

PETROL

A FILM BY
ALENA LODKINA

PRESSKIT



TECHNICAL INFO

PRODUCTION YEAR	2022
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	Australia
DURATION	93 minutes
SHOT ON	Arri Alexa Mini
ASPECT RATIO	16:9
SOUND FORMAT	Dolby Surround
FORMAT	DCP
LANGUAGE	English, Russian

AUSTRALIAN DISTRIBUTOR



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PRODUCED WITH SUPPORT OF:



A woman with long, dark, wavy hair is shown in profile, looking out through a window. The window has a textured, grid-like pattern. The lighting is dim and moody, with a blueish tint. The woman's face is partially illuminated, and her hand is visible near the window frame.

LOGLINE

An impressionable film student is drawn into a shadowy and intoxicating world when she befriends an enigmatic performance artist.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Eva, an impressionable film student, befriends a charismatic performance artist named Mia who quickly takes hold of Eva's imagination. As Eva moves in with Mia and their lives grow more and more entwined, Eva sets off on a surreal journey of awakening, haunted by dreams, fantasies and ghosts. *Petrol* is a story of a haunted friendship between two young women, discovering the world and themselves through a strange bond.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Petrol is a story of a haunted friendship between two young women artists, discovering the world and themselves through a unique and at times troubled bond. Eva is an impressionable and idealistic student of film from a Russian migrant family. Through a series of chance events she befriends a charismatic performance artist named Mia, who immediately takes hold of Eva's volatile imagination. Mia inspires Eva with her ebullient character, bold lifestyle, and dedication to her quintessential art projects. Eva soon moves into Mia's house and is swept up in Mia's decadent life and milieu of layabout friends. She works obsessively on a film she wants Mia to star in. But as Eva gets closer, Mia pulls away, only fuelling the fascination. As the two women's lives become more entwined, Eva sets off on a surreal journey of self-discovery, haunted by dreams, fantasies and ghosts. Set to the backdrop of contemporary Melbourne, *Petrol* explores the nature of identity and friendship, and the things that haunt us as we strive for connection with others in an uncertain world.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I began collecting ideas for *Petrol* while living in Melbourne share houses as an aspiring filmmaker in my 20's, inspired by friendships with female artists. This 'diaristic' process of noting down images, snippets of dialogue, dreams, observations of characters, stories told by friends, locations, clothes, music and random details of daily city life, is at the heart of this film - a sort of collage of a time and a place.

I wanted to portray the euphoric and maddening bond between Eva and Mia, two imaginative, idealistic and determined women, who are very different and at the same time alike, at a time in their lives when they are creatively and emotionally open, vulnerable and uncertain. Working with the very talented actresses Nathalie Morris and Hannah Lynch, who very much shaped their respective characters, I wanted to show a female relationship that is platonic but highly romantic in its own way, to create an enchanted ode to friendship. I was interested in how at a time of change and discovery, when one readily loses themselves in other people, the delicate line between reality and imagination can become blurred.

I believe that reality as interpreted by individuals has an intangible, mysterious quality, and cinema is uniquely equipped to capture it. In *Petrol* I want to invite the viewer to enter a cinematic world that resembles a dream, both familiar and

strange, in a hope that dreams, like art, may offer us clues to our relationship with the world and with ourselves. The film blends naturalistic observations of young peoples' lives with magic, ghostly hauntings and dreams in order to create a world that is both familiar and a little disorienting. It felt like an exciting way of exploring the themes of identity, the fragility of human relationships and the hauntings that get in the way of our connection with one another. The two worlds that Eva inhabits - the untethered millennial 'scene' and her migrant Russian family - are in a way both marked by the strange sense of dislocation, inner displacement, uncertainty and melancholia. The title *Petrol* places the story in the context of the city and speaks of the volatility of contemporary life.

"One ought not to talk or act as if he were asleep," writes Heraclitus, "We share a world when we are awake; each sleeper is in a world of his own." For me, this sums up the journey Eva sets off on in the film. In the tension between sleep and wakefulness, one must finally learn to wake up to the world, to themselves and to others, as they are. As Eva looks at the face of the ghost-corpse, she looks into the camera. We don't know what she sees (she is looking at us) - but we know that her private discovery brings her a new understanding.

As Mia and Eva share a moment of tenderness in the bar, the kinds of precious moments of connection that we seek, they go on their separate respective paths. Perhaps everything passes, but such shared experiences of friendship make for the confusing, messy, beguiling stuff of life, the stuff that makes us who we are.



PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

I met Alena in late-2012 through the film scene in Melbourne, so *Petrol* is the culmination of our ten-year working relationship and friendship. Whilst our first feature film, *Strange Colours*, was set in a remote Australian opal mining community, *Petrol* is an inherently Melbournian film about young people; set between the dimly lit terrace house parties, the inner-city parks backlit by skyscrapers, and the makeshift gallery spaces that defined our 20's. Many of the faces in the film are people we have met and known along the way and the sound design is complete with the sounds of construction; of a city transforming. *Petrol* is an exploration of the collective anxiety of a generation constantly striving for more; from our relationships, from our creative pursuits, and from our uncertain futures.

We filmed in the early winter of 2021. For anyone familiar with the city, this was a period

of revolving Covid-19 induced lockdowns. There were several points where we thought the shoot might not continue. As a city, we have spent the most time locked down than any other city in the world, so managing to complete principal photography in 2021 felt like a triumph against the odds.

In Nathalie Morris and Hannah Lynch we found two talented performers who like us, had a shared past. Together, they bring such power and fragility to their respective roles as two women striving for connection and meaning. On this film we worked with many of the same Heads of Departments from *Strange Colours*; Cinematographer (Michael Latham), Production Designer (Leah Popple), Editor (Luca Cappelli), Composer (Mikey Young) and Sound Designer (Livia Ruzic), to name a few. For them and for us, we hope the result is a familiar and truthful portrait of the city we love.

WRITER / DIRECTOR ALENA LODKINA

DOB 27/03/1989

Place of birth: Leningrad, USSR

Alena Lodkina is a filmmaker based in Melbourne. She directed and co-wrote her first feature film *Strange Colours* (2017), developed through the Venice Biennale College. *Petrol* (2022) is her second feature film as writer and director. Her fiction and documentary short films have played at festivals around the world. Her writing has appeared in *Senses of Cinema*, *4:3 Journal*, *Meanjin* and *Fireflies*.



DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

Mercury – short film (2019)

Director, Writer, Editor

Original work commissioned by Prototype, an Australian online platform for video art

Strange Colours – feature drama (2017)

Director, Writer

Producers: Kate Laurie and Isaac Wall

Co-writer: Isaac Wall

2017: Venice International Film Festival (Biennale College); Arctic Moving Image and Film Festival

2018: Goteborg International Film Festival (New Voices), Atlanta International Film Festival (Competition), BAFICI (First Films), Sydney Film Festival, Melbourne Film Festival, Gold Coast Film Festival, Queensland International Film Festival, Vision Splendid Film Festival, Perth Revelation, Darwin Film Festival, Rencontres Internationales du Cinema des Antipodes, Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival, AACTA Awards for Best Independent Australian Feature nomination; Winner Best Independent Australia Film Award Gold Coast Film Festival

Lightning Ridge: The Land of Black Opals – short documentary film (2016)

Director, Writer, Editor, Producer

Associate Producers: Kate Laurie and Isaac Wall

Antenna Documentary Film Festival 2016 (Winner Best Australian Short Documentary), Message to Man International Film Festival 2016, Melbourne International Film Festival 2017, Heart of Gold Film Festival 2017

Plain Pleasures – short film (2015)

Director, Writer

Producer: Isaac Wall

There Is No Such Thing As a Jellyfish – Short Film (2014)

Director, Writer, Assistant Editor

Producer: Kate Laurie

Melbourne Film Festival 2014 (Accelerator Program Participant)

PRODUCER KATE LAURIE



After completing a Bachelor of Arts majoring in History in 2010, Kate has pursued film production, casting and ultimately a career as a film producer. Her first feature film as producer was Amiel-Courtin-Wilson's *Carnation*, shot on location in Oklahoma, USA. In 2017 she produced her second feature *Strange Colours* (Alena Lodkina) which premiered at the Venice International Film Festival and was nominated for an AACTA award for Best Independent Feature. In 2019, she participated in the Berlinale Talents in Berlin, Germany. From 2018-2019 Kate undertook a producer placement with Robert Connolly's Arenamedia, during which time she produced a short documentary series - *Third Culture Kids* (Santilla Chingaipe) for the ABC. Her latest narrative feature film *Petrol* (Alena Lodkina) is currently set for release in 2022.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

ROBERT CONNOLLY

Robert Connolly is the writer and director of the feature films *The Bank* (2001), *Three Dollars* (2005), *Balibo* (2009) and *Paper Planes* (2014). For TV, he was one of the featured directors on the International Emmy nominated mini-series *The Slap* (2011) and also directed the TV series *Barracuda* (2016) for Matchbox / NBCU and *Deep State* for Fox International (2018).

As a Producer, Robert is recognised as a champion of new talent, innovation and bold and compelling works for the screen.

Robert has won multiple screen awards and has screened his films in over thirty major international film festivals including the Berlin, Toronto and San Sebastian International Film Festivals.

LIZ KEARNEY

Along with Robert Connolly and Maggie Miles, Liz produced the Australian film *Paper Planes*. The family feature was released by Village Roadshow and grossed almost \$10m at the Australian box office.

Liz produced her first feature *These Final Hours* in 2013. The film premiered at the Melbourne International Film Festival in 2013 and screened in Cannes as part of Directors' Fortnight in 2014. Liz was an executive producer on Stephen Page's directorial debut *Spear* - a dance film that draws on the amazing body of work Stephen has created with Bangarra Dance Theatre over the last 25 years.

Most recently Liz produced Jub Clerc's debut feature film debut *Sweet As* to be release in 2023 and *Acute Misfortune* which premiered at MIFF in 2018, won the Critics Prize.



CAST

EVA	Nathalie Morris
MIA	Hannah Lynch
ROBERT	Daniel Frederickson
BELL	Robert P. Downie
VIKTORIA	Inga Romantsova
VLADIMIR	Alex Menglet
ALEX	Emmett Aldred
BELLA	Becky Voskoboinik
CYNTHIA	Brittany D'Argaville
VAL	Matthew Linde
TUTOR	Nasseim Valamanesh
DR CALINAO	Miles Paras
LILLIAN	Susan Godfrey
DAVID	Hugh Fraser



CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

EVA

The protagonist, film student of Russian background in her early 20's. Determined, forthright, curious and sensitive, Eva is consumed by ideas, her projects and people she admires.

She has a certain inner confidence, partially due to her youthful naivety, but can also be shy, vulnerable, insecure, anxious and self-conscious. Her tendency to imagine and fantasise propel her friendship and fascination with Mia.

She longs for a sense of belonging and becomes a voyeur in her fascination with her new friend.

MIA

An artist in her mid 20's, working in performance art at the time of the film. Mia can be warm, playful, flirtatious, generous and charming but is also private and secretive, has a certain 'out of this world' mystique. She is highly intelligent, eccentric and also has a hard edge, an old spirit.

She is wholly committed to her work, is a risk-taker, becomes obsessive to the point of self-destruction. She is an aesthete, loves beauty, is soft-spoken, dignified and self-composed. She is both frivolous and serious, quietly confident and vulnerable, egotistical but ultimately honourable and sincere.

Marguerite Duras said of artists that their 'desire is stronger than their fear' - this sums up the spirit of Mia.

NATHALIE MORRIS AS EVA

Born and raised in Canberra, Nathalie Morris has just completed production on the third season of the popular Stan series *Bump* where she plays the lead role of Oly opposite Claudia Karvan and Angus Sampson. She will next be seen in acclaimed filmmaker Alena Lodkina's upcoming feature film *Petrol* and the second season of TVNZ's drama series *One Lane Bridge*.

Nathalie graduated from New Zealand's leading Drama School, Toi Whakaari, with a Bachelor of Performing Arts Degree in 2018. Since graduating, she has appeared in the US feature film *Black Christmas* starring alongside Imogen Poots for Blumhouse Productions, US TV series *Almost Paradise* which filmed in the Philippines, and TVNZ and Great Southern Television web series *The Basement*.

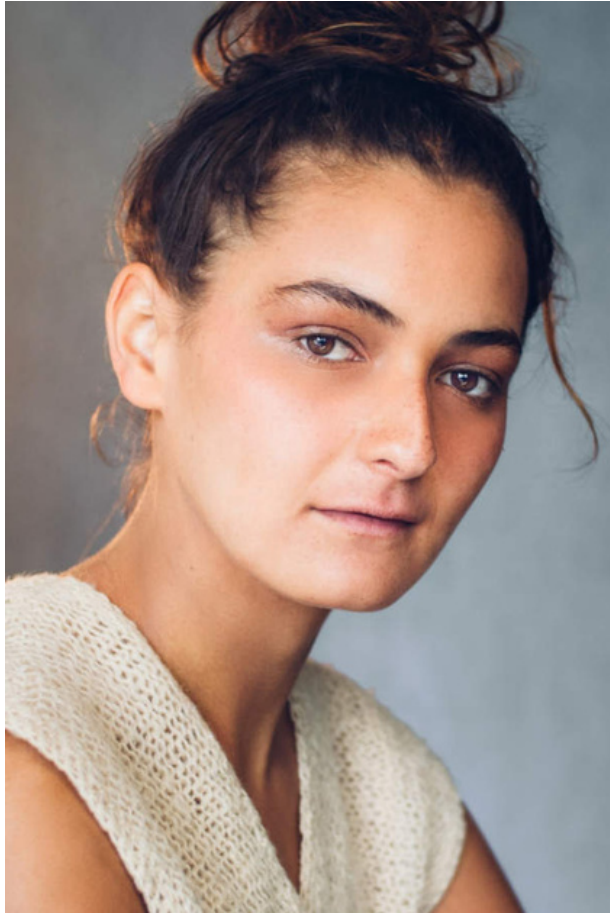
Nathalie also played the role of Nina in Auckland Theatre Company's production of Chekhov's *The Seagull*, which screened online during COVID and was met with worldwide acclaim, before heading home to Australia to film *BUMP*.

Nathalie is represented by RGM Artists and Gail Cowan Management.





HANNAH LYNCH AS MIA



Hannah is a queer artist with heritage from New Zealand, Fiji and Samoa. She is a graduate of our top drama school, Toi Whakaari. Since graduating, she has been working solidly, she has drive and a brilliantly creative mind with a unique energy which she brings to all her work.

Career highlights thus far are performing with one of Aotearoa's top physical theatre companies, Red Leap, in a variety of works, including "Owls do cry" and "Dakota of the White Flats". She has had guest roles on NZ comedy series Good Grief and Amazon series "The Wilds". She is also a published writer and musician, making music for film and theatre

KEY CREW

CINEMATOGRAPHER	Michael Latham
EDITOR	Luca Cappelli
PRODUCTION DESIGNER	Leah Popple
COSTUME DESIGNER	Phoebe Taylor
HAIR AND MAKEUP DESIGNER	Marie Princi
LINE PRODUCER	Mim Davis
GAFFER	James Thompson
COMPOSERS	Mikey Young Raven Mahon
SOUND DESIGNER	Livia Ruzic
SOUND RECORDIST	Steve Bond
MUSIC SUPERVISOR	Jemma Burns
MIX	Keith Thomas
COLOURIST	CJ Dobson CSI
POST PRODUCTION BY	The Post Lounge
CASTING DIRECTOR	Jane Norris CGA
LOCATION MANAGER	James Cameron
ADDITIONAL CASTING	Lucie McMahon

CINEMATOGRAPHER

MICHAEL LATHAM

A graduate of VCA, Michael Latham works between shooting documentary and narrative films. Michael's recent collaborations include Gabrielle Brady's award winning film *Island of the Hungry Ghosts*, Alena Lodkina's *Strange Colours*, and Kitty Green's critically acclaimed *The Assistant* for which he was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award.

He previously worked with with Kitty Green on her Netflix Original and Sundance hit *Casting JonBenet* as well as her Sundance winning short documentary *The Face of Ukraine: Casting Oksana Baiul* and together they made their debut documentary feature *Ukraine Is Not A Brothel* which premiered at the Venice Film Festival, the film went on to be nominated for 7 AACTA awards, winning Best Documentary.

EDITOR

LUCA CAPPELLI

Luca Cappelli is an Italian film editor. In 2010 Luca moved to Melbourne where he started his collaboration with Amiel Courtin-Wilson and Michael Cody that culminated in the feature film *Ruin* (Best Editing Award at the Asia Pacific Film Festival 2014 and Orizzonti Jury Prize at the Venice Film Festival 2013).

His other editing credits include *The Inland Road* (Berlin Film Festival Selection 2016), *Strange Colours* (Venice Biennale Fund 2017) and *Acute Misfortune* which won the Age Critics Award at the Melbourne International Film Festival in 2018. In 2021 Luca finished the feature film *You Wont Be Alone* by Macedonian-Australian director Goran Stolevski produced by Causeway Films and distributed by Focus Features.

PRODUCTION DESIGNER

LEAH POPPLE

Leah graduated from the Victorian College of Arts with a Bachelor of Production majoring in Stagecraft and Design.

Leah production and costume designed her first feature *Ruin*, which premiered at the Venice Film Festival in 2013. Other work includes Kitty Green's *Casting JonBenet*, a Netflix Original film, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival 2017, Jackie Van Beek's *The Inland Road* which premiered at the Berlin Film Festival 2017 and Alena Lodkina's *Strange Colours*, which premiered at the Venice Film Festival 2017. Most recently Leah designed Thomas Wright's film *Acute Misfortune*. Leah is collaborating again with Wright on his new film, *The Unknown Man*, starring Joel Edgerton and Sean Harris.

COSTUME DESIGNER

PHOEBE TAYLOR

Phoebe Taylor is a Melbourne based Costume and Fashion Designer, who has spent over ten years immersed in Melbourne's film and fashion industries as a designer, events co-ordinator, stylist and international brand co-ordinator for various Melbourne based fashion houses.

In 2016 Phoebe founded the made-to-order brand Vovo The Label and proceeded to carve out a niche in the bespoke fashion landscape by way of commissioned garments and wardrobe styling for award winning musicians and artists, including; Courtney Barnett, The Veronicas, Lorde, Mac Demarco and King Gizzard and the Lizard Wizard.

Phoebe has continued to establish herself as an emerging Costume designer for Film and Television.

COMPOSERS

MIKEY YOUNG

Over the last 20 odd years, Mikey Young has been a member of Eddy Current Suppression Ring, Total Control, The Green Child, Power Supply and Lace Curtain. He has released records on such labels as DFA, Mexican Summer, Sub Pop, Goner, Castleface and Upset the Rhythm, and has also toured the world many times in various groups.

He has compiled 2 albums worth of 70's folk/psych treasures for the New York based record label, Anthology recordings.

Mikey has scored 2 films previously, 2014's *The Mule* and 2017's *Strange Colours* as well as providing music for *Go!* and *Cut Snake* and numerous short films.

Over the last decade, he has become well known for mixing and mastering countless releases for local and international artists. He just released his 3rd solo album, *Curtains*.

RAVEN MAHON

Raven Mahon is a Melbourne / Naarm based musician and furniture designer / maker who has been releasing music with co-composer, Mikey Young, as *The Green Child*, since 2017.

Prior to Australia, Mahon lived in the San Francisco Bay Area and played in *Grass Widow*, a three piece post punk band which established a label to self release three full length records, an EP and two 7"s. Between touring and recording projects she developed a business designing and building commissioned furniture and installation projects for commercial and residential environments.

Over the last few years Mahon and Young have collaborated on original music for short films and Alena Lodkina's feature, *Strange Colours*, composed by Young. Mahon scored the short film *I'll Let You Know When I Have Something To Say* by Lawrence McCrabb in 2020 and since has digitally released an album in collaboration with Xanthe Waite called *XR*.

SOUND DESIGNER

LIVIA RUZIC

Livia Ruzic has worked in sound for over 40 years. She has been either a dialogue editor, FX editor or sound designer on close to 300 productions, from feature films to documentaries, shorts, animations, television productions and dance soundscapes.

She has been part of sound teams that have been awarded over a dozen awards including nine AFI/AACTA awards, a few ASSG awards and a BAFTA.

Some of the productions she has been involved with include features *Strange Colours*, *Balibo*, *Muriel's Wedding*, *Shine*, *Greencard*, *Romeo & Juliet* - documentaries *Geeta*, *The Family*, *Ecco Homo*, *Dr Sarmast's Music School*, *Coniston* - animations *Small Treasures*, *Dirtgirl World* and *Good Grief* - television productions *The Secret River* and *Utopia*.

MUSIC SUPERVISOR

JEMMA BURNS

After breaking into the industry on *Summer Heights High*, Jemma Burns has now worked on over 100 productions. Regular collaborations with some of the world's most renowned production companies and directors include:

Plan B Entertainment on Bong Joon Ho's *Okja* and multiple David Michod films; See-Saw Films on numerous productions including Oscar Nominated *Lion* and Jane Campion's *Top of the Lake: China Girl*. And Justin Kurzel's acclaimed *Nitram* to name a few.

Jemma is currently working with Ari Aster on his highly anticipated third film starring Joaquin Phoenix, Garth Davis' sci-fi thriller *Foe* and the Netflix reboot of the iconic series *Heartbreak High*.

