

A film by  
PIETER DU PLESSIS

# DUST

(Working Title)

Starring  
SHANA MANS  
MICHELLE BRADSHAW  
KAZ McFADDEN  
GUSTAV GERDENER  
DANIELLE GOODALL  
DEON COETZEE  
JUSTIN STRYDOM  
CHRISTIAN GOUS  
and  
DAVID BUTLER

Written and directed by  
PIETER DU PLESSIS

Producer  
GREIG BUCKLE

Produced by  
ANANT SINGH

Executive Producers

SUDHIR PRAGJEE

SANJEEV SINGH

ROBERT NAIDOO

BRIAN COX

Director of Photography

THOMAS REVINGTON

Editing

LEON GERBER

Production Designer

LELANIE PIETERS

Costume Designer

ANDREW PHIRI

Music

PIETER DU PLESSIS

LEON GERBER

Sound

HENDRE JACOBS

## SHORT SYNOPSIS

When Rachel (Shana Mans) and her traumatised family find asylum at a remote farmstead in a barren landscape, she believes that they have found a place to rest before moving on again, until the matriarch of the farm asks her to marry one of her sons. This sets off a cascade of clashing allegiances and ideologies that becomes more and more constricting to the young woman, her disabled father and adopted little brother. *Dust* is a slow burning tension thriller set in a post-apocalyptic world.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

Rachel (Shana Mans), her father David (David Butler), and adopted brother Isaac (Christian Gous), flee an attack on their home that leaves David disabled, and everyone traumatised. When they arrive at Janice's (Michelle Bradshaw) farm, they are welcomed in and given asylum. While David convalesces, Janice asks Rachel to marry her youngest son, Caleb (Kaz McFadden).

With the offer of marriage looming over her, she learns of hidden tensions within the family, slowly illuminating cracks in the happy facade Janice seems intent on living. Rachel is determined to go North, where rumours tell of a land less blighted than the one they live in.

David regains consciousness, but he struggles with survivors' guilt, feeling responsible for the death of Rachel's mother. When Rachel tells him about Janice's offer, he entertains the idea of staying and becoming family. With the pressures to stay mounting, Rachel must decide how to deal with the growing tension around her, while maintaining her autonomy in the face of everyone's expectations off her.

As the relationships grow deeper, the stalemate between leaving and staying becomes more and more untenable.

## **Q&A WITH WRITER/DIRECTOR PIETER DU PLESSIS**

### **What inspired you to write *Dust*?**

When I initially wrote the script for *Dust*, about a year and a half ago, I wrote it very specifically so that I could direct it myself. To that end, I decided to do a nice self-contained thriller with as few characters as possible that I could get away with and still make the story interesting.

I had the idea to set the film in a single location so that we didn't have to go around shooting at different locations and follow the perspective of one character. As the characters move through the world it feels as if the world is closing in around them. So the genesis of the idea was to have this feeling of elation in the beginning, but then slowly feed the information to the audience and to the main character. So as to have all these little dominoes falling, you get the sense that things are not right. And I felt that could be really engaging.

### **How did you cast your characters for this film?**

Casting the film was an interesting experience. I had a very strong idea of what I wanted to go for with the specific characters that we have. There were a couple of characters I already had people in mind for, like the character of Caleb that is played by Kaz McFadden. I knew he would be perfect for the role, and, since we'd worked together before, I knew that he was a pleasure to have on set.

While I had a few actors in mind already, for most of the characters we had to do auditions, which was a strange experience. Most of the actors only got two pages of the screenplay for the audition scene and it was interesting to see how they put their own spin on it. Then you have to sift through the auditions and go, "this one is bringing something interesting here, but this one brings something interesting there." And then you find the right actor, and it's a revelation, like the clouds are opening up.

I remember when Shana Mans' audition came in, I was just sitting there grinning. I thought, yes, she just gets it. And that is usually what I am looking for. And this is before direction, before reading the script. She was just wonderful, she had this air of strength with a vulnerability underneath it, which is exactly what I was aiming for with Rachel.

Watching Michelle Bradshaw do Janice's monologue was chilling. She just switches off her face and there is suddenly this coldness behind her eyes. And Danielle Goodall did this wonderful thing while she was talking about her family and she just teared up and had all this pain and vulnerability in her eyes. It was riveting. And I just knew that she was Elma.

I have an incredible cast in this film.

**Half of the cast are very well-known Afrikaans actors, was that a conscious decision on your part?**

I come from a background as an assistant director and project manager on mostly Afrikaans films. So I knew a lot of Afrikaans actors and didn't really know a lot of the English actors. So it just kind of turned out that way. I knew what they could do and that they were great.

Most of these Afrikaans actors don't always get a chance to do this genre and they were really excited to get involved. It was something completely different for them, which is great, because their enthusiasm is palpable.

**How did you decide on the location where the film was shot?**

Initially the idea was to set the film in the Karoo, where there are wide open desert-spaces with these really stark landscapes. But the problem was that if you shoot in barely inhabited locations it becomes very expensive, very quickly. So we realised that that might not be the best way to go about it.

So Darrell Roodt suggested going on a drive around the Cradle-of-Humankind and he showed me a place and I immediately thought: this doesn't need the Karoo. The film can actually be

shot right here. There is something wonderfully bleak about the Highveld in winter. The grass is dry. There are things burning everywhere. The plants are all full of this red dust that you get there. And there is something really post-apocalyptic about that.

The location we decided on in the end was a much more realistic view of what the world might look like after an apocalyptic event.

**The film is described as a “slow burning tension thriller”. What devices did you use to achieve this?**

To create a film in this genre there are quite a lot of ways you may want to approach it. When you start writing the screenplay, you try and set up a situation where you don't really know what is going on. But it is ominous. Especially in the way that we are doing it, the idea is to hopefully have things start out relatively benign, but just give you a sense that something is wrong.

Cinematographically we are doing a lot of slow pushes into things. We are lighting it very high contrast with really moody lighting and lots of dark shadows with strong highlights. We are keeping the lenses wider rather than tighter, which really puts you into the situation. Most of the film was shot with a 28mm lens for that very reason.

A thriller like this is all about tone, and how it moves the viewer towards the emotions you want them to experience. There is no single thing that creates this: it's all in how the production design, cinematography, and actors come together to create this intangible thing that the whole film rests on.

## **Q&A WITH PRODUCER GREIG BUCKLE**

### **What attracted you to this project?**

The project was given to me by Darrell Roodt and he knew I was in the market for low budget, contained projects. He sent it to me and said that the guy who wrote it has got great potential. I read the script and really enjoyed it. I thought it was a great concept and it ticked all the boxes for what I was looking. It is a very clear genre picture that has a great story and it's quite relevant at the moment with the two strong female leads.

### **How did you bring the cast and crew together?**

For this project I got a much better crew and cast than I expected. When you are doing these restricted budget films you have to give people the opportunity and allow them to progress. It's an opportunity for people to build and grow within our industry and they are critical for the growth of crew and cast members. Sometimes you get the gems who have not been given the opportunity before and you take your chance and you strike gold, and then sometimes you get the ones that are a disappointment. But the good outweighs the bad and it is just the process of low budget filmmaking.

### **What were the challenges in putting the budget together for this film?**

When you are constrained on a budget level it makes it a lot more difficult because you can't throw money at the problem. But the upside to it is that you become creative and you find a creative solution for it. Whether it is a rewrite of a scene or you have got a cooperative director like Pieter, you adapt to what you can afford. So budget dictates the stress levels.

It has been challenging and people had to do three or four jobs to achieve it, but I took on this project with Pieter knowing what we had to do and what we were in for. When you structure it from the get go it does make it easier. So you have to plan ahead, knowing where you are going to finish and how you are going to get there.

**How was it working with first-time writer/director, Pieter du Plessis?**

It has been a great experience. The footage is looking great and the actors really enjoyed working with him. I think the performances are there and Pieter knows the story inside-out. It is one of the benefits of working with a writer/director. You don't have to have the director's new take on someone else's written script so it cuts that kind of prep work out. So having a writer/director like Pieter has been a big bonus and a key component in making it successful at this budget level.

**What are your expectations for this film?**

To get recognition for the South African film industry and to break out of the run-of-the-mill kind of films that you normally expect to come out of Africa, because this isn't one of them. There is no tie-in to Africa whatsoever. This is not a South African or African story – it is a universal story.

## **BIOGRAPHIES – CREW**

### **Pieter du Plessis – Director/Writer**

Pieter du Plessis is a filmmaker from Johannesburg, South Africa. From an early age, Pieter learned the ins-and-outs of storytelling from his grandfather, legendary Afrikaans writer PG du Plessis. He obtained a degree in journalism, discovered a love for philosophy, and decided to become a filmmaker. Towards this end, he worked on television series and feature films for more than a decade, honing his craft and knowledge of all the different aspect of filmmaking.

He is the writer/director of *Arts*, a 24-minute short film made for kykNET's Silwerskerm Film Festival.

*The Furnace*, his first produced feature film screenplay (which he co-wrote with director Darrell Roodt who directed the Academy Award®-nominated *Yesterday*), was nominated for Best Foreign Screenplay at the 2019 Madrid International Film Festival.

### **Anant Singh – Producer**

Anant Singh, recognised as South Africa's preeminent film producer, has produced more than 80 films, including the Academy Award® nominated films: *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* and *Yesterday* and other notable films, *The First Grader*; *Red Dust*; *Cry*, *The Beloved Country*; *Sarafina!*; *Remember*; *Shepherds and Butchers* and *The Song of Names*. He is President of Distant Horizon, Chief Executive and chairman of the Videovision Group of Companies; Chairman of Cape Town Film Studios; Member of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences and member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

He is the recipient of numerous awards including the Lifetime Achievement Golden Horn Award at the inaugural South African Film and Television Awards, and the first Simon Mabhunu Sabela Lifetime Achievement Award from the KwaZulu Natal Film Commission; inaugural Lionel Ngakane Lifetime Achievement Award of the RapidLion Film Festival; the Crystal Award of the World

Economic Forum; Lifetime Member Award from the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund; Palm Beach Film Festival's World Visionary Award and was the first man to receive the International Women's Forum Legacy Award. He has been conferred with Honorary Doctorates from the University of Port Elizabeth; University of Durban-Westville, the Durban University of Technology and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

### **Greig Buckle – Producer**

Greig Buckle is the owner and director of Enigma Pictures. Since the start of his career in the entertainment industry more than 30 years ago, Greig has earned recognition as one of South Africa's most results-driven producers in the delivery of both local and international productions.

It was through working on South Africa's first-ever Daily Soap, "Egoli", that Greig acquired a solid foundation that set him up for his future as one of the country's most skilled film executives in finance and project management.

Greig rises to most challenges and was involved in the production of *Promised Land*, the first-ever high-definition feature film to be shot in South Africa, and only the 6<sup>th</sup> in the world and is the go-to person in South Africa for series pilots.

His line producer credits include Nicholas Cage's *Lord of War*, *Starship Troopers 3: Marauders*, *Natalee Holloway*, *Mister Bob*, Wes Craven's *The Last House on the Left*, *Flight of the Storks*, *Restless*, Twentieth Century Fox's *Chronicle*, the "Dominion" pilot for NBC Universal, which went to two seasons and most recently *The Scorpion King: Book of Souls* for Universal Pictures. Greig has also been credited as production manager on Warner Bros. *Mad Max: Fury Road* directed by George Miller.

He facilitated and produced *Thula*, *An Elephant's Journey*, *Shepherds and Butchers*, *Back to School Mom*, *Kite* with Samuel L. Jackson, Luke Goss' *Charlie*, Patrick Swayze in the Hallmark Channels version of *King Solomon's Mines*, *Against the Wild 2*, *Global Effect*, *Save Angel Hope*, *The Seven of Daran* and the multi-award winning *Life Above All* - which went on to garner the

*Prix Francois Chalais* award in Cannes Uncertain Regard, and Best South African Feature Film at the Durban International Film Festival – in 2010. At the time it garnered a record-breaking seven SAFTA award nominations including Best Feature Film, which it won, and was presented as South Africa’s official film in the Foreign Language category of the Academy Awards®.

Short film producing credits include *Instance*, *Protect the Nation* and *Heart and Soul*, which was one of only two projects selected from over 75 submissions in M-Net’s New Directions Program.

### **Brian Cox – Executive Producer**

Brian Cox is a writer/producer/director. As writer/director, his credits include *The Obit Writer* with Norman Mailer which premiered at Venice, *Scorpion Spring* with Matthew McConaughey which premiered at Sundance, *Keepin’ It Real*, and *El Muerto*. As a writer/producer, credits include *Kite* starring Samuel L. Jackson, *Don’t Look Up*, *Tao of the Golden Mask*, and *AmericanEast*. As a producer, among his credits are Tsui Hark’s *Zu Warriors*, *Pulse*, *Chain of Desire*, *Terminal Bliss*, the MTV release of *Volcano High* with Snoop Dogg, *Wu Lin Warriors* for Cartoon Network, *Cairo Exit*, *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom*, Atom Egoyan’s *Remember*, *Un Padre No Tan Padre*, *Serpent*, *Museo*, *Clara* and *Through Black Spruce*. Brian was a fellow of both the Film Independent’s “No Borders” script development program and the Film Independent Screenwriter’s Lab and a member of the Writers Guild of America.

### **Thomas Revington – Director of Photography**

Wherever Thomas goes, a camera goes. It is, after all, his lifelong passion for photography that led him to discover and study the wonderful world of Film and Television at Wits for four years, where he learnt the art of combining images and storytelling.

As a member of the South African band *Shortstraw*, Thomas has found himself shooting many music videos for other South African artists. Passionate about the industry, image making is hardwired into Thomas. He loves the teamwork and collaborative effort that goes into film

making, and gets excited about the different ways in which ideas are brought to life. *Dust* marks his first feature film debut as cinematographer.

### **Leon Gerber – Editor**

Leon Gerber is a South African film editor and post production coordinator. He is best known for editing *Trouvoete*, *Mignon Mossie Van Wyk*, *Siembamba*, and *Skorokorro* and *The Furnace* for Darrell Roodt. As well as editing several commercials and TV series, he also edited the Showmax hit, "The Girl From St. Agnus".

### **Lelanie Pieters – Production Designer**

Multi-talented Lelanie Pieters worked on numerous TV commercials as an art director, for well-known South African brands including OUTsurance, Vodacom, Klipdrift, Wimpy, Nando's and MacDonald's to name but a few.

*Dust* is her first feature film as production designer.

### **Andrew Phiri – Costume Designer**

Andrew Phiri started his career as costume designer in 2009, right after matriculating in Botswana, on the internationally acclaimed BBC series, "The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency" with Jill Scott, under the watchful eye of costume designer, Jo Katsaras as her trainee.

His breakthrough came when he worked as costume designer on the TV series, "Room 9" with director Darrell Roodt, for which he was nominated for a SAFTA as Best Costume Designer. He also worked on Roodt's *Little One*, which was South Africa's official submission in the Best Foreign Language Film category of the 85<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards® in 2013. He was again nominated for a SAFTA in 2017 for the BBC TV series, "Broken".

## **BIOGRAPHIES – CAST**

### **Shana Mans – ‘Rachel’**

Young and upcoming Cape Town based actress Shana Mans plays the leading role of Rachel in her first feature film debut, *Dust*. She appeared in director Julian Jarrolds’ *The Girl* and can also be seen in next year’s *Kissing Booth 2* for Netflix.

Her television credits include “What Lies Beneath” and “Suidooster” for kykNet.

### **David Butler – ‘David’**

David Butler is a South African actor best known to international audiences for his role as Art in the television drama series “Life is Wild”. He played the same role in the pilot episode of the original British version of the show, called “Wild at Heart”. Butler is better known to South African audiences for his roles in the television series “Generations”, “Shado's”, “Snitch” and “Binnelanders”.

Internationally David has worked with various American and British television directors on projects such as “Black Sails”, “Cape Town”, “Kings & Prophets”, “Madiba” and most recently the series written by Bruce Lee called “Warrior” to name a few.

He has also acted in numerous feature films, including *Cop Land*, *Operation Delta Force 3: Clear Target*, *Circles in a Forest*, *Gums and Noses* and *Zulu Love Letter*. Most notably David has starred in *Long Walk to Freedom*, *Game Changer*, *Breathe*, *Maze Runner*, and *The Forgiven*.

### **Michelle Bradshaw – ‘Janice’**

Michelle Bradshaw is a South African actress and voice artist and is best known for her role as Lindsay Barnes, in the M-Net television series, “The Wild”. She has appeared in numerous local television series including “Isibaya”, “Isidingo”, “Generations” and “Binnelanders” as well as the British comedy series “Beaver Falls” and the American series “Crusoe”.

Michelle was the “station voice” and a radio presenter on Jacaranda FM for over a decade and has also featured in and voiced hundreds of commercials through the years. She was recently seen as the tyrant Cheryl Banks on the local Mzansi drama “Isithembiso”.

Her theatre work includes “Sleeping Around”, “Same old Story” and “Selle ou Storie” where she starred in both with Pieter Dirk Uys.

Michelle studied an N Dip Drama at Pretoria Technicon and went on to complete her licentiate teachers diploma through the Trinity College of London.

### **Kaz McFadden – ‘Caleb’**

Kaz McFadden was born in Pretoria, South Africa. After matriculating at HTS John Vorster, he enrolled at the Performing Arts Lifestyle Institute (PALI). After completing his third year at PALI in 2006, he made his debut on the local television series “Binnelanders”.

In 2007 he completed his fourth year at PALI as well as accepting a permanent role on the kykNET series “Villa Rosa”. Since then he has appeared in other television series such as “Egoli”, “7de Laan”, “Die uwe Pottie Potgieter”, “Koos Roets”, “Pantjieswinkel stories”, “Getroud met Rugby”, “Erfsondes” and “Ouboet en Wors”. His theatre productions include “Paulus”, “Noises Off”, “Vaselinetjie”, “Somewhere on the Border”, “Die Vrou uit die See” and “Baba met die Badwater”.

His film credits include *’n Pawpaw vir my Darling*, *Angus Bachun’s Ordinary People*, Katinka Heyns’ *Die Wonderwerker*, *Knysna*, *Strikdas*, and *Kampterrein*. In 2016 Kaz made his debut as producer when he joined Lara Lourens in producing the short film *Koue Voete* for kykNET’s Silwerskerm Film Festival.

In 2016 Kaz was appointed as Director of Operations for the Performing Arts Lifestyle Institute and in 2018 was appointed as Managing Director of this Performing Arts incubator while functioning as co-owner and Creative Director of Third Law Productions.

### **Gustav Gerdener – ‘Obel’**

Gustav Gerdener is a classically trained theatre actor with more than 15 years of experience in the film, television and theatre industry. He has been nominated for various theatre and television awards throughout his careers, receiving critical acclaim for many of his performances.

He has made his mark overseas starring in various international series and films. His film credits include *House on Willow Street*, *Bram Fisher* and *In the Outback*. Television credits include “Outlander”, “Warrior” and “Madiba”. Local television and films include *The Last Victims*, *Modder en Bloed*, “Donkerland” and “Swartwater” among others.

Gustav Gerdener is also a skilled director and is currently looking to further his career in this discipline.

### **Danielle Goodall – ‘Elma’**

Theatre trained Danielle Goodall is making her feature film debut in *Dust* as the emotionally conflicted, Elma. Her theatre credits include “The House of the Four Temperaments”, “The Red Light Canteen”, “The Skriker”, “Tangaroa” and “The House Of Bernarda Alba”. She also appeared in the local television series “7de Laan”.

### **Deon Coetzee – ‘Lemmy’**

Deon Coetzee is a South African actor and was a provincial rugby player in his younger years before becoming an actor. His first major role was in the television series, “Skooldae” in 1980. From there he appeared in numerous Afrikaans television series including “Die Rooi Komplot”, “Agter Elke Man”, “Egoli” and “7de Laan”.

His film credits include *Boetie gaan border toe*, *Swansong for Charlie*, *Bakgat!*, *Stilte*, *Die Ballade van Robbie de Wee* and *Bram Fisher*. He can also be seen in *The Last Victims* alongside Gustav Gerdener.

### **Justin Strydom – ‘Shane’**

Justin Strydom has been in the film and entertainment industry for over 25 years and is probably most recognised as a SAFTA award winning actor in South African daily dramas like “Isidingo”, “Generations”, “7de Laan” “Binnelanders” and “High Rollers”. His love for factual crime narratives started with “Innocent Times”, which was deeply inspired by the Charmaine Phillips and Pieter Grundlingh story.

He also appeared in the internationally acclaimed film *District 9* for director Neill Blomkamp. Other film credits include *Stander*, *Winnie Mandela*, *Stealing Time*, *Impunity*, *Assignment* and *State Enemy No. 1*.

He is currently in story development for “Binnelanders”, as well as a new factual project for SABC 2 called “I Wish I’d Said”.

### **Christian Gous – ‘Isaac’**

Cristian Gous was born in Pretoria as one of a pair of twin boys. Apart from an interest in drama, Christian sings in the choir, has a passion for visual art and is an academic achiever. He also plays cricket for his school and is an avid Judoka. Christian is making his first feature film debut in *Dust*.