

# MEN'S GROUP

Rating MA  
Time 105 minutes  
Country Australia  
Director Michael Joy  
Cast Grant Dodwell, Steve Le Marquand,  
Steve Rodgers, William Zappa  
Distributor Titan View  
Worth \$14.50  
Released [www.mensgroupthemovie.com](http://www.mensgroupthemovie.com)  
for full details

"...brilliant..."



Michael Joy's brilliant Australian film *Men's Group* is full of sharp observations, and (as is often the case with the most keenly observed drama) is also blackly funny, as it follows a disparate group of men all haunted by their own ghosts who converge on a house in the suburbs to fumble their way over the walls that they have built up around themselves. A defining moment comes when Freddy – a gentle clown broken by his

wife's rejection and estrangement from his daughter – vacuum shrinks a four foot plush bunny rabbit as an impassioned act of revenge. The tragic futility of this gesture points to the harsh and complex questions at the heart of the film. When is a man allowed to grieve, and when is he expected to move on? How do men cope with loss and frustration in an emasculated world? And most importantly, where can they turn to let it all out?

Co-writer/director Michael Joy smartly avoids offering definitive answers, but allows the possibility of individual redemption and collective catharsis to ring through the film's open-ended final act. He also avoids alienating the female audience by cleverly subverting the stoic-macho-Aussie-male cliché and colouring his characters with real, universal emotions.

The performances are outstanding across the board, which is extraordinary considering that every single shot is a first take. The shoot took just fourteen days following months of intense character work. When the cameras started rolling, the actors only knew their own purpose within each scene. Their reactions to each other are immediate and authentic. And while this kind of technique isn't new, it is brave nonetheless, and it's hard to imagine it being done in a more meaningful way than here. *Men's Group* is a film that really deserves to be seen.

Trent Griffiths