

Samoan tattoo on show in horror

By Vaimoana Tapaleao

A dark side of Samoan culture is now on show with New Zealand's latest feature film *The Tattooist* dipping its toes into the icy world of cultural taboo.

A horror film without the plentiful singing and dancing typical of Pacific Island life, *The Tattooist* looks at taboos behind the traditional imprints of the Samoan tatau (tattoo).

In the film a curse is unleashed after the theft of a traditional tattooing tool by American tattooist Jake Sawyer, played by American actor Jason Behr of *Roswell* and *The Grudge* fame.

The Tattooist is the first feature by Kiwi director Peter Burger, who says the spiritual and cultural aspects of the script are what drew him into accepting the job.

"I was really interested in the cultural side of the movie, looking at the ideas of tapu. It's pretty freaky and it really got to me," he says.

Behr's character Sawyer is passionate about the art of tattooing, yet untruthful and ignorant when it comes to its meanings.

"He basically does it because it looks cool. He tells his clients that his tattoos have healing



PHOTO: THEA KNIGHT
TABOO: Samoan tatau are not just pretty patterns.

powers, which he doesn't actually believe in himself.

"It's only when he comes across a traditional Samoan tattooing ceremony that he sees the spiritual side of tatau, realising that, 'Hey, this is real,'" Burger says.

Burger acknowledges it is a ghost story, but says it is also a story about cultural practice and the need to uphold customs properly.

"I want non-Samoans to see it and understand that tatau is not just pretty patterns. It's about one's identity and honour," he says.

The Tattooist is showing in theatres nationwide.

Young carers missing school

By Veronica Johnston

Thousands of young Kiwis are missing out on school, socialising and making friends because they are looking after dependent family members.

A Victoria University researcher says child carers supporting ill, disabled or elderly family members often go unnoticed.

"Recognition is increasing about the work and needs of informal family carers," says Wellington Health Services Research Centre assistant Janet McDonald.

"But young carers are often a hidden sub-group.

"The help they provide can be physical, emotional and social. Tasks can include cooking and shopping, cleaning, minding siblings, and personal care tasks such as bathing or dressing."

McDonald is seeking young carers aged 14 to 25 to participate in a study to find out more about their needs and experiences.

According to a Ministry of Social Development report published in July, many carers work out of a sense of love, kinship and responsibility.

The report says that some people do not feel they have any choice in helping others, and "the caring role is imposed on them without warning or time for preparation".

The 2001 census shows almost 10 per cent of children and young people aged 15 to 24 support

someone who is ill or disabled.

Carers New Zealand director Laurie Hilsen says carers can go unnoticed because the health services focus more on the dependent person. The needs of caregivers and their families are often neglected.

Young Carers New Zealand spokesperson Pania Tulia wants more care for child carers.

Tulia was nine years old when her mum had a motorbike accident and became a paraplegic.

She told TVNZ: "Our family situation was pretty tough.

"We had to do the shopping, and personal care such as help toilet her, bath her and look after ourselves on top of that."

She and her four brothers and sisters often missed school.

"There were half days here and there and sometimes they just wouldn't go to school because they were worried about who would be looking after Mum."

Young Carers New Zealand is part of the New Zealand Carers Alliance, a network of 43 non-government organisations which are working with the Ministry of Social Development to build a national carers' strategy.

Disability Issues Minister Ruth Dyson says they are asking Kiwi carers about what they need to balance their roles with jobs, education, family and community life. The strategy will be published in April next year.

Hilsen says: "It was simply time for New Zealand to care for its carers.

"Caring for the carers is common sense because they're doing

unpaid work that's saving New Zealand billions of dollars.

"It just makes sense for everyone to share their knowledge and work together."

'I want to study but I can't'

Mt Roskill resident Lose Singh has cared for her grandmother and auntie since she was 11 years old.

"I've had ups and downs because it's not an easy thing to do. But I've got used to it."

Singh, 29, says she gets home help for one to two hours every day from Monday to Friday. She can also let health professionals look after her dependent family members for up to 28 days a year to give her a rest.

But this does not give her enough time to attend school. "I want to study but I can't."

She is pleased she gets to spend valuable time with her auntie and nana though.

Singh also feels very positive about the proposed carers' strategy as it is helping her realise what she has been missing.

The strategy will help carers balance paid work, their caring responsibilities and other aspects of their lives.

"Once the doors are open, I'll understand more about what I need. It'll open my eyes to what my options are," she says.



LOSE SINGH

AUT student scores spot at World Cup

By Elizabeth Allan

AUT University journalism student Priscilla Duncan is "ecstatic" she has been named in the New Zealand soccer team going to the World Cup in China this month.

Most eyes might be on the rugby in France but the FIFA Women's World Cup kicks off at about the same time, with New Zealand playing Brazil on September 12.

"I've worked really hard for this," says 24-year-old Duncan.

"It's completely what I've wanted all this year so I'm ecstatic and can't wait to go to China."

Duncan first toured with the New Zealand team in 2003 while she was studying at a US university on a soccer scholarship.

But she had to earn her place back on the team this year after a new coach left her out of the World Cup qualifying squad.

New Zealand women's coach John Herdman says he did not know Duncan as a player when he was appointed but she showed "fantastic character".

"She came and supported the team in training and since then she's shown herself to be one of the best midfielders New Zealand has.

"We see ourselves as plausible underdogs."

"She's one of those players you can always really rely on."

Duncan, who has been playing soccer since she was six, says the team is realistic about its chances. They are up against Brazil, Denmark and China in the first round.

"We're coming up against much more experienced players and we're not really competitive in terms of international exposure," she says.

"But having said that, anything goes in soccer.

"It's the kind of game where you can get results against teams that might on paper be a lot better than you."

Herdman agrees the goal is to "cause major upsets" against better-fancied opposition.

"The girls have had some real downers in terms of results against international teams but we've realised, with a bit more belief and strength of character on the pitch, we can certainly upset teams when we get to China," he says.

"We're realistic of what we're up against but we see ourselves as plausible underdogs."

The World Cup aside, Duncan says the biggest struggle in her life is thinking about how long to keep playing at an international level.

"People say play as long as you can but I want a career," she says.

"It's hard to balance it."



PHOTO: DYLAN QUINNELL
STRIKING IT HOT: AUT's Priscilla Duncan is off to China for the FIFA Women's World Cup after regaining her spot in the NZ team.