

# Synopsis

*Speed City (2000)* will be a punchy picture of the city's business centre, told from the frenzied point-of-view of the bicycle courier. In the hub of modern communication, the old-fashioned "human on a bicycle" can provide the most valuable commodity for a city whose roads have become gridlocked by its own hunger for development and wealth - Time! They transport billion dollar checks that will be cancelled unless banked in 15 minutes, sperm to the sperm bank that'll die unless it gets there quickly, vital last-minute evidence to the courts - for around \$2.00 a job. However, this subculture of only 150 people has become one of the most reviled in the CBD, renowned for being dangerous and anarchistic; the subject of major council reports, police crackdowns, media focus and public outrage.

*Speed City* will explore the personal and work lives of 3 bicycle couriers who are veterans in the scene.

Our central character, renegade wild rider DANNY, aka Crash Test, is a fallen sports star who is addicted to speed and adrenalin. After 10 years of horrific on-the-job accidents, his body is held together by pins and staples, and we will follow the process of his court cases in which he is suing several courier companies for compensation. It is certain that he will receive a large payout, and we will witness the huge changes that will occur in his life. Will he become what he has always hated - a city young gun with money?

SKATER, a Manchester lad with a temper, has set up his own business after years of bad treatment by courier companies. Will he survive as a struggling small independent or will he be undercut by the larger companies? Skater is very much a part of a subculture that regard themselves as underdogs, and he takes on anyone who treats him as the bottom of the pile. Through his furious confrontations we will explore notions of alienation and hierarchy in the chaotic and competitive city spaces.

KIRI is a tough yet gentle Maori woman who is one of only 5 women in the very macho courier scene. Kiri is the antithesis of the aggressive stereotype of the bicycle courier. With the world focus on Sydney and the revival of the CBD as a tourist centre, the media has upped its bad coverage on cycle couriers. We see how this threatens Kiri's reputation and career, and how she deals with being part of such a hated group.

Do the couriers have cathartic reasons for seeking adrenalin, confrontation and danger? We will see the massive shifts in temperament that occur when they leave their personal lives and engage in the battle for space and respect on the road and within the business hierarchy.

It is not only a close friendship that brings these 3 riders together but also the effects of a huge on-going campaign by the City Council and Police to clean up the city and its image. They want the cycle couriers strictly controlled or even removed altogether. This will severely threaten our characters' meagre livelihoods. We will explore how it is easier to have strict law enforcement aimed at a relatively powerless small group than to address larger issues of town planning.

*Speed City* is about small flesh-and-blood people taking on the big city, where commerce, technology, the law and humanity are constantly at odds with each other. The couriers' lives encompass more extreme versions of the thrills and stresses experienced by most people in cities: the urgency of making a living and feelings of powerlessness and redundancy within bigger systems. Like soldiers or cowboys, camaraderie, strength, law-breaking, confrontation, ruthlessness and disaster have all become part of the job.

# Characters

## **“Crash Test” Danny Metcalfe**

A 28 year-old who has been a cycle courier all his working life (10 years). He is a boyish larrikin, a larger-than-life adventurous free spirit. He is a “legend” in the inner-city cycle couriership scene, renowned for his speed and dare-devil riding and survival of many horrendous accidents.

Danny is a high energy person with an addictive personality. He needs constant rushes and intense highs. He used to get these from BMX racing (he was once a national champion) and then from hard drugs - now, he gets adrenalin rushes from reckless riding on the job as a cycle courier in the city, and testing his extreme riding skills.

Danny is very charming and attractive in many ways - he can strike up a conversation with anyone, and likes to be the centre of attention. He has a constant stream of girlfriends who seem to be attracted to his good looks and cheeky cowboy persona. However, he is also unpredictable, and has a strong dislike for authority, and certainly has a dangerous streak.

What makes Danny so interesting is his volatile nature - he moves from being an aggressive confrontational drunken larrikin to a fun kid who loves people.

He lives a somewhat chaotic and gypsy-like existence. He shares a dilapidated terrace in Chippendale with a motley group of cycle couriers, but only spends a few nights a week there. He is constantly losing his keys and forgetting to pay his bills, with chaos close on his tail.

He is now involved in on-going court cases for compensation for work-related accidents which have left his body badly impaired.

## **Glenn Rosser (known as Skater)**

Late 30's, has been a cycle courier most of his working life - in New York, London (delivering packages to the Queen) and for the last seven years in Sydney. Lean and shark-like in appearance, with a long nose and piercing eyes. Speaks like rapid gunfire and has a philosophy and an opinion on everything. He is articulate, with a quick wit and dry sense of humour.

Skater is a fighter, and after years of low pay has set up his own business, Personal Touch Couriers, with himself as sole employee. He has set up a web-page for his company, does his own accounts, etc. Unlike most cycle couriers, who don't see themselves doing the job for more than a few more years, Skater thinks he will be a cycle courier till he is 55 or 60. It is his life.

He lives alone in a bachelor flat in Darlinghurst, with his bike elevated on a rack like a shrine at one end and a carefully tended indoor garden at the other.

Skater is an excellent rider and generally a courteous man, but he has a short temper and although he has had few accidents or injuries in his long career, every day on the job is peppered with verbal conflict. He takes on anyone who treats him with disdain - and he has been to court a few times on assault charges. He hates being looked down upon but in a way he also relishes this status as the

underdog. It's his identity and keeps fire in his belly. There are two distinct sides to Skater - to the outside world he is simply an aggressive courier with a severe chip on his shoulder about class and hierarchy, but when he is in his personal space, talking about his painful violent family background, he becomes vulnerable and reflective.

He is close friends with Danny, but the two men are very different. Where-as Danny is the party boy with endless girlfriends, Skater is quite the loner. He lives alone and has not revealed any evidence of romantic partners, past or present. Skater is organized with his own business, Danny is chaotic. Danny is quite happy to live on bread and butter whilst Skater is refined in his tastes and cuisine (everything is fresh and hand made).

## **Kiri Kotara**

A Maori woman in her mid-twenties - her name means "Skin" in Maori. She migrated to Australia from New Zealand eight years ago. She initially worked in a law library, but her craving for physical freedom soon led her to become a bicycle courier and she has been one for seven years.

With flowing black hair down to her muscular thighs, she rides powerfully through the city with great precision and gusto.

She is one of the longest serving female cycle couriers in Sydney, one of only about five women in an industry of approximately 150 couriers.

She is well-spoken, polite, calm and warm, and a very careful rider. Although, like all cycle couriers, she has near-misses on the road every day, she loves the freedom the job offers.

## Promo

The accompanying “PROMO” tape aims mainly to show the exciting visual potential of *Speed City* and to show that it is possible to capture our characters’ intimate experiences whilst on the road. It gives a taste of our characters and some of the issues in their lives. It is not a mini-version of our planned documentary. The themes, unfolding stories and details of their lives are described fully in the written TREATMENT - and these are yet to be shot! Time and resources will help realize the intended predominantly verite style, which is not reflected in the promo.

Due to lack of resources, the visual style of the promo is a bit repetitive, particularly in the lipstick camera footage of our characters on the road. We will alter the visual style when filming each of our three characters - see details in the “Style” section of the proposal. We will use 2 lipstick cameras at a time on the bikes, to capture both our characters’ faces and what they are seeing (for our promo, we could only afford to use one lipstick camera). We will have much more WIDE coverage of the city spaces and the other people in it, as the longer-form story unfolds.

# Treatment

*Note: Events depicted are only an indication of what will happen (based on our thorough observation of our characters during Development) as **Speed City** will be primarily a verite documentary. Also please note that when “voice-over” is mentioned in the treatment, this does not refer to narration, it refers to comments that the characters will make informally in active situations. There will be no narration in the film.*

We hover over an aerial view of Sydney: the harbour, the office blocks flashing with neons from international companies and cranes reaching out of the top of skyscrapers show a growing world-class city of wealth and beauty.

We move down into the canyons of the city where construction of roads and buildings is at an all-time high. This frenzy is most apparent in the CBD, where corporate activity is also accelerating and fierce competition means that things have to happen fast. The CBD throbs with the hunger for everything to be bigger, better, faster, more profitable, more technologically advanced.

We move past the windows of the Stock Exchange where share prices click over. Business-people check their watches and push through crowds to the next meeting, stumbling around roadworks.

An endless row of traffic crawls through a line of tower blocks. Faces of drivers and pedestrians trying to cross the roads are a mixture of desperation, rage, determination and defeat. In the distance, out of the banked up traffic, a tiny speck emerges through the brown haze of pollution, weaving its way to the front of the queue with military precision. It is a bicycle courier. The irony is clear - the quickest way to get an object around the centre of this modern city is by one of the simplest forms of manual transport - the push-bike.

We are suddenly seeing the courier’s point of view from the handle-bars. It’s fast, dangerous, crazy, raw. In different locations of the CBD and from unusual angles of a tiny “lipstick” camera mounted in various positions on the riders and their bikes, we meet our three characters. Our central character, “Crash Test” Danny, does a wheelie along a crowded footpath, loving the attention. He sings a song loudly: “Red light, yellow light, green light, go! Crazy little woman.....”. His walkie talkie crackles: “Crash Test Danny, got some building plans to pick up from Lend Lease, level 38, going to North Sydney. VIP, ASAP, you’ve got 20 minutes.” He grabs onto the back of a bus and catches a ride.

We see Skater just miss a pedestrian and scream some witty abuse. Kiri expertly dodges a truck and checks her watch on the state of her urgent delivery, her eyes darting around, sensing every movement around her.

We see close angles of flexing muscles, sweating skin - flesh-and-blood amidst the concrete and steel of the streets.

Throughout the film, we follow Danny, Skater and Kiri from the roads into the corridors of the business world as we follow the journeys of urgent packages from around the city, from beginning to end, giving us a dynamic and unusual insight into the city’s machinations. For example, every day Danny delivers packages for the massive construction corporation Lend Lease - urgent construction plans from architects to consultants in the plush Lend Lease offices to major building

sites in the CBD. This will be an interesting way to explore the changing face of the cityscape.

Kiri delivers an urgent sperm delivery from the sperm bank to the hospital, Skater takes false teeth hot from moulding to a patient in the dentist's chair and cheques for millions of dollars to the Stock Exchange that must be countersigned in fifteen minutes or they will be cancelled. Danny, curious about a package he is carrying, opens it in the toilet and discovers, for example, a diamond from a jeweller's worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. He tosses up the pros and cons of doing a runner which could set him up for life.

We see them interacting with the people they deliver from and to and get a sense of them as human links in the business chain.

CBD, 6 pm: city lights are turning on, commuters file onto buses and into train stations, cars bank up.

About 30 couriers have gathered at what has become known as "Courier Corner", in a blocked-off street in the high business end of town. It's a real "scene", a motley group of university dropouts, ex-professionals (a priest, an architect, a chef), athletes, travellers and jailbunnies, with names such as Trash, Cracker and Paddlepop. There is a sea of dreadlocks, tatoos, flash coloured lycra, makeshift rusty bikes and expensive professional racing cycles. There is a strong camaraderie between the diverse members of this group. Danny, Skater and Kiri are clearly the veterans of the scene, who command respect.

Danny stands on top of a bin with his shirt off, toasting the couriers with a beer: "Another day, another dollar, still alive!" He is the "leader of the pack", conducting the conversation. The couriers drunkenly compete for the most spectacular accident story - falling down manholes, being stabbed by a pedestrian. Danny gets hassled for crashing through a fruit cart, his tally of accidents is the biggest and most horrifying.

Talk moves to another favourite topic: wages. Discussion is heated. Danny bellows that his wage has gone down from over \$1,000 a week to about \$500 per week. He heckles the couriers who work for Crisis Couriers, whose managers started the recent "price war" between companies which meant that most couriers' wages fell, and the couriers are now more desperate to make more deliveries in less time in order to make a decent living. We also find out that many of the companies have taken on more riders as contractors, so that there are more riders competing for the same amount of work, and most couriers are only paid per delivery they make - around \$2.00. The anti-boss, anti-authoritarian nature of the couriers is clear, as is the irony that although the city is more prosperous than it's ever been, this group of workers is worse off.

Skater says that years of bad treatment by courier companies is why he has set up his own business - Personal Touch Couriers - so that he gets paid directly for each job that he does. He is sole employee. The other couriers hassle Skater about his new business flyer, which we see. It is very professionally laid out, stating that he "has been entrusted with the delivery of mail from the hand of HRM Queen Elizabeth II...and has signed official secrets act to HRM Queen Elizabeth II and has been recognized for his loyalty to duty in the form of a commendation for bravery". The couriers have been gradually banned from the pubs for rowdy behavior and getting into conflicts with office workers. They are constantly finding a new spot to drink before they are

moved on again. We will explore the reactions of other city workers to the couriers as they pass by this colourful scene. The couriers are objects of both admiration and disdain. Many female office workers hang around here to check out the sweaty muscular forms of the male couriers and flirt with them. Here we meet some of Danny's past and current love interests.

Early morning: We see the three couriers waking up in their homes. Danny crawls out of a bed with no sheets in a dilapidated inner city share terrace, surrounded by empty beer cans and dirty laundry, stolen road signs and crutches hanging from the ceiling. Dozens of BMX trophies compete for space on shelves with specimen jars containing old pieces of his cartilage and screws and staples that once held his joints together. He's like a little kid who doesn't want to get out of bed, his joints are stiff.

Skater folds up his futon in his tiny neat bachelor unit. He brews a gourmet coffee, waters his carefully tended window garden and checks his e-mail. He is calm and ordered. Kiri, with her thigh-length hair flowing, prepares a massive breakfast in her stylish kitchen in a large country-style share terrace and takes it into her huge garden.

We hear a little from each in voice-over about what attracted them to couriering.

Daytime: We see moments of Danny, Skater and Kiri running red lights, riding on the footpath, riding the wrong way down one-way streets, speeding, etc. The thrill is obvious, but another reason for it is simply that if they strictly obey the law they won't be able to make their deliveries on time and they won't get paid. The couriers are like the cowboys of the CBD - law-breaking is a daily necessity to get the job done.

We see Danny, one of the few "Bridge Hoppers", flying along the only dedicated cycle path in the CBD, which starts at one end of the Harbour Bridge and stops at the other end, at the top of 6 flights of stairs! At terrifying speed he swipes a pedestrian who shouldn't be on the cycle path and flies down the exit ramp. It's a rollercoaster ride. Danny tells us he has only made a few dollars and it is nearly lunch time - he is frantic, hassling his boss on his walkie talkie.

We see crowded streets where the definitions of what space is for whom are unclear: cars in bus lanes, pedestrians on the roads, trucks on the footpaths, couriers everywhere.

We see Skater, juggling a huge delivery of flowers on his bike, just miss a pedestrian who runs to cross the road out of a wall of road construction. Skater expresses his philosophy on the law:

If everyone stuck to the letter of the law this city would not move. There are three laws: the moral law, which is about whether something is morally right, which you shouldn't break; there's the physical law, which you can't break because of the laws of physics, and then there's the Law law, which is what the police try to enforce. No-one really cares about that one, except for insurance companies.

In the centre of a city that has exploded without adequate town planning, there simply aren't systems on the road that the cycle couriers can operate in, so they have to make their own rules and systems to some extent. Even Kiri admits that she frequently breaks the law. What's the solution to a city where people can only do the job they're expected to do by breaking the law? The systems that keep business and money flowing, traffic moving and people safe are constantly at

odds with each other.

We see police officers at Sydney Central Police Station watching the couriers on screens via some of the numerous surveillance cameras that have been installed in the CBD.

The police are planning a major crackdown on the couriers. These happen a couple of times a year, and seem to get bigger each time. Complaints from the public about the couriers' dangerous riding are escalating, as are the accidents in which the couriers are involved. In our PROMO video, we have a simple research interview with a police commander who talks about why the couriers are a problem. However, we will actively follow the police's crackdown campaigns - from the planning at the station to the chases and bookings.

Through the police officers making plans at the station, pointing out some of the major traffic problem zones and accident hotspots on maps, we will gain more of an insight into the complexities of movement in the city. Officers are assigned to particular beats and discuss strategies to catch the couriers breaking the law. We find out that as a response to gridlocked traffic, and to enable them to keep up with the couriers, City Central Police have recently introduced "Velocops", who ride bicycles through the city. The irony is clear!

We also see the police in discussion with Sydney City Councillor Robert Ho, talking about the findings of a major 200-page Council report on cycle couriers. (All of this created by a group of around 150 people!) The police will be working in conjunction with the Council to introduce more surveillance cameras and compulsory registration for cycle couriers. They will have to have large numbers displayed on their backs so that they can be easily identified. (However, the argument is not black and white as the Council is also trying to deal with increasing pollution and traffic congestion in the CBD - which could be reduced by an increase in the use of bicycles).

We see a montage of newspaper articles which give the couriers a bad wrap and current affairs programs in which pedestrians and drivers express both fear and rage towards them. We finish on an article titled, "Hey, Off Yer Bike!", which features a photo of Kiri riding through a red light.

Kiri, Danny and Skater are discussing the article over a beer. Skater melodramatically quotes Councillor Robert Ho from the article:

Bike couriers have killed people in the city of Sydney and I am convinced that they will kill again!...They're a nuisance and a danger, they travel with a total disregard for the law. It's time for Sydney Council and the State Government to work together to fix this problem.

Ho feels that the couriers create a bad impression to tourists and business visitors and that the courier scene has to be cleaned up.

Skater jokes that there was obviously not enough news that day so they just ran one of their regular "courier-slagging" stories to fill space:

They've got the Kennedys in America, they've got the Royal Family in Britain and they've got the couriers in Sydney!

Photos of Skater and Danny have also featured in articles. In his typical “proud underdog” style, Skater had his article, titled “Kamikaze Couriers”, printed onto a T-shirt. We also see Skater, and many other couriers, sporting “Cycle Courier = Media Scapegoat” stickers on their bikes, as they feel the media blames them for all problems on the roads rather than examining how bigger issues and groups are also responsible.

We will see how Kiri, as a fast but careful and non-confrontational rider, still suffers from the negative stereotypes of cycle couriers presented by the media. It results in more police and council crackdowns which, in turn, leads to fines and loss of income for most of the couriers. She also feels that city councillors such as Ho are using the general wide-spread disregard for cycle couriers as a cheap trick for canvassing votes for elections.

We will see Kiri make a delivery to the Sydney Opera House and explain that she is not allowed through the doors. With a grin, though, she tells us that she has performed as a singer at the Opera House a number of times, as a backing vocalist for performance poet Romaine Morton. This will help the audience challenge their stereotypical views of what bicycle couriers are like. Her haunting singing will be used over images of her riding away from the Opera House and through the city. Her love of riding and the freedom it gives her are clear.

We see Danny make a delivery to Sydney Hospital, one of his regulars. He carries items such as vials of blood for AIDS testing, fingers in cool bags for urgent operations - they can get them there faster than any other means of transport.

We then see Danny arriving at the hospital for a check-up with his doctor. He is instantly recognised and greeted by the hospital staff, and in his consultation and going through his massive files we gain an idea of the history and extent of his injuries. This conversation is mostly over a montage of X-rays of Danny’s broken bones held together by pins and staples, medical diagrams and reports, etc.

We discover that he has had 18 operations due to riding accidents, and he discusses a forthcoming major operation on his leg. His vulnerability in hospital contrasts with the bravado he demonstrates in public.

He also discusses with his doctor that he needs to get some copies of X-rays and medical records to support some court cases he is involved in - after 8 years of trying to gain workers’ compensation for accidents on the job, the several cases are about to come to a climax. He tells the doctor that he wants to wait a couple of months for the operation on his leg as hopefully some of his compensation money will come through - the operations are hugely expensive.

The doctor also discusses with Danny how his injuries are likely to affect him later in life - he could end up in a wheelchair once arthritis sets into his injured joints, by the time he’s 40. We see Danny disappear under an X-ray machine and the light flashes.

Danny’s injuries could be seen as a parallel to the damage that the city environment, and its people, are suffering from the constant onslaught of pollution-spewing vehicles and construction. Machinery and ripped apart roads will be constantly present in the film: our couriers dodging it and all kinds of people in the city struggling to find a place in the increasingly alienating public spaces.

As a stylised interlude, we will have a sequence in which the city is likened to the human body - the scars of roads and construction will be mirrored by Danny's scars, bruises, etc. The roads will also be presented like arteries of the body - street maps and shots of the roads dissolving with shots of Danny's X-rays, videos and photos of his operations, etc.

Over the end of this sequence, Danny describes in voiceover how he was once a national BMX bike-racing champion and was on his way to becoming an international one. But severe injuries from both his racing and his working life as a courier put a halt to his sporting career.

We see Danny and Skater together at Skater's house, fixing their bikes. Every cog and screw is carefully cleaned and replaced - it is a ritual that is almost meditative. Skater's V/O describes how, as the fallen sports hero, Danny got involved in hard-core drugs and was a severe smack addict for 4 years.

Danny and Skater talk about how he hit rock bottom and was on the verge of suicide and how, with the help of his mum and Skater, he detoxed and kicked the habit. However, Danny is a high energy person with an addictive personality. He needs constant rushes and intense highs. He used to get these from his racing, and then from hard drugs - now, he gets adrenalin rushes from reckless riding on the job as a cycle courier in the city, and testing his extreme riding skills

Skater serves up a finely prepared dinner (he is quite a chef) and they begin to drink heavily.

They talk about Skater's brother who was recently murdered by a street gang in Manchester. We hear about Skater's poor and violent childhood in a rough part of Manchester, with a violent father who beat him and raped his sister, and a mother who refused to acknowledge the abuse. He now has virtually no contact with his family.

Some of this story could be told in his voice-over as Skater rides through the city at night. Although he is close friends with Danny, he has few other friends and is quite a loner.

By hearing some of their pasts and observing them in their personal lives we hope to reveal and understand their perhaps cathartic reasons for seeking adrenalin, confrontation and danger. Cycle couriership is an exhilarating existence, but certainly self-abusive in some ways. Why choose to dodge trucks, buses and construction, risk death on a daily basis, when you could earn the same meagre living in a safer, easier job?

Lunchtime: Danny enters the swish offices of Stacks Law Firm, in the top end of town, overlooking the harbour and city. This time, it's not for a delivery. He is meeting his solicitor, Bruce MacManemy, to discuss his next court appearance, for his cases in which he is suing several courier companies and their insurers for accident compensation. They discuss the cases. The discussion is punctuated with low-angle death-defying footage of Danny riding, the city looming heavily above him.

The major case involves an accident Danny had when working for Crisis Couriers. At the beginning of the day, he phoned his boss to tell him one of his bike parts was faulty and he had to get to a bike shop to get it fixed. His boss just gave him a number of jobs and told him to worry

about it later. Danny called his boss every half hour about his bike and was simply given more jobs to do. In the afternoon, his bike collapsed and Danny was thrown across the road, broke both of his legs and woke up in an ambulance. “Many bosses just treat us like we’re machines”, says Danny. Bruce examines Danny’s X-rays, medical reports, etc.

Danny describes to Bruce how he tried to get a lawyer through Bicycle NSW, the closest thing there is to a group that looks after the rights of cyclists. One of his accidents for which he is claiming compensation resulted from a huge pothole in a poorly maintained road, which is ultimately the responsibility of the RTA and Council. Bicycle NSW is funded by the RTA and the lawyer was nervous about getting involved in a legal case in which the RTA might be seen as responsible. Bruce says that because of the amount of red tape and power of the RTA, Council, etc they would have no chance of winning a case against them, so it comes down to claiming compensation from the courier companies’ insurance companies and suing them if they don’t pay up.

Bruce, who is very animated and eloquent, specialises in workers’ comp. In their discussion, we learn more about how most couriers are not aware of their rights as workers and how most companies avoid paying sick pay, holiday pay, accident insurance, etc by employing the couriers as contractors. There are no minimum wage rules that cover them or a union that represents them. Bruce:

The companies are trying to rot the system the best they can to avoid paying...pay as little as possible. They don’t care about you guys a lot of the time, unfortunately. “We can always get someone else to ride a bike for us.” The law keeps shifting on definitions of who’s an employee, who’s an employer, contractor, who’s responsible for what...cases go on.

Most couriers’ communication with the companies they work for is through their radios when receiving jobs. The boss often feels like an unseen “Big Brother”, a voice handing out orders. Most of the couriers have never even met the people in the courier office headquarters. It is only feisty personalities like Danny that have the audacity to take on their employers. As a consequence, he has been fired by company after company, but is also in great demand because of his great skill as a rider and charming personality with clients. However, like most workers, the couriers are generally not interested in getting politicised. They just get on with earning a living.

Friday evening rush hour: we see hundreds of cyclists blocking off traffic on the Harbour Bridge. It is the annual major rally of “Critical Mass”, a movement which protests against a society governed by environmentally unsustainable transport and highlights the lack of facilities for alternatives (bike lanes, public transport, etc). Over these images, we hear a radio news report from a car radio warning motorists about the rally.

We discover Skater and Danny on Observatory Hill, having a beer and good-naturedly heckling the rally riders, including Kiri, who emerges from the sea of cyclists .

Over these images, we hear from Kiri why she is involved in Critical Mass:

We’re at a point in Sydney where we can chose what sort of city we can become, by offering alternatives to cars. Do we want to become a city like LA where people are

advised not to go outside some days because pollution levels are too high? Or people spend 4 hours travelling to and from work each day because of traffic congestion?

We see a tiny cyclist stopping a truck to let other cyclists through. Also, moments of road rage from people in their cars directed at the cyclists.

Kiri continues in voice-over:

Like in many European cities, the CBD should be only open to public transport, service vehicles and bicycles. Private vehicles should stay out. This would also make for a better street culture.

Radio news report continues:

1 in 3 Australians have said they would ride bicycles if there were safe places to ride... Traffic congestion costs Australians \$5.5 billion a year...Holland, which has the best cycle system on the planet, is the only western nation where obesity hasn't increased since WW2...etc.

We Danny and Skater on the hill, sinking back a few beers. Our veteran riders feel strongly for Critical Mass's causes but feel they make the same point all day every day by making cycling their profession. They also cannot afford to be lumped with more bad media coverage and general public outrage that Critical Mass receive every rally.

Some are worried that their employers will think they are trouble-makers, or, as Skater says: "I get enough venom spat at me all week on my bike without some motorist yelling at me for making him 5 minutes late for *Sale of the Century*". It's quite ironic that the people who are riding their bikes for a living don't get involved in bike advocacy because of on-going pressures from bigger forces.

Daytime: We see Skater on the street on his phone trying to drum up some work. We discover that it's the end of the day and he has made only \$40.00. We then see Skater screaming at a businessman who has stepped in front of his bike, all the time sarcastically calling him "Sir" and "Gentleman".

Skater is acutely aware of the bad image that cycle couriers have and feels that he is at the bottom of the pile in the hierarchies of the road, the business world in which he makes his deliveries, and the social sphere. He is very cynical of human behaviour and has strong views on class and hierarchy. He opinionates on the fiercely competitive climate of Sydney's CBD:

We live in a so-called classless society. That is, we don't have a pre-determined class system that they have in Britain - working class, upper class, the elite and all that crap; which means that anyone can elect themselves to whatever class they want. We live in a society of winners and losers; does anyone elect themselves to being the loser? No. Everyone wants to be the winner...It's what this city's built up off.

However, Skater's observations are often enlightening of his own existence; he, too, will fight tooth and nail not to be at the bottom of the pecking order. We see a montage of Skater as he deals with security checks and enters some of the ritziest offices in the country. He is both proud,

defensive and at times enraged - when he isn't trusted to be given access to an area where he must make an urgent delivery or pick-up.

The CBD is so driven by business that "progress" can often leave humanity behind. The regimented systems of the city demand that people are cogs in those systems, and workers will stereotype each other to feel a small sense of empowerment. Body language in lifts and corridors will give a subtle insight into how people relate to each other.

We see Skater in a vicious confrontation with a motorbike courier - physical violence is close as they seem to argue over "not holding the lift door for each other". The futile confrontation is not necessarily personal - it comes from lack of time, space, money. Workers, on the roads and in the office blocks, direct their frustration and stress at the nearest target - each other - rather than taking on the bigger systems.

Kiri will show what it is like to be a woman in what is a very male dominated macho physical industry. She takes it all in her stride and just gets on with the job, and is very good at it, which is her strongest feminist statement. We will see Kiri interacting with the other female couriers, perhaps giving advice to a female "pecker" (someone new to the job) and see the reactions that Kiri gets in the offices to which she delivers, and also from the men within the courier scene.

Morning: With Western "cow-boy" like music we see a stylized montage of Kiri, Danny and Skater dressing for a day's work. Their bodies are strong, their outfits and protection gear sexy and their attitude is like soldiers preparing for another battle - taking on The City. They pull on lycra clothes, padding and hand grips, strap on water bottles and phones, put on helmets and shades. Each courier has little individual touches to their outfits: eg Skater selects his trademark, a red bandanna, from a row of 30 identical ones hanging in a row on the wall; Danny bandages his many injuries, rubs his still tender scars and bruises; Kiri dresses in particularly boyish clothes and binds up her long hair to hide her femininity.

The couriers descend on the city from various directions. They are tiny coloured specks, the city seems huge, slick and impenetrable, all angles, lines and reflections.

There is a police crackdown happening that day. We see the couriers as they radio each other on their walkie-talkies, as to the whereabouts of the police, eg Danny, with jokey bravado:

Two so-called undercover cops spotted on bikes corner Martin and George. No dress sense. Looks like they've gone to the 2 Dollar shop and bought those little chequered shorts because they think that's what real cyclists wear. They've got "GQ" magazines wrapped around their walkie-talkies...

Watchful eyes of police. Fleeting glimpses of couriers. Comedy. The police chase some of the couriers through the streets. Danny particularly enjoys the thrill of leading the police on a chase. We see him do a wheelie the wrong way up a one-way street, loudly singing his favourite Suzi Quattro song, "48 Crash like a lightning flash!" (his company rider number is 48), then ride down George Street without hands on his handlebars. His voice-over tells:

I've been charged in court for causing an accident that wasn't my fault. So now, I feel that I've got the right to go out there and break the law to make up for that. If everyone

thinks you're a criminal, you might as well be one. No-one's going to believe me way, I'm just a bicycle courier.

Many of the couriers feel that the police pick on them. Skater says: "They're not going to go out there and give 300,000 pedestrians tickets for jaywalking when there's only 150 cycle couriers in the city that they can book".

We will see some of the couriers caught and fined, the arguments that result and possible arrests.

At the end of the day a crowd of couriers discuss the day's crackdown and fines (\$44.00 a pop) at Courier Corner. We find out that Danny has recently paid off \$1,600 worth of fines because of a small amount of compensation he received for one of his accidents. To a personality like Crash Test Danny, have terrible accidents developed some kind of allure whereby compensation can get him out of other troubles? The city is all about money.

Despite the cycle couriers' bad image, some of the city's most powerful companies are realizing that the couriers could be good for their business in other ways than just making deliveries. Because they are such a visible and enigmatic presence in the business centre of a major city, and something of a Sydney icon, we will see some of the couriers being approached by advertising companies to have company logos on their outfits in exchange for payment. The advertisers think that in a country that puts so much focus on sport, imaginations will be captured by these people who earn their living from physical strength and skill.

Skater has been approached by a graphic design company he delivers for to have their company name (Wysiwyg) emblazoned across his shirt in exchange for them designing a logo for his company and printing it on his shorts. We will follow Skater in his negotiations with Wysiwyg. "Personal Touch Couriers" will be emblazoned across Skater's backside and crotch. Will Skater's survival as a courier come down to advertising, selling his ass?

Morning, Danny's home: Through the mess we find Danny dressing up in his best clothes. He tells us that he is going to court today and he should find out whether he will receive several hundred thousand dollars in accident compensation.

We see Danny outside the imposing grey structure of the Compensation Court - his usually carefree spirit is dulled with nervousness. Barristers in cloaks and wigs mill around the entrance to the court. Bruce gives Danny a pep talk about how to answer questions, etc on the stand and they disappear into the court.

When they reappear we discover the outcome (*note: it is certain that Danny will receive some compensation, we will find out how much*).

Bruce expresses his concerns about Danny's new life with his compensation. He talks about how the legal system fails to provide a financial structure to the few who are lucky enough to receive compensation.

How will Danny, who comes from a struggling working class family and has lived a gypsy lifestyle on a very basic wage, deal with this sudden slab of money? How will it affect his relationships with his mates, particularly Skater? Skater has a fatherly, nurturing attitude towards

Danny but the two men are also competitive. Skater indicates that he hopes he doesn't get lured back into drugs and heavy drinking, especially as he plans to give up couriering which currently gives him the adrenalin and rushes he craves. Danny plans to buy a fast car, party hard and move up north to the country. We will see him parading his new car around town, being heckled by his mates on their bikes and getting enraged by congested traffic.

However, even if Danny does receive a payout, the money won't last forever. Cycle couriering is the only job he has ever done - his whole working life has been supported by his body and physical strength. How will Danny, who is uneducated, plan to survive now that his body is deteriorating? We will see him being wheeled through the long corridors of the hospital and into the operating theatre for his major leg operation, and we will see footage of the operation, reminding us that Danny's future has to take a huge turn.

*Speed City* will climax with moments from Danny's last days in the city, and last night partying with Skater and Kiri and the rest of the couriers. We will see Danny packing his bags and driving across his usual work beat of the Harbour Bridge to leave the city where he has worked on his bicycle since he was a teenager.

We see Skater and Kiri, separately, riding home late at night. Skater tells, in voice-over, how the city is his life and he will be a cycle courier till he is 60.

With the end credits, Skater and Kiri continue riding home in silence. The city is empty with shimmering neons. The images from their bicycles' point of view is a strange mixture of loneliness and alluring beauty. Out of the chaos of the work day and rush hour, the city is peaceful.

## Directors' Statement / Style

*Speed City* will be fast paced to match the speed of our characters' lives and the city in which they operate. The camera and/or the subjects will be constantly moving.

Verite footage of our couriers' lives will be woven together with pacy footage shot from Lipstick Cameras mounted to their bikes and helmets, presenting a visually exciting way of seeing the city from our characters' points of view. This is a point of view that is very rarely explored. Unprotected, on a simple bicycle, their experience on the roads is raw, animal-like and in-your-face, as they dodge tonnes of steel, roadworks and pedestrians.

Although they are a vital part of the city's communication, there is no real place for them - they are largely regarded as outlaws and outsiders. We will visually explore their sometimes alien-like existence - eg the shots in our promo of Skater on his bike shot from underneath him, with his helmet, almost silhouetted against the sky and skyscrapers. In *Speed City* our couriers are like outlaws in cowboy movies - outsiders who ride into town and take it on, make their own rules and operate outside of the law, in order to sustain their existence.

In our promo, the on-road coverage of our three characters is a bit repetitive. In the longer form piece, we will alter the visual style when filming each of our three characters, to reflect their personalities and stories. Danny will be filmed more from skewed angles to reflect the chaos in his life and riding style, and damaged body. Skater will be filmed more symmetrically to reflect his organised nature and controlled riding, and mainly in profile to accentuate his shark-like features and predatory demeanor. Kiri, who is not aggressive, relies on strength and surveillance to get the job done, and therefore we will move between wider angles exploring her powerful body and extreme close-ups of her eyes. Her eyes dart around like a defensive animal, in contrast to Danny's and Skater's more tunnel-like vision.

As a pause from the almost relentless, lightning-speed, gnarly on-road experience, we will also observe our couriers in their home spaces. With planned camera movement and softer edges and colours we will discover another level of their personalities.

The intended verite nature of *Speed City* is not shown in our promo (which aims mostly to show an introduction to the characters and some visually exciting moments). *Speed City* will not be an advocacy film using specialists or talking heads to convince the viewer about certain ethical arguments but rather a film that unravels ideas and themes through observation; how our characters react to the inherent obstacles in their lives.

However, we do not want to limit ourselves to only observational material. We feel that a few stylised sequences - ie the dressing sequence, Danny's operation juxtaposed against torn up city streets and maps, etc, could make the storytelling more playful and interesting. Many very successful contemporary documentaries at times mix styles to suggest and unravel underlying ideas.

**There are elements of the following in our promo, but we hope to explore them more in the longer-form work:**

- We will contrast carefully composed, imposing images of the city with the edgy material of our couriers in action - flesh versus steel and concrete, speed versus congestion, the sensual versus the stark. The angles, lines and reflections of stark city forms will surround the sweating bodies of the couriers with their flexing muscles. The theme of the individual taking on the big city will be emphasized by shots where the couriers are dwarfed by massive buildings.

- We will explore the city from high aerial views - showing the couriers and all city dwellers as tiny specks in the canyons and square blocks of the city. Regimentation and surveillance are undermining the sense of privacy and individuality of everyone in the city

- We will explore images of the city as a stunning and alluring place, with its dramatic skyscrapers, but also as a dysfunctional and impenetrable place in some ways, and a damaged landscape - is it becoming too overbuilt, scarred by roads, and increasingly alienating? These are the ironies of city living.

Apart from subtle ambience to underscore some of our characters' personal lives and occasional surreal views of the city, the music, like the couriers, should be punchy and playful, a pulse for the split-second moments of their volatile worlds.