

S P E E D C I T Y

26-minute Documentary

Short Synopsis

Speed City is a picture of the city centre of Sydney told from the frenzied point-of-view of three bicycle couriers: the accident prone former BMX bike racing star “Crash Test” Danny, his mate Skater (an educated English lad with an attitude), and Kiri (one of only a handful of women couriers in the city). Like soldiers or cowboys, strength, camaraderie, danger, law-breaking, injury and confrontation have all become part of the job.

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Longer Synopsis

Speed City is a picture of the city centre of Sydney told from the frenzied point-of-view of three bicycle couriers: the accident-prone former BMX bike racing star “Crash Test” Danny, his mate Skater (an educated English lad with an attitude and a temper), and Kiri (one of only a handful of women couriers in the city).

In the wealthy hub of modern communication, the old-fashioned human-on-a-bicycle can provide one of the most valuable commodities for businesses operating in a city of gridlocked roads – Time! They transport billion dollar cheques that will be cancelled unless banked in 15 minutes, urgent building plans, medical specimens – for payment of around \$2.00 a job.

However, this small youth subculture has become one of the most hated groups in the city - the subject of police crackdowns, public outrage and media focus. People are frightened of them and they’re always in trouble.

Cheeky renegade “Crash Test” Danny is addicted to speed, adrenalin and danger and is constantly paying off fines for breaking the road laws. He enjoys the thrill of leading the police on a chase. However, the couriers’ reckless riding, law-breaking and accidents are not simply the outcome of their “urban cowboy” personas. We discover that their rates of pay have not gone up in ten years, meaning that they are desperate to do more deliveries, which means more risk-taking to earn a living. With no designated areas for them to ride in a car-dominated CBD, conflict is inevitable as they engage in the battle for space and hierarchy on

the roads.

Even the police admit that their constant crackdowns and fines aren't really working: "the couriers probably have to cheat more to make up for the money that they've had to pay in fines" says police Commander Donald Graham. As courier Skater says: "When the police are out in the city, some of the riders just put their heads down and go flat stick, because they can't afford to get caught."

Our central character Danny does finally get ahead, not through his fighting for better pay rates but through a payout of workers compensation for a series of accidents which have left his body held together by pins and staples. He buys himself a car (the very thing most cyclists are at war with) and, gloating with his new symbol of success, leaves town. But he gets into more trouble with his car.

Speed City presents the city from a fresh and exhilarating point-of-view. Using miniature camera lenses mounted on our characters' bikes and helmets we capture an unusually raw and intimate on-road experience – the thrill of the ride, the accidents and the confrontations. Like the couriers' lives, the film moves at lightning speed.

TRT: 26:00

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Directors' Statement

After living in Sydney's inner city for most of our working lives we wanted to make a film about little people in the Big City - in this case the simple human on a bicycle. The cycle courier, even in the 21st Century, is still the fastest way around a wealthy, technologically advanced, car dominated city.

We hope the documentary works on several levels. Ultimately we want it to be fun and entertaining for an audience (not excluding a youth audience which documentary so often does) and to make it visually exciting and innovative.

The "Urban Cowboy" nature of the characters and their frantic on-road experience were a good start for dramatic film making. Experimenting with "lipstick" cameras (miniature cameras) and mounts that we devised, attached to different parts of the riders' bikes and helmets, enabled us to get a great sense of intimacy with our characters who were constantly on the move. We hope that the frenetic style of story telling reflects the couriers' frenetic lives.

Whilst keeping the documentary fun and pacy, we have also tried to touch on more serious themes without letting the film become an advocacy piece. We wanted to capture some of the chaos and stress in our characters' work lives that are an extreme version of what the modern city deals out to all city dwellers: ie the physical and mental stress we all experience in just trying to have a place and a say in the modern commerce-driven city. Money, time and lack of space seem to inform a lot of our behaviour and decisions in this environment, and many of us feel a danger of becoming redundant to technology.

Following three characters in 26 minutes makes for a quite impressionistic film. But none the less we hope the city and our characters' conflicts are not just painted in black and white and that the audience is left with some feelings of the bigger picture - ie the modern business-driven city, both alluring and damaging, still has a corporate need for the simple old carrier on a bicycle. This gives a touch of hope for retaining some of the human elements in modern living.

Sylvia Wilczynski and Kim Mordaunt
Co-Directors / Co-Producers

S P E E D C I T Y

Crew list:

Produced &
Directed by Kim Mordaunt & Sylvia Wilczynski

Editor Richard Mordaunt

Cinematography Kim Mordaunt & Joel Peterson

Sound Chris Bollard & Brian Rapsey

Production
Management Kath Shelper & Sylvia Wilczynski

Sound Editor Mike Gissing

Music John Willstead

Additional Music *13th Floor* and *Better Get a Lawyer*: Performed by The Cruel Sea
Last Tuesday: Composed and Performed by John Carr

Graphics Brett Sullivan

Stills Photographer Brian Rapsey

Speed City was produced by Lemur Films in association with the Australian Film Commission, the New South Wales Film and Television Office and SBS Independent.

It had its premiere television broadcast on SBS-TV, Australia, in July 2002 where it got rave reviews and the pick of the day in Australia's number one newspaper.

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Filmmakers' Biographies

Co-Director/Producer Kim Mordaunt

Kim graduated from the Communications degree (Film and Video major) at the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia in 1992, Australia.

He started his career as a researcher and director's assistant on documentaries for Channel 4 and the BBC, UK.

In 1992 he completed a half-hour documentary *45 Years is Enough* for Bulgarian National Television, as producer and director. The film looks at life for a number of artists in Bulgaria before and after the Iron Curtain came down.

He has produced and directed two one-hour documentaries for SBS-TV, Australia. *Survival* (1996) is about the history of the Survival Day music concert, featuring performances by Australia's top Aboriginal performers. *Copyrites* (1998), co-directed with Aboriginal filmmaker Cathy Eatock, explores copyright infringement of Aboriginal art. *Copyrites* was screened at the Australian International Documentary Conference and on ABC Asia, as well as three times in 18 months on SBS-TV. It was funded by SBS Independent and the Film Finance Corporation.

In 2001 he co-directed/co-produced *Speed City*, a 26minute documentary that presents the centre of Sydney from the frenzied point-of-view of three bicycle couriers, which will screen on SBS-TV. *Speed City* won the Best Documentary prize at Australia's BASC Film Festival and has been selected for competition at the Roma Independent Film Festival in Rome, Italy.

Speed City was funded by the Australian Film Commission, NSW Film & TV Office and SBSI.

In 2002 he directed and co-wrote *Mongrels' Ghost*, a 15-minute 16mm thriller romance funded under the NSWFTO's Young Filmmakers Fund, and he has two feature films in development: *Flight from Mount Warning* and *Snap* (in association with the AFC).

Kim has had extensive experience as an actor, having trained at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. He also teaches directing at Metro Screen, one of Australia's leading production schools.

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Filmmakers' Biographies

Co-Director/Producer Sylvia Wilczynski

Sylvia has worked in the film and television industry for nine years, since graduating from the Communications degree (Film and Video major) at the University of Technology, Sydney, in 1992.

She has worked in a variety of roles on documentaries and dramas for ABC-TV and SBS-TV in Australia, and in London on projects for BBC and Channel 4.

In 2001 she co-produced/co-directed the 26-minute documentary *Speed City* with Kim Mordaunt, a 26 minute documentary that presents the CBD of Sydney from the frenzied point-of-view of three bicycle couriers. *Speed City* won the Best Documentary prize at Australia's BASC Film Festival and has been selected for competition at the Roma Independent Film Festival in Rome, Italy. It will also screen on Australian national SBS TV.

Speed City was funded by the Australian Film Commission, NSW Film & TV Office and SBS Independent.

In 2002 she produced and co-wrote a 15-minute 16mm thriller romance, *Mongrel's Ghost*, funded by the NSWFTO's Young Filmmakers Fund.

She also has a feature film, *Snap*, in development in association with the Australian Film Commission.

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Filmmakers' Filmographies

Co-Producer/Co-Director Kim Mordaunt

45 Years is Enough
1992

Documentary **26 minutes**

Screened on Bulgarian National Television

Survival
1996

Documentary **52 minutes**

Screened on SBS National Television, Australia

Copyrites
1998

Documentary **52 minutes**

Screened on SBS National Television, Australia
(3 screenings in 18 months)

Screened Australian International Documentary Conference, 1998
Screened ABC Asia

Speed City
2001

Documentary **26 minutes**

To be screened on SBS National Television, Australia
Selected for competition: Roma Independent Film Festival, Italy
Winner, Best Documentary, BASC Film Festival, Australia

Co-Producer/Co-Director Sylvia Wilczynski

Speed City
2001

Documentary **26 minutes**

To be screened on SBS National Television, Australia
Selected for competition: Roma Independent Film Festival, Italy
Winner, best Documentary: BASC Film Festival, Australia

Mongrel's Ghost
2001

Drama (16 mm) **15 minutes**

Snap
2002

Drama **56 minutes**

Co-writer & Director **Producer – Sylvia Wilczynski**
In development with the Australian Film Commission

S P E E D C I T Y

Technical details:

Master Format:	Digital Betacam
Other formats available:	Betacam SP and DV-Cam
Audio:	Dolby Stereo Surround Mix on Tracks 1 & 2
Duration:	26 minutes and 3 seconds
Textless Master:	Available on Digital Betacam with M & E Mix on Tracks 3 & 4
Classification:	M (for mature audiences)
Rights:	All music and images in <i>Speed City</i> have World All Media in Perpetuity clearance (except US Television at this stage).