



Paul Murphy and the wee gnome made by Richard Taylor for his film *Second-Hand Wedding*.

Murphy's Lore

A second-generation Kiwi filmmaker hits the big screen.

When a yellow Mini roars along the road in the second scene of new feel-good comedy *Second-Hand Wedding*, you can't help but be reminded of another little yellow Mini that became a Kiwi film icon in the early-80s classic *Goodbye Pork Pie*.

But the car isn't the closest connection between the two films. *Second-Hand Wedding* director-producer Paul Murphy is the son of *Goodbye Pork Pie* director Geoff Murphy, one of the founding fathers of the New Zealand film industry.

Uncannily, the reprise of the yellow Mini was pure coincidence. While *Second-Hand Wedding's* script called for a red Mini with a boot big enough to fit the finds of the film's leading lady (a garage-sale junkie), the production designer found a grumpy Mini Clubman Estate that just happened to be yellow. "I thought, 'Oh no, I'm probably going to get some grief over this,'" says Paul, with a grin. "But I quite liked the idea of paying homage."

For the Murphy clan, film has always been a family affair. All four of Paul's siblings are in the industry, mum Pat is a script supervisor who worked on *Second-Hand Wedding*, uncle Kerry was executive producer on the film, and Paul's 11-year-

old daughter Ella has a cameo role. (Paul, who lives in Wellington, has four children with partner Vicki O'Hagan, a film-industry executive assistant.)

On one trip to Gisborne when Paul was 15, the family's Kombi van broke down. While they were waiting to be rescued, his sister Robin grabbed their dad's 8mm camera and made a short film starring brother Matt as the villain and Paul as Superman.

"As kids we lived it," says Paul, who grew up '70s-style in "what's loosely termed a commune but was really an extended family". The Murphy, Sanderson and Lawrence families (the late Bruno Lawrence is Paul's uncle by marriage) lived together, with 15 kids in all, on an acre block in Waimarama, Hawkes Bay, and performed together in the travelling band Blerta. Geoff began directing feature films and, from the age of 16, Paul worked in assorted rudimentary roles on five of them. One was 1988's *Never Say Die*.

After spending a few years in the freezing works and doing building jobs, Paul rang Geoff and cheekily asked to be the film's third assistant director. "Dad told me that if you want to learn about the film industry, be a gaffer [lighting director] or a grip [camera safety and movement]."

Paul signed on as assistant grip and soon learned that his father was right. "As a grip you work alongside hundreds of directors, DOPs

[directors of photography] and actors."

Although he's been everything from gopher to gaffer to set dresser, Paul has spent half of his three decades in the industry as key grip; his CV includes *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and *King Kong*. (Don't assume his famous dad got him any gigs: Geoff had relocated to the US by the time his son made his mark, and Paul never mentioned the father-son connection.)

In 2004, he followed his father into directing, and has worked on TV commercials, two children's TV series, short film *SOX*, and TV2's *Sensing Murder*.

A dozen short-film ideas had been rejected by the New Zealand Film Commission when he read scriptwriter friend Nick Ward's feature-length screenplay about the trials and tribulations of the Kapiti Coast's Rose family. The uncontrived Kiwi characters appealed, but Ward's application for funding had already been turned down.

"So I said to Nick, 'Why don't I just grab some people and make it?'" recalls Paul. "I'd come to realise the only way to make an impression on the film world was to get out and shoot something."

So he did. Using borrowed camera equipment, cast and crew worked on the proviso that they'd get paid if and when *Second-Hand Wedding* made money.

When doubt crept in over whether the film would work, Paul rang his father, who reassured him mid-shoot jitters were perfectly normal. "He said, 'Filmmaking is unpredictable. You could think you're onto a winner and it might fail. You could think it's a dog and it could turn out a winner. It takes on its own life; just guide it and set it loose.'"

The rookie wrapped filming in just 24 unusually fine winter days. However, without post-production funding, the film couldn't easily be finished to the standard required for commercial theatre release.

After a rough-cut viewing, the impressed NZFC stumped up \$845,000: cue editing by Academy-Award nominee Michael Horton, and sound by double Academy Award winners Michael Hopkins and Mike Hedges at Wellington's world-class Park Road studios.

From first take to nationwide theatre release on May 15, the film swallowed less than 12 months of Murphy's life.

"Dad's career has taught me if you want to make a film, you can create something out of nothing – and make something that costs \$50 look like \$5000." +