

Moon Rises In Ponsonby

Auckland City Harbour News



Photo: JASON OXENHAM

STORY OF COMMUNITY: From left: Producer Mike Riddell, director of photography Tom Burstyn and actor Rawiri Paratene will be involved in the filming of *The Insatiable Moon* in Ponsonby next month.

The streets of Ponsonby will be filled with famous faces when a month-long film shoot begins next month.

Novelist and producer Mike Riddell is bringing to the big screen the adaptation of his book, *The Insatiable Moon*, which will be shot at locations throughout Ponsonby.

Whale Rider star Rawiri Paratene plays lead character Arthur, a psychiatric patient who lives in a Ponsonby boarding house and thinks he's the second son of God.

When the house is faced with closure, Arthur and a bunch of friends set out on a mission to save their home, before his own world starts to fall apart.

Veteran Kiwi actor and director Ian Mune also plays a significant role in the production.

Mr Riddell says the character of Arthur is based on a man he met years ago when working with mentally ill people in Ponsonby.

"I used to sometimes think 'how would you know if he was the second son of God'?"

After seven years and financial difficulties that have seen the movie's budget reduced from several million dollars to just a few hundred thousand, Mr Riddell is pleased to finally be making the movie.

"It's been tough and turned into a bit of a labour of love.

"Nobody's in it who doesn't want to be when they could get more money anywhere else."

He says it was always important to film the month-long shoot in Ponsonby and surrounding suburbs.

"It's a story that's come out of this community and something people can feel proud of."

Some familiar spots that will pop up in the film include the Ponsonby Baptist Church, Western Park and a number of local businesses.

Mr Paratene says he wanted to be involved in the movie as soon as he finished reading the book.

"What grabbed me is it had film written all over it," he says.

"It's a compelling story being led by a really interesting character, so I immediately got hold of the publicist and told them I was interested in purchasing the film rights.

"I got hold of Mike and said I know the rights have gone but I'm really interested in the role."

While he knows it will be difficult to get into the head of Arthur, Mr Paratene says that's what acting is all about.

"This role for me is going to be a challenge, but as an actor it's always what you're looking for – something that's going to stretch you.

"To play someone who's mentally challenged is as challenging for me as playing someone from royalty.

"It requires me to fit into their shoes so I'm prepared and feel comfortable in their world."

Despite the small budget, director of photography Tom Burstyn says the pace at which new technology is developing means making films isn't as expensive as it once was. But he says the story should be the focus of the film rather than any technological extras.

"You can get distracted with special effects and forget there's a story to be told."

Filming of *The Insatiable Moon* is due to start on November 16 and wrap a week before Christmas.

Locals are also being encouraged to put their names forward as potential extras for crowd scenes in the film.

For more information email ism@fylvm.co.nz.