

# HAIRTALES PRESS KIT



## DOCUMENTARY

Duration: **61 minutes (& 55min TV version)**

Directors: **Scott Otto Anderson & Cath Moore**

Writer: **Cath Moore**

Producer: **Oliver Lawrance**

Produced with the assistance of:



# HAIRTALES

## ONE LINER

You can comb over secrets for only so long...

## LOGLINE

12 characters. 12 stories unique as hair itself.

*Hairtales* is a film that slowly untangles the unexpected; tales of murder, a mysteriously white father, the 'lie of the hot comb', and secret personal truths that only hair can reveal.

## ONE PARAGRAPH SYNOPSIS

Like fingerprints, hair is a unique signifier of identity and personal history. *Hairtales* is a portrait of 12 diverse characters whose strange and at times startling connections to hair reveal long-held secrets and life-changing experiences. However, this film is as irreverent as it is intense. From mysteries of true paternity to brushes with a serial killer. From a prized corset made entirely out of dreadlocks to a hair-growth specialist convinced that bald men are accident prone. *Hairtales* is a series of interconnected strands where tears & trauma, hope & hilarity are all tangled up into one celebration of the human experience.

## ONE PAGE SYNOPSIS

Perhaps you know these characters already. A hairdresser, a teenager with an afro, a cancer survivor. But you've never heard stories like these before. Mysterious tales unravel themselves slowly in this irreverent yet intimate, strange and revealing portrait of 12 individuals whose personal and professional lives have been changed forever through hair.

It is a film full of unlikely stories. 18-year-old Gaby looks black but has two white parents. Was her (now deceased) father really a French Ambassador? Is her dark skin and afro just "one of those strange twists of random fate" or is a family secret still to be revealed?

Mim used to cut people's hair in their homes until she found out one of her clients was a serial killer. "...he always wanted a different look.... his mood would change very quickly if he didn't get what he wanted." How has such intimate physical contact with a killer changed Mim and her connection to hair?

Gilly grew up on a farm and has put her knowledge of crutching sheep into her business; she's a bikini waxer whose main clientele is heterosexual men. Ow. Margaret, a myopic hair artist, shows off a corset made out of dreadlocks and a hair death mask made in memory of her brother.

Lance, an ex-gothic Mortician believes a dead person's dignity can be maintained with beautifully styled hair. Esther, a Canadian hair academic explores the racial politics embedded within African-American hair and the contentious yet desirable white aesthetic. "I have the privilege, the invisibility of whiteness... I melt in. I'm not betraying anything because it's not there."

*Hairtales* is an anecdotal mix of eclectic memories, dreams lost, and inner selves found. Alive and dead, functional and ornamental, the duality of hair makes it a fascinating accessory, tool for expression, and connection to history, culture and fantasy.

This is a film that challenges the viewer to rethink their assumptions about hair and what it can tell us about who we are, have been and would like to become. More than anything, this is a film which celebrates both the diversity and commonality of human experience.

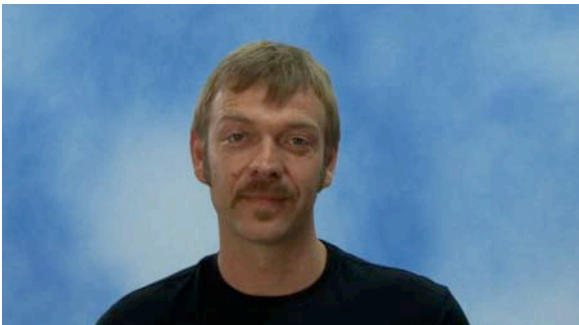
**Hair. Underestimate at your peril.**

## CHARACTERS



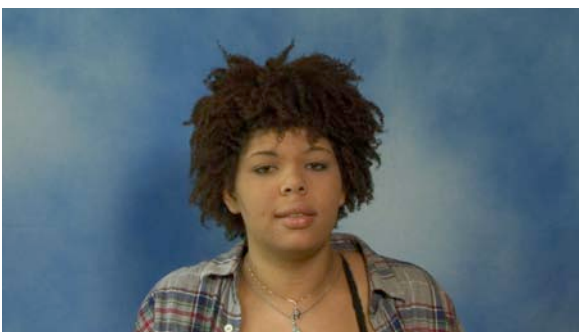
### **Mim**

Mim had her own mobile hairdressing business for many years in Melbourne, servicing mostly elderly clients in their own home. Her life changed forever when the police called and said one of her clients, a middle-aged man, was suspected of killing up to 6 women. Mim had been in and out of his house for the past two years, but believes her saving grace was a regular phone call from her sister. She recalls him saying 'someone always knows where you are, don't they.' Since testifying at one of his trials, Mim is too traumatised to work as a hairdresser. Her client is in jail and she is in counselling.



### **Lance**

When the girl Lance was in love with at high school told him she wanted to be an embalmer, his path in life was set. Lance has been a Mortician for the past 18 years, and loves the creative freedom his clients allow for. 'Height' is an important factor when styling 'a decease'. His most used product is hair spray and favoured tool, the curling wand.



### **Gaby**

Gaby is a teenager whose afro and dark skin suggest an African heritage. But as she reveals, both her parents are white, leaving her to wonder if her Father, who

died when she was 3 years old, really was the French Diplomat her mother says he was. Does she really know the truth about her past at all?



### **Esther**

28-year-old Esther Berry is a Canadian/Australian academic who explains the horrific nature of hair and its 'zombie-like' status, both alive & dead. Esther discusses hair as the constant wardrobe that makes us ever locatable and reflects on personal experiences of dealing with her matte-haired hippy Mother's hair loss through cancer.



### **Yiota**

After having Cancer three times, Yiota's hair has grown back 10 times. She recalls how having no hair made her rethink who she was and what she might become. Yiota also recounts her theory on why aliens tell us something about the purpose of human hair.



### **Gilly**

A professional waxer, hair for Gilly has strong associations with growing up on a farm with animals. One of her first memories is seeing her mother's pubic hair, and excitedly telling her sisters that "Mum's got chook feathers... down there." Ripping hair off men's pubic regions also brings back fond memories of life on the land. "It's just like crutching sheep."

**Daniel**

A true self believer, Daniel is fast becoming an iconic hairdresser in Sydney for his uncompromising 'brand', based on the notion that hair is all about sexual ferocity and power. He offers two different hair styles; the 'get Eff'd', or the 'Eff-off'. Having been bald since 19, Daniel has his motto tattooed on his neck: Direction, Passion, Aggression.

**Margaret**

Margaret is a captivating eccentric, who has been keeping her cut hair for the past 10 years. Hair for Margaret is a creative medium, she has made a corset out of the hair of close friends and her own dreadlocks, and a hair death mask in memory of her deceased brother.

**Jane**

In her 7<sup>th</sup> decade, Jane still has a youthful exuberance that suggests that you're only as old as you feel. Jane cuts straight to the chase, dispensing styling advice for women in their 'senior' years; while the body starts to sag, hair should fight gravity by remaining 'up and back'. Going white has been a liberating experience for Jane, and she intends to continue growing old as disgracefully as possible.



**Sam**

A 71 year old 'Jew from Calcutta', Sam is a hair regrowth specialist, who claims to have saved hundreds of people from suicide by restoring hair to their heads and love in their hearts. A bald man himself, he believes men without hair are accident prone and selfish.



**Suzy**

Suzy has a mane of untameable frizzy hair. It has always been a conflict for Suzy; something which proudly represents her Egyptian heritage, but that drives her wild with frustration. She hates her hair being a signifier for who she is and never wears it out in public.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

The thought of sourcing characters was a tad daunting when we began the research process. It was conceivable that every single person on the face of the planet might have something interesting to say simply by virtue of having hair, so where and how to start?

We placed ads in print and digital media and gave copious radio interviews asking for people to write to us with their memorable stories of hair. Originally, our demographic was targeted at a youth market, and we received many emails from teenagers talking about their rites of passage with hair being ripped, bleached, cut, shaved in multiple fashions, all of which left tears or cries of joy.

The response was overwhelming, and it seemed that for many, talking about their experiences with hair was quite cathartic. More so, it revealed something about the transformative power hair has. The stories we received reflected the life changes people had gone or were still going through, recorded and reflected through hairstyles and cuts, or loss of hair altogether.

It also reflected memories of relationships. The clichés are true, people told of having broken up with a partner and rushing out to get a haircut. Or being uncomfortable with their body shape, and finding solace in a new hair do.

We must have communicated with around 100 people, and narrowed the field down to 25 who we interviewed over a 3 week period. It ended up being a confessional process, at times painful to listen to, other moments proved hugely entertaining and full of giggles from crew and cast alike.

In terms of style, this film is a not so inconspicuous homage to the great Errol Morris whose use of metaphorical imagery and captivating, unique character portraits has inspired and moved us deeply. His ability to capture a sense of universality through his characters was something we were interested in exploring in the film. Fortunately we found many underlying truths about life that our characters told us, and that informed one another's stories. The battle for self acceptance, notions of mortality and self expression most prevalent.

We decided to use a plant image system to help represent the character's experiences. The growth, maintenance, structure and texture of plants had many connotations with our own head and body hair, follicle gardens, lawns, deserts, jungles to groom and tend to.



## **DIRECTORS' STATEMENT**

**Cath Moore**

My mother has straight blond hair and blue eyes. My (absent) father has an afro hair and dark skin. Growing up with my mother, I coveted her hair which could be brushed and styled with ease. I used to hate my hair because it inevitably tied me to a black Father and heritage that I knew little about, And what was dark skin and fuzzy hair supposed to make you do, feel, be? Although now as an adult I am more comfortable with the hair and skin I'm in, the fascination with hair persists.

Walking through Paris years ago, I was fascinated by the African hair salons, where another world seemed to exist, one that through my own heritage I may have been connected to, but is still very much unknown to me. The concept of hair as a porthole to family, value systems, political movements, cultural histories is endlessly intriguing.

My hair has always been such a signifier, one imposed by others rather than an attribute I use to reflect my own sense of self. But it made me think about where I came from and where I was heading. I realised that the same must be true for many people, and what an incredible way of looking at oneself, hair might allow for.

I had my hair straightened for the first time in my life during the making of the film; finally I could run my fingers through it. Similarly, I wore a number of wigs worth well over \$1000 a piece. It was intoxicatingly different, but ultimately not me.

And so while hair allows for voyeuristic explorations of identity, it is also a reminder of the authentic self; haircuts are often happy, sad, troubled or joyous expressions of how we feel about ourselves right now and who we would like to become in the future. This film has also shown me how hair for many is a marker of time, recording and reminding us of past lives; from a harmless dye job to a fatal poisoning, hair records it all!

One of the characters said that she was still waiting for her hair to 'be something.' India Arie's great song '*I am not my hair*' speaks volumes about the expectations we invest in our own and others' hair.

Collectively, our characters reveal a lot about who we have all been at some stage. And I am so grateful to them all for having the courage to share what has often been the most traumatic or challenging experiences of their life. Revealing their personal transformations and reflections on how hair has impacted on their sense of self was not always easy, but allows for a fascinating insight into the significance of hair. I continue to walk past people in the street and wonder, 'what's your hair tale?'

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

**Scott Otto Anderson**

When I was still in Kindergarten, I returned home early one day to an empty house. For some reason still unknown to myself, I picked up a pair of scissors and took them to my hair, wondering what they might do. One 'snip' and like magic there it was, a child's handful of hair on the linoleum and a massive hole in my fringe. I was surprised that hair could be so strong and yet so delicate, and that the sudden, huge, change in my personal appearance could elicit such a response of upset from my parents obviously I looked quite the freak— crooked teeth and now crooked hair too —what were they to do with me?

The duality and contradiction of hair has become so apparent through the making of this film. Delicate yet strong, functional and ornamental, uncontrollable and sensuous, alive and at the same time dead, the characters' stories demonstrate the complexity that lies within such subject matter. In speaking about hair from a forensic analysis point of view, one interviewee said that it was important because "**hair is ubiquitous.**" *Everybody* has a hair story, primarily because it is integrally linked to change and transformation. It documents personal history like rings in a tree.

Being somewhat of an awkward social being I always found going to the hairdresser's a daunting expedition. For the past thirteen years I've not returned to a salon. When researching for this film and returning to the salon, a rush of memories came flooding back. The guilty sensuous pleasure of another's fingers in your hair; a physical intimacy that very few professions are permitted. Similarly, there is the desire to reveal all. Unable to move or escape, and under scissor-point, one often finds yourself telling a complete stranger personal information even your closest friends might not know.

We took this idea and procured an old barber's chair to sit the interviewees in, hoping to elicit the same haemorrhaging of personal information — the hair salon as cathartic confessional booth where hair might be explored as a public placard for genetic history, or a marker for self definition.

In the project's conception, Cath and I began talking about hair's multifarious nature, breaking it into various categories of sexuality, history, mortality, politics and culture. Not surprisingly, we lost focus and decided to find the heart of the film through character, not concept. We wanted to find stories that people could connect to but were also very distinct, and ended up with narratives that had very unique entry points like death, academia, and racial politics. These in fact brought us back to the subjects we had originally been keen to explore.

Since starting on this project I have discovered I suffer from Trichotillomania, a condition where one has an irresistible urge to pull out hairs. Generally this results in noticeable hair loss, and in my case begins to explain the severe shape of my beard and moustache (“No, I didn’t shave it like that; I unconsciously epilated it over a matter of weeks”). Thankfully for me it (the beard) is reasonably symmetrical and as a stress-related problem, is likely to ease off on completion of this documentary.



## CREW BIOGRAPHIES

### **Cath Moore**

Cath graduated with an MA in Scriptwriting from the Australian Film, Television and Radio School in 2002 where she received the Best Documentary award for her film 'The Green Monster.' She also graduated with the Southern Star, Scriptwriting and Best Overall Body of work awards. Cath has lectured in Scriptwriting and has written for Kid's TV. She has had 6 short film scripts produced. She won an AFI award in 2002 for Best Short Screenplay and also won Best Student screenplay at the St Kilda Film Festival of the same year. She won the Adelaide Film Festival Insite screenplay competition in 2005. That year Cath directed and co-wrote a half hour documentary for SBS TV *Hearing James*. Her latest script *Swing* won the Best Short Film award at both the 2007 St Kilda Film Festival and Adelaide Film Festival and was nominated for Best Short Film at the 2007 AFI awards. She is currently working on a number of feature film projects.

### **Scott Otto Anderson**

Scott graduated from The College of Fine Arts, UNSW in 1998 where he has since returned to teach Digital Video and Filmmaking. His work spans drama, documentary, music video, art and theatre. At 23 Scott was directing his first national television show, *Alchemy*, a cult dance and electronic music show on SBS TV. He went on to direct music videos and has received numerous awards including a Cannes Lion, ATOM Awards, D&AD finalist and the Green Room Award for his video work on the Sydney Opera House project *Honour Bound*.. Scott has been listed on many directors-to-watch lists including Shots (US), Boards Magazine (US) and The Reel (UK). He has worked extensively overseas, mainly directing music videos with his directing collective *Family* - [www.workbyfamily.com](http://www.workbyfamily.com) . He recently won the 2008 MTV One80 award and is currently in pre-production as director of the resulting one-hour drama *Dream Life*.

**Oliver Lawrance**

Oliver produced & photographed the short film 'Liu Awaiting Spring' in 1999. It won an Award at the Berlin International Film Festival and received 2 AFI nominations, but more importantly secured him a place at the Australian Film Television & Radio School (AFTRS). On graduation he received the Best Student Cinematographer Award from the Australian Cinematographer's Society. Since then he's worked on numerous TV commercials and music videos, yet mixes this with documentaries and drama films. In 2003 he won the Best Cinematographer Award at the St Kilda International Film Festival, ACS Gold awards in 2004 & 2005 for several music videos and commercials, and in 2006 he was awarded the Kodak Gong for best young cinematographer.

**Andrew Soo**

After completing his BA in Mass Communications, Andrew spent several years working as an editor in film, television, and advertising. With a Berlin Film Festival Teddy Award, and two Australian Film Institute (AFI) nominations under his belt for his short film, "Liu Awaiting Spring" (1998), Andrew then studied drama editing at the Australian Film, Television & Radio School (AFTRS). On completion, he spent 3 years editing at The Tait Gallery in Sydney. Andrew is now a freelance editor, and has worked on numerous award-winning short films, television commercials, and music videos. He recently edited "The Boot Cake" (2008), a feature film documentary about Charlie Chaplin impersonators by Kathryn Millard.

[www.hairtales.com.au](http://www.hairtales.com.au)

**Contact:**

Oliver Lawrance – Producer

+61 412 265 078

[photoplayfilms@gmail.com](mailto:photoplayfilms@gmail.com)

[www.photoplayfilms.com.au](http://www.photoplayfilms.com.au)