

BLACK PANTHER WOMAN

Directed and Produced by Rachel Perkins



PRESS KIT

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Production Notes

Director	Rachel Perkins
Producer	Rachel Perkins
Production Company	Blackfella Films
Genre	Documentary
Language	English
Aspect Ratio	16:9
Duration	52 minutes
Sound	Stereo

One Line Synopsis

Marlene Cummins breaks a forty year silence to tell the story of her own abuse in the Australian Black protest movement, to overcome her demons of today.

Short Synopsis

In 1972 Marlene Cummins fell in love with the leader of the Australian Black Panther Party. With the break up of that relationship, she spiraled into a cycle of addiction that left her on the streets and vulnerable. Forty years later Marlene travels to a gathering of international Black Panthers in New York. The journey takes her back in time. Still struggling with addiction, she reveals the secrets she has held onto, to face her demons today.

Long Synopsis

Marlene Cummins was a poor, uneducated teenager, already carrying the scars of discrimination, when she met the leader of Australia's Black Panther Party in 1972. She fell madly in love with him and her education into Black Power began the night she moved into the Panther headquarters in Brisbane.

The little known Brisbane chapter of the Black Panther Party, was directly inspired by the American Panthers. They adapted their politics and their militant, sexy style of Black leather and a defiant attitude. Like their American comrades, they also raised suspicious attentions from the Police and ASIO. Yet unlike their American comrades, who numbered in the thousands across America, the Australian chapter comprised just ten members. In one heady year, this small group of young Aboriginal people staged educational theatre shows, kept watch on the police on what they called 'pig patrols' and were at the forefront of demonstrations including the Aboriginal Tent Embassy.

The ideological revolution sweeping the world, also coincided with the sexual revolution. Suddenly Black men had status and white women wanted a part of it. The tensions around the movement and her personal life tightened around Marlene and finally led to the break up of her relationship with the party's leader. Marlene filled the vacuum with alcohol and quickly spiraled into a cycle of addiction that left her on the streets and vulnerable.

Her vulnerability and her belief in the movement made her a target for Black men in power. Marlene recalls the incident of her rape, by two Indigenous leaders, after which she made the difficult decision to stay silent. Dedicated to the cause and distrustful of police, she, like other Aboriginal women facing abuse, chose to stay silent to protect the movement from criticism.

Forty years later, and still struggling with addiction she looks back on her involvement in the Aboriginal protest movement, from her housing commission flat in the community of Redfern. Marlene journeys to New York to an international gathering of Black Panthers. The journey takes her back in time, to her love affair, her time with the Panthers and the question of the place of women in the movement.

Now a grandmother and no longer afraid, she speaks out about her experiences. This film presents her attempt to heal herself and her ongoing battle with addiction, and to add her voice to those calling for a halt to the abuse of Black women from within their own community.

Director's Statement

What began as a straight forward story, recounting the Black Panther party in Australia, slowly revealed itself as something more. My friendship with Marlene Cummins goes back twenty years. But I never knew the stories she held within her.

The film began about five years ago when I offered to help Marlene prepare to pitch her idea for a documentary about the Black Panthers. We got together and she began to tell me her story. Over a week, the stories unravelled from deep within her. I soon realised that Marlene had a very personal and controversial story to tell, if she had the courage to do so and that I wanted to help her tell it.

It is a story that resonates with me. As a child I grew up surrounded by people in the Aboriginal rights movement. My life's work has been dedicated to telling the stories of my people through film. When I realised that this story might turn a critical eye on leadership within the movement, I had to seriously consider the repercussions and the risk that it would appear we were 'bringing down the movement'. I talked to my family and sought advice from Indigenous leaders along the way, notably Sam Watson and Jenny Munro. They both felt that the Aboriginal movement was mature enough to apply the same critical eye to itself, that it applied to those it has struggled against.

So we began, choosing not to write a script, but to allow the film to evolve as an observational narrative, threaded with Marlene's history. Marlene had some key rules she wanted to follow. That the film should be honest about her and who she was. That it would only be told by people who were intimately involved at the time. That it would be her story and that she would not speak on behalf of anyone else. The outcome is a very personal story, of Marlene's experiences and of her survival. There are many more stories within her life that could not be told within the time constraints of a one hour film. They are extraordinary, and made more so by Marlene's positive attitude to making the best she can of her life. It will perhaps only be told in the complexity and detail it deserves when Marlene publishes her autobiography.

This film, like all the films I have worked on to date, is intended for an Aboriginal audience first. But the premise of the film is relevant for all. To have a fair and just society, we must have leadership with integrity.

Rachel Perkins

Director & Producer



Rachel Perkins' Australian Aboriginal heritage (Arrente/Kalkadoon) has informed her entire filmmaking career. She founded Australia's premier Indigenous production company Blackfella Films in 1992, and has contributed extensively to the development of Indigenous filmmakers in Australia and, more broadly, to the Australian film and television industry.

Rachel has directed three feature films: **RADIANCE**, **ONE NIGHT THE MOON** (which received 5 Australian Film Institute (AFI) Awards), and most recently the musical **BRAN NUE DAE**. It screened at the Sundance, Berlin and Toronto Film Festivals, and achieved a box office of \$7.5 million in Australia. Rachel's films have screened at over 75 film festivals worldwide.

In 2012 Rachel directed the telemovie **MABO**, which screened on the ABC to mark the 20th anniversary of the historic High Court decision. **MABO** was nominated for Most Outstanding Mini Series or Telemovie at the 2013 TV Week Logie Awards. Rachel also directed two episodes of the landmark television drama series **REDFERN NOW**. The first Australian drama series written, directed and produced by Indigenous Australians, **REDFERN NOW** was awarded the 2013 TV Week Logie for Most Outstanding Drama Series, and Rachel also received the Australian Directors Guild (ADG) Award for Best Direction in a TV Drama Series.

Rachel also wrote, directed and co-produced the seven-hour documentary series **FIRST AUSTRALIANS** (2009), which received Australia's top honours including AFI and IF Awards, the UN Media Peace Prize, TV Week Logie, and the Writers and Directors Guild of Australia Awards. **FIRST AUSTRALIANS** has sold throughout the world and is the highest selling educational title in Australia.

Rachel's other documentary work includes the series **BLOOD BROTHERS**, on which she was one of the writers, directors and producers as well as **SPIRIT TO SPIRIT**, an international co-venture of Indigenous partners from New Zealand, Scandanavia, Canada and Australia.

With her Blackfella Films business partner, Darren Dale, Rachel Perkins co-curated the film program for the **Message Sticks Indigenous Festival** at the Sydney Opera House from 2002 until 2011, and in 2012 presented the curated program of Indigenous films **Blackfella Films Presents** in partnership with major Australian film festivals.

Rachel was honoured to receive the inaugural *Contribution to Television IF Award* at the 2011 Jameson IF Awards. In addition to her experience as an executive producer for both ABC and SBS Television, Rachel has previously served on the Council of the Australian Film Television and Radio School, the NSW Film and Television Office (now Screen NSW), the Australia Film Commission, Screen Australia, and was a founding member of the National Indigenous Television Service (NITV).

Rochelle Oshlack

Editor

Rochelle has worked in postproduction for film and television for over twenty five years. Her credits include the box office hit musical feature **BRAN NUE DAE**, the critically acclaimed documentary series **FIRST AUSTRALIANS**, the UN Peace Media award winner, **LANI'S STORY** and the highly awarded telemovie **MABO** starring Deb Mailman.

In 2010, Rochelle received an AACTA documentary editing nomination for **THE TALL MAN** and in 2013 an AACTA nomination in drama editing for her collaborative work on **THE TURNING**.

Most recently Rochelle edited **MISS NIKKI AND THE TIGER GIRLS**, a feature length musical documentary set in Burma during the change of the regime. **MISS NIKKI AND THE TIGER GIRLS** was selected for the prestigious IDFA festival and selected in competition for both Sydney and Melbourne Film Festivals in 2013.

Kim Batterham ACS

Director of Photography

Kim is one of Australia's most talented and respected cinematographers, who has easily moved from documentary to feature film. A graduate of AFTRS. Kim began his career as a DOP in the mid 1980's.

From the late 1980's to early 1990's Kim worked on 8 biography films. This group of films was about some of Australia's major performing artists, (Brett Whitely, Graham Murphy, Meryl Tankard, Peter Corris, Paul Mercurio) and our famous sporting personalities, (Annette Kellerman, Les Darcy and Wayne Gardiner). Interwoven with this was a number of features and mini-series including **SHOTGUN WEDDING**, **RAW NERVE**, **KANGAROO PALACE** and **THE POTATO FACTORY** which earned Kim the Cinematographer of the Year award at the 2000 Australian Cinematographers Society Awards.

His work on a number of handmade one-hour shorts (**BLACK RIVER**, **FLOODHOUSE**, **THE WIDOWER**) culminated in his most successful film **ONE NIGHT THE MOON**, Winner of Best Cinematography in a Non-Feature Film at the AFI Awards 2001. This film was the beginning of his working relationship with Rachel Perkins and ultimately led to his involvement on **FIRST AUSTRALIANS**.

Andrew Commis ACS

Director of Photography (US Shoot)

Andrew's most recent feature film **THE ROCKET**, won three awards at the 2013 Berlin Film Festival including the Crystal Bear, and three awards at the 2013 Tribeca Film Festival including Best Feature Film. It also won the Sydney, Melbourne and American Film Institute [AFI] Film Festival audience awards along with best cinematography prizes at the Mumbai and Kosovo Film Festivals. Directed by Kim Mordaunt and produced by Sylvia Wilczynski, **The Rocket** was nominated for 12 Australian Academy of Cinema & Television Arts [AACTA] Awards including Best Film and Best Cinematography.

Andrew's first feature **BEAUTIFUL KATE**, directed by Rachel Ward and produced by Leah Churchill-Brown & Bryan Brown, was nominated for 10 AFI Awards, including Best Film and Best Cinematography, and officially selected at Toronto 2009. Andrew received the prestigious Milli Award from the ACS as the 2010 Australian Cinematographer of the Year for his work on the film, along with the 2009 IF award for Best Cinematography.

Andrew shot David Wenham's directing debut **COMMISSION** starring Hugo Weaving, along with Justin Kurzel's **BONER McPHARLIN'S MOLL**, both of which form part of the screen adaptation of Tim Winton's book of short stories **THE TURNING**. Premiering at the 2013 Melbourne International Film Festival and selected for the 2014 Berlin Film Festival, **THE TURNING** also received Best Feature Film nominations at the 2014 AACTA and 2013 Asia Pacific Screen Awards.

His documentary credits include the feature length, **A NORTHERN TOWN**, winner of the 2008 AFI Award for Best Cinematography in Documentary, and **NAKED ON THE INSIDE**, nominated for Best Documentary at the Film Critics Circle of Australia in 2007. Andrew's short films include the Cannes selected **MEATHEAD**, **NATURE'S WAY** and **BLUE TONGUE**. **MEATHEAD** directed by Sam Holst also won the 2012 Crystal Bear at Berlin. **NATURE'S WAY** directed by Jane Shearer won the 2006 New Zealand Screen Award for Best Short Film and Technical Contribution to a Short Film [for Andrew's cinematography]. **BLUE TONGUE**, directed by Justin Kurzel, won Best Australian Short at the 2005 Melbourne International Film Festival.

Andrew's television credits include the BAFTA nominated series **THE SLAP** for the ABC and Matchbox Pictures, it premiered at the 2011 Melbourne International Film Festival and won the 2012 AACTA Award. Also for Matchbox Pictures Andrew shot **UNDERGROUND** for Channel 10 it stars Rachel Griffiths, Anthony LaPaglia and Alex Williams as Julian Assange; and most recently for Matchbox Pictures, **THE DEVILS PLAYGROUND** which will air later this year on Foxtel. Andrew also shot the Rachel Perkins directed tele-feature **MABO** for Blackfella Films and the ABC, which premiered at the 2012 Sydney Film Festival.

Antony Partos

Composer

Antony Partos is one of Australia's most awarded film composers. His passion lies in creating innovative scores that morph acoustic with an eclectic mix of bespoke elements. His feature film credits include the Sundance Festival winning film, **ANIMAL KINGDOM** (starring Guy Pearce and Oscar nominee Jacki Weaver), **THE HOME SONG STORIES** (starring AFI winner Joan Chen), **DISGRACE** (starring Oscar nominee John Malkovich), **UNFINISHED SKY** and **ACCIDENTS HAPPEN** (starring Oscar Winner Geena Davis) and David's Michod's upcoming **THE ROVER** (starring Robert Patterson and Guy Pearce).

ANIMAL KINGDOM, **THE HOME SONG STORIES** and **UNFINISHED SKY** have all won Best Original Score at Australia's most coveted AFI awards.

His passion for creating evocative scores for TV drama include the highly awarded series **THE SLAP** (Winner APRA-AGSC 2012 Screen Music Awards Best Television Theme and Best Soundtrack Album), **MABO** (Winner APRA-AGSC 2012 Screen Music Award Best Music for a Mini-Series or Telemovie), **RAKE** (Winner 2013 APRA Screen Music Award and 2011 AGSC Award for Best Music for a Television Series) and the ABC production **REDFERN NOW** Series 1 and 2 (2014 AACTA Award for Best Original Music Score in Television and 2013 APRA Screen Award for Best Original Song Composed for Screen).

His most recent projects include Channel Nine's hit TV drama series **LOVE CHILD**.

Marlene Cummins

Biography



Born in the southwest town of Cunnamulla, Marlene's traditional people on her Father's side are Guguyelandji, and Woppaburra on her Mother's side. Growing up amidst the Aboriginal Protection Act of the 1950s, Marlene was raised with a very political 'grassroots' upbringing.

By the time she met the leader of the Black Panther Party, Marlene, still a teenager already bore the scars of discrimination and institutionalised racism. Drawn to the party's potent mix of militant, sexy black power, Marlene became a member of the first and only Australian Black Panther Party. However, as an Aboriginal woman, Marlene continued to endure hardship, discrimination and abuse, even from within her own community.

Marlene has maintained an outspoken stance on political issues committed against Aboriginal people but she prefers to maintain this struggle through her artistic expression in music and art.

Marlene Cummins is Australia's foremost Indigenous female blues writer and performer. Marlene knows the blues from an Aboriginal woman's perspective in this country and her story is one of vulnerability, strength and survival.

Marlene refined her skills as a blues saxophonist and songwriter at the Berklee College of Music in Boston in the mid-90s. She continues to busk a few times a week as she finds this helps her to maintain and develop her feel as a musician.

In addition to her musical talent, Marlene has been regular broadcaster on Koori Radio for years with her renowned blues show, 'Marloo's Blues', Marlene won Broadcaster of the Year at the Deadly Awards in 2009.

Now Marlene is preparing to release her first full-length album, **Koori Woman Blues** through GoSet Music in June 2014 to coincide with the premiere of her film **BLACK PANTHER WOMAN**.

CREDITS

Card 1

Appearing in the film

MARLENE CUMMINS
KATHLEEN CLEAVER
SAM WATSON
LIONEL FOGARTY
LYNELDA TIPPO
ZAINAB ABBAS

Card 2

Special thanks to

Marlene Cummins Sam Watson Dennis Walker Kathleen Cleaver
Lorda Omeissah Erica Glynn Jenny Munro Zainab Abbas
Murray Cook Peggy-Sue Cummins Darren Dale Miranda Dear
Alana Doolan Terry Farr Lionel Fogarty Jacob Hickey Manthia Diawara
Bronwyn Penrith Phyllis Simpson Peter Read Lynelda Tippo

Card 3

Directed by
RACHEL PERKINS

Produced by RACHEL PERKINS
Associate Producer CAITLIN MURPHY

Card 4

Director of Photography KIM BATTERHAM ACS
Director of Photography (US Shoot) ANDREW COMMIS ACS

Editor ROCHELLE OSHLACK

Composer ANTONY PARTOS

Card 5

Camera Assistants CORNEL OZIES
ALBERTO MOJICA (US Shoot)
CHARLIE WHITTAKER
JOSH FLAVELL
TYSON PERKINS
SAMUEL VINES

Sound Recordists DAVID TRANTER
RICHARD TEAGUE
LEO SULLIVAN
RICHARD BOXHALL
PAUL FINLAY

Card 6

Production Supervisor HELEN LOVELOCK
 Production Managers FOTINI MANIKAKIS and CAITLIN MURPHY

Post Production Supervisors CAITLIN MURPHY and JANE MAGUIRE
 Assistant Editors BERNADETTE MURRAY
 BONNIE FAULKNER
 DAVID SHARPE

Archival Researcher NAOMI HALL

Stills Concept & Photographer ALINA GOZIN'A
 Stills Grading HOUSE OF RETOUCHING and ONE DOG PRODUCTIONS
 Models LILLE MADDEN and MEDIKA THORPE
 Additional Stills MARK ROGERS and CORNEL OZIES

Card 7

Supervising Sound Editor WES CHEW
 Sound Mixer LUKE MYNOTT
 Sound Editor RYAN MILLARD
 Sonar Sound Producer LAURA MURDOCH
 Sonar Executive Producer MIRANDA CULLEY
 Music Recorded and Produced at SONAR MUSIC

Colourist DWAIN HYDE
 Post Production Producer STEWART DEAN
 Post Production Facility DDP STUDIOS SYDNEY

Card 8

Blackfella Films Legals RAENA LEA-SHANNON
 Insurance MOONEYS INSURANCE BROKERS
 Film Stock KODAK
 Camera & Lighting Equipment LEMAC FILM AND DIGITAL
 PCE ATLANTA and HAND HELD FILMS NY (US Shoot)
 Laboratory DELUXE SYDNEY & NEW YORK
 Transcription THE LAST DRAFT
 Post Production Script REEZY MILLER SCRIPT SERVICES

Card 9

“The Blues It Knows Your Name”
 Written By Murray Cook
 Performed By Marlene Cummins
 Produced By Richard Fields
 Taken from the album recording Koori Woman Blues
 © Goset Music 2009

“Brisbane Blacks”
 Written By Dennis Conlon
 Performed By Mop & The Drop Outs

“She Cried”
 Written and Performed by Frank Yamma
 Taken from the album recording Countryman
 © Wantok Musik Foundation 2010

Card 10

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE AND STILLs SUPPLIED COURTESY OF

Howard Bingham Marlene Cummins Peggy-Sue Cummins
Terry Farr Stephen Shames Associated Press
Australian Broadcasting Corporation
Buyout Footage National Archives Of Australia
National Film And Sound Archive Newspix
Ningla A-Na By Alessandro Cavadini Courtesy Of Smart St Films
State Library Of Queensland

Card 11

	For Blackfella Films
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Financial Controller/Production Accountant	LEAH HALL
Office Managers	LISA KITCHING
	HAYLEY JOHNSON

	For SBS
SBS Commissioning Editor	JOHN GODFREY
SBS Legals	LYN KEMMIS

	For Screen Australia
Investment Development Manage	MARY-ELLEN MULLANE

Card 12

THANKS TO

Faye Guinsburg Kevin Kropinyeri Kathy Lothian Victoria Kasunic Haydn Keenan
Sue Milliken Alec Morgan Martin Kenner Michele Blakeney
David Page Rose Page Lily Shearer Sonny Dallas Sue Smith Tom Zubrycki
Foundation House Gadigal Information Service Aboriginal Corporation

Card 13

Blackfella Films acknowledges the support of
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Card 14



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Card 15



Card 16

A National Documentary Program



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