



PRESENTS

**THE TOPP TWINS:
UNTOUCHABLE GIRLS**

A film directed by Leanne Pooley

PRESS KIT

Runtime: 84 minutes

<http://www.argotpictures.com/topptwins>

<http://topptwins.com/>

U.S DISTRIBUTION CONTACT:

Jim Browne, Argot Pictures | e: jim@argotpictures.com | p: (718) 369 1180

PRODUCTION COMPANY CONTACT:

Arani Cuthbert, Producer | e: arani@divaproductions.co.nz | p: +64 9 360 9852

SYNOPSIS

Winner of the Cadillac People's Choice Award at the Toronto International Film Festival 2009 'The Topp Twins: Untouchable Girls' tells the story of the world's only comedic, singing, yodeling lesbian twin sisters, Lynda and Jools Topp, whose political activism and unique brand of entertainment has helped change New Zealand's social landscape. In the process they have become well-loved cultural icons.

This is the first time that the irrepressible Kiwi entertainment double act, Jools and Lynda Topp's extraordinary personal story has been told. As well as rarely seen archive footage and home movies, the film features a series of special interviews with some of the Topp's infamous comedy alter-egos including candid chats with the two Kens, Camp Mother and Camp Leader, the Bowling Ladies and the Posh Socialite sisters, Prue and Dilly.

The Topp Twins have attained a unique status within New Zealand culture, and their fans range from hard core political activists, to sheep farmers and 'Ladies who Lunch'. Their ability to relate to all kinds of people, and their natural gift for humour, has helped them cross from the fringes to the mainstream.

It has often been said that if the story of the Twins was fictional nobody would believe it. From rural backwaters to busking on the streets of Auckland, to performances at the Rugby World Cup and London's West End stage, their appeal is infectious. From support act to Split Enz, Billy Bragg, and Midnight Oil to headlining their own hugely successful tours in Australia, Canada, the USA and Britain. The twins have morphed from radical activists into Kiwi 'national treasures', 'cultural ambassadors', and finally, according to the Glasgow Herald, into New Zealand's 'finest artistic export since lamb cutlets!'

'The Topp Twins: Untouchable Girls' follows the girls from their happy childhood on a Waikato dairy farm - where they grew up singing to the cows - to the Territorial Army where they quickly became the Vera Lynns of their battalion. They came of age performing on the streets of Auckland during the heady days of the political protest marches in the early 80s, and quickly joined the forefront of progressive social change campaigning for a Nuclear-Free NZ, Maori Land Rights, a halt to the 1981 Springbok Tour, and Homosexual Law Reform.

By 1998 only a decade later, Lynda Topp, as Camp Mother, came close to winning the mayoral elections in Auckland, and the Topp Twins were firmly entrenched in the bosom of Kiwi culture with their own prime time TV Series 'Do Not Adjust Your Twinset'.

'The Topp Twins: Untouchable Girls' is a big story. It's not just the story of two sisters but also of 50 years of New Zealand history. Half a century of cultural changes and the foundation of a national identity. Part concert film, part biopic, part historical record, part comedy, the Twins share their journey from "coming out" to Jools' recent brush

with Breast Cancer with much laughter, honesty and wisdom. It is a film about two truly unique New Zealanders which ends up saying as much about us as it does about them.

'The Topp Twins: Untouchable Girls' is directed by award-winning ex BBC documentary filmmaker, Leanne Pooley. Director of Photography was shared by Leon Narbey ('Whale Rider'); one of New Zealand's most acclaimed cinematographers, and Wayne Vinten, (Best Cinematography NZ Screen Awards 2008).

The film was produced by Arani Cuthbert of Diva Productions, who has also managed the twins for much of their career and produced their popular TV series.

AWARDS

FINALIST IDA Awards 2010, USA

Cadillac People's Choice Award – Documentary
Toronto International Film Festival 2009, Canada

Audience Award – Documentary
Melbourne International Film Festival 2009, Australia

Audience Dragon Award – Best Feature Film
Gothenburg International Film Festival 2010, Sweden

Audience Award – Best International Feature Film
Florida Film Festival 2010, USA

Best Feature Documentary
Portland Film Festival 2010, USA

Audience Award – Best Documentary
Nashville Film Festival 2010, USA

Best GLBT Film
Nashville Film Festival 2010, USA

Audience Award – Best Documentary
River Run Film Festival 2010, USA

Best Feature Documentary
Newfest Film Festival 2010, USA

Special Programming Award for Freedom
Outfest Film Festival 2010, USA

Best Documentary
Inside Out Film Festival 2010, Canada

Best Documentary Feature
Reeling 2010: The 29th Chicago Lesbian & Gay International Film Festival, USA

Best Documentary
Mendocino Film Festival 2010, USA

Lena Sharpe Award for Persistence of Vision
Seattle Film Festival 2010, USA

Selected for the 'Best of the Fest' Program
Palm Springs International Film Festival 2010, USA

Special Jury Award
FIFO Documentary Film Festival 2010, Tahiti

Best of Fest Award
Women's Film Festival Brattleboro 2010, USA

Best Documentary
Miami Lesbian and Gay Film Festival 2010, USA

Audience Award – Best Documentary
21st Hamburg International Queer Film Festival 2010, Germany

Madelyn's Choice Award
Rocky Mountain Women's Film Festival 2010, USA

Best Film (Budget under \$1 mil)
Qantas Film and Television Awards 2009, New Zealand

Best Original Music in a Feature Film
Qantas Film and Television Awards 2009, New Zealand

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT – LEANNE POOLEY

As a documentary filmmaker most of the projects that come my way involve the darker side of life, and death and despair are too often part of the pallet I'm working with. So it was wonderful to make a documentary that was, for once, funny!

Lynda and Jools Topp are truly unique. It's not every day you get to work with yodeling, lesbian, comedian, twin sisters. To top this off their story is incredible in its richness, variety and depth. I wasn't long involved with the project before I realised I was making a film that was not just a profile of talented individuals but a story that traversed the history and tenacity of an entire nation.

How did two highly politicised gay women push their way into the hearts of mainstream New Zealanders, becoming not just entertainers but icons? The journey to answer this question was a riotous one, both inspiring and hilarious. The Topp Twins have managed to use humour to explore serious subject matter in a way that even the most cynical observer couldn't ignore. As singer-songwriter Billy Bragg says in the film "they're a kind of anarchist variety act", one that forces people from all walks of life to examine their position on any number of issues.

To illustrate this there was a wealth of archive material. The Topp Twins have been doing their thing for 30 years and despite their seemingly alternative appeal they have been followed every step of the way by the mainstream media. Provoking change simply by being themselves, their youthful performances were caught on camera in the early '80s. As young buskers they amused shoppers with songs that questioned the status quo while at the same time demonstrated a 'joie de vivre' that has never left them and is still at the core of their appeal. As is often the case with documentary filmmaking I am indebted to the directors who went before me. Their footage was a gift and each clip we discovered made us reflect on how far the Twins and New Zealand had come.

Working outside the perceived confines of the documentary genre this film was a directorial smorgasbord. Part concert movie, part documentary, part comedy, part historical document and part traditional documentary, 'Untouchable Girls' provided me with endless opportunities to play! The Twins were generous in their willingness to play along, making it possible to have a great deal of fun with the story telling. As comedian John Clarke states in the film "they are relatively shameless, and that's a good thing to be!".

The Twins allowed me to 'interview' their characters as if they were taking part in a documentary 'about' Lynda and Jools. When we filmed behind the scenes at their shows they were open and available every step of the way. They even agreed to write a special concert in which they would tell stories and sing songs about the important

moments in their lives. This concert provided me with a wonderful narration for the film; one that I believe sets "Untouchable Girls" apart from the ordinary biopic.

Lynda and Jools are New Zealand treasures and I feel honored to have been involved with sharing their story, our story, with the World.

PRODUCER'S STATEMENT – ARANI CUTHBERT

The Topp Twins are truly a phenomenon. They have an extraordinary effect on people, from all walks of life. I think the fact that they truly touch people's lives, is why I still work with them after all these years. In their shows you can have a burly farmer or grey-haired grandmother laughing alongside a pierced lesbian and it doesn't get much more political than that. The Topp Twins style of humour, and their ability to say important things without being threatening, means they have built a bridge from the alternative left to the mainstream and helped ordinary people accept what used to be called 'radical' ideas, like gay rights.

I wanted to produce this documentary because these two women have had a huge impact on New Zealand. And their story is our story, really. All the struggles the Topps were prominent in, the changes they agitated for, were the key events that have shaped our country. They were incredibly brave about being out when most people were still hiding in the closet. We forget how times have changed and making a documentary like this reminds us – and the next generation – how important it is to take a stand about things that matter.

I have worked with the twins for fifteen years now, and it's been quite a ride. In the early days it was like joining the circus, the thrill of being a gypsy. But now the Topp Twins are somewhat of an institution, there's quite a business to run. They have an enduring popularity, and have become 'cultural icons', because they express what it means (to many) to be a New Zealander, they have come to occupy a well-loved place in kiwi psyches. And although they are quintessentially Kiwi, there's no culture barrier for international audiences, it's been great to see they respond the same way as NZ audiences.

Lynda and Jools' story deserved to be told on the big-screen because it is a big story. They have a huge love for New Zealand, and I think NZ has loved them back in equal measure. If I had to sum up what the Topp Twins mean to me, it's about being true to yourself and having the courage to walk your own path. One thing that stands out too, is their generosity of spirit, always having time to meet their fans and give to many causes. It's never been about becoming rich and famous, it's about the journey and having time to do what you love doing.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

LEANNE POOLEY (Director)

Leanne Pooley is one of New Zealand's most accomplished documentary filmmakers. Born and raised in Canada, she immigrated to New Zealand in the mid-1980's and began working in the New Zealand television industry. In 1992 she moved to England where she made documentaries for Britain's major broadcasters including BBC1, BBC2, ITV, Channel 4 as well as PBS in America. Her films featured on internationally acclaimed series such as; Everyman, Modern Times, and 40 Minutes. Pooley's documentaries have screened in more than 100 countries, and include topics ranging from rugby to the Pope.

Leanne's latest work is 'The Topp Twins: Untouchable Girls' a theatrical feature about the lives of lesbian, singing, twin sister comedy duo, the Topp Twins. Previous documentaries include the Qantas Award 'Best Documentary' winning film Relative Guilt, The Man Who Has Everything for the American Discovery Network, Kiwi Buddha as seen on National Geographic and Haunting Douglas about choreographer Douglas Wright. Haunting Douglas has screened at festivals around the world and earned Leanne the award for 'Best Director' at the 2005 New Zealand Screen Awards. The film also won 'Best Documentary' at the International Reel Dance Awards. Her documentary feature The Promise, about euthanasia campaigner Lesley Martin won the 2006 New Zealand Screen Award for 'Best Documentary'. In 2006 Leanne produced and directed Try Revolution, exploring how rugby was used to help bring down South Africa's apartheid regime, and in 2007 Being Billy Apple, another feature length documentary, about the man who became a living work of art.

Leanne serves as a judge for the International Emmy Awards, has extensive teaching experience, and has published several articles on documentary filmmaking. She lives in Auckland with her husband and two children.

www.spacific.co.nz

ARANI CUTHBERT (Producer)

Arani has more than 15 years experience producing live shows and television. She established the independent production company Diva Productions in 1992, initially as an artist management company for New Zealand's much-loved entertainers, the Topp Twins. After many successful international tours, Diva evolved into a boutique production house, producing The Topp Twins' award-winning entertainment TV series, as well as several co-productions with Ninox Films (NZ) and Beyond International (Australia).

The Topp Twins: Untouchable Girls, is her first feature film and broke all box office records in New Zealand for documentary, taking nearly 2 million dollars domestically. The film won Best Feature at the 2009 Qantas NZ Film and TV Awards, People's Choice Award at the 2009 Toronto International Film Festival, and has gone on to win an impressive number of audience awards at other international film festivals.

Last year Arani was the recipient of the WIFT (Women in Film and TV) Outstanding Achievement Award and received the NZ Film Commission Producer Award in 2010.

As well as developing a slate of films and television shows, Arani is exploring new media distribution strategies and creating a VOD documentary channel www.worldeye.tv dedicated to social change films.

www.divaproductions.co.nz

LEON NARBEY (Director of Photography)

Leon Narbey is one of New Zealand's most prolific and lauded cinematographers. His considerable talents have contributed to more than 25 films during his 30 year career and he has won four 'Best Cinematography' Awards at the New Zealand Film and TV Awards. Narbey's work includes 'Whale Rider', 'The Price of Milk', 'The Tattooist', 'Perfect Creature' 'Rain of the Children', 'Desperate Remedies', 'The Price of Milk' and 'No.2'. He is also the director of 'Illustrious Energy' (1987), an acclaimed drama about Chinese gold-miners, and the ground-breaking NZ feature 'The Footstep Man'. Leon has most recently shot 'Dean Spanley' starring Sam Neill and Peter O'Toole for Toa Fraser, which is released in New Zealand in February 2009.

WAYNE VINTEN (Director of Photography)

Wayne Vinten has been one of New Zealand's top freelance cinematographers for over 20 years. His recent credits include 2008 'Live Earth' (Al Gore's second film) , and 'An Island Calling-Murder in the Pacific', for which he won 2008 Qantas Film & Television Award for Achievement in Camera Documentary. Wayne was also the recipient of the 2006 Air New Zealand Screen Award for Cinematography, Documentary. He has been DP on numerous documentaries including award-winning docs 'My Name is Jane', and 'The Promise' by Leanne Pooley. Other credits include Director of Photography Drama for the first season of 'Outrageous Fortune', and also for 'Burying Brian', for Eyeworks Television 2007.

TIM WOODHOUSE (Editor)

Tim has been editing for over 20 years. A documentary specialist, he has also cut TV drama, commercials, comedy, pop videos, short films and dance films. He won 'Best Drama Editor' at the 2002 NZ Television Awards for 'Staunch' and 'Best Documentary Editor' at the NZ Screen Awards 2005 for 'Haunting Douglas'. In 2006 he was finalist in the documentary editing category of the NZ Screen Awards and the Australian Screen Editor's Guild Awards for his work on 'The Promise' and the NZ Television Awards for 'Elgar's Enigma'. Documentary projects include 'Coffee, Tea or Me' (with Brita McVeigh and Gaylene Preston), 'Haunting Douglas', 'The Promise' and 'Try Revolution' (with Leanne Pooley), 'Sheilas: 28 Years On' and 'Elgar's Enigma' (with Annie Goldson).

DAVID LONG (Musical Editor)

Composer, performer and producer, David's scores for the series 'Insiders Guide to Love' and 'Insider's Guide to Happiness' won him the 'Achievement in Original Music' Award at the Air New Zealand Film and Television Awards in both 2005 and 2006. In 2006 he scored the TV series 'The Hothouse' and 'The Lost Children'. In 2007 he composed the score for the South Pacific Pictures feature, 'We're Here To Help You' and two feature documentaries, 'Being Billy Apple' (for Leanne Pooley) and 'An Island Calling' (for Annie Goldson). He has recently composed the score for Alistair Barry's documentary 'The Hollow Men'. He was a founding member of the Six Volts and The Mutton Birds with Don McGlashan. He has written music for Peter Jackson's 'Lord of the Rings Trilogy' and 'King Kong'. He has composed for many leading NZ choreographers including Douglas Wright, Shona McCullagh and Raewyn Hill, and produced albums for among others Dave Dobbyn and Fur Patrol. He won producer of the year in 2001. David is currently composing music for a Weta Workshop children's TV series, 'The Wotwots' and additional music for Peter Jackson's forthcoming feature release 'The Lovely Bones'.

THE TOPP TWINS BIOGRAPHY

A New Zealand cultural institution. The Topp Twins are a well-loved comedic country music duo whose popularity has spread around the world. Spontaneity is a vital ingredient of the Topp Twins' magic on stage. Audience participation is almost a trademark. Their unique blend of seriously good original country music, comedy characters and the finest yodelling you'll hear anywhere, has won them awards and accolades. Most recently the Topp Twins won the Country Music Group/Duo Award at the 2009 National Country Music Awards, they were inducted into the New Zealand Music Hall of Fame (2008) and won Best Country Album at the NZ Music Awards 2007 and 2005.

Twin sisters, Lynda and Jools Topp, grew up singing to the cows on their family's dairy farm in the Waikato. After a short stint in the Army, they began their careers busking on the streets of Auckland and came of age during the heady days of the political protest marches in the early 80s. They quickly joined the forefront of progressive social change campaigning for a Nuclear-Free NZ, Maori Land Rights, a halt to the 1981 Springbok Tour, and Homosexual Law Reform.

By 1998 only a decade later, Lynda Topp, as Camp Mother, came close to winning the mayoral elections in Auckland, and the Topp Twins were firmly entrenched in the bosom of Kiwi culture with their own prime time TV Series 'Do Not Adjust Your Twinset'.

AWARDS

New Zealand Entertainer of the Year (Various years since 1984)

Best Entertainment Programme : NZ Film and TV Awards 1997 and 1999 for The Topp Twins Series, which was also, rated as one of TV3's (CanWest) top 10 shows for 1997

New Zealand Order of Merit 2004 for services to Entertainment

Best Country Album at the NZ Music Awards 2003 and 2007 for 'Flowergirls and Cowgirls' (CD) and Grass Highway (CD)

NZ Music Hall of Fame 2008

Best Original Music in a Feature Film at the 2009 Qantas Film and Television Awards for "The Topp Twins: Untouchable Girls"

Honorary Masters of Arts 2010 Waikato University of Technology

PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

Montreal Comedy Festival 1998, 2003
Edinburgh Fringe Festival 1995, 1997
North American Tours 1993 - 1997
London Seasons at The Drill Hall (off West End) 1994, 1995, and 1997
Melbourne Comedy Festival 1995
Whelans Dublin 1995
Perth International Festival of The Arts 1995, 2003
Edmonton Folk Festival 1993
Vancouver Folk Festival 1993
Sydney Opera House 1991
World Cup Rugby Finals, Sydney 2004
Sydney Olympic Games 2000
Australian Tours 2001-2008

FILMOGRAPHY

The Topp Twins Series 1, 2, 3 (19 x 1/2 hour, TV3 1996-2000)
Mr and Mrs (10 x 1/2 hour, TV3 1999)
In Search of the Lonesome Yodel (1 x 1hour, ABC Australia/TVNZ 1999)
Hessies Shed (ABC Australia 1998)
Best of the Fest (BBC, London 1997)
Hero Parade (TV3 1997)
Beyond a Joke (TVNZ 1996)
Laugh Your Sox Off (TVNZ 1995)
The People Next Door (TVNZ 1994)
Camping Out with The Topp Twins TV Special (TV3 1993)
Rivers of NZ (1 x 1hour, TV3 1992)
That's Country (TVNZ 1987 and 1988)
Topp Twins TV Special (TVNZ 1986)

DISCOGRAPHY

Honky Tonk Angel (CD) 2009
Flowergirls and Cowgirls (CD) 2005
Grass Highway (CD) 2001
Two Timing (CD) 1994
Hightime 1992
Wear Something Sexy EP 1990
No War in My Heart 1986
Twinset and Pearls 1985
Topp Twins Go Vinyl 1982

TOPP TWINS CHARACTERS

THE TWO KENS - Ken Moller, is a fourth generation sheep farmer from the Wairarapa, (played by Lynda Topp) who is in love with Camp Mother 'the lady in pink' (also played by Lynda), although so far he has been unable to actually properly meet her. His search for the object of his desire is a common theme throughout the TV series and has continued in the Topps" stage shows. Ken's best mate, Ken Smythe, is a 'Townie' not used to the great outdoors. A failed TV sportscaster he longs to commentate on the Big Match one day. His other pet hobbies are Ikebana, breeding Burmese cats and Musical Theatre.

CAMP MOTHER and CAMP LEADER - The Topp Twins' best-known and most popular characters, identifiable in any culture as the dominant/side-kick duo, who find themselves caught up unwittingly in a larger plot while they are in pursuit of a quest. Camp Mother is typical of those busy bossy Kiwi or Australian matrons often found running clubs and camping grounds. She always wears pink and her signature fashion statement is a velour jumpsuit. Camp Leader is a keen and naive follower ready to jump unquestionably at the chance to put Camp Mother's directives into action. She and her jelly sandals are very rarely parted and she has a fine line in colorful woolly cardies.

THE POSH SOCIALITES - Prue and Dilly Ramsbottom are from an old-money family in the Hawkes Bay. They enjoy a drop or two of Chablis, Gin or Champagne, breed King Charles Spaniels and know all the right people. Fah fah fah! Always to be seen at THE social events of the year, usually getting out of the back of Roller in full twin-sets and pearls.

THE GINGHAMS - Belle and Belle are the Topps oldest characters who just love country music and a boot stomp'n' good time. Belle was born in a hay barn and her sister five minutes later, between the hay barn and the cowshed, Belle's spoon playing (New Zealand champion for 21 years) has been known to bring the house down. Sunny personalities who like to get into the audience and meet new people their only worry is whether the elastic holding their gingham skirts up will last the evening.

THE BOWLING LADIES - Mavis and Lorna met at the crematorium the day their respective husband's remains were cremated. Avid root collectors, when they're not playing at lawn bowl tournaments, they're touring the country taking cuttings of anything green.

BRENDA and RAELENE - Two 'Westie' girls (from West Auckland, a less salubrious part of the city) with big hair and bad attitude. Always on the lookout for a 'hunk of spunk" they are good time girls who aspire to have their own hair salon one day, 'Cuts for Sluts'. Never ones to waste energy on walking they are often seen in high heels by the roadside, thumbs out awaiting a trucker to drive them to the Speedway (their favorite haunt).

CREDITS

Directed by

LEANNE POOLEY

Produced by

ARANI CUTHBERT

Edited by

TIM WOODHOUSE

Directors of Photography

LEON NARBAY, WAYNE VINTEN

Production Manager

VICTORIA HARDY

Art Department

JANE CRESSWELL

Post Production Supervisor

ROGER GRANT CONBRIO MEDIA LTD

Music

ORIGINAL MUSIC WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY LYNDA AND JOOLS TOPP © THE TOPP TWINS LTD

UNTOUCHABLE GIRLS
MOVING UP IN THE WORLD
ALL THINGS KIWI
CALF CLUB DAY
LOTTA TROUBLE
WHITE LINE TO GEORGIA
WHEN THE GIRLS HIT TOWN
COUNTRY MUSIC
DOLLY PARTON
GRAFFITI RAIDERS
GOOD SISTERS GONE BAD
BASTION POINT
FIRE IN THE BARN
LOVE SONG
NEW ZEALAND ICON
RADIATION
ANY MINUTE NOW
MILESTONES
PARADISE

NGA IWI E (SYDNEY HIRINI MELBOURNE)
COURTESY OF THE HIRINI MELBOURNE WHANAU
BEEN OUT WEST (UNKNOWN)

STRING QUARTET NO.23 K 590 Movt 1 (#RFM111456)

MY PINTO PONY AND I (SMILEY) COURTESY OF ALBERT MUSIC

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