

Author over the moon

SCOTT MORGAN - Auckland City Harbour News

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LONG HOURS: The *Insatiable Moon* producer Mike Riddell shares an embrace with his wife Rosemary, the film's director, on set late last year.



JASON OXENHAM

CAST AND CREW: Pictured on the set of *The Insatiable Moon* last year, from left: Mike Riddell, Tom Burstyn and Rawiri Paratene.

AN eight-year journey to bring the novel *The Insatiable Moon* to the big screen is almost over for author Mike Riddell.

After a couple of false starts where funding fell through, the story of Arthur, a mental health patient who believes he's the second son of God, gets its first screening at the New Zealand International Film Festival this weekend.

The story centres around Arthur's mission to save the Ponsonby boarding house he lives in from closure, while dealing with his own personal demons.

Mike, who's also producing the movie, says filming couldn't have gone more smoothly.

"The remarkable thing was we finished the shoot on schedule, in five weeks and on budget.

"It was in the category of 'can't be done'."

He was inspired to write the book after working with mental health patients in Ponsonby during the 1980s.

Including post-production, the film cost about \$500,000 to make, with Mike's wife Rosemary in the director's chair and Whale Rider actor Rawiri Paratene playing the role of Arthur.

Mike says the dedication of those involved in the project helped the couple pull off a whirlwind production schedule, that began shooting in November last year.

"There has been an enormous amount of very talented and competent people who seem to believe in this film as much as we do."

Rosemary says many Ponsonby and Grey Lynn locals and landmarks made the final cut.

"It was good fun and we had lots of co-operation from local business owners on Ponsonby Rd. A lot of people who are passersby are in the film," she says.

"We shot at Pt Erin next to the swimming pool, the parks around Ponsonby, the little side streets, the Hopetoun Bridge, the Grey Lynn Community Centre and Soho Square at a nicely symbolic point.

"I think the film ended up capturing the atmosphere of Ponsonby quite well."

About 80 locals were used as extras during a couple of scenes.

Along with showing at the film festival, the Riddells have reached a distribution deal with Rialto cinemas that will see it released throughout the country and potentially overseas.

"The major push for the film will be September and October. We don't want to blow all the champagne corks yet."

Film festival director Bill Gosden says it wasn't a hard decision to give *The Insatiable Moon* a prominent slot on its schedule.

"It's one from the heart. I was impressed by the authenticity and grit with which the film portrays the city's dispossessed, and insists on their visibility."

For information on screening times visit www.ticketek.co.nz.

For information on the film festival visit www.nzff.co.nz.