

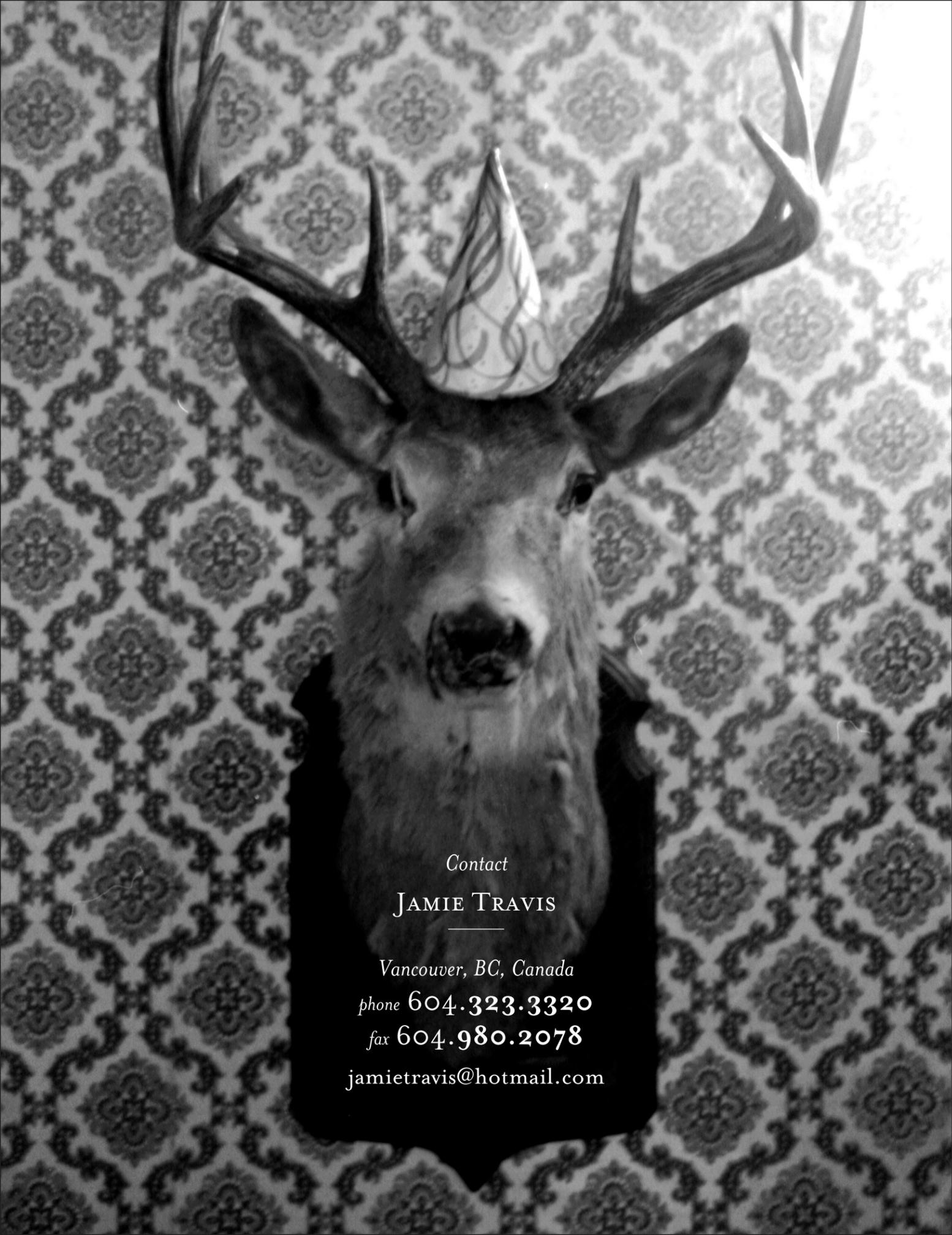
Why
the Anderson
Children

Didn't

Come to
Dinner



Written and Directed by Jamie Travis



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WHY *the* ANDERSON CHILDREN
DIDN'T COME *to* DINNER

16.5 MINUTES | COLOUR | 2003
© MODERN FAMILY PRODUCTIONS

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FESTIVAL HISTORY

~ in chronological order ~

2003 • MONTRÉAL WORLD FILM FESTIVAL | TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL | ATLANTIC FILM FESTIVAL (*Halifax*) | CINEFEST SUDBURY
CALGARY INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL | VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
NORTHWEST FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL (*Portland*) | PRENDS ÇA COURT FILM SERIES (*Montreal*)

2004 • VICTORIA INDEPENDENT FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL
SLAMDANCE FILM FESTIVAL (*Park City*) | BIARRITZ AUDIOVISUAL FESTIVAL (*Fipatel*)
SAN FRANCISCO INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL | FLORIDA FILM FESTIVAL
SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST FILM FESTIVAL (*Austin*) | EAST LANSING FILM FESTIVAL
CLEVELAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL | RENDEZ-VOUS DU CINÉMA QUEBECOIS (*Montréal*)
KANSAS CITY FILMMAKERS JUBILEE | COMMONWEALTH FILM FESTIVAL
JACKSONVILLE FILM FESTIVAL | ANTELOPE VALLEY INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL
UTAH ARTS FESTIVAL | ATLANTA FILM FESTIVAL | SHERBROOKE FILM FESTIVAL (*Québec*)



Press

VICTORIA INDEPENDENT FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL 2004

Winner: Best Student Short

PORTLAND MERCURY | NOVEMBER 6, 2003 | **Chas Bowie**

"It's like THE ROYAL TENENBAUMS meets THE ADDAMS FAMILY, and it's one of the best short films I've ever seen. A set of triplets, a food-obsessive mother hooked to an IV, and a suite of cats move surreally and beautifully through this entrancing film. The art direction had me squealing with glee. Aside from just being an insanely good film, the director is only 23 years old. I'm still in awe."

FILM THREAT | MARCH 18, 2004 | **Doug Brunell**

"This is the kind of film Tim Burton wishes he could make. Kind of touching, kind of morbid and totally original... Rarely has there been a short film so worthy of attention. It has just the right amounts of dark humor and fantasy, and it always takes itself seriously. It's also painfully obvious that director/writer Jamie Travis has a natural gift. If this doesn't win some awards, the judges are asleep at the wheel."

NOW TORONTO | SEPTEMBER 4, 2003 | **Wendy Banks**

"Then there's Jamie Travis's darkly hilarious WHY THE ANDERSON CHILDREN DIDN'T COME TO DINNER, with its hollow-eyed kids straight out of Edward Gorey."

NORTHWEST FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL PROGRAMME GUIDE

"Heroically succulent and frolicsome art direction with a hilariously deadpan delivery."

SAN FRANCISCO INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL PROGRAMME GUIDE

"An exquisitely detailed mannered modern fairy tale."

ATLANTIC FILM FESTIVAL PROGRAMME GUIDE

"Taking a page from Wes Anderson's THE ROYAL TENENBAUMS... Supremely art-directed, this short is a feast for the eyes."

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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I WILL NEVER FORGET THE SECRET MY LONG-TIME NANNY TOLD ME WHEN I WAS SEVEN. IT WAS THE KIND OF SECRET THAT INCITED BOTH FEAR AND DELIGHT IN MY DEVELOPING MIND. I REMEMBER LAUGHING, THEN CRYING, THEN LAUGHING AGAIN. AND I REMEMBER HER UNBLINKING EYES AS SHE DIVULGED IT. NANNY, AS I WILL CALL HER, THOUGHT NOTHING OF IT.

SHE TOLD ME THAT SHE ONCE FLUSHED A CHILD DOWN THE TOILET.

I ALWAYS KNEW SHE HAD FOUR CHILDREN OF HER OWN, BUT SHE INSISTED SHE HAD FIVE. ONLY THE FIRST SHE FLUSHED DOWN THE TOILET. "IT SLIPPED OUT WITH MY PEE, SO I FLUSHED IT." HOW AWFUL NANNY MUST HAVE FELT, I REMEMBER THINKING: WHAT AN UNFORTUNATE ACCIDENT!

AS IT TURNS OUT, SHE HAD MISCARRIED HER FIRST CHILD. I ONLY DISCOVERED THIS IN RECENT YEARS. WHAT STORYTELLING PANACHE SHE HAD! WHAT FLAIR! ONLY NANNY COULD TAKE SOMETHING SO CLINICAL AND MAKE IT SO MYSTICAL! ONLY NANNY COULD TAKE THE LOGIC OF A CHILD AND APPLY IT TO SOMETHING SO ADULT!

Why the Anderson Children Didn't Come to Dinner IS AN ATTEMPTED EMULATION OF NANNY'S EXPERT HANDLING OF THE WORD. HER MATTER-OF-FACT TONE AND HER FANCIFUL WORDS CREATED IN ME, A CHILD OF SEVEN, THE QUEEREST TENSION. DO I LAUGH? DO I CRY? DO I RETURN TO MY LEGO? IT IS THIS TENSION I HAVE STRIVED TO ACHIEVE IN TELLING THE STORY OF MAUD ANDERSON AND HER THREE 'MISCARRIED' CHILDREN.

EITHER YOU CAN LAUGH AND CRY AND LAUGH AGAIN, LIKE I DID.
OR LIKE NANNY, YOU MAY THINK NOTHING OF IT.

Long Synopsis

A day in the life of the Andersons and their three cats.

Maud Anderson, mother of three, prepares bounteous breakfasts, lunches and dinners for her three hollow-eyed children. Her culinary choices are peculiar.

Little does she know that peculiar too are her young ones. Young Chester has a fixation with the toilet and a propensity towards kleptomania. His sister Eliza, a closet-voyeur, likes her Paint-by-Numbers a little too much. And poor Godfrey, buoyed by an awe for the horticultural, can't tell the difference between the things he loves and the things he wants to eat.

All is normal at the Anderson residence until poor Godfrey breaks the house rule. He eats the one food banned from Maud's kitchen, the one food crafty enough to conspire against Maud and make her come undone. He eats a BROWN EGG! And right before lunch!

Maud's sinister retaliation stuns the children and prompts them to orchestrate a harrowing musical number.

As Maud prepares the dinner her kids will never forget, Chester, Eliza and poor Godfrey employ their queer preoccupations for a communal objective - their undeniable, unprecedented and completely heroic absence from dinner.

Tonight Maud Anderson eats alone.

SHORT SYNOPSIS | *Three seven year-olds endure the culinary abuses of their mother. When Mother's aversion to brown eggs reaches new heights, young Chester, Eliza and Godfrey take a stand.*

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Production Notes

Pre-production for *WHY THE ANDERSON CHILDREN DIDN'T COME TO DINNER* began in the fall of 2002.

Jamie Travis, Amy Belling and A.J. Bond made the film as their graduating project from the University of British Columbia's Film Programme.

Travis wanted to make a film with children and cats; he wanted the story to be contained within a single day; and he wanted to create a world in which flocked wallpaper and mounted deer heads incited not even a glimmer of a blink in the eyes of the characters. And so came the sixteen page script for *ANDERSON CHILDREN*.

The three served as Co-producers under the banner Modern Family Productions. A.J. Bond would serve as Editor. Amy Belling would serve as Director of Photography and Sound Designer.

On a \$10 000 budget, many favours needed to be called in to make the slick product the filmmakers intended. Friends, family members, colleagues, equipment houses - all volunteered their valuable hours and resources.

The Dutch Colonial mansion which served as the sole location for principal photography was a donation of sorts as well.

The only cost was the casting of the homeowner's daughter (Katherine Eaton) as young Eliza - a strange deal which worked out very well in the end.

Vancouver casting directors Carole Tarlington and Dorothy Szymanska helped fill the other principal roles. No one could quite relish the line "Tonight we'll be having a very special dinner" the way Patti Wotherspoon could. And so she won the role of Maud Anderson. Colton Boreen was the obvious choice for the role of Godfrey: his only prior acting experience a school play, he showed not the slightest hint of affectation. Michael Kurliak, similarly unaffected, bestowed the character of Chester with a charming insolence.



Principal photography began on November 28, 2003 after months of colour coordinating and test shooting. The original eight scheduled days became twelve once the filmmakers learned of the great difficulties involved when children, cats, pigs' heads and Vancouver weather come together.

Fly infestation, the foul smell of rotting meat, the hijinks of warring cats and the fluctuating sugar levels of eight year-olds - these all posed quite the challenge for the three student filmmakers and their twenty to thirty person crew. The budget was soaring. The film stock was disappearing. And Christmas was coming.

The outdoor shots were necessarily postponed until the first non-rainy weekend in the new year. Well into February, dryness finally arrived. Godfrey's exterior scenes were shot in A.J. Bond's Vancouver backyard. And the climactic swingset scene was shot commando-style in between bouts of showers in Vancouver's Kitsilano area.

Editing spanned from January to March 2003 at the UBC editing facilities. The original assembly was twenty five minutes long and needed major cuts. A.J. Bond tried out countless variations, and finally, in March, the 16.5 minute final cut was ready for Amy Belling's sound treatment.

Dave Webber, a Vancouver musician and graphic designer, was brought on board as Composer. His klezmer-inspired, pizzicato strings-heavy score made the Andersons seem only weirder.

The film premiered at the UBC Student Film Festival on May 2, 2003. Awards received include Outstanding Film, Outstanding Direction and Art Direction for Jamie Travis, Outstanding Cinematography for Amy Belling, an honourable mention in editing for A.J. Bond, the People's Choice Award and a special commendation for excellence in cat wrangling.



FILMMAKERS' BIOGRAPHIES

JAMIE TRAVIS | Writer / Director / Co-producer / Production Designer

Jamie Travis graduated from the University of British Columbia with a BA in Film Studies. The first film he wrote and directed at UBC, entitled *DIARY OF AN INSOMNIAC* (2002), travelled most notably to the Montreal World Film Festival. *WHY THE ANDERSON CHILDREN DIDN'T COME TO DINNER* (2003) served as his graduating film. Stationed in Vancouver, BC, Jamie is currently writing a number of shorts and a feature, *I HATE WHITE RABBITS*. | 604.323.3320 / jamietravis@hotmail.com

AMY BELLING | Director of Photography / Co-producer / Sound designer

Amy Belling is a graduate of the UBC Film Programme, and is currently working as an Associate Producer at Soapbox Productions. She is also producing two short films and a music video. On the opposite side of the festival fence, she worked as the Canadian Images Programme Assistant at the 2003 Vancouver International Film Festival. | 604.626.2781 / amy@magicaltingles.com

A.J. BOND | Editor / Producer

A.J. Bond started his film career as an actor, appearing in Canadian films like *KITCHEN PARTY* (Slamdance 1998) and *BETTER THAN CHOCOLATE*. A recent graduate of the University of British Columbia Film Programme, where he wrote and directed a short film titled *REPEAT* (2002), A.J. is now pursuing a career behind the camera. | 604.760.9766 / bonders007@hotmail.com

Credits

WHY THE ANDERSON CHILDREN
DIDN'T COME TO DINNER

Written and directed by
JAMIE TRAVIS

Director of photography
AMY BELLING

Editor
A.J. BOND

Cast
PATTI WOTHERSPOON as MAUD
COLTON BOREEN as GODFREY
MICHAEL KURLIAK as CHESTER
KATHERINE EATON as ELIZA

SCRIBBLE as BLACK CAT
BUNNIE as WHITE CAT
JIM as ORANGE CAT

Casting by
CAROLE TARLINGTON &
DOROTHY SZYMANSKA

Producer
A.J. BOND

Co-Producers
AMY BELLING
JAMIE TRAVIS

Music by
DAVE WEBBER

Music Engineer
BEN KARLSTROM

Production Designer
JAMIE TRAVIS

1st Assistant director
A.J. BOND

Production Assistants
RITA YEE
MANDY WORTHY
MICHELLE TSAO

Cat Wranglers
JEFF KHONSARY
COURTENAY WEBBER

Catering
HEIDI BELLING
DIANE TRAVIS
CAILIN GOOD
PETR BENDA
JANET AND JIM BOND

Camera Operator
AMY BELLING

1st Assistant Camera
LEIGH JENKINS

2nd Assistant Camera
KEVIN HARDIMAN

Trainee Assisant Camera
COLIN MASKELL

Stills Photographers
ASHLEY MAILE
LYNETTE GILLIS
JEFF KHONSARY
COLIN MASKELL

Videographer
YU GU

Gaffer
MARTIN KOSTIAN

Lamp Operators
BRETT BIRD
COLIN MASKELL
HENNISEA HOY
JENNIFER SHANSE
GWEN HAWORTH
CHRIS KEMPINSKI
SHANNON O'NEILL
BYRON LAMARQUE
JENNIFER OEY

Dolly Grip / Grip
RYAN THOMAS CATHERWOOD

Grips
KEN STEINKE
CHRIS ROY
JOE TOLTA

Sound Recordist
PAUL FURMINGER

Additional Sound Recording
SIMON MCNABB

Boom Operator
SHAWN MILLER

Sound Designer
AMY BELLING

Sound Mixer
AMOS HERTZMAN

Continuity
NASHILA BHIMJI

Costume Designers
JESSICA ROBILLARD
GREGORY SHANK
LISA STARY

Key Makeup Artist
SHERYL-LYNN ONG

Assistant Makeup Artist
SHAB RASHID

Set Design Consultant
JANICE CHIU

Cat Paintings by
HUMANFIVE:
MIKE SWANEY
JARET PENNER
SIMON REDEKOP

Prop Designers
COURTENAY WEBBER
JAMES FRIESEN
NICOLE TAYLOR

Food Stylists
VISH JUGDEO
MANDY WORTHY

Titles Design
JAMES FRIESEN

Painters
DARREN CLAYDON
BECKY HALL
PIETER BRUSSE
JUDY HERLICK
CHRIS FUNNELL
SHANNON MURRAY
GUITA YAZDANI
JENNIFER LAPIERRE
VISH JUGDEO
RANDY WHITE
DIANA SORRENTI
DAVE BARSHLOMO
RICH MAEROV
JEFF KHONSARY
COURTENAY WEBBER
MISCHA ZAJTMANN
MARK NEIGHBOR
INGRID COUGHLIN
PAUL FURMINGER
PETR BENDA
SARAH SHAMASH
KAREN TRAVIS

Carpenter
PIETER BRUSSE

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