



## **X-Press Magazine: July 2 2009**

Music and its part in film is explored often in this year's Revelation Perth International Film Festival. BOB GORDON reports on two of this week's highlights.

### **THREE HAMS IN A CAN Hot Tokyo Nights**

Strange music in a strange land, could be the tagline for *Three Hams In A Can*.

It follows WA avant-garde musicians Chris Cobilis, Stina Thomas and Predrag 'Pex' Delibasich on their visit to Tokyo in August, 2008, to perform several shows. Director Kenta McGrath originally hails from that city, so while at first glimpse the film may appear to be a 'rock doco', it's much more about simply being there. Initially agreeing to shoot a tour diary for the Heartless Robot label, McGrath decided that more was warranted.

"I wanted the subjects to be people first, musicians second, and I wanted to look at the simple, tiny everyday things that we see, hear and do on holidays or at home, but which we rarely see in films or elsewhere," McGrath says. "It was also crucial that viewers who don't know these musicians, or like their music, could still engage with the film."

The three protagonists, meanwhile, were not aware of any themes, simply that they were being followed and filmed. And there is a *lot* of following, as they very silently walk around in Tokyo humidity.

"I chose to include so much walking because I felt it was more faithful to the mood and reality of the tour; was consistent with the rest of the film which focused on these very mundane, 'in-between' moments; and also allows you to really experience the atmosphere of the places they visit," McGrath explains.

"I love silence in films, and I think we can understand people in a very different, intimate way when we watch them walk, twitch, cough and exist, rather than constantly jabbering on about something for the sake of the camera. I think them being not too chatty also has a lot to do with the environment we were in – it was stinking hot and exhausting 24/7, and I was filming them. As the film progresses they definitely start to open up more, which is normal."

A visit to Pex's in-laws seemingly begins as an awkward meeting of disparate cultures/languages, but Japanese hospitality and a quirky family dog turn the scene into the most sociable, laugh-out-loud moment of the piece.



“It’s my favourite sequence from the film,” McGrath says. “It was a ridiculously humid, uncomfortable day and the initial interactions between the two parties were indeed a bit awkward.”

“The family dog then became the icebreaker – it drew everybody together. People may speak and behave differently around the world but a dog is a dog anywhere. By the end of the day, after the incredible hospitality and the dog being everywhere all at once, everyone was relaxed, happy, and was able to communicate beautifully despite the language barrier. I think it’s the first time in the film where everybody genuinely opens up.”

Of course music is why the trio are in Tokyo in the first place and given the out-of-the-box nature of it McGrath found the potential for (mixed) soundtrack moods enthralling and complex.

“I knew from the outset that I wanted to use Chris, Stina and Pex’s music in the film, firstly because I love it, and because between them there’s such a great range of moods and textures covered. Their music is so filmic to begin with; I was spoilt for choice.

“Their music helped me to structure the film and I’d go so far as to say it determined what kind of film it was going to be.”

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