

Reviewed by Sam Edwards

New Zealand commentators tend to brand our films “little”, or “small”, and further demean them with soft adjectives such as charming or funny. But Kiwi films, the better ones, also have a genuine sensitivity – one which both displays our culture and allows us to laugh at ourselves.

The opening shots of *Moon* are exactly that, a kaleidoscope of urban New Zealand living, from a shot of a noisy old fart as a derelict Ian Mune rolls up his mattress, to the coffee and traffic images of street life in Auckland. The language is genuine, and this film is authentic stuff, made with a love and understanding which only comes from an intimate knowledge of its subject.

When the inimitable, smiling, wonderful Rawiri Paratene arrives on screen we know the film’s going to be a cracker. And it is. He introduces himself to the vicar as Arthur, “The Second Son of God”; asks the vicar to help him find out who he is and, when the vicar gives him a quiet push, tries a smart con: “I don’t suppose you could spot me twenty bucks until I can get to the bank?”

Arthur is a character who won’t go away in both senses of the phrase. He lives in a boarding house wanted by a developer and, when the developer brings pressure to bear on the owners so that he can buy it – including a television reporter to dump on the bedraggled remnants of humanity it houses – we have the driving tension for a great story. Eccentric, yes, different, absolutely, but a great story.

Look for Paratene’s hilarious interview with the TV presenter doing her piece on the halfway house, and her later summary, “Ponsonby welcomes the queer, but not the peculiar.” Nor does she.

The halfway house inhabitants are hilarious, and the film perfectly defines the tensions with neighbouring home owners unable to cope with such a degree of difference while uttering platitudes about care and concern, and the real needs of people existing below the normal level of care and comfort.

That difference is further underlined in the extraordinary love affair between Arthur, a man diagnosed as clinically disturbed, and Margaret, a normal, even ordinary woman whose life is empty. Unusual and delicate treatment of the affair includes a notable scene in a motel room Arthur has turned into the stuff of romantic love with old sheets and tea lights.

The other set pieces include the movingly comic funeral of a suicide paedophile, who had lived in the house with his family of dishevelled

social flotsam. Derelict Roger sings the Elvis Presley version of *Amazing Grace* and moves us hugely for a brief and poignant moment.

This delightful romp through a character-filled world is well worth a look.