

South African short film selected for Cannes

'A Shot at the Big Time,' a short film produced and written by Durban filmmaker and AFDA Durban scriptwriting lecturer, Janet van Eeden has been selected for the Cannes Court Métrage, the short film corner of the official Cannes Festival 2014. It was chosen from over a million entries.

"This honour is something my co-producer, Magda M Olchawska and I have dreamed of since we joined forces to make the short," says Van Eeden. "We met online when I ran the Indiegogo.com crowd-funding campaign in 2011. I'd given up on the dream recently and was working to raise funds to make a feature film by the end of the year, so when she let me know that we'd been accepted, I was over the moon."

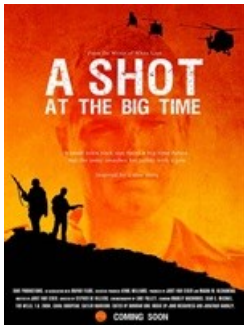


Photo via [AFDA Film School](#)

Remembrance movie

Van Eeden launched the crowd-funding campaign for the film on 11th of the 11th 2011, Remembrance Day, in remembrance of her brother Jimmy, who was killed on the border in mysterious circumstances after being there for only three days in 1979.

"I'd never been able to forget Jimmy's tragic life, and after being challenged by film and theatre critic, Robert Greig, to write about my own life instead of writing plays about literary greats, I finally had the courage to put pen to paper and tackle one of the saddest experiences of my life.

"Jimmy was my idol in the small town of Odendaalsrus. He was a rock star in the eyes of all the youngsters, as he was the lead singer in a band, which dreamed of making the big time. When he received his call-up papers when he was only seventeen, his dream was put on hold. Especially after he had a traumatic incident in basics which made him go AWOL, steal a rifle and fire rounds of bullets into the rubbish dump with the members of his band. A terrible accident happened and Jimmy had a breakdown and was classified as mentally unfit for military service. He tried to put his life back together again but he was broken by the events.

"Three years later the army forgot about the fact that they'd classified him as unfit and called him up to do border duty. He was part of the infantry but he did not want to kill anyone. There are conflicting stories of what happened to him on the border on that fateful day, but all we know for sure is that three days after arriving on the border, my parents received a phone call telling them that Jimmy had been killed by a ricochet bullet."

Crowd-funding pays off

The feature film script of 'A Shot at the Big Time' is based on the story of the tragic loss of her brother, which she says is Oedipal in its intensity. When she could not get funding for the feature without giving away the rights to the film completely and thereby compromising the integrity of the story, she decided on a crowd-funding campaign after listening to US expert Peter Broderick at the Durban Film Mart in 2011.



Janet van Eeden. Photo via [AFDA Film School](#)

She decided to produce the film herself. She did not raise enough money for the feature on Indiegogo.com but received so much support, including finding Stephen de Villiers, a young director from Australia and London producer Olchawska, that they decided to shoot the short film instead.

The lead actors auditioned online as part of the crowd-funding campaign and "the best actors I could've dreamt of" were found in Brad Backhouse as Jimmy and Sean C Michael as the antagonist Van Staden. De Villiers flew out in July 2012 to film the short. Athol Williams, the executive producer, was found through the campaign and he gave whatever he could to make the short film happen.

A Shot at the Big Time was one of the projects selected for the Durban FilmMart in 2012 and the short film premiered at the Durban International Film Festival in July 2013. It was awarded an eThekweni Film Award in November 2013.

Olchawska will represent the short at Cannes, as there has not been enough time to raise sponsorship for Van Eeden's visit. However, she hopes the whole team will represent the film next year when they enter the feature into the festival.

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