

# Kawatiri Quarter Horses & Equine Films Ltd

Kawatiri Quarter Horses and Equine Films Ltd is owned and operated by ourselves Wayne McCormack and Amelia Cook. Our small time business has gone from a part time passion to a full time ever expanding venture.

Wayne's background included western performance as a youth which rolled into an obsession with rodeo and saw him compete successfully in both Australia and Canada in calf roping and team roping events. As a result Wayne missed 13 years of family Christmas' and good friends weddings just to be on the road ready to rodeo with his horses. He trained with some of the most successful calf ropers and team ropers in the world at the time including World Champions JD Yates, Walt Woodard and Canadian Champion Joe Lucas and consequently has become a walking book of knowledge when it comes to anything you need to know about these events. Unfortunately like most equine sports it costs thousands to win hundreds, even when you are the National Champion.

His ability and 'handy' horses got a name outside rodeo which saw him be approached on several occasions to work on *Lord of the Rings*. When he finally agreed this gave him the opportunity to work 3 years on and off as a wrangler and included his horses. This was the first horse heavy feature film to come to NZ and it is more than fair to say that the horse department lacked depth. This showed an obvious opening in the industry so Wayne decided to head to Australia to see how things worked over there (*Saddle Club*) and then back to Canada (*The Assassination of Jesse James and September Dawn*) before coming back to NZ with a basic understanding on how to shape up a business to specialize in horses for the film and television industry.



Quarter horse stallion Sierra Negro (Sierra Isla Via x San O'Lita) and Liam McIntyre who plays *Spartacus*. Arnie is very true to the quarter horse breed being so versatile.

Meanwhile I (Amelia) learned about western riding at our local Buller Western Performance Club which fitted perfectly with my existing passion for quarter horses. I especially was wowed by reining, a sport I had never seen or heard of or until the days of America's Horse on ESPN. I got my first QH when I was 11, a 2 year old first cross called Docs Exceptional Miss followed by a weanling when I was 13, Rimrock Rascal - I thought I was made!

The guy that drove around town in an American truck I imagined to be quite suitable for me (!) which was just as well, as he was sure the only girl in town to be into quarter horses could fit quite well into his lifestyle. He proved this by mucking out my paddocks at the local pony club for 3 whole weeks (never to be seen done again) and so that was the start of that.

It just so happened not long after this Equine Films got its first feature film (*Narnia: Prince Caspian*) and has never looked back. As a new team we were already winning as we walked onto set for the first day as our horses mostly consisted of quarter horses - something that wranglers in this country are still yet to grasp.

Wayne's name in the film industry has gone international and he concentrates himself in specializing in the training of the liberty horses. I like to go to as many national and international clinics as my time allows and although most of these involve horses in the show pen, it is all relevant to having a decent horse suitable for film work.

We found in general that older untouched horses came up to speed quicker than those that already had someone else's base and a perfect example of this is the wonderful multi talented Sierra Negro, Arnie Q1088.

We purchased Arnie as a 9 year old stallion who had been nothing more than a pet living in an acre paddock

most of his life - not even breeding a mare. He has since been broken to harness, used for stunts (saddle falls, rearing, bombs and helicopters), trained at liberty (without any restraints), used as a cast horse (these are one in a million, carrying valuable actors in all types of environments) but what he really loves most of all - calf roping! Had he been given the opportunity we are sure he would be competitive in western performance events too, although that is something his great natured offspring will have to prove.

One of our horses we were so excited about was the stunning Radz Good Lookin Q1688. He had done some work with us during the end of filming *Underworld 3: The Rise of the Lycans* and started in *Season One of Legend Of The Seeker* before an injury has seen him retire to the paddock ever since. Radz' was started at liberty and his trainable attitude, independence while working and ability to switch off after pressure and seek reward (rest, not tit bits) proved he was going to be exceptional.

Finding ourselves with two lovely stallions and my dream of seeing a few quality foals in my paddock each spring has seen us purchase a small number of mares for breeding - and along with that saw the creation of Kawartiri Quarter Horses.

Our horse numbers grew to consist of the film horses, breeding horses, my horses (the ones that I have for pure play!) and as for Wayne, unfortunately the consistent work saw him put rodeo on hold since 2005 when he won his last National Title.

It takes a whole lot to be a good film horse. They have to have enough schooling on them to move parts of their body in a soft and responsive fashion on camera yet not too much schooling on them that when they have a total beginner riding them they don't get confused or worried - and that would have to be the hardest thing a film horse has to manage, being rode by a variety of different people at different levels a lot of the time.

An insight of what is expected of our horses is if you can imagine how much work it takes to ride that really nice horsemanship pattern. How precise every transition at the cone must be, how exact every backup step is and how every 90 degree turn sends you off exactly where you need to go next. Now if you could imagine that again, in a costume that is heavy and hard to see out of, holding a shield in your riding hand and sword in your other remembering



**Wayne and Jackson (Mr Zippo x Paint Mare) rehearsing the rear.**



**Quarter horse gelding Zeke (Initial Boom x Clover Reata) who originally was Waynes team roping horse is also one of our most trusted cast and stunt horses. Here he is on the set of *Narnia: Prince Caspian*.**



**Kawatiris Real Slick (Radz Good Lookin x Pride Of Erin) who is one of our upcoming stars.**

your exact lines at that exact 'cone' on a horse you met just days ago and on that day was the first time you ever sat on a horse... and to top it off you have a small army of men riding right behind you!

We have to do a lot of desensitising to have the horses 'camera ready' and you can't do enough at home. They must learn to work in large crowds (television for example could have 200 people on set at any one time) and amongst the horses stunt men could be yelling at them, chasing them and fighting around them.

Not all action sequences happen in a natural environment and we often have had up to eight horses in a studio (a small interior film set) approx 50m x 40m. They share this space with multi million dollar cameras and lighting equipment to say the least and are expected to perform their action without being distracted. They could of just finished a high adrenalin scene where they have galloped into shot, fought men and reared on command where they must pull up and relax while lines are spoken. This could mean that cameras come swooping in on cranes just inches from their body, booms (those fluffy microphones) come in right above their head and lighting men work above them in the studio roof. Bombs go off and people run on fire and it has been known for a small puff of smoke in the sand end up being a 15m explosion!

A lot of credit must go to those who work for us, and we can not thank them enough. It is hard to find the people who use similar techniques to ourselves, don't mind the early morning starts, late nights and care for our horses as they do for their own. Everyone wants to work in the movie business but there is hardly any of the 'roll out the red carpet' rewards. As Wayne always says, you can only be as good as the team that work for you.

On feature films we often work with someone from the 'American Humane Society' and on smaller productions we work with 'Animal Welfare in NZ'. These associations document all animal action, when they are fed, watered and how they are housed during their quiet time. They are another voice for your horse master to help ensure your

horses don't get pushed to meet director demands or to film action time and time again due to technology failure or human error. Although I have never seen Wayne be pushed or ask too much of his horses, it does happen and unfortunately some animal coordinators see these associations as nuisance rather than a help.

We are often searching the country and overseas for the type of horse that can handle the pressures on a film set. We try and have two horses share the load of one role and then once we think we have found him he has to be a suitable height, build and colour to match other horses we have. Once those boxes have been ticked we have to make sure they are happy to work, travel and live amongst one another - attitude amongst themselves is very important.

The search for these horses have seen our team be important from Holland (friesians, a great look for the bad guys), USA (andalusians, a great look for the good guys) and both here and Australia for our beloved quarter horses. And as we all know 'time flies when you are having fun' so it doesn't take long for those foals in our paddock to become mature horses and ready for a days work on a film set!



**Rimrock Rascal (Docs Desperado x 22 Caret Gold) on television feature *Avalon High*.**



**Kawatiris Wimpy Chic (Wimpys Little Starlight x Ima Ruf Chic) is hopefully going to take me back to the ESPN days where I can finally give reining a go.**

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