

SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES



# MACBETH

FROM THE ACCLAIMED DIRECTOR OF "ROMPER STOMPER"

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MACBETH will open in the UK on July 13 2007

For images please check [www.revolvergroup.com/press](http://www.revolvergroup.com/press)

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## MACBETH

### BRIEF SYNOPSIS

Macbeth, a loyal henchman to his crime boss, Duncan, is told by teenage witches that he will one day assume great power. Driven by their prophecy, he plots with his wife to kill Duncan, and takes the leadership of the gang for himself. Maintaining his power will require more murders and violence, finally driving his surviving enemies to unite and destroy him.

### SYNOPSIS

Melbourne, present day.

The story begins when Macbeth (Sam Worthington), a loyal henchman, is rewarded with gifts from his crime boss Duncan (Gary Sweet) for serving him faithfully and performing bravely in a vicious gangland rip-off.

But these gifts are nothing compared to what Duncan lavishes on his son Malcolm (Matt Doran). Macbeth wonders why he bothers to stick his neck out when Malcolm does nothing at all.

Macbeth is then visited by some extraordinary young witches, dabblers in the occult arts, who indicate that he shall be the new crime 'king'. Banquo (Steve Bastoni) won't be of the same standing, but he will father a 'king'.

Macbeth is intrigued, but when Lady Macbeth (Victoria Hill) drops the hint that they might kill Duncan and take over the gang for themselves, he realises he may simply be fulfilling his destiny.

Duncan is killed in Macbeth's own home, with Lady Macbeth providing the drugs to silence the bodyguards and Macbeth, reluctantly, carrying out the murder.

Suspicion for the murder falls on Malcolm and he has to leave town. Macbeth seizes power and becomes ruler of the gang. But still, he knows there may be rivals. The madness that drove Macbeth to kill Duncan now compels him to dispose of Banquo, followed by Macduff (Lachy Hume), or at least his young family, when Macduff is not to be found.

Some of the gang members begin to have their doubts about Macbeth's regime. Macbeth's wife is particularly affected by the brutal killing of Macduff's family; after all, she's lost a child of her own. Perhaps she isn't as ruthless as she thought; perhaps Macbeth is more ruthless than he thought?

Meanwhile, Malcolm returns and joins forces with Macduff and war is waged.

While Macbeth waits for the blow to come, his wife commits suicide, leaving him and the rump of his men to take on his enemies who storm his country house, using all the power they can procure, including a corrupt police force. Macbeth fights like a man possessed, becoming bolder as the situation worsens. He is a mighty warrior. But will it be enough?

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## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

**Geoffrey Wright has worked as a writer and director in Australia and the United States.**

**His 1993 feature *Romper Stomper* became an international cult hit. The film was nominated for 9 Australian Film Institute Awards and made a star of young Australian actor Russell Crowe, who won the AFIA for Best Actor in a Lead Role.**

**Wright's other films include *Metal Skin*, *Cherry Falls* and now, *Macbeth*.**



"*Macbeth* was a dream project for me and I intended it to unfold as a kind of dream, an escape from the naturalism of most Australian films, a removal of the audience's attention from grunge or suburbia. The correlation to the Melbourne underworld is implicit, not literal, of course, since the screenplay remains an adaptation of Shakespeare's play. The themes of the story are timeless, murder breeds murder, blood will have blood. Once you start killing it's hard to stop, like a nuclear reaction, and that's pretty much what we've seen at the height of the Melbourne gangland wars.

Shakespeare's dialogue is maintained, though much edited and Australian accents of all colours have been allowed to roam across the play's text at will. *Macbeth* was always a sensational, highly visual story, and the entire endeavor is an experiment to see if cinema-goers will become immersed in an image-oriented version of what theatre-goers have been long drawn to."

**Geoffrey Wright**

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## THE CAST



### Sam Worthington - Macbeth

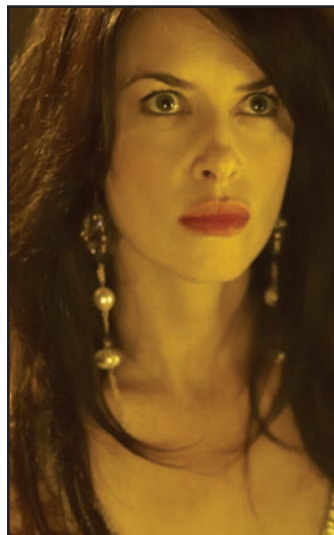
Sam Worthington is one of Australia's most successful young actors. He is currently in production with James Cameron's forthcoming feature *Avatar*, starring in the lead role opposite Sigourney Weaver. He also takes the lead in horror feature *Rogue*, directed by Greg McLean (*Wolf Creek*).

In 2004 Worthington starred in the critically acclaimed Australian feature *Somersault*, which was selected for Un Certain Regard at the 2004 Festival de Cannes. Industry recognition continued for Worthington's role, including the 2004 AFI Award for Best Actor in a Leading Role and FCCA and IF Award nominations.

Worthington made his feature debut in *Bootmen* in 1999 shortly after graduating from NIDA. The performance earned him a nomination at the 2000 AFI Awards and he soon found himself working with some of Australia's most respected actors, including David Wenham, Toni Collette and Sam Neill.

Other Australian film credits include *Dirty Deeds*, *Gettin' Square* and *Thunderstruck*. International credits include the 2000 Bruce Willis vehicle *Hart's War* and *The Great Raid*, with Benjamin Bratt and Joseph Fiennes.

In 2004 Worthington directed the comic short *Enzo*, which was selected as a Tropfest finalist. He also has a number of small screen credits, the most recent of which was the first series of the critically acclaimed Foxtel drama *Love My Way*.



### Victoria Hill - Lady Macbeth

Victoria Hill trained at Flinders Drama Centre in South Australia and graduated with a BA ARTS HONS in Performing Arts. After graduating, Hill set up a theatre company in South Australia, that later became the prestigious touring company – Brink Productions. During this time she performed in and was involved in the production of several touring productions including *The Europeans*, *Uncle Vanya* and *Ursula*.

Most recently Hill has appeared in *December Boys* alongside Daniel Radcliffe and Jack Thompson, *Hunt Angels* co-starring Ben Mendelsohn and *BoyTown* with Mick Molloy. As a writer her credits include a modern adaptation of *The Misanthrope* and *Famous By Friday* currently in development.

Other film credits include; *Siam Sunset*, *Drop Dead Gorgeous*, *Dead End*, and *Picture This* and *Modern Love*, both currently in post production.

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#### Lachy Hulme - Macduff

Lachy Hulme has appeared in over thirty feature films, television shows and stage productions both at home and abroad.

Beginning his career as an award-winning Theatresports performer, Hulme spent the following ten years starring in a diverse array of television and theatre projects such as *Stingers*, *Blue Heelers*, *The Rover*, *Bonfire Downside*, *99.9 Raw-Fm*, *Rinaldo 441*, and the troika penned by David Mamet of *All Men Are Whores: An Inquiry*, *Litko: A Dramatic Monologue* and the award-winning *Sexual Perversity in Chicago* (as "Bernie").

This work led to Hulme's starring role in Matthew George's award winning indie-smash *Four Jacks*, a pitch-black thriller that earned Hulme the Best Actor Award at the 2001 Melbourne Underground Film Festival and Festival Favourite Award at the 1999 Noosa Film Festival.

Other film credits include his hyperkinetic turn as "Sparks" in the Wachowski Brothers *The Matrix Revolutions* motion picture sequel, and Enter the Matrix interactive video game. More recently, Hulme appeared in the comedy feature *Boytown* opposite co-stars Mick Molloy and Glenn Robbins.



#### Steve Bastoni – Banquo

Steve Bastoni has a string of film and television credits including the Golden Globe nominated *On the Beach*.

His film credits include *The Lighthorsemen*, *Heartbreak Kid*, *15 Amore*, *He Died With A Felafel In His Hand*, *South Pacific*, *Matrix Reloaded*, *Crocodile Hunter*, *Man Thing*, *Fink*, and most recently *Suburban Mayhem*. His performance as Alfredo in *15 Amore* resulted in a Best Actor nomination at the 2000 AFI Awards as well as a Film Critics Circle nomination in the same category.



#### Gary Sweet - Duncan

Originally from Adelaide, South Australia, Gary Sweet attended Flinders University where he studied to become a teacher. After graduating, he won the role of "Magpie" Maddern in the television series *The Sullivans* in 1980, which he followed with numerous other TV credits.

In 2002 he landed the lead role of Steve in *Alexandra's Project*, Gary's second film with the acclaimed director, Rolf deHeer. His first, *The Tracker*, in which he played *The Fanatic*, was in competition at the 2002 Venice Film Festival.

Other film credits include; *Love in Ambush*; *What the Moon Saw*, *Indecent Obsession*, *The Dreaming*, *Fever*, and *The Lighthorsemen*.

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## ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

### Genesis

In 2004 producer Martin Fabinyi was in a meeting with Geoffrey Wright and Victoria Hill. Wright recalls, "We were sitting down and I suggested that we do a film version of 'Macbeth.' I had always been a big fan of Laurence Olivier's Richard III and Henry V and knew that Shakespeare could make for good filmmaking. Out of all of Shakespeare's plays I think that 'Macbeth' is the most sensational. 'The Tempest' is probably the most sophisticated, but 'Macbeth' is just down and dirty. There is very little sub-plotting in it. It just hits its main marks very quickly."

Fabinyi embraced the idea. The discussion led to setting this version of Macbeth in and around Melbourne's gangland wars. "Martin didn't need much convincing", says Wright, "he was on board and very supportive from the start". According to Fabinyi, both he and Michael Gudinski had wanted to do a project with Wright for some time. "The concept of a reworking of Shakespeare's play set in the Melbourne underworld was very appealing, given the furor that surrounded the assassinations in Melbourne at the time. The prospect of the film became a cause celebre and was picked up by the press around the world. It's always fun to have a controversial project", says Fabinyi.



Very quickly Wright realised that people wanted to make this film. "It put skates underneath us", he says. With Mushroom Pictures on board the project gathered momentum. They took the script to Film Victoria who pledged production investment. The script was then offered to Palace Films for local distribution and they were very keen to participate. Arclight Films, who had worked with Mushroom Pictures on *Wolf Creek*, took international rights and the Film Finance Corporation green-lit the film in January 2005. Shooting began in July 2005. "From the day Geoff and Victoria started working on the script to the day we started shooting was about twelve months. That's a very fast development period" Fabinyi remarks.

Wright believes the project moved a lot faster than if he had tried to do a true crime story. "If we had done another type of gangster film, it would have been very different. This way using William Shakespeare as a kind of battering ram we swept away all the resistance and the things just happened and it happened really fast." They had a story in a modern setting with themes that still resonate today. "The human need for love, or revenge, is always the same", says Wright.

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## Adapting the play to the screen

Wright and Hill worked together on the adaptation of the material. When they began, Wright knew he had to find a modern equivalent framework with some correlation to the play. "What I noticed early on about the story and today's underworld is that when you kill someone it never ends there. The friends or the family or the colleagues of the person who has been murdered will sooner or later seek revenge and it keeps going. So I very quickly noticed the connection between the dynamics of Melbourne's underworld and the dynamics of a feudal setting depicted in Shakespeare's play."

On adapting the material, Hill says "There are little or no changes to the original dialogue except that we have edited it, moved it around and reordered things for maximum impact in terms of drama and filmmaking. We did try and do away with anything that was expositional and that allowed us to keep fine-tuning the structure so that Macbeth's story was clearer and clearer."

Wright adds, "All the soliloquies and exchanges that people remember from high school are all there. There is not a single one that we dropped. All the famous - and the most potent ones are still there. If audiences love the play they are not going to feel short-changed by the film."

The single biggest change in the story was the fact that BANQUO (Steve Bastoni) is not present when the witches visit MACBETH (Sam Worthington) for the first time. Wright explains, "In our version we wanted it to be a more subjective experience for Macbeth, particularly, because he's just plied himself with drugs and alcohol. We wanted to leave open to interpretation whether the witches were supernatural or a figment of Macbeth's drug-addled brain."



On the reordering of text, Wright adds, "You will see the comings and goings of the lords – ANGUS (Rel Hunt), LENNOX (Jonny Pasvolsky) and ROSS (Damian Walshe-Howling) are much more designed. We've taken bits of text that belong to other peripheral characters and given that text to the lords, as a way of building them up and to show the shifting of their allegiances. Some stay loyal to Macbeth, others move away, others are not sure and are going to have to make a decision. Each member of the gang has an opinion, a point of view and a decision to make."

There are also changes in the modernising of the story into its new setting. "The murder of MACDUFF'S (Lachy Hulme) son as a plot point comes at exactly the same point in our story. Obviously in the play he is killed with (I imagine), a dagger or strangled or whatever. In our film it is done with a gun – as befitting the modern setting. But the

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idea of killing Macduff's son is the same. Likewise the death of Banquo takes place at the same point in the structure of the story. Of course in his case when he goes riding it is not on a horse, it is on a motorcycle. Modern replacements like that take place in the story, but the beats of the story are identical", says Wright.

The other big change made was with LADY MACBETH (Victoria Hill). Wright elaborates, "Victoria and I had a discussion about whether Lady Macbeth had any children or not. In the end we decided to set it up so there has been a death of her child and that she is still grieving the loss of this child. This makes Lady Macbeth a lot more vulnerable. She becomes more ruthless in the mind, but desperate as a person."



Wright says that working with Hill meant he could trust her to give a more female point of view overall, and more especially when it came to the character of Lady Macbeth. "I think Lady Macbeth has been short changed in a lot of productions. I think this is the most sympathetic version of that character that I've seen, and that is largely due to Victoria's input as a writer and an actress."

### On Casting the Film

On casting Sam Worthington, Wright says, "I honestly believe Sam is the only person who could have played Macbeth the way I wanted it played. He had the right level of intelligence and masculinity that the part required. He's tough and he's sexy and he knows how to fire a gun. For all of those reasons there never was anybody else in my mind for that part."

When Worthington was approached about the role he liked the risk factor. "What drew me to it is because it's a risk. Geoffrey pitched it to me as the most violent film ever made. He said it might be banned and I thought I want to be a part of that, where do I sign? I'd rather go into battle with a director who isn't afraid than someone who is going to go at it half heartedly."

Worthington also responded to the universality of the film's story, "I also look at this as a love story. Yes it's described as a tragedy - which it is, any man with a good soul going down is a tragedy. But essentially it's got a nice spin on it because all he wants is love from his wife. It's also a story about a gang of guys who bust up. Lady Macbeth is the fuel in the fire that forces best mates to lose trust in each other. They are all important themes, mate-ship, respect, honour among thieves."

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With the role of Macbeth cast, the next challenge was to cast the gang. According to Wright, the filmmakers "deliberately tried to make this film as beautiful or attractive in as many ways as possible and this included the casting". With Steve Bastoni, Lachy Hulme, Damian Walshe-Howling, Jonny Pasvlosky and Matt Doran, they assembled a great-looking group of male actors.



In the casting of Lady Macbeth, Wright looked no further than his co-writer, who was also an accomplished actress. "I'd worked with Victoria years ago on a television series and I always thought she was a very interesting actress. There was pressure from all sorts of sources outside our unit to cast either this big name actress, or that big name actress and I was very determined that Vic should hold onto the part, which of course she did. The results are an interpretation that is not only sympathetic and unusual, but at times lovely and uncanny and a bit enigmatic – all these great qualities that she brings to role. I really think that she is a fine actress, a vastly underrated one, up until this point."

Hill recalls, "Working on the adaptation I couldn't help seeing myself as the female protagonist. It always works out like that when I am writing. So it was almost like dangling a carrot in front of my nose. I was nervous, but I really wanted to play that role and I had the full support of Geoff and Martin."

On casting DUNCAN (Gary Sweet), the filmmakers tested a number of people but in the end Wright says "Gary was the man because there is a twinkle in Gary's eye – he doesn't let anything get too heavy. I wanted audiences to think that in different circumstances Duncan might have caught Lady Macbeth's eye – or she his – and it made the idea of her trapping him at the house and murdering him with the help of her husband more dynamic and credible."

For the three witches, played by Kate Bell, Miranda Nation and Chloe Armstrong, Wright wanted to do something where the witches had a different kind of mystery about them. This was when he came up with the idea of three school girls who each had this weird sexuality about them and that they were either supernatural entities or figments of Macbeth's drug-addled imagination.

Wright explains, "The answer as to which one it actually is remains open to interpretation. They really are aspects of Macbeth's own personality; the sensuousness; the lust for power and manipulation, are all part of his character but they might not even exist."

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## PRE-PRODUCTION

### Cast Preparation

Pre-production commenced in Melbourne in June with a two-week rehearsal period. The shooting schedule was set at 25 days. It was going to be a fast shoot with not a lot of takes and Wright wanted his cast prepared so they could hit the ground running.

Worthington remembers working with the language for the first time was difficult. "I found as long as you understand exactly what you are saying then you just allow the line to work for you. If I understood it I could make it stick. It has a real rhythm to it just like rap, there's a beat. I worked with Greg but decided to keep my Australian accent. I mean we were doing Geoff's 'Macbeth', not Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' and he was happy for me to keep it."

Lachy Hulme (Macduff) adds, "There's no denying that 99% of actors in this world are terrified of Shakespeare's dialogue. It's terrifying, the language can be really confronting for an actor to deal with in this day and age. We all worked really hard to make the most of the rehearsal time."

### The Visual Style of the Film

One of the films that Wright has referenced on the style of the film is *Fallen Angels*, directed by Wong Kar Wai, particularly for the camerawork. Will Gibson, the film's DOP, says, "It's a little bit documentary in style in the sense that its not quite composed in the usual way. Things are a little bit skewed, a bit weird, with very wide angles and a lot of it. It just gives the sense of a world not quite level and not quite straight. It also gives you a lot of freedom to move around and respond to what is going on with the actors. I am used to shooting a lot of documentary and doing hand held so I was very happy to shoot in this way."

### Cameras Roll

After a tight pre-production period, filming began on Monday July 4th, in the dead of Melbourne's winter. The first two weeks saw the cameras rolling in and around the city of Melbourne. Locations included; Bourke Street, Abbotsford, Toorak and the Melbourne Cemetery in Parkville.



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The first two nights were spent at the Docklands on some of the biggest action sequences in the film. During these scenes the actors didn't have a lot of dialogue. It was only later, as the shoot progressed and the actor's started delivering their lines that the challenge, to speak the Shakespearian language, presented itself. Wright recalls, "Every actor's first appearance was fraught with a bit of uncertainty and a little bit of fear. But that melted away very quickly and they soon realised it was just like any other shoot they had to make the dialogue believable and they had to put passion into it, or tenderness, or whatever other emotion is required. It was just like any other piece of writing you've got to couple it with the appropriate emotion to make it work. They all rose to the challenge."

Worthington, in particular, had a lot of dialogue to deliver and although he admits there was a lot of fear to start with, he faced the challenge head on. "With Shakespeare he gives you such a rich character that if you don't fully jump in and invest and go with it and be as raw and edgy as you try to be you're going to fall short", he says.

He also admits that Wright was very challenging and brought a lot out of him. "You don't want a director who's a pedestrian, you want a director who pushes you. I didn't want a safety net, as an actor I wanted to take a risk. It had to be bold and he allowed me to do that."

On working with Worthington, Wright says, "I'd work with him again in a heartbeat – I think he's great. And he takes risks. That is the most important quality an actor can have after talent is courage."

Back in the edit suite, the filmmakers were seeing the Shakespearean dialogue cut together for the first time. Wright believes "that some parts of the audience will always be able to pick up and go with Shakespearean dialogue very comfortably, and there are others, again, who will fall somewhere in the middle. But Shakespeare's plots and especially Macbeth are so clear that even if there is a moment where you don't actually understand what someone has said the situation very quickly informs you - the film creates clues for an audience to latch on to. Being such a straightforward plot, I'd be very surprised if anybody got lost it is such a clear story."

Fabinyi agrees, "I think that audiences will really respond to the Shakespearean language. The way that it is spoken in the movie is very much on a conversational level. There is no sort of arch use of the language. I think that is a wonderful way of using a classic text in a contemporary setting."

With the first two weeks of filming completed, the majority of cast and crew relocated to Mount Macedon, in rural Victoria, about an hour's drive from the city.



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One of the most spectacular locations in the film is 'Alton', the mansion that is Macbeth's house. "We were given a tip by the locals and were blown away when we first saw it. It's from around 1880 – 1890. They call it Venetian Gothic, but I think of it as a cross between Bram Stoker and a ginger bread house. It's got a whimsical quality to it and a kind of dark thing happening at the same time. It's that contradiction I find really unusual and that is why we came here," says Wright.

Despite the challenges they faced with night shoots, a fast schedule, and difficult weather the film finished on time. According to Wright this had a lot to do with their decision to film on HD. "Every time we got into a difficult situation we just punched our way through. In terms of time we just knocked over huge, complicated pieces of action in half an hour. Because of what Will could do with the operating, because of what the Hi Def was capable of and because, and perhaps even most importantly, there was no shooting ratio – in other words it was infinite. I think that was the biggest single thing that Hi Def gave us, that made it possible to do this film. I don't think I ever want to work with film again."

During filming there was no time for any long establishing shots to set up any of the scenes. "We just got in there and went for it" Gibson says. He adds that in preparing for the film he had a lot of plans of what he would do with lighting but then "Geoff would come in and completely change everything. But that is good in a way. There is something exciting about that as it forces you to do things you wouldn't normally do and that often is when the most creative discoveries are made, when you are forced to rethink a situation."

He explains that "although Geoff has a very clear plan in his head when he arrives, he likes to respond to the moment and see what comes up and then we mould the scene together."

Timing also put pressure on the actors. Wright says "the actors had to keep up with the camera and with the speed at which we were working and that brought about a difference in the way they delivered things. It brought a lot of adrenalin to the set. And that all contributed to a kind of synergy."

Hill recalls, "It was terrifying to think you were doing all these incredibly well known scenes in just two takes. That really frightened me. You have to have faith in the director and that he knows what he needs." Worthington agrees, "You certainly had to be on your toes."

Principal photography concluded on August 5th, on schedule. With filming behind him, Wright acknowledges that the low budget and tight schedule was an enormous challenge. He says "with one or two days less we couldn't have done it. We really operated on the edge of what was possible. Shooting a film in 25 days was always going to be the challenge. There is no way around that, it was always going to be a difficult thing to do but fortunately we had the right people to make it possible."