

“THE REEF” – directors production notes

Locations

The locations in the Reef are in effect an extension of the casting in so much as they define the characters as much the characters themselves. There are *TWO BEACH* locations quite distinctive from each other.

1st BEACH

The first is the standard tourist surf beach where most of the beach action happens. Carpeted with holidaying families this beach is family friendly; flags, lifesavers etc. My imagining of it is always as the Torquay Back beach in Victoria, Australia. Another beach that could work in Australia is the Sorrento back beach. Clearly there are plenty of similar beaches in Australia and indeed around the world that could fit this brief but these are the ones I'm personally familiar with. What is important is that

1. it's a coved beach bookended with rocky outcrops capped with forests and/or sand dunes,
2. at low tide the sand stretches out forever and
3. the beach is separated from the campgrounds by huge grassy hills peppered with low windswept sea trees.

These features in and around the beach would serve as signatures or passages into the other locations which would punctuate certain realms of reality and fantasy within the film. For example perched atop one of these bookends is the looming presence of the Hotel Horizon.





2nd BEACH

The second beach is what lays beyond one of those rocky outcrops. This is the beach / reef where the Wrecks hang out and make their preparations for the arrival of the ships. It should evoke the mood of the arrival at Skull Island in Peter Jackson's King Kong. I imagine this beach to be a combination of two beaches I've visited. The first is Sphinx Rock near Sorrento, Vic Aust. which is characterised by a combination of gnarled rock formations that interrupt the sandy pockets trying to assemble themselves to form 'a beach'. There's plenty of these beaches around and Sphinx Rock. The waves here are more rugged, wild and all over the shop kicking off plenty of sea mist. Another beach that feels like the Wreck's beach (minus the waves) is Sassnitz in Nth East Germany. This beach is characterised by a number of rocky outcrops littered with heaps of driftwood.



THE FOREST

A forest opens out directly onto the 2nd beach and as you follow the beach around points / outcrops, it reveals more and more of itself and great white cliffs like Dover in the UK. Another beach in this part of Germany which has a forest meeting up with the beach that would be perfect for the Wrecks

hideout is in Graal-Muritz. Unfortunately it's difficult to find this effect in Australia as the coasts are so much more rugged. That said I'm sure it could be found.



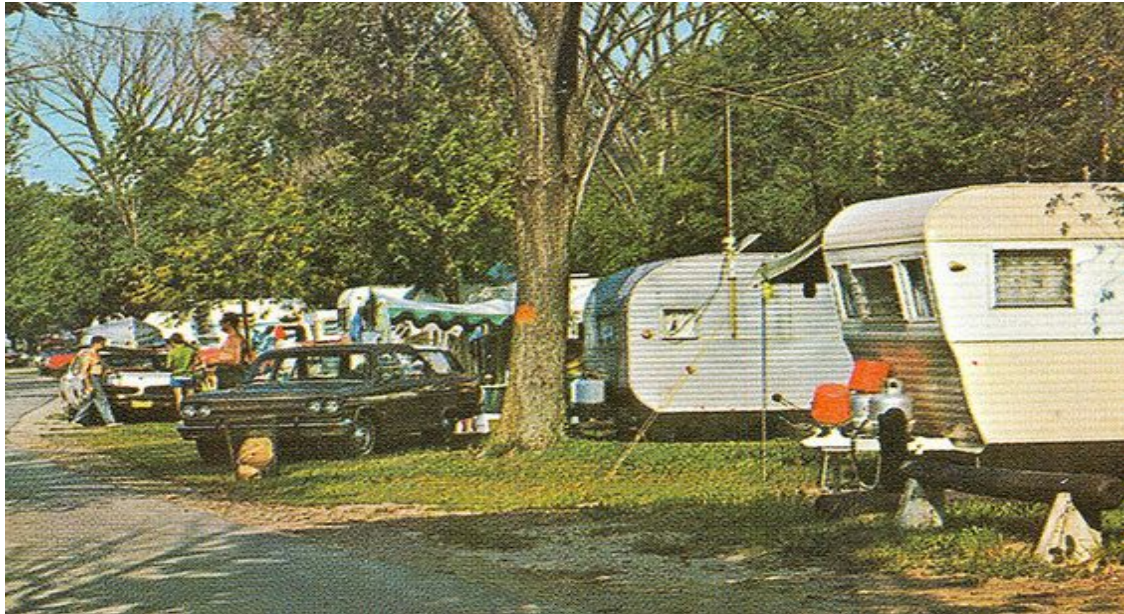


THE CARAVAN PARK

Land's End is the name of the camp ground because it is a place at the edge of the world. Who would want to visit there? No one of course. Therefore it's a long forgotten place and only the featured sites come to life as the story passes through them. It's a campground that exists between two worlds, the past and the present.



I believe it needs to be a bushy overgrown camp ground, like what can be found in Australia along the Rye foreshore in Vic Australia or at Graal-Muritz in Nth East Germany where Seita wrote part of the book (again there are sure to be others). The twisted and distorted trees act as natural fences between sites. They are tortured looking silhouettes that echo the heavy adolescent emotions felt by Aleksi. Even when the action is fun - such as when the boys are joyfully racing in and around the trees - their twisted and wretched forms maintain a presence, framing the subtext of the emotions that carry the key characters forward through the story.



The only thing that doesn't quite work with the campsites I've mentioned in Australia and Germany is that they're too tidy and too up to date, particularly in Torquay and at Rye. My initial instinct was to recreate a nostalgic look with the stripped coloured canvas annexes and round caravans of the 70's etc. because that is so much of how my own memories of camping came to mind. That said, The Reef demands something more. It should be retro through neglect, deep shadowed and bleached rather than colourful and sun-kissed. Not retro and cool, rather old and crappy.

HOTEL HORIZON

The Girl's home is a rabbit warren and as mysterious as its Matron. Pigeon shit and sand everywhere. Discarded remnants of furniture litter the halls, rotten floorboards like gaping wounds expose views of the rooms below. In one room and the main hall intact pieces of furniture; a bed, the shell of a piano, a grand table all give a hint of habitation. Only in the attic is it patiently clear that it is a person's place and whose place it is.



Wedding dresses hang from the eaves. Jars of feathers and beach glass line a window ledge. Not a home for a sleeping beauty in a tower so much as a princess warrior's factory floor. A vintage sewing machine in one corner, bow and arrows in another. A magnificent mirror framed by a collage of many broken mirrors resting against the back wall.

The location for the Hotel Horizon I've imagined would be an existing abandoned house, a grand house. The perfect example of this I found in Heiligendamm in Rostock complete with astounding coastal views.





WRECKS HIDEOUT

Stinky seaweed hangs over walls made of found objects. Decay and creative repurposing of waste.

Dream Cast

MOTHER – Uma Thurman, Naomi Watts



French actress Julia Dietze expressed to me personally that she really wants to play the mother. She is the right age, has a few notable credits to her name and is a regular on German television. I could think of a lot worse options.

Uma Thurman would clearly be the ultimate casting choice based purely on her performance in *Nymphomania*.

PARK RANGER – Matthew McConaughey



Matthew McConaughey would be perfect as the Park Ranger.

THE GIRL – Maddie Ziegler



Maddie Ziegler's people have expressed curiosity (although I'm not sure if she'd be too old now)

The Girl is a mythical character. She needs to be able to switch within a split second from playful and dancing to a gutter rat racing deftly through rough terrain. She is on one hand a feral animal and on the other, the princess who wants to go to the ball.

MITYA – Levi Miller



Mitya is a character who needs to hold the film; a witty whippet of a kid, who like the Girl can at the drop of a hat, move like a rat in any situation.

ALEKSI

Whilst shooting the mood piece in Australia I had the opportunity to work with a teenager named Tarn who could be perfect for the role of Aleksis.

THE FERRYMAN



Barry Otto has expressed his willingness to play the Ferryman (in particular if the film is shot in Australia)

He is perfect for the role; eccentric, quirky and that glint of magic in the eye.