

My Friend Michael Jones

An Original Short Film Screenplay

by

Eldon Booth, Ian Leaupepe and Samson Rambo

(Final Draft V.2)

CONFIDENTIAL

Produced by: Eldon Booth
Alex Lovell

Directed by: Ian Leaupepe
Samson Rambo

Story by: Eldon Booth
Ian Leaupepe
Alex Lovell
Samson Rambo

Email: alex@runcharliefilms.com

Phone: 021 64 55 82 (Alex Lovell)

Copyright © 2017 Run Charlie Films. All Rights Reserved.

1. INT. HIGH SCHOOL CORRIDOR (OTARA) - MIDDAY

OPEN ON a shiny, black and white chequerboard. SUDDENLY, a pair of legs in uniformed socks and shoes ENTERS FRAME and hot-steps perfectly between the squares. PULL OUT to REVEAL the chequerboard as the linoleum floor of a HIGH SCHOOL CORRIDOR.

The legs and feet belong to **M.J** (Samoan, 17) and he dashes with panic through the corridor. He reaches the EXIT and taps his fingers against the doorframe in an obsessively complex rhythmic sequence.

Ridicule from nearby STUDENTS embarrasses M.J but doesn't deter him from his OCD ritual. He finishes his finger-tapping sequence and pushes through the door.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL QUADRANGLE (OTARA)

M.J sidesteps STUDENTS to the BOYS TOILETS and begins his OCD finger-tapping routine on the doorframe. Beautiful **SELENA** (Samoan, 18) ENTERS to knock M.J's hand away.

SELENA

Gimme five uce!

SELENA grins knowingly to the popular clique of **BECCA** (18), **PAULO** (18) and **WILLIE** (18).

M.J grimaces at the interruption. His legs shake as he tries to contain his bladder. As M.J restarts his finger-tapping routine, SELENA grabs his hand and embraces it in mock romance.

SELENA

C'mon M.J, I thought you liked me!
Don't you want to touch my hand?!

SELENA looks over to BECCA, PAULO and WILLIE and they cackle with laughter. Distressed, M.J rips his hand away from SELENA; desperate to beat his bladder, M.J resumes his finger-tapping sequence.

SUDDENLY, M.J's face floods with shame. The SOUND of riotous laughter points to the fact that M.J has wet himself.

We REVEAL PAULO video-recording the event with his cellphone; SELENA joins in with BECCA and WILLIE to cruelly scorn M.J.

ANGLE ON M.J, outcast and humiliated.

2. EXT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM (OTARA) – AFTERNOON

M.J sits alone against the rear wall of an EQUIPMENT SHED. His mismatched P.E shorts signpost his pants-wetting shame and headphones funnel MUSIC from his cellphone.

He folds a paper dart out of a FLYER advertising the school's end-of-semester music exam. ANGLE ON M.J as he sends the dart into the air. He checks the time on his cellphone and lifts off his headphones.

SUDDENLY, M.J hears the SOUND of two GIRLS giggling nearby. Wary, M.J peers around the corner of the EQUIPMENT SHED and we REVEAL SELENA and **ABBEY** (Palagi, 18) huddled closely together, sharing two halves of a headphone set.

ABBEY

This beat goes hard! You're gonna ace it.

Faced with his tormentor, M.J quietly seethes. ABBEY glances suggestively to SELENA. SELENA checks her surroundings anxiously; we glimpse a moment of frustration in ABBEY. Then, SELENA leans in and passionately kisses ABBEY.

M.J is stunned. SUDDENLY, an idea hits him and he switches his cellphone to "CAMERA" mode. Revengeful, M.J covertly snaps a photograph of SELENA in lesbian embrace.

Paranoid, SELENA disengages and checks for onlookers. M.J quickly ducks his head out of view. M.J peeks again as SELENA makes the conscious effort to EXIT in a separate direction from ABBEY.

SUDDENLY, M.J realises that SELENA is coming straight for him. With nowhere to hide, M.J steps into the open and avoids eye contact as he approaches SELENA. ANGLE ON SELENA as M.J passes, flustered to find him in the vicinity of her tryst.

CUT TO:

3. INT. BUS – AFTERNOON

To the SOUND of high-pitched laughter, we view FOOTAGE of M.J demeaned outside the BOYS TOILETS. PULL OUT to REVEAL PAULO holding his cellphone so BECCA, WILLIE and SELENA can view the screen along the BACKSEAT.

SELENA responds with a half-hearted snicker; she stares to the forsaken figure of M.J, seated alone at the FRONT, anxious about what he witnessed behind the GYMNASIUM.

SELENA then glances across the BACKSEAT to BECCA, PAULO and WILLIE and observes them shout derision towards M.J.

My Friend Michael Jones

Original Short Film Screenplay by Eldon Booth, Ian Leaupepe & Samson Rambo
CONFIDENTIAL. Copyright © 2017 Run Charlie Films. All Rights Reserved.

SELENA presses the red "STOP" button and stands.

SELENA
(To BECCA)
See you tonight?

BECCA nods.

PAULO (OS)
Hey M.J! You skux guy!

WILLIE
Nah it's not skux eah - he's gay - eah M-GAY!
GAY BOY - GAY - GAY BOY!

As laughter breaks out from the STUDENTS, SELENA refrains from joining in. ANGLE ON M.J as tears shoot violently down his face. The BUS stops and SELENA EXITS the REAR DOOR.

WILLIE (OS)
Go kill yourself like your Dad gee.

The words cut M.J to the bone. SUDDENLY, M.J rushes to the FRONT DOOR; tears squeeze from his eyes as his condition forces him to stop and finger-tap the doorframe.

BECCA
Look at the ma'i fuck!

PAULO
Ulu ka'e ass bitch!

4. EXT. SELENA'S STREET (OTARA)

M.J EXITS the BUS and spills out onto the footpath in front of SELENA. As the BUS drives away, M.J leans on his haunches, recuperating. SELENA lingers uneasily. Alone on the footpath, their eyes meet.

M.J
(Through tear-filled eyes)
What did I ever do to you?!

SELENA offers help with the ulterior motive of protecting her secret; she points at the bag of soiled clothes in his hand:

SELENA
Do you need help with those?

M.J
(Incredulous)
Leave me alone!

M.J storms off. Awkwardly, SELENA follows suit a few steps behind.

M.J

(As he walks)
I said fuck off!

SELENA

(Motions to DRIVEWAY)
This is my house!

SELENA ENTERS her DRIVEWAY.

As M.J continues along the footpath, his attention turns to two boys (aged 11) in the adjacent driveway; **CYRUS** wears his mother's cooking apron and draws fake tattoos with a marker pen on the neck of **OSCAR**. OSCAR feigns pain while CYRUS makes the SOUND of the tattoo machine with his mouth.

M.J

Oscar?! Why aren't you at home?!

OSCAR stands SUDDENLY, forcing CYRUS' marker pen off course.

OSCAR

(As De Niro in *Taxi Driver*)
You talkin' to me?

M.J doesn't know how to respond. CYRUS helps OSCAR into an army green *Taxi Driver* style anorak.

OSCAR

You talkin' to me?

CYRUS

You talkin' to him?

The boys' ridiculousness is disarming. Dumbfounded, M.J can only shake his head and smile.

CUT TO:

5. INT. CYRUS' LAUNDRY — AFTERNOON

ANGLE ON the WASHING MACHINE as M.J puts his soiled clothes inside, closes the hatch and sets the wash cycle.

EXT. CYRUS' FRONT YARD — LATE AFTERNOON

M.J sits on the front step, self-conscious under the gazing adoration of CYRUS.

CYRUS

Hey M.J! Can you show me some dance moves?!

My Friend Michael Jones

Original Short Film Screenplay by Eldon Booth, Ian Leaupepe & Samson Rambo
CONFIDENTIAL. Copyright © 2017 Run Charlie Films. All Rights Reserved.

M.J hesitates, burdened by the question.

OSCAR (OS)
Cyrus, I told you! He doesn't dance anymore.

M.J nods to confirm, leaving CYRUS disappointed. SUDDENLY, OSCAR ENTERS wearing an adult size sports-tracksuit and carrying a packet of flour.

OSCAR
(To CYRUS)
Where's your costume?!

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON CYRUS as he wears a thick belt over his mother's floral one-piece swimsuit and stands behind a homemade barbell. Acting as CYRUS' trainer, OSCAR tips flour from the packet onto CYRUS' hands as a substitute for grip-chalk. CYRUS bangs his hands together sending flour everywhere. OSCAR then eyeballs CYRUS to psyche him up.

OSCAR
The road to Tokyo starts here!

M.J watches on bemused as OSCAR slaps CYRUS across the face repeatedly with both hands for further motivation. His capillaries inflamed, CYRUS turns to the barbell and mimics the pre-lift routine of an OLYMPIC WEIGHTLIFTER.

CUT TO LATER:

6. EXT. CYRUS' BACKYARD - NIGHT

M.J unpegs his clean underwear and school pants from the clothesline and puts them on in the shadows of the backyard. SUDDENLY, the SOUND of loud music with heavy bass emanates from the neighbour's GARAGE.

Intrigued, M.J lifts himself up the high fence so he can see into the neighbour's BACKYARD. Through the open door of the GARAGE, he glimpses SELENA engineering and testing a track on her laptop. ANGLE ON M.J as he observes SELENA and witnesses her dedication and passion to the craft.

SUDDENLY, a CAR ENTERS SELENA's DRIVEWAY and M.J ducks his head down out of view. We hear the SOUND of two car doors slam. M.J peers through the gap in the fence as a **MAN** (Samoan, 43) and **WOMAN** (Samoan, 41) ENTER the GARAGE.

We hear the SOUND of menacing, indistinct shouting in Samoan. ANGLE ON a large mirror; in the reflection, the MAN then drags SELENA across the floor by her long hair. The sight of SELENA being manhandled makes M.J recoil.

My Friend Michael Jones

Original Short Film Screenplay by Eldon Booth, Ian Leaupepe & Samson Rambo
CONFIDENTIAL. Copyright © 2017 Run Charlie Films. All Rights Reserved.

SUDDENLY, we hear the SOUND of tortured wailing from SELENA and metal scissors slicing. In the reflection of the mirror, we see the MAN smash SELENA's keyboard on the ground.

WOMAN

Lava gā!

ANGLE ON M.J concerned, indecisive. The MAN and WOMAN EXIT the GARAGE door and M.J hides down behind the fence. The SOUND of angry muttering fades as the MAN and WOMAN ENTER the HOUSE.

M.J can't locate SELENA in the reflection of the mirror. He checks the coast is clear. With deft agility, M.J scales the fence and lands inside SELENA's BACKYARD.

EXT. SELENA'S BACKYARD

As M.J creeps to the GARAGE, he hears the SOUND of SELENA weeping inside. M.J finger-taps the doorframe with his OCD routine and ENTERS cautiously.

INT. SELENA'S GARAGE

M.J is greeted by the portraits of JESUS CHRIST, ELVIS PRESLEY and BRUCE LEE displayed on the wall with equal status. M.J turns to find SELENA sobbing on the floor, surrounded by broken equipment and clinging to off-cuts of her hair. Her hair has been hacked short in the traditional Samoan punishment.

Emotionally wounded, SELENA shies away from M.J. M.J empathises with her pain; he crouches to her level and places a comforting hand on her shoulder. Unsure of his intent, SELENA doesn't know how to react.

M.J looks to the triptych of JESUS CHRIST, ELVIS PRESLEY and BRUCE LEE and grins.

M.J

(Points to ELVIS PRESLEY)
I used to think he was Jesus.

SELENA smirks and points to BRUCE LEE.

SELENA

I thought it was him.

They share a chuckle and the ice is broken. As he kneels, M.J helps tidy up fragments of her shattered keyboard.

M.J

Did you make that beat?

SELENA nods solemnly.

M.J

Pretty solid.

SELENA deflects the compliment; ANGLE ON her hands as she sifts through hair clippings.

SELENA

(Looks to the HOUSE)

They think it's against God.

M.J

My Dad was the same, with my dancing.

SELENA glimpses a deep hurt within M.J.

SELENA

I'm sorry about your Dad.

M.J

I killed him.

SELENA

What?!

M.J

(Aloud to himself)

I didn't tap the door right.

ANGLE ON SELENA as she recognises the burden M.J carries.

BECCA (OS)

What the fuck's going on here?!

We REVEAL BECCA standing at the door, in total disbelief. M.J and SELENA snap to reality. ANGLE ON SELENA as her body language closes off towards M.J. BECCA takes in the full severity of SELENA's haircut and rushes to console her.

BECCA

Oh my God! Are you okay?!

(Confused)

What's he doing here?!

M.J turns to SELENA for backup, but her silence maligns him.

BECCA

GET THE FUCK OUT FUCK BOY!!!

Rejected, M.J moves to the door and conducts his OCD finger-tapping routine; BECCA watches with contempt, while SELENA observes his affliction with more compassion.

My Friend Michael Jones

Original Short Film Screenplay by Eldon Booth, Ian Leaupepe & Samson Rambo
CONFIDENTIAL. Copyright © 2017 Run Charlie Films. All Rights Reserved.

7. EXT. OTARA FISH MONUMENT/SHOPPING CENTRE – NIGHT

At a bench-seat, M.J listens to music through his headphones; he looks to his cellphone conflicted. ANGLE ON the image of SELENA kissing ABBEY with M.J's finger hovering over the "DELETE IMAGE" button.

After further consideration, M.J selects "SAVE IMAGE" and gets to his feet. M.J passes under the FISH HEAD monument and walks past the rows of shops.

CUT TO:

8. INT. EVELINA'S TAKEAWAY SHOP - NIGHT

ANGLE ON PAULO as he plays an arcade machine in the foyer.

EXT. EVELINA'S TAKEAWAY SHOP

M.J reaches the TAKEAWAY SHOP and sees PAULO playing the arcade machine. M.J tenses. As M.J passes, his eyes trace PAULO fearfully.

As M.J ENTERS the safety of the shadows, he exhales with relief. SUDDENLY, M.J is blindsided by WILLIE and pinned up against the wall.

WILLIE

The fuck you doing at Selena's?!

M.J is trapped, paralysed with fear.

WILLIE

You perving on her?! You trying to fuck her eah?!

PAULO ENTERS, recording video with his cellphone.

PAULO

Nah - he wants to ass-fuck her eah?!

WILLIE and PAULO laugh, revelling in M.J's torment.

WILLIE

You want to rape her ass?! You trying to rape her ass you faggot?!

M.J

(Scared)

No! She doesn't even like boys.

WILLIE

The fuck did you say?

M.J

(Desperate)
She likes girls!

Incensed, WILLIE rams his forearm hard up into M.J's jaw.

WILLIE

You trying to be funny cunt?!

SUDDENLY, WILLIE punches M.J hard in the stomach. M.J buckles under the blow and slumps to the concrete.

PAULO

(Recording with cellphone)
Yeeeah! Fuck him up!

As WILLIE motions to kick M.J in the head, M.J holds his cellphone up desperately in self-defence.

M.J

Wait! I got proof! I GOT PROOF!!!

WILLIE wrenches the cellphone from M.J's grasp; when he checks the screen, his smile gives way to shock.

PAULO

(Stops recording)
What is it?!

WILLIE and PAULO stare at the image, trying to process the revelation that SELENA is gay. With WILLIE and PAULO distracted by his phone, M.J seizes the opportunity to EXIT.

9. INT. STATE HOUSE GARAGE (M.J's SLEEP-OUT) - NIGHT

Defeated, M.J ENTERS darkness and falls onto his bed.

OSCAR (OS)

Ah, *Michael Jones* – I've been expecting you!

OSCAR spins around in a chair to REVEAL himself. When he turns on the lamp, OSCAR is shocked to find M.J banged up.

OSCAR

M.J?

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON M.J sombre as he holds a packet of frozen peas to his jaw. He and OSCAR sit across from each other on their respective beds. OSCAR reaches for a RARO packet. Using an old 'VIDEO CITY' membership card, OSCAR dices the cordial powder into lines and drags the RARO 'rails' into whisky tumblers.

My Friend Michael Jones

Original Short Film Screenplay by Eldon Booth, Ian Leaupepe & Samson Rambo
CONFIDENTIAL. Copyright © 2017 Run Charlie Films. All Rights Reserved.

OSCAR tops up each glass with water and passes one to M.J.

OSCAR

Salute.

OSCAR takes a heavy sip and winces at the Raro-to-water ratio as if it's a stiff whisky. OSCAR sees that M.J is feeling guilty for exposing SELENA's secret.

OSCAR

You did what you had to do uce.

M.J is beyond counsel; OSCAR's heart sinks for his brother.

OSCAR

(Forces eye contact)

M.J, you did what you had to do.

10. EXT. OTARA BUS STOP – MORNING

ANGLE ON M.J self-conscious as STUDENTS murmur at him.

INT. BUS

Besieged, M.J rushes toward the BUS and starts his OCD routine on the BUS DOOR. SUDDENLY, WILLIE shoulder-barges him, forcing M.J inside the BUS.

As WILLIE moves to the BACKSEAT, M.J swings his head back to the DOOR in horror. M.J clammers to his seat, terrified. All around M.J, STUDENTS consult their cellphones for gossip about SELENA.

M.J turns to the BACKSEAT; while the others are preoccupied with the scandal, BECCA chews gum nonchalantly and stares right back at him. Her cold, threatening demeanour unnerves M.J.

As the BUS approaches SELENA'S BUS STOP, M.J looks to the window expectantly. The BUS fails to slow down and M.J sees the BUS SHELTER is empty. Concerned, M.J presses the red "STOP" button five times and stands.

11. EXT. SELENA'S STREET – MORNING

M.J reaches SELENA's DRIVEWAY just as her PARENTS' CAR reverses out. Anxious, M.J hangs back and waits for the CAR to EXIT.

EXT. SELENA'S HOUSE

M.J knocks on the front door. When no movement appears in the frosted glass, he heads to the BACKYARD.

My Friend Michael Jones

Original Short Film Screenplay by Eldon Booth, Ian Leaupepe & Samson Rambo
CONFIDENTIAL. Copyright © 2017 Run Charlie Films. All Rights Reserved.

EXT. SELENA'S GARAGE

M.J rounds the house. As he passes the GARAGE window, M.J sees SELENA kick away a chair to hang herself from the rafters. M.J fills with dread.

INT. SELENA'S GARAGE

M.J bursts through the GARAGE door to REVEAL SELENA choking and struggling on the rope. His mind floods with panic. SUDDENLY, M.J spies the set of large metal scissors on the workbench.

Frantic, M.J rushes to hold up SELENA's weight and desperately hacks at the rope with the scissor blades.

SUDDENLY, the rope snaps, sending M.J and SELENA into a heap on the floor. SELENA gasps for oxygen. M.J embraces her weakened body and sobs hysterically.

M.J

(Guilty)

Sorry - sorry - sorry - sorry - sorry - sorry

As SELENA regains her bearings, her body surges with life and she clutches M.J for support.

CUT TO A SHORT TIME LATER:

ANGLE ON M.J and SELENA emotionally rinsed, sitting on the floor against the wall. Quizzical, M.J stares at the doorframe of the GARAGE and down to his hand; he processes the concept that he neglected to tap the doorframe and SELENA didn't die.

SELENA

She doesn't want to see me anymore.

M.J patiently listens to SELENA via the large mirror leaning up against the wall opposite them.

SELENA

(Mourns)

What else have I got left?

(Touches her cropped hair and scoffs)

And they thought my music was unholy.

SELENA starts to weep and M.J comforts her with a hug. SUDDENLY, SELENA pulls away from M.J with urgency.

SELENA

I'm sorry I made you piss yourself.

My Friend Michael Jones

Original Short Film Screenplay by Eldon Booth, Ian Leaupepe & Samson Rambo
CONFIDENTIAL. Copyright © 2017 Run Charlie Films. All Rights Reserved.

The timing of the apology catches M.J off-guard and he can't help but smile.

M.J

(Heartfelt)
I'm sorry I took the photo.

SELENA

(Sighs)
That photo changed everything.

M.J glances to SELENA perplexed; in his matter-of-fact perspective, the obvious becomes profound.

M.J

But, this is who you are?

ANGLE ON SELENA as she heeds his words. She stares at her reflection in the mirror opposite them; the short hair that symbolises her persecution also embodies empowerment.

SELENA

Yeah, but what am I supposed to do now?

ANGLE ON M.J as he smiles knowingly.

CUT TO:

12. INT. SCHOOL AMPHITHEATRE — AFTERNOON

ANGLE ON a packed audience milling in their seats. A slide on a data projector above the stage details the criteria for SELENA's music exam.

The crowd hushes; the atmosphere is menacing. SELENA stands anxiously next to M.J in the prompt box, side of stage. M.J offers support for SELENA as she moves tentatively into the lights.

As SELENA ENTERS STAGE, murmurs and laughter target her from the dark, faceless mass.

ANGLE ON WILLIE and PAULO as they make fun of her short hair, while BECCA refuses to acknowledge her. As she moves behind the DJ TABLE, SELENA is intimidated.

SELENA takes a breath and taps four-times on the drum machine. SUDDENLY, her nerves get the best of her and the performance stalls. The CROWD grow restless and heckle her severely. SELENA does everything to hold back the tears.

She looks across to M.J for support; he stares down at the intricate maze of lines and cracks in the parquet hardwood floor and is powerless to help.

My Friend Michael Jones

Original Short Film Screenplay by Eldon Booth, Ian Leaupepe & Samson Rambo
CONFIDENTIAL. Copyright © 2017 Run Charlie Films. All Rights Reserved.

SELENA struggles to keep it together. ANGLE ON her hands shaking as she restarts the beat; SELENA misses the timing on her fourth hit and the CROWD are merciless with rowdy slander.

ANGLE ON M.J as his heart crumbles for SELENA. He looks to the parquet hardwood floor as if it is a field of landmines and retreats.

Humiliated, SELENA shies away from the DJ TABLE and turns to EXIT the STAGE.

M.J takes a deep breath and steps onto the STAGE. ANGLE ON his shoe as it cuts across several lines in the parquet floor. M.J looks down at his shoe as if knives are stabbing it. Determined, M.J takes another step forward into the light.

SELENA is stunned. WILLIE, PAULO and BECCA mock the awkward duo and the CROWD erupts with laughter.

Although pained, M.J gains his footing and locks eyes with SELENA. SUDDENLY, M.J dashes to CENTRE STAGE and launches into an effortless back-flip.

The CROWD silences in awe; WILLIE, PAULO and BECCA are confounded. M.J nods to SELENA behind the DJ TABLE; his heroic gesture fuels her with enough confidence to try again.

In the crowd, BECCA, PAULO and WILLIE snigger dismissively.

SELENA starts a light beat. ANGLE ON M.J as he dips his head to the floor. The MUSIC BUILDS to an intensifying drum roll and the BEAT DROPS.

M.J hits the first beat with an authoritative move. The BEAT HOLDS and M.J freezes. SELENA exhales with joy and submerses into the performance.

The BEAT DROPS again and M.J moves accordingly. The BEAT HOLDS one more time, then HITS again. M.J executes each move with a polished, crisp technique.

AUDIENCE MEMBERS stand in excitement as they holler and vie for an unobstructed view.

ANGLE ON BECCA, WILLIE and PAULO with their mouths agape in astonishment.

ANGLE ON SELENA as she looks to a vacant seat in the FRONT ROW; the empty space reserved for her girlfriend stirs her to perform with more resolve.

As the BEAT HITS REPEATEDLY, M.J ticks with more complex movements and uniquely creative combos. The BEAT DROPS again.

Tongue-in-cheek, M.J incorporates rhythmic patterns that reference his OCD and the AUDIENCE loses their mind!

M.J showcases a seamless repertoire of moves across the whole stage increasing in complexity and athleticism.

ANGLE ON SELENA as she watches M.J with total admiration.

CUT TO:

13. INT. HIGH SCHOOL CORRIDOR (OTARA) – SUNSET

We hear the SOUND of wild applause as CAMERA TRACKS across the empty chequerboard floor.

CAMERA TRACKS AND EXITS the corridor to find M.J and SELENA on a bench-seat at the edge of the rugby field.

SELENA passes one half of her headphones to M.J and he accepts it.

ANGLE ON M.J and SELENA in their post-performance afterglow, feeling contented with their eyes fixed on the horizon.

CUT TO END CREDITS