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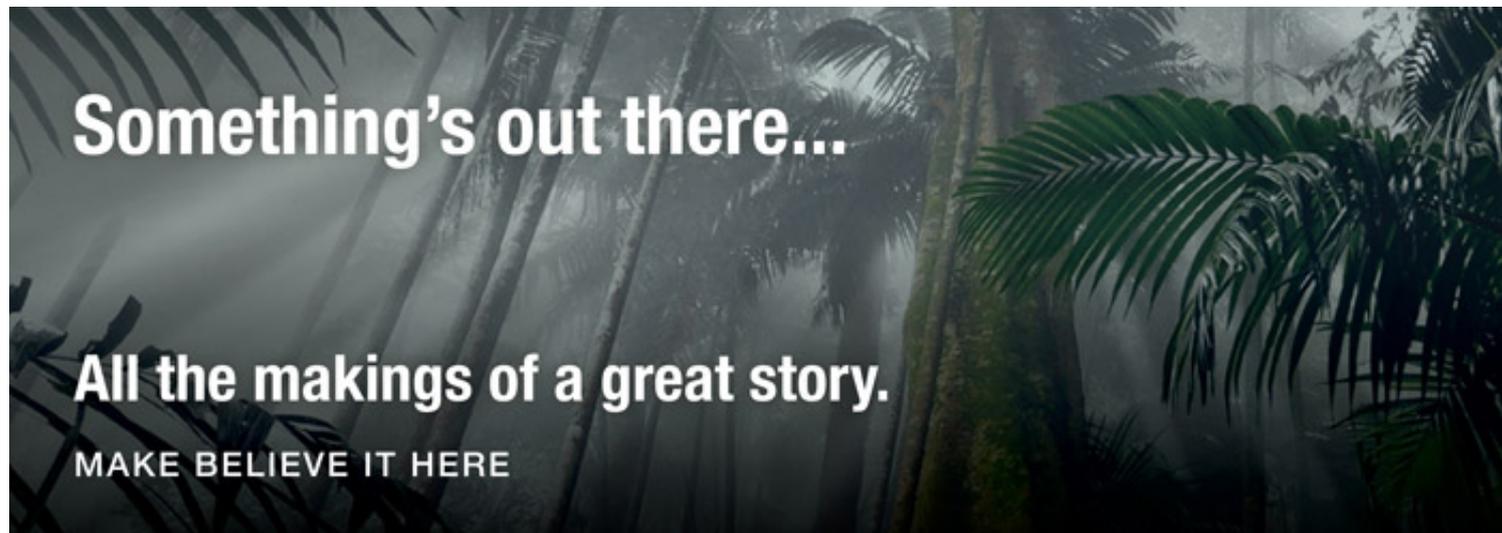


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Ben Allan and Clara Chong jump hurdles to wrap 'Dark Noise'

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Ben Allan and Clara Chong jump hurdles to wrap 'Dark Noise'

Don Groves · Film News · August 31, 2020



Clara Chong and Philip Quast (Photo credit: John Slaytor).

One of first features to roll during the pandemic, Clara Chong and Ben Allan's thriller *Dark Noise* has wrapped after an eventful shoot which spanned 28 days spread in blocks over 12 weeks.

The privately-financed production had to shut down for 48 hours while a team member who had mild symptoms on the COVID-19 list was isolated and tested. It was quickly established the team member had a common cold which did not spread to anyone else.

The producers faced another problem when actress Leah Vandenburg was trapped in Melbourne

during the city's second pandemic wave and could not travel to Sydney. So Maura Fay Casting speedily recast the role, with Renee Lim stepping in.

The producer and DOP, Allan tells IF the disruption and COVID Safe protocols increased the budget by just 12 per cent.

Writer/director Chong said: "The biggest challenges were in writing and blocking scenes where characters can't touch. How to keep the integrity of the characters and story within safety protocols – including love scenes and what used to be normal everyday interactions in our pre-COVID world.

"At a time when the whole world is going through the same craziness and we're all trying to learn together how to go with the flow, films help navigate the myriad of emotions we're going through. With *Dark Noise*, we wanted to create a quirky atmospheric thriller that would both thrill and make you laugh, with characters that draw you in to invest in every twist and turn."

Production designer Sam Wilde observed: "Clara did an amazing job of reworking her script to fit the limitations. We were all excited about forging ahead and being part of a project proving films can still be made in spite of the current climate."

Allan came up with the premise: a young woman with headphones is alone in a rain forest listening for frogs when she hears something she shouldn't have. Chong fleshed out the screenplay with the protagonist as a female Foley artist who stumbles on a large cocaine plantation. With Internet access and police radio hacked, a one-man police station has to fend for itself.

Imogen Sage in 'Dark Noise.' (Photo credit: John Slaytor)

UK theatre actor Imogen Sage plays the lead, Abigail 'Jack' McFadden, a young woman who is alone in the forest listening for frogs when she hears something she shouldn't have.

Lauren Clair is Jack's mother Cassandra with David E. Woodley as her former husband, scientist and conservationist Dr Donovan McFadden. Steve Le Marquand is Ollie Martin, a loner and National Parks officer who becomes a father figure to Constable Myangi (Callan Colley).

Philip Quast is Tanner Blue, a self-made billionaire whose wife died giving birth to their only child. Cast as cops who don't like each other, real life couple Sara Wiseman and Craig Hall, who co-starred in *A Place to Call Home*, worked remotely from their home in New Zealand.

The producers raised the budget without the need of pre-sales, also figuring that with more films going straight to streamers, that may create more room in cinemas for indie films.

The primary target audience is the 35-55 demographic with a slight female skew, Allan said, adding: "Audiences can expect a quirky Australian take on the atmospheric crime-thriller genre in a style we've nicknamed 'sonic-noir.' Think *Twin Peaks* meets *The Usual Suspects*, but in small town Australia."

TAGS

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- #CALLAN-COLLEY
- #CLARA-CHONG
- #DARK-NOISE
- #IMOGEN-SAGE
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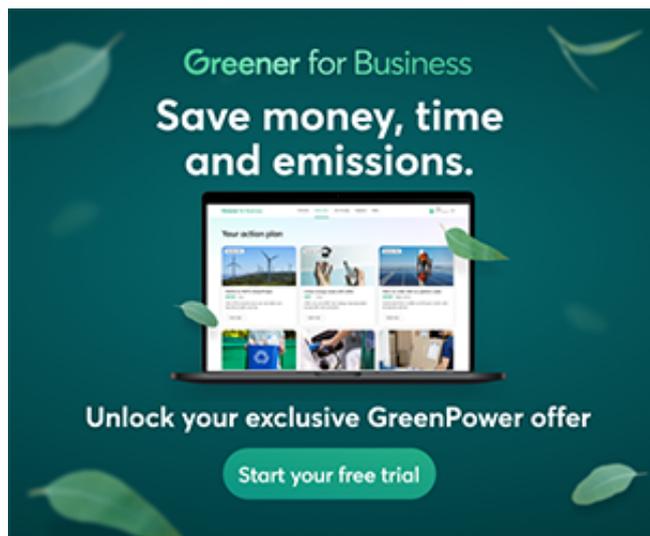


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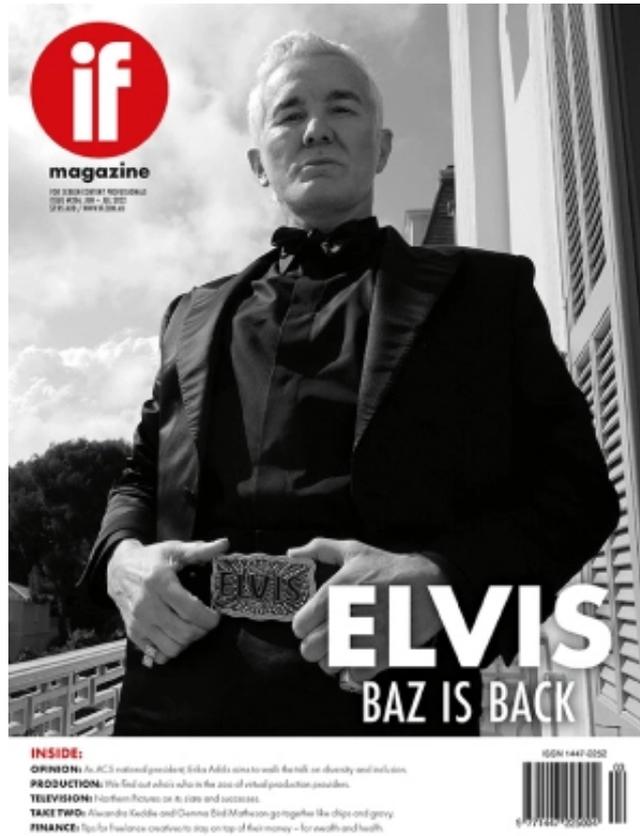


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