

## John Banks

Auckland Mayor/  
radio presenter  
and father to  
Natalia, 21,  
Sergei, 17, and  
Alexander, 16



It's all about giving and receiving, mainly giving – although I'm told at age 25 your kids finally say thank you. I've formed an opinion, as one of the oldest fathers in the country, that children only need two things: unconditional love and a world-class education.

## Scribe

Hip-hop artist  
and father of four

Being a dad, I've found I am constantly learning how to fit everything into a day. Every parent knows raising children is a full-time job, especially when you have kids at school as well as home. And then, if you're like me, there's rugby practices, hip-hop dancing, kapahaka practices, school productions, etc. I have learned that time management is the key because, let's face it, even cleaning up after your children is a never-ending battle. But with good time management, a tight routine and a lot of greasing up to your parents, you can still balance a career and a life of your own as well as having to run around after those lovely kids.



## Carly Binding

Singer/songwriter  
and daughter of  
artist Wellesley Binding

The relationship between my father and I is a perfect case for the argument of nature verses nurture. Although I did not grow up with my father and have never spent more than a few weeks with him at one time, we are, in many ways, one and the same. I was lucky enough to be passed his abilities and a little of what I consider to be his great and complex mind. My father is an artist: a painter, art lecturer, part-time gardener and maker of anything his mind can imagine. To him there is no such thing as an idea which can't be manifested into a physical object.



## Jason Gunn

TV presenter/game  
show host and  
father to Eve,  
19, Grace, 13,  
Faith, 10, and  
Louis, 5

Parenting has given me a huge appreciation for my parents and how they were always there for me. It's only now, being a dad, that I've realised how good I actually had it. Every time I think my kids are causing me a bit of strife, I think "I bet I was no smooth ride". They say the best thing you can give your kids is quality time and certainly it's something I've discovered. And also the importance of keeping promises – if you break the small promises how can you expect them to trust you for the big things?



# Warriors princess

Rena Owen casts vanity aside for her role in Vincent Ward's upcoming movie *Rain Of The Children*, reports Sarah Lang.

**W**HEN I first saw Vincent Ward's new film *Rain of the Children*, I honestly didn't recognise Rena Owen. Not because I expected the award-winning actress to look like she did as Beth Heke in *Once Were Warriors* – after all that was 13 years ago – but then again neither did I expect the 46-year-old to sport rotting teeth, cavernous wrinkles and an afro-esque mop of grey hair. "Well, I'm glad you didn't recognise me!" laughs Owen who, to play protagonist Puhi in her old age, was slathered with special-effects make-up including layers of latex sprayed to form wrinkles. "It was ghastly looking in the mirror."

But the three-hour transformation helped Owen to own the part in Ward's lauded doco-drama. It's a sort of multi-layered prequel to Ward's *In Spring One Plants Alone* documentary made in 1978, when the 21-year-old art student captured the rudimentary existence of the 80-year-old Tuhoe woman and her schizophrenic son after living with them for almost two years in the remote Ureweras. Though Puhi died soon after, memories and unanswered questions continued to preoccupy her "white mukupuna": just who was Puhi and what was this curse she'd tried to ward off with constant praying?

Fast forward 30 years, and Ward's moving film – released September 18 – unravels and re-imagines the heartbreaking life of an extraordinary woman. Picked by Tuhoe prophet Rua Kenana to marry his son at age 12, Puhi escaped the 1916 police raid on Kenana's Maungapohatu community and went on to have 14 children – and lose 13 of them.

After watching the original documentary, Owen – who is based in Los Angeles acting, writing and directing in film, TV and theatre – couldn't resist coming home for the role. Partly because she'd long wanted to work with friend Ward; partly because she felt it was an important story for Maoridom; and partly because Puhi reminded her so much of her own grandmother. "They both led very similar, very hard lives of survival. My Nanny had 15 children, all delivered in the bush by my grandfather – and she lost eight to tuberculosis, measles and stillbirths."

Due to Ward's extremely limited budget, Owen played the part without pay. Well, almost. She cheekily suggested that Ward's own painting of a barren street covered in jacaranda trees, which she'd coveted years before, could be her fee. Ward agreed: "I didn't want to give it to Rena but I knew it was the only way to get her on that plane from LA ... and I knew the film needed her," he says.

She certainly earned her art. It took not one but four trips home to complete the shoot and extensive voiceovers.

Unfortunately, during filming Owen didn't get a chance to catch up with *Warriors* co-star Temuera Morrison, whose scenes playing prophet Rua Kenana had already been shot. While the pair meet up whenever schedules collide, the last time they acted together was alongside Ewan McGregor in George Lucas' *Star Wars Episode II*. Laughs Owen: "The crew were like, 'Oh Jake and Beth end up in *Star Wars*'."



PLUM ROLE: Rena Owen



FEE: The painting Vincent Ward gave Owen.

You've probably heard the pre-*Once Were Warriors* Rena Owen story. Young girl from the sticks trains as a nurse, heads to London, becomes a heroin junkie, gets arrested at a dealer's house and spends six months in jail, where she resolves to become an actor and writes her first screenplay. After attending drama school and working in theatre, she heads back Downunder at the tail-end of the 80s to write, direct and perform in theatre, TV and radio. And then came *Warriors*. But what happened to Owen after the smash hit propelled her into the international limelight?

For almost two years she travelled the global film-festival circuit with *Warriors* director Lee Tamahori, which was an invaluable introduction to distributors, directors, investors and the inner workings of the film world. Then home to theatre, TV and a few films on both sides of the Tasman, until a tempting part and her mother's encouragement saw her fly to LA in 2000.

She knew it was never going to be a matter of walking into lead roles. "I was a big somebody at home but you come to this town and they don't give a crap," says Owen, who kept reminding herself of the advice of Russell Crowe (who'd spent five years in LA before getting his first break): "Listen mate, it takes time in this town".

"If anything I was spoiled – usually you work your way up in film but I got the cherry on top of the cake with *Warriors* straight out

of theatre. I knew it wasn't going to get any better than Beth Heke, so I had to almost go backwards."

And working her way up the ladder is a challenge she's relished. While in LA, she's had bit parts in some major films under directors including Steven Spielberg and George Lucas, but she's mainly starred in small-scale and independent films, both in the US and in countries as far-flung as Budapest and Albania and enjoys her "really interesting" roles.

But for the last few years everything except acting's been on the backburner while she's gradually developed New Zealand's first pre-colonial epic film, *Behind The Tattooed Face*. Based on the Heretaunga Pat Baker novel of the same name, the historical action epic is based around the complex web of Maori beliefs and rituals at the time of James Cook's voyages. With the screenplay (a collaborative effort between Owen, *Warriors* screenwriter Riwia Brown and several script consultants) complete, her next step is securing an A-list director and production team.

Now that she's emerged from the "totally consuming" writing process, Owen's planning to attend to a much-neglected personal life. "I don't want to be a spinster for the rest of my life and I've always wanted children – it's just I've given birth to an epic screenplay instead of a human baby! But hey, the clock still works so I'm not counting it out yet."

One day in the not-too-distant future (likely when her film begins shooting) she'll rebase herself in New Zealand, tending a veggie garden, chooks, and a pet kunekune pig, and taking trips to LA and back rather than vice versa.

But in the meantime she's keeping an eye out for the next "juicy" role. "My mum always says to me 'Helen Mirren and Judi Dench didn't get their big breaks 'til they were in their 50s, and for a little girl from the sticks you've had a pretty damn extraordinary life so far'."

– *Rain of the Children* is in cinemas from September 18