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CLEIN + WHITE INC.

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AN ANGEL AT MY TABLE

A Fine Line Features Release

Production Notes

PRESS CONTACT:

Jill Haggard

CLEIN + WHITE INC.

8584 Melrose Avenue

West Hollywood, CA 90069

213-659-4141

33 West 54th Street

New York, NY 10019

Telephone (212) 247-4100

Telefax (212) 247-4562

8584 Melrose Avenue

West Hollywood, CA 90069

Telephone (213) 659-4141

Telefax (213) 659-3995

CAST

Janet.....	KERRY FOX
Young Janet.....	ALEXIA KEOGH
Teenage Janet.....	KAREN FERGUSON
Mum.....	IRIS CHURN
Dad.....	K. J. WILSON
Myrtle.....	MELINA BERNECKER
Bruddie.....	ANDREW BINNS
Isabel.....	GLYNIS ANGELL
June.....	SARAH SMUTS-KENNEDY
Frank Sargeson.....	MARTYN SANDERSON
Patrick.....	DAVID LETCH
Bernard.....	WILLIAM BRANDT

FILMMAKERS

Director..... JANE CAMPION

Producer..... BRIDGET IKIN

Co-Producer..... JOHN MAYNARD

Screenplay..... LAURA JONES

Cinematography..... STUART DRYBURGH

Production Designer..... GRANT MAJOR

Costume Designer..... GLENYS JACKSON

Casting Director..... DIANA ROWAN

Editor..... VERONIKA HAUSSLER

Sound Design..... JOHN DENNISON

TONY VACCHIER

Composer..... DON MCGLASHAN

ABOUT "AN ANGEL AT MY TABLE"

In her feature debut -- the internationally acclaimed "Sweetie" -- director Jane Campion created an unforgettable portrait of madness and sibling rivalry. In her most recent work, **"An Angel At My Table,"** Campion moves to a larger canvas by focusing on the remarkable life of Janet Frame, one of New Zealand's most celebrated authors. With compassion, humor and a wonderful attention to detail, the film tells the epic story of a memorable woman's journey towards selfhood, as she also discovers her unique voice as a writer and artist.

"An Angel At My Table" is divided into three sections, each based on one of the three volumes of Janet Frame's acclaimed autobiography: To The Is-Land, An Angel At My Table and The Envoy From Mirror City. The first section tells the story of Frame's Depression-era childhood and early adolescence on the South Island of rural New Zealand, and explores her relationships with her parents and four siblings, her discovery of storytelling, her love of writing and her growing shyness and sensitivity.

In part two, the grown Janet (Kerry Fox) goes off to college to study to become a teacher, but soon retreats even further into herself and her writing. She is misdiagnosed as schizophrenic, is hospitalized for eight years and undergoes more than 200 shock treatments. She is only released upon public recognition of her literary talent and the surprising success of her first novel. In the third section, Frame travels throughout Europe on a literary fellowship, discovering life and experiencing the bohemian literary world of the 1950s in London and Ibiza, Spain. She enjoys her first romance, is cleared of her earlier misdiagnosis, and ultimately returns to New Zealand a successful and independent woman.

Campion details Frame's story with disarming honesty and insight. In the director's sure hands, the horrors of Frame's life are far overshadowed by her literary and personal triumphs. Superbly crafted, **"An Angel At My Table"** is a moving and affirming celebration which spans four decades in the life of a unique and singularly talented woman.

"An Angel At My Table" won an unprecedented eight awards, including a Special Jury Prize, at the 1990 Venice Film Festival, and also won the Critics' Prize at the 1990 Toronto Film Festival. Starring Kerry Fox in a vivid, emotional performance, the film is produced by Bridget Ikin, written by Laura Jones and photographed by Stuart Dryburgh.

JANE CAMPION

(Director)

Jane Campion was born in New Zealand. She studied painting and sculpture and earned a diploma in anthropology before attending the Australian Film and Television School, where she directed three short films: "Peel," "Passionless Moments" and "A Girl's Own Story."

In 1984, she wrote and directed a thirty-minute film, "After Hours," for the Women's Film Unit, which won the XL Elder Award at the Melbourne International Festival.

In 1985 she made a television movie, "2 Friends," which was written by Helen Garner.

In 1986, Campion's "Passionless Moments," "A Girl's Own Story" and "2 Friends" were presented in the "Un Certain Regard" section of the Cannes Film Festival. "Peel" won the Palme d'Or for the Best Short Film.

In the same year, "2 Friends" screened at Film Festivals in Edinburgh, Sydney and Melbourne, and in 1987 was the recipient of three Australian Film Institute Awards: Best Director, Best TV Film and Best Screenplay.

Campion's feature debut, "Sweetie" screened in competition at the 1989 Cannes Film Festival, and went on to win international acclaim. Boldly original and darkly comic, "Sweetie" dealt with the turbulent relationship between two singular sisters. It won the 1989 Australian Critics Awards for both Best Director and Best Film.

"An Angel At My Table," Campion's second feature, was a marked departure from her debut film. While "Sweetie" was provocative and darkly ironic, Campion sees **"Angel"** as a "gentler, more humanist piece." It also marks a return home for Campion to her native New Zealand after working for years in Australia. She had read the first volume of Frame's autobiography, To The Is-Land in 1983, and worked for several years with producer Bridget Ikin and screenwriter Laura Jones to bring Frame's story to the screen.

"I found myself really moved by such simple, seemingly naive writing," explains Campion. "Janet Frame has a highly developed and educated mind but also this very direct, almost childlike freshness. And the combination of this simplicity, which was natural, and her amazing craft, which must have been honed with great deliberation, seemed to me extraordinary. It was like everything I wanted to do myself in filmmaking."

JANE CAMPION

Filmography

PEEL (1982) 9 mins.

Palme d'Or, Cannes Film Festival 1986

Diploma of Merit, Melbourne Film Festival

PASSIONLESS MOMENT (1983) 12 mins.

Co-director, with Gerard Lee

Best Experimental Film: AFI [Australian Film Industry] Awards 1984

Most Popular Short Film, Sydney Film Festival 1985

A GIRL'S OWN STORY (1983) 27 mins.

Rouben Mamoulian Award

Best Short Film, Sydney Film Festival 1984

Best Director, Best Script - AFI Awards 1985

AFTER HOURS (1984) 26 mins.

XL Elders Award

Best Short Fiction, Melbourne Film Festival 1985

TWO FRIENDS (1986) 80 mins.

Best Director, Best TV Film - AFI Awards 1987

SWEETIE (1989) 100 mins.

In Competition, Cannes Film Festival 1989

Georges Sadoul Award, Best Foreign Film (France) 1989

Best Director, Best Film - Australian Critics Award, 1989

AN ANGEL AT MY TABLE (1990) 158 mins.

Eight Awards, including a Special Jury Prize at the 1990 Venice Film Festival

Critics' Prize, 1990 Toronto Film Festival

LAURA JONES

(Screenwriter)

Sydney-based Laura Jones is best known for her original script for Gillian Armstrong's "High Tide" (1987) and her many award-winning original television dramas for Australia's ABC-Drama, including "Every Man For Herself," and "Cold Comfort."

She is currently adapting two novels for the screen - her mother Jessica Anderson's Tirra Lirra By The River and Elizabeth Jolley's The Well.

The screenplay for "**An Angel At My Table**" is published by Random Century in New Zealand and Pandora in the United Kingdom and Australia.

BRIDGET IKIN

(Producer)

New Zealand native Bridget Ikin is a strong advocate for an independent film culture and industry. For several years she has developed and produced short dramas with new writers and directors through her company Hibiscus Films. Her projects have included the landmark series "About Face" (seven half-hour dramas co-produced with John Maynard) and the fifty-minute drama "Talkback" (directed by Alison Maclean).

In 1989 Ikin produced Alison Maclean's acclaimed short drama "Kitchen Sink." It premiered In Competition at the Cannes Film Festival and has since won awards from several festivals. She is currently developing an original feature film script, "Crush," with writer/director Maclean. Ikin lives in Sydney where she manages Hibiscus Films, based in both Australia and New Zealand.

JOHN MAYNARD

(Co-Producer)

John Maynard has developed an international reputation with three consecutive films In Competition at the Cannes Film Festival. They are Vincent Ward's "Vigil" (1984) and "The Navigator: A Medieval Odyssey" (1988) and Jane Campion's "Sweetie" (1989).

"The Navigator" is now also winner of eleven New Zealand Film Awards -- including Best Film and Best Director, six Australian Film Institute Awards and several other international prizes.

John Maynard, well known for the risks he has taken with new talent, is currently developing further projects with selected directors in New Zealand and Australia.

ABOUT JANET FRAME

Born on the South Island of New Zealand in 1924, Janet Frame spent her childhood and adolescence in a materially poor but intellectually intense railway family. In her late teens she was incarcerated in a mental hospital for presumed schizophrenia where she started writing. With the recognition of her early work and her determination to be a writer, she was declared legally sane and released. Her writing is described as "the transformation of ordinary facts and ideas into a shining palace of mirrors."

She is the author of eleven novels, four collections of stories, a volume of poetry and a children's book. She has won nearly every major award in New Zealand literature including the Katherine Mansfield Memorial Fellowship, the New Zealand Book Award in 1980, 1984 and 1986, the Book of the Year Award in 1983 and 1985, the University of Otago Robert Burns Fellowship, and the Frank Sargeson Fellowship.

In 1979 she became an honorary doctor of literature at Otago University; she was made a CBE for her services to literature in 1983, and made a member of the Order of New Zealand in 1990.

Frame won the Commonwealth Writer's Prize in 1989 for her most recent novel, The Carpathians.

She is published by Braziller Press in the United States, the Women's Press in the UK, and by Random Century in New Zealand.

AN INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR JANE CAMPION

After Jane Campion's debut feature, "Sweetie" screened In Competition at the 1989 Cannes Film Festival, she went straight into pre-production for "**An Angel At My Table.**" Based on the autobiographies of novelist Janet Frame, this was a project Campion and producer Bridget Ikin had been developing with screenwriter Laura Jones over several years.

"Sweetie" and "**An Angel At My Table**" could not be more different in style from each other. "Sweetie," which has been described by Vincent Canby in the New York Times as "spectacular ... an original," is tagged purposely "provocative" by the director herself.

Campion's approach to "**An Angel At My Table**" she says, is "kinder -- it's a more humanist piece. It has also prompted me to reappraise the values of New Zealand, where I was born."

Jane Campion's involvement with Janet Frame's autobiographies began when she read the first volume, To The Is-land, soon after it was published in 1983, and she found herself "laughing and crying, surprised to be moved by such simple -- seemingly naive -- writing.

"On meeting Janet I began to understand how it was possible -- a unique blend of her direct childlike freshness, alongside a highly developed and thoroughly educated mind. The simple charm of the book was no accident; it had been deliberately crafted.

"Being a poetic New Zealander, I grew up with Janet's fiction -- her chilling and poetic first novel Owls Do Cry -- and the prevailing legend of Janet as New Zealand's 'mad writer.' We all knew of her supposed schizophrenia. Many believed her writings were inspirations of her madness.

"But the autobiographies painfully and truthfully unravel this myth. After reading all three books, I felt committed to making Janet and her style of story widely available to people.

"Janet's fresh exploration of her childhood and life opened up my own, stimulating many painful and funny memories that somehow under Janet's courage and beam of honesty no longer seemed so bad or so embarrassing."

AN INTERVIEW WITH KERRY FOX (Janet)

There is a quality of stillness; of watching and taking things in, that Jane Campion recognized in 23-year old Kerry Fox from her audition. Despite her inexperience as a film actor (Kerry is recent graduate of the New Zealand Drama School), she was chosen for the lead role, and for eight months, Fox lived the character of Janet Frame.

"Everything was so affecting," says Fox of her experience. "Jane Campion kept saying, 'I want you to peel off another layer -- another layer of skin.'"

"My key into Janet Frame evolved directly from her novels and poetry. I saw my task as understanding every letter that she had written in my own way; how it affected me and the images it created. I don't believe that I was trying to *be* Janet Frame. I was portraying a character from the script, which is written from the books, which in turn is Janet's version of her life. So you wouldn't say I was playing *the* Janet Frame."

When asked what it was like working with director Jane Campion, Kerry Fox speaks eloquently. "I think she's a very rare and precious director. She would do anything within her -- considerable -- power to get the best performance. She believes that all actors will give a good performance if she allows them to. She was always allowing the actors to do that by giving us a sense of trust. Jane gave me the ability to believe in my own working methods, absolutely."

The most profound effect of working on the series for Kerry Fox was comprehending the full import for Janet Frame's lively mind and sweet disposition of being imprisoned with a diagnosis of schizophrenia. At first, Fox had found Frame's novel of institutionalized madness, Faces In The Water, quite unbelievable.

"After talking to Janet, the research I've done and the experience I've had, it's not unbelievable at all," she says. "As Janet states in her autobiography, she toned it down to make it acceptable. I imagined that I would be very upset portraying Janet's mental institution experience. But it was much worse than I ever anticipated. It was so frightening and foreign -- just like all the horror stories.

"It's hard to comprehend that someone actually experienced that environment and treatment. Janet had over two hundred shock treatments; as she said, 'each one the equivalent in fear to an execution.' In Janet's days there were no drugs, so the place was continually full of noise, of screaming and shouting.

"I think that Jane Campion's intention is to convey the essence of Janet Frame's life. She wants other people to understand and appreciate her, and have an emotional link to what she went through. It's an amazing story."