

Movie Review: The Insatiable Moon

By [Peter Calder](#)

7:00 AM Thursday Oct 7, 2010

Rating: 4/5 **Verdict:** Unassuming local charmer

In the press notes for this small, heartfelt local film, there's a comment that it's amazing what you can do with "five weeks of shooting, six weeks of post-production and eight years of pre-production".

It's a rueful acknowledgement of the venture's changing fortunes. It started life as a mid-budget, British/NZ co-production with dependable stars James Nesbitt and Timothy Spall attached, but when the Film Commission refused funding, the whole thing collapsed.

Thus The Little Film That Almost Wasn't became The Little Film That Could: writer Mike Riddell's wife Rosemary, a Hamilton District Court judge, took the helm; cinematographer Tom Burstyn (director of handsome backwoods doco *This Way of Life*) made miracles with virtually no equipment; four cracker actors took the key roles; and together, for \$340,000, they produced an unassuming charmer. Sure, at times it feels somewhat deliberately assembled and the setting of gritty social realism doesn't always dovetail neatly with the parable at the story's heart. But its restless, genial energy is infectious.

On paper, it shouldn't work: the story of a psychiatric patient, Arthur (Paratene), who thinks he's the second son of God, with twin earthly missions – finding his Queen of Heaven and saving his boarding house from forced closure.

But the film, like Riddell's 1997 novel which it adapts, is an irresistibly winning mix of pathos, humour (sly, whimsical and sometimes riotous) and something close to wonder. It would be a stretch to call it a religious film but it's spiritual in the best sense and it's certainly not blasphemous.

It's also a movie with a sure sense of itself and, in particular of the place where the story was born – Riddell was once a Baptist clergyman in the area – and the film is shot and set. Audiences familiar with Ponsonby will find themselves doing a double take when characters, say, walk past Cafe Cezanne and turn into the Grey Lynn Community Centre, but it's unfair to bring inside knowledge to bear on a film that celebrates the area so generously.

Best just to sit back and soak it up on its own terms. That way you'll enjoy it more when a character who misses a line says "I beg your pardon" and Arthur, looking meaningfully at a crucifix on the wall, says: "That's been done. We've moved on to other stuff now."

Cast: Rawiri Paratene, Sara Wiseman, Ian Mune, Greg Johnson **Director:** Rosemary Riddell **Running time:** 90 mins **Rating:** M, offensive language, content that may disturb)

-TimeOut

By [Peter Calder](#)

rae (New Zealand) | 03:37PM Friday, 08 Oct 2010

This is an amazing awesome film! I cant think of another film I have enjoyed better, it is a must see, you will love it,

Helen (New Zealand) | 03:37PM Friday, 08 Oct 2010

I am in Napier. Will I be able to see it here?



Psychiatric patient Arthur (Rawiri Paratene) and Margaret (Sara Wiseman) in *The Insatiable Moon*. Photo / Supplied