

Behind the scenes with Marno van der Merwe



By [Daniel Dercksen](#)

28 Oct 2013

You might not know who Robbie de Wee is, but after watching the superb *Die Ballade van Robbie De Wee*, everyone will know who Marno van der Merwe is. Daniel Dercksen shares a few thoughts with Marno and talks about his demanding role, as well as the South African film Industry.



From the thrilling pen of Deon Meyer and the skilful eye of filmmaker Darrell James Roodt, *Die Ballade van Robbie de Wee* is an excellent Afrikaans music movie that takes viewers behind the scenes of the industry and delivers a twist that will have them on the edge of their seats.

■ **Daniel Dercksen:** *Tell me about **Die Ballade van Robbie de Wee**. How did you get involved with the film?*

Marno van der Merwe: Darrel (director) and Christianne (producer) just phoned me one day out the blue and offered me the part. That night I read the script and the next day I let them know that I'm in.

■ **What attracted you to the project?**

That it was different to what I've seen in an Afrikaans film the last 20 years and the depth of the character they wanted me to play. Not a lot of actors in SA get the opportunity to play a character like Robbie.

■ **How do you relate to the character of Robbie?**

The only thing I actually relate to is the singing. Writing original music and performing it. I myself have been writing ever since I can remember. The rest of Robbe was quite a journey.

■ **Are you shy by nature, or more of an extrovert?**

I would say shy but other people would say extrovert. I think everybody has a bit of shyness in them. Okay, here it is: I would say I'm an introvert with an extrovert talent - haha.

■ **You have a great connection with Neil Sandilands in the film. How did you find working with him?**

It was great working with a master. We clicked from the beginning and became good mates quickly. An honour to work with

Neill.

■ ***And director Darrel Roodt?***

Can I use the word honour again? It was great working with Darrel; I have huge respect for him as a man and a director.

■ ***Was there any communication between you and Deon Meyer, and how did this affect your performance?***

I met Deon on set for the first time when I had to do a big performance scene on the day. It got me nervous because of his incredible reputation, but he's such a down-to-Earth, great guy. It was a pleasure meeting him and amazing having him on set that day.

■ ***When did the acting bug first bite you?***

I always thought I was a singer, but the acting just kept taking off. The first acting job I did was on stage and I didn't even audition for it. Didn't think it was in me and the director just cast me. One day I hope I can ask him why. But that was it. Fell in love with it.

■ ***Tell me more about your other work?***

I started in theatre: from casinos to Barnyard, to ensemble in pantomime. Then I had to make the decision to not take ensemble work or small roles anymore and that led to four consecutive supporting leads in the State Theatre with a movie(Pretville) and role in a series(Hartland) in-between, all the while still doing some Barnyard shows and corporate singing events in off time. I've been blessed with doing great professional shows and almost never having time off for five years. Not a lot of performers can say that in SA. I'm very grateful.

■ ***What excites you about the film medium?***

It's all about playing interesting characters, or making characters interesting. That's what excites me - playing a character that is challenging. It takes you to a different world. Or it should, I believe. I truly love it. In both Pretville and now Robbie de Wee I got to play interesting characters that are so different from each other and who I am. May that happen more and more. And to play them real and honest as much you can, that's the quest.

■ ***What motivates and inspires you?***

Inside me there's this undeniable thirst and passion for performing and everything surrounding it. If I'm creating it or practicing it, I have to follow it. That's the motivation. The inspiration is opportunity, succeeding and people believing in me.

▣ ***How do you see the future of the South African film industry?***

I have high hopes for it, but I worry for it. Our market is small and still in the last few years our quality of film has come a long way. Young filmmakers are pushing the bench, but if the public don't start supporting film, very soon, those young filmmakers we will be lost to the rest of the world and that will be the end of it. The next five years in SA cultural and traditional filmmaking will be the decider.

▣ ***How do you see the future for actors in South Africa?***

Just as it has always been. Most will come and go. Few will stay and see it through. I do think we will have more SA actors break into the international film and TV industry in the years to come.

▣ ***Is there a role you would like to play?***

The extravagant action movie bad guy. The one you love to hate. Or even the badass good guy. That always looks like fun.

Read more about *Die Ballade van Robbie De Wee* at www.writingstudio.co.za/page1466.html

ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

Daniel Dercksen has been a contributor for Lifestyle since 2012. As the driving force behind the successful independent training initiative The Writing Studio and a published film and theatre journalist of 40 years, teaching workshops in creative writing, playwriting and screenwriting throughout South Africa and internationally the past 22 years. Visit www.writingstudio.co.za
View my profile and articles...

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>