



Festival News

There's More To NZ Cinema Than The Rings Trilogy SUN 04 AUG

New Zealand may be better known at the moment as the monumental canvas upon which director Peter Jackson filmed his *The Lord Of The Rings* trilogy, but Mark J. Gordon's *Her Majesty* reminds us just how good, as well as big, New Zealand's cinematic product can be.

New Zealand? Isn't that like the UK down under, with like better weather and a decent minimum wage? Well, maybe, but New Zealand has troubles that run deep: a national guilt that is tied into their handling of Maori repatriation in the 1950s in the face of exploitative land gains imposed by the Commonwealth. It is this fascinating period of history that *Her Majesty*, showing at this year's EIFF, deals with. It does so by telling the story of the 1953 Royal Tour of New Zealand and its effect on twelve-year-old white girl Elizabeth and an old Maori woman named Hira Mata.

It is amazing that a film industry that really only got under way in 1977 (with Roger Donaldson's political thriller *Sleeping Dogs*, whose plot rather presciently involves a totalitarian government beefing up its terrorism legislation by hunting down a fundamentalist naturalist - watch that one did you Mr Bush?) and only found its first international success with a white trash road movie *Goodbye Pork Pie* in 1980 should have given the film world so much talent as well as pioneering a certain kind of ethno political genre.

Lee Tamahouri's *Once Were Warriors* and Geoff Murphy's *Quiet Earth* and *Utu* are head on collisions that try to deal with the fallout that comes from living in another's native land. Add to this the combined talents of Sam Neil, Jane Campion, Russell Crowe (yep, born in Wellington), Peter Jackson, Vincent Ward and many others and you have an industry of considerable influence. More than can be said for its counterpart on the other side of the world.