



OFFICIAL PRESS KIT

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SHORT SYNOPSIS

The antithesis of a rock biography, ANONYMOUS CLUB paints a raw and intimate picture of enigmatic singer-songwriter, Courtney Barnett – an anti-influencer who is a powerful voice for our times, a recluse acclaimed by audiences the world over and a strong female artist in conflict with herself.



EXTENDED SYNOPSIS

With unprecedented, intimate access to the private life of Courtney Barnett, this innovative and stylised 16mm feature documentary follows a paradoxically introverted performer and anti-influencer, who, at the height of success, is ready to walk away. Long-time collaborator Danny Cohen's feature documentary reveals a woman who finds power in sharing her vulnerability. Recording her innermost thoughts on a Dictaphone over a period of three years, Courtney begins her slow acceptance of Danny Cohen's camera. This unique filming process mirrors Courtney's gradual search for purpose and emergence as an artist embracing her place in the world.



ABOUT THE FILM

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This feature documentary project was initiated in 2018 by Danny Cohen, who has been collaborating for many years with Courtney Barnett on her award-winning and highly imaginative music videos. Danny spent three years on tour in Europe, the US and Asia and at home in Melbourne filming with Barnett as a one-man crew, shooting on a 16mm camera, customised to record sync sound.

In tandem with filming, at the suggestion of Danny, the notoriously guarded Courtney Barnett kept an audio diary on an analogue Dictaphone. These unmediated reflections capture Courtney's internal struggles – from her own confidence and self-perception, to the pressures of fame, to understanding her place in music and as an artist navigating the world around her.

Philippa Campey and Samantha Dinning of independent production company Film Camp came on board as producers of the project in mid-2019 and subsequently received development support from Film Victoria to conduct crucial story work. As part of this development the team engaged award-winning filmmaker Glendyn Ivin as a story consultant and mentor to help shape the film's story, together with editor Ben Hall.

ANONYMOUS CLUB was financed with the MIFF Premiere Fund, Film Victoria, Screen Australia, The Post Lounge, Mind The Gap Film Finance and Film Art Media, alongside private investment. The edit took place over 16 weeks in Brunswick, Melbourne and the score, composed by Courtney Barnett and Stella Mozgawa (who has produced Courtney's upcoming album), was recorded over three days at Newmarket Studios in North Melbourne.



COURTNEY BARNETT

In the hands of Courtney Barnett, fragments of everyday life become rich and riveting. A deft lyricist and virtuosic guitarist, she is an emblem of millennial wit and one of Australia's most successful musical exports.

Based for much of her adult life in Melbourne, Barnett first found critical acclaim with 2013's *The Double EP: A Sea of Split Peas*, and broke into the mainstream in 2015 with her debut album, *Sometimes I Sit and Think, and Sometimes I Just Sit*. Garnering a coveted Best New Artist Grammy nomination and numerous other accolades, the album stands as a generational classic. Barnett followed her debut with 2017's *Lotta Sea Lice*, an acclaimed collaborative record with Kurt Vile, and eschewed the vignettes of her early records on 2018's *Tell Me How You Really Feel*, her humid, political sophomore record, which featured the Margaret Atwood-invoking single "Nameless, Faceless".

Barnett is also a powerhouse live act, playing slots at festivals including Coachella, Bonnaroo, Governor's Ball, Primavera, and Lollapalooza. In 2021, she'll release *Things Take Time, Take Time*, a remarkable artistic step forward. In the meantime, Barnett will undoubtedly continue doing what she does best: translating the chaos of the world into sparkling, indelible poetry.



DANNY COHEN **WRITER / DIRECTOR**

Danny Cohen is a Melbourne-based director who has filmed and photographed some of the most interesting and influential figures in contemporary music. An accomplished photographer, Cohen has in recent years become a sought-after music video director, and his kaleidoscopic clips for King Gizzard and the Lizard Wizard, Kirin J. Callinan and longtime collaborator Courtney Barnett have attracted tens of millions of views online. His diverse photographic portfolio includes memorable portraits of Eric Andre and Mac DeMarco.

Cohen is a past winner of the Triple J Music Video of the Year award and a past nominee for the ARIA Best Music Video award. *ANONYMOUS CLUB* is his first feature film.



PHILIPPA CAMPEY PRODUCER

Philippa Campey is the founder of Melbourne-based production company Film Camp. Over the past 16 years Film Camp has produced many critically acclaimed and commercially successful feature documentaries including *Brazen Hussies*, *The Leunig Fragments*, *No Time For Quiet*, *Bastardy* and *murundak: Songs of Freedom*.

Her debut feature drama *Galore* premiered at Berlinale 2014, *The Face of Ukraine: Casting Oksana Baiul*, won the Short Film Jury Prize at Sundance 2015 and her debut short *Clara* won the Jury Special Mention in Cannes 2005.

Other films have won awards at the AACTA, FCCA, AFI Fest, FIFO and Seminci Valladolid, and have screened at over 100 festivals in the world including Venice, Berlinale, Telluride, True/False, BFI London and Sheffield Doc/Fest.

Philippa was awarded SPA's Independent Documentary Producer of the Year (2008); Film Victoria's Greg Tepper Award (2009); and is an inaugural recipient of Film Victoria's Natalie Miller Fellowship Women in Leadership (2016).



SAMANTHA DINNING PRODUCER

Sam Dinning's experience and passion for story-craft and script development has seen the recent conception and delivery of feature documentary *No Time For Quiet* (MIFF 2019 Audience Award, ABCTV) and ABC Art Bites Series *The Unmissables*. With Philippa Campey, she is currently producing feature documentaries: *Palazzo Di Cozzo* (ABCTV, Sharmill Films) about furniture magnate Franco Cozzo; *ANONYMOUS CLUB*, about award-winning singer songwriter Courtney Barnett; and developing TV drama series *Foreign Soil* written by author Maxine Beneba Clarke. Other producing credits include *Treaty* (NITV, SBS) and *Guardians of the Strait* (MIFF).

Supported by Film Victoria, Sam is currently writing a documentary adaptation of Michael Atherton's book 'A Coveted Possession: The Rise and Fall of the Piano in Australia' for Film Camp and a 3-part ABC series about the history of the Australian Ballet for WildBear Entertainment.

SUE MASLIN

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Sue Maslin is one of Australia's most successful screen producers with a track record of producing award winning feature and documentary films including the smash hit *The Dressmaker*, one of Australia's all time highest grossing films.

Sue is committed to engaging and empowering audiences with ideas that matter. Her innovative company, Film Art Media established in 2008 with Daryl Dellora, develops and distributes screen content across many platforms with a focus on blue chip documentaries including *Jill Bilcock – Dancing The Invisible* and *The Show Must Go On* which addressed mental wellbeing in the arts and entertainment sector. Her latest releases include *Why Did She Have To Tell The World?* and the highly successful theatrical documentary, *Brazen Hussies*. Feature film credits include *Road to Nhill* and *Japanese Story*, Best Film at 2003 AACTA Awards.

Sue's outstanding 35-year contribution to the Australian screen industry has been recognised in numerous ways, most recently when she received the 2021 Chauvel Award. Reflecting her commitment to advocacy for women, Sue was inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women in 2018. In 2019 Sue was appointed as an Officer (AO) of the Order of Australia for distinguished service to the Australian film industry.

NICK O'BYRNE

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Nick O'Byrne began his artist-management career shortly after he first saw Courtney Barnett perform at the East Brunswick Club in 2011. Working together with Barnett from that day onwards, he has been there every step of the way throughout her extraordinary journey. These days Nick is the co-founder and director of Look Out Kid, an Australian-based artist-management company whose roster includes the aforementioned Barnett, Sarah Blasko, Briggs, Middle Kids, Faye Webster, Beverly Glenn-Copeland and Arooj Aftab. Prior to his work in artist management, Nick was the Executive Programmer of Brisbane's BIGSOUND Festival and the General Manager of the Australian Independent Record Labels Association (AIR).

BEN HALL

EDITOR

Ben has worked as a freelance editor for 15 years, having been taught the editing skills of storytelling, rhythm and emotion by his father, a commercial editor for over 30 years.

He has worked on a variety of documentary, film, commercial, and music video projects, including Courtney Barnett's *Need a Little Time*, *The Eagle* (winner best documentary St Kilda Film Festival), feature documentary Judd Reid, *Journey to the 100 Man Kumite* (screened by networks and in cinemas globally), feature documentary *Cryptopia* (funded by Screen Australia), feature documentary *Stan the Man* (currently in production) and the Sony feature film *Spin Out* (screened in cinemas globally).

Ben has worked at ABC, editing *The Yearly* with Charlie Pickering and does casual editing for Channel 10's *The Project*.

STELLA MOZGAWA

CO-COMPOSER

Stella Mozgawa is an artist, writer, producer and arranger. As a member of Warpaint, she has released four critically acclaimed albums that have sold a combined 500,000 copies globally.

Warpaint's music has been featured in advertising for Gucci, Chanel, Stella McCartney, Calvin Klein, Steve Madden and others. It has also been used in numerous television shows including True Blood, American Horror Story, C.S.I., Gossip Girl, Revenge, Reign, Flaked, American Crime and Suits.

Her collaborations include contributions to albums by a variety of artists such as Courtney Barnett and Kurt Vile, Queens Of The Stone Age, Cate Le Bon, The xx, Kurt Vile, Adam Green, Regina Spektor, Kim Gordon, Flea, Sharon Van Etten and Tom Jones.

Stella has produced acclaimed remixes of many artists including Courtney Barnett, Depeche Mode, Daughter, Shura, Georgia, and Eves The Behavior.

Her composition work includes creating the score for independent film Clara's Ghost, which will be released this year through MGM.

MILK! RECORDS

Milk! Records was founded by the Grammy & Brit Award nominated, multiple ARIA award-winning artist Courtney Barnett and the Australia Music Prize & ARIA nominated & AIR winner Jen Cloher in 2012. Milk! Records is a queer run record label that has released over 60 titles from Australian artists including Dyson Stringer Cloher, Hachiku, Liz Stringer, The Finks, Jade Imagine, Evelyn Ida Morris, Loose Tooth, and East Brunswick All Girls Choir. Milk! was awarded Best Independent Label at the 2015 and 2018 Australian Independent Record Labels Association Awards. Five of Milk's releases have debuted in the top 5 in the ARIA Album chart with Courtney Barnett's "Tell Me How You Really Feel" debuting at #2. Milk Records is a community of artists and arts workers who share their experience, resources, time and presence to transform the music industry into a space of collaboration, discovery, inclusion, support, independence and strength.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

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Courtney and I have struck up quite a lovely creative friendship over the last however many years. It's a bond which has grown with overlapping tastes and changing palettes. You know, I'll share something, she'll share something in return here and there. Not often but often enough to pop into a daydream now and then. Each time we'd find ourselves working together again we'd learn a little more, which in turn might fold into the next project and so on and so on until the idea of this film came hopping along. I'd never really considered making a documentary, but the opportunistic challenge was present and my curiosity was stirred.

I found the right 16mm camera with the 80s advertisement championing it "like a cat on the shoulder". Sure, the slogan was correct, ish. The camera was all black (the bringer of good or bad luck, depending on where you were born). It purred. A cool cat, but at the same time particularly particular and it was hungry. It weighed enough to add even more psychical and metaphorical pressure to the looming tour and became a very present, daily reminder of a stylistic decision to shoot the whole thing on film.

I was yay deep into the first year of filming, and a newfound tour buddy told me Courtney was like a hawk – in a completely endearing way, of course. I think. There'd be a whole bunch of noise in a room and she'd sit, sometimes on the fringe of the group, sometimes right in the middle – but she'd just sit there. And listen. And observe. At least this was true from my new found perspective, thanks to my birdwatcher friend. I too started to watch Courtney and found the metaphor to be somewhat reliable. I'm not sure if she was hunting like a hawk but she was definitely searching.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT (CONTINUED)

Like anything, enough repetition got me into the swing of filming and life on the road. Go to sleep in this country, wake up in that bus. Wait for a call, then get the call; in the thickest New York accent I'd ever heard, "Danny, we got pictures!". This forever quotable voice would soothe my fortnightly film development fears. Moments like this truly made me feel like I was in Hollywood's version of Hollywood.

I'd quietly whistle Courtney's songs, then get told I couldn't whistle. Crew would wonder why I was there. I was wondering why I was there. I'd film a conversation, film a duck, film a famous road, film a famous person. Seemingly grand moments would continually fall short of their own expectations, which in turn triggered the search for the smaller moments. Piece by piece I was unknowingly building the film.

In another room, somewhere, in that country there, Courtney would be building the film too. She'd make time between the hours of soggy hotel breakfasts and seas of screams to update me on her search. All the while, I'd keep filming without knowing how she felt until I carefully backed up the diary entries, usually a month or two later. Always a surprise both pleasant and not to hear her sometimes chirpy "Hey Danny". Always fascinating, and always thinking about how to turn my now dear friend's inner rollercoaster into a 90 minute ticketed ride.

Eventually, enough time had passed and without ever really thinking about it, but at the same time being completely consumed by it, I'd documented a story; one of a searching woman, of tremendous personal growth, and limitless talent. Reflecting now, three years later, it's wild to think where curiosity has led, or will lead. As my friend always says, or at least once said; it's a big world if you look close enough.

Danny Cohen



PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

PRODUCERS' STATEMENT

ANONYMOUS CLUB is an ambitious and innovative documentary that tests the boundaries of traditional storytelling. We were immediately drawn to the idea of an 'anti-rock doc,' and saw great potential in Danny's unique approach and style which steer away from a traditional bio-pic. Rather, the film is unashamedly 'independent' in nature, it's bold and it allows access to a story many would be desperate to both tell and hear. The material is beautifully raw, honest and reveals a highly talented but complex character.

Courtney Barnett is adored by people all over the world, and yet she lives a relatively isolated life. On stage, she is a wonderfully talented and charismatic entertainer, however, off stage she is awkwardly shy, insecure and endures periods of depression. In many ways ANONYMOUS CLUB is a one-woman show in which Courtney involuntarily becomes both the protagonist and antagonist in her own story. The core tension is embedded in this duality.

The story is also unique in the way it lifts the hood on the isolation of fame and its effect on mental health. Courtney's experience of depression is incredibly honest and, in turn inspiring, she is the everyday person living an extraordinary life.

Samantha Dinning and Philippa Campey



DIRECTOR'S Q&A

DIRECTOR'S Q&A – DANNY COHEN

1. Tell us about how you and Courtney Barnett came to work together?

I'd mainly been doing photography but had recently started working on music videos. I had admired Courtney and her music from afar and was quite keen to work with her on something. My partner's band Loose Tooth is on Courtney's label, and she introduced us. It started with a photoshoot of a portrait of Courtney's head in an Australian bush diorama, and over time, we just went from project to project.

The Kurt Vile and Courtney Barnett collaboration came along, so I started to shoot photos for that. Then I did some music videos for them, then some more music videos for Courtney. I think it's been 7 or 8 projects in four years, and it's been a really fun and creative partnership. It's been rewarding, and I think we've built a good understanding of each other and what we like and don't like.

2. How did the creative process of the documentary compare to previous projects you had worked on with Courtney?

It was pretty much the opposite of what we'd done before because album covers and music videos are pretty scripted. Especially for a music video, one that's quite conceptual, it's mapped out to the nth degree, with room to find something on the day. Whereas with the documentary, I went into it without really knowing what I was trying to find but knowing that I had to find a story. Nothing was necessarily planned out. The plan was to just be where Courtney was. There were no interviews, it was just a matter of being at the right place at the right time and to just find those moments.

DIRECTOR'S Q&A – DANNY COHEN

3. The film feels very intimate. Do you think your long-standing friendship with Courtney helped to achieve this?

Definitely. I think it also helped that it was just me. That there wasn't a crew around me. We were often in a dressing room or a hotel room, those really quiet places. It was just me with a camera and a sound recorder. So those moments feel really intimate because they were.

It definitely took time for Courtney to feel comfortable with me being around and being in those situations. In the film, you can see that over time she gets to a level of comfort where she begins to interact with me and the camera, as opposed to initially ignoring it.

4. Can you tell us about the creative decision to provide Courtney with a sound recorder?

You can see in the film that Courtney has a history of not feeling entirely comfortable in interviews or on camera. The decision came from trying to get to the core of what her story is, without the pressure of her being interviewed or filmed by me. Even with our friendship, there is still a level of intensity and pressure when you point the camera at someone and start asking questions. Especially with the idea that some of that footage could be used and seen by a broader audience.

So, the Dictaphone allowed her to talk about anything she wanted without any pressure. She could start a recording and then finish it later. It didn't have any set rules, it was just when she had time, or felt comfortable, or had something to share. Or she could be walking around a city on her own on a day off and she'd just chat into the Dictaphone.

DIRECTOR'S Q&A – DANNY COHEN

I gave her the idea that if it made her feel more comfortable, she could pretend she was talking to me, so it creates a connection there. Over time, she got really comfortable with it and just went deeper and deeper and deeper. After a year of filming and looking at the footage, I made the call to start talking to Courtney on camera, so the interaction could help build the story. And you can see my hesitation, when I first start talking to her, I'm not a journalist but I started to wing it and bring some of our friendship on to the screen.

5. Why did you decide to shoot on film?

I love the feeling of it. It feels like a memory, but not in a nostalgic way. I mean film has a nostalgia to it, its colour accuracy and tonality is so lifelike and real. It feels like what life looks like. It doesn't feel too sharp or digital or harsh, just a natural way of seeing things. Film is magical and immersive, it has texture; it puts you right there in the scene and I think adds to the intimacy of it. Something about it just draws you in.

It was also a choice to put restrictions on filming for me. Film is so expensive to use that I could only roll one or two rolls a day, which is 10-20 minutes. So, you really have to pick your moments of what you're going to film. And over time you learn, you're looking for the in-between moments. There might be a big show with 10,000 people, it's going to be a huge event and everyone's talking about it, but that doesn't necessarily translate on screen. And it doesn't necessarily tell a story as much as those smaller moments. I conditioned myself to set up in those positions, to find those moments, those little bits and pieces.

I also feel like when you're shooting digital, you usually have a viewfinder or display and that adds another element in a room. Other people around or band members, they can see what you're filming and when you're filming. It's kind of a presence in a room, that makes people feel a bit on edge, as opposed to a film camera, that is somewhat compact with no screen attached. It feels like you can blend in a bit more.

DIRECTOR'S Q&A – DANNY COHEN

6. What was the biggest challenge for you in making this film?

Aside from shooting on film and travelling with film, and the physical challenges that come with shooting film along with the risk, I think it was most challenging to tell the story just through the use of footage and Dictaphone recordings. Because they happened at separate times. You'd be filming a moment, not really knowing what Courtney's thinking, but then hearing that moment a couple of months later. So, everything was delayed and out of sync. Coming into the edit, I knew what story needed to be told, but to find that story and to find it clear enough for an audience to follow, was really challenging.

7. You have a background in photography, what led you to directing and what creative projects are on the horizon for you?

I'd always been drawn to film. I worked in a cinema as a kid as a projectionist, and it's always been in my life. Photography was a stepping stone to film. Being a photographer, for me, felt quite isolating. You don't have that broader team to bounce off. When the opportunity came along to shoot a friend's music video, it felt like a sandbox to play in. It was so much fun and such a different challenge, but a really supported challenge. I felt more at home than I'd ever been creatively. I went from music video to music video until the documentary came along.

Next, I think I'd like to work on a fiction narrative film. I have a short in the works, which will happen when I've had a break and I'm ready for the next journey.



BILLING BLOCK

SCREEN AUSTRALIA AND FILM ART MEDIA

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL PREMIERE FUND

AND FILM VICTORIA PRESENT A FILM CAMP PRODUCTION ANONYMOUS CLUB

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY DANNY COHEN FEATURING COURTNEY BARNETT

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY & SOUND RECORDIST DANNY COHEN FILM EDITOR BEN HALL

SOUND DESIGNER RYAN GRANGER ORIGINAL MUSIC BY COURTNEY BARNETT & STELLA MOZGAWA

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS SUE MASLIN, NICK O'BYRNE PRODUCED BY PHILIPPA CAMPEY & SAMANTHA DINNING

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TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Runtime: 83 mins

Format: HD & 2K, available 25fps DCP (with AD and CC)

Shot on: 16mm film Kodak Stock

Gauge: 16:9

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Philippa Campey & Samantha Dinning

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