



TIHEI

Director: Hamish Bennett Producer: Orlando Stewart

As the beat drops can Tihei find his words? Redemption comes unscripted

**PREMIERING AT NZIFF 28 JULY 2015
AVAILABLE ONLINE FROM 29 JULY 2015**

SHORT SYNOPSIS

At the age of fourteen, Tihei Harawira found his own unique way to connect with others - through freestyle rapping.

Set in the vibrant world of the Otago Markets, amongst a community that has embraced Tihei, our film is an uplifting and inspiring look at a humble young man who has turned every challenge that he has faced into a positive.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Tihei Harawira has faced adversity all his life. Diagnosed with autism and dyslexia as a child, he remembers always feeling behind at school. Socially he was aware that he didn't quite 'fit', and the bullying he suffered is a permanent scar from this time. But a chance encounter with two musicians set Tihei on the path to discovering his own unique way of connecting with others – freestyle rapping.

Set in the vibrant world of the Otago Markets, amongst a community that has embraced Tihei, Bennett's film is an uplifting and inspiring look at a humble young man who has turned every challenge that he has faced into a positive.

Turning the lens from Tihei to focus on the customers who pay him to perform his freestyle raps, Bennett has created a unique, nuanced and uplifting portrait that allows the viewer to see Tihei through the reactions of his audience.

Director: Hamish Bennett

Hamish Bennett (Te Arawa, Ngāpuhi, Kāi Tahu) wrote and directed his first short film *The Dump* in 2011, which screened at many festivals in New Zealand and around the world, and which won the 2012 NZ Writers Guild Award for Best Short Film Script. His second short, *Ross & Beth*, had its world premiere at the 2014 NZ Film Festival where it won the Jury Prize for Best New Zealand short film, as well as winning the Audience and Cinematography awards. The film has continued to pick up awards and screen at high profile festivals around the world. Hamish is a teacher at Owairaka District School, and he's the father of two young boys, Tai and Leo.

Producer: Orlando Stewart

Orlando Stewart has been writing, producing and directing content for screens of all sizes for the past ten years. He's worked on award-winning historical series, comedies, factual reality and drama. Orlando produced Hamish Bennett's celebrated short films *Ross & Beth* and *The Dump*. He enjoys long walks on moonlit beaches and recently entered the world of male modelling, to mixed reviews.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I first met Tihei back in Whangarei where we both lived. We didn't know each other well, but I remember seeing him a fair bit on the sidelines at club rugby games. Other than that I didn't know a lot about him – he was a friendly but unassuming guy. Then a few years ago, a mate sent through a video of Tihei busking up at Waitangi. He'd asked Tihei to rap about Hora Hora, our local rugby club. Tihei pressed play on his backing CD and started to freestyle. I was blown away. The lyrics, the rhymes, the way he tied everything together – it was so hard to believe he'd made it all up on the spot. And when I learnt a bit more about the challenges that Tihei has faced in his life, and the values that he promotes, it further reinforced my keenness to make something with him if I ever got the chance.

We're rapt to play a part in sharing Tihei's story and talent, and very much appreciate the opportunity that Loading Docs has given us to do this.

PRESS RELEASE

If you head to the Otarā Markets in South Auckland on a Saturday you are likely to come across an autistic free-styling rapper called Tihei Harawira. Originally from Kaitaia, Tihei now spends weekends at the Otarā Markets where he turns any subject market patrons give him into a free-style rap.

Filmmaker Hamish Bennett has known Tihei for many years from the rugby league community in Northland and has made him the subject of a 3-minute documentary created as part of the Loading Docs scheme. The film, simply named *Tihei*, uses a single freestyled rap from one Saturday market to highlight Tihei's remarkable ability to think on his feet and craft extraordinary raps that have gleaned him recognition all around the world, particularly amongst rugby league fans.

Owing to his online popularity, Tihei has now managed to secure himself a place as a student at Mainz Music academy and is working towards a career in the industry. Bennett says the aim of the film is to share Tihei's unique gift to connect with people through rap in a way that he has never been able to outside of music. He hopes that people will come away from the film feeling inspired by what Tihei has been able to achieve despite his disability.

The Loading Docs initiative that *Tihei* is a part of supports 10 filmmaking teams to experiment with the confines of a 3-minute timeframe to make innovative and creative documentaries that tell New Zealand stories, this year based around the theme of connection. *Tihei* has been selected to premiere at the NZ International Film Festival on the 28th July, screening before the feature *Dope*, after which it will be available to view online at www.loadingdocs.net and [TVNZ OnDemand](#).

CONTACT

Notable Pictures
(09) 973 5731
hello@loadingdocs.net

