



## Intro

This story captures the vices and virtues of modern society, as well as the impact of entertainment. The speed and enthusiasm with which we latch onto the latest trends in search of fun, affirmation, or to feel part of a community without ever thinking about what they mean. Then the inevitable backlash when we look beyond the superficial excitement and question their real-world implications, seeking to educate ourselves and others.

Even amid a global pandemic that saw nations shut down, cities close, economies grind to a halt, and people more isolated than ever, we managed to take seemingly frivolous forms of entertainment like *The Wellerman* and turned them into cultural trends that not only brought people together in difficult times but started a debate about whaling and the conservation of our oceans.

This is the power of entertainment. To trigger a conversation. To educate. And to be a catalyst for change that pushes humanity forward. And all it takes is a little SPARK.

## Vision

Like the Guardian's 'Three Little Pigs' and FIFA's 'More Than a Game' spots, this film will mix media with a unique, visually complex approach.

We'll capture the reality of the world we're in. The damp, dimly-lit, cramped environment of the Billy o' Tea as *The Wellerman* spreads through the crew and breathes new life and hope into the sailors on board. Then the hopeless, isolated Covid-laden world of 2020 as our hero, Hana, discovers Nathan Evans's cover and it spreads across the world, cutting between a range of diverse characters stuck in their visually distinctive homes.

We're looking to balance a raw, gritty, handheld cinematic approach that favours natural light - think the early work of Bradford Young - with modern dynamic camera moves. Heightened by bold, colourful, and often intense graphics and text that intrude on the frame and our world. Layering on top of each other at rapid speed - like a constantly evolving, audiovisual collage of news and social media. This bold, stylised, punchy look

will mix scenes we'll shoot, with influencer TikTok videos, wild text, and graphics. People singing, screaming in excitement, all joining in the shanty frenzy as the world gets brighter, faster, and the collective energy builds towards a crescendo of light and sound. That dopamine rush that everyone feels when their phone pings as links are shared, photos and comments are liked.

This is a playful, viral sensation with a darker undercurrent of truth.

## Story

We quickly push through the dark, damp lower deck of an 1800's whaling vessel - lined with splintered wood - through the crew's quarters. Large harpoons are propped up against the walls and whaling paraphernalia litter the floor of the cabin. Water leaks from the ceiling. Weary groans of the creaking ship in the ocean waters, indistinguishable from those of the hopeless sailors who sit on bunk beds in the corners. The mood is grim.

Then the dim light of a lantern flickers on, illuminating a young sailor singing. It's a faint but audible murmur. A subtle, merry tune that penetrates the somber tone and dark atmosphere.

We hover over the quill of the sailor. Then whip up to a low angle of his young face - dirty and wet. A necklace made of large teeth hangs around his neck. He eyes a thick, dirty sheet of paper filled with scribbled lyrics. He sings them in a low and patchy voice as he dips his quill in a small makeshift inkwell and pens the title of this shanty: *The Wellerman*

Wipe transition to the cabin now full of sailors - of all ages, sizes, colours, and beard lengths - singing the chorus, arm in arm, ale in hand. We circle the men as they sing. With their fighting spirits lifted, they each grab their harpoons, ready to tame the wild seas.

We zoom out from the ship as the lanterns on deck begin to light. When they reach the end of the chorus the sound distorts and...

190 YEARS LATER appears on screen in big bold text with a loud bassy rumble.

News footage of Covid-related images (mask-wearing, empty supermarket shelves) appears on-screen along with VO from reporters “WHO declares a pandemic”, a news report - “Global deaths pass 2 million.”

We transition back out of a news programme on a TV screen to Hana (13/14) sitting alone in her dimly lit bedroom. Her walls are covered with posters of K-Pop bands, movie stars, (un)inspiring cliched quotes. The ocean is visible from her window. She scrolls through TikTok and lands on a video of Nathan Evans singing The Wellerman (ShantyTok). She sings along to the chorus somewhat tentatively, lacking in confidence as she tries to learn it. She taps the ‘share’ button and her lone voice joins a cacophony of others as The Wellerman explodes.

Bold graphics of people’s @comments about the song fill our frame. GIFs of merry sailors. And our own spin on classic memes. Twitter tags. Selfie videos of people alone in their houses. People’s voices commenting. Singing. Headlines filling our screen. SFX pops and chirps with each post, like, and comment.

A kid sits alone at a kitchen table singing along with classmates on a zoom lesson while their teacher has a pirate ship background.

We push through the open door of a bathroom to a man submerged beneath the water in his bathtub. He holds his phone above him to get an underwater selfie, splashing water over the sides.

The song changes to an electronic remix by Argules. The internet ramps into a frenzy and the speed of imagery intensifies as The Wellerman sweeps the world

Through his computer screen, we see a Twitch streamer going crazy in his bedroom, jumping up and down on the bed as he parties alone to the banger with a strobe light. The feed lags a little.

Amidst the imagery, some graphics, videos, and emojis also subtly reference images associating the song with whaling - foreshadowing what’s about to come. These include the whaling scene from Assassin's Creed, whale emojis, pop culture whale references such as Moby Dick, Jonah and the Whale etc. sprinkled throughout.

We push towards a bus driving along a beachside road and through the window to Hana - wearing headphones - sitting alone on a bus. People are spread far apart, abiding by the COVID social distance signage throughout the bus. From her headphones, we hear the muffled beat of the Argules remix. She hums along to the tune as she scrolls through the comments on her own uploaded video. Suddenly a comment appears. “🤔 The Wellerman? More like the whaler-men! 🌊👤🤔”

Her thumb hovers. Her brow furrows. She clicks on the commenter’s profile which takes her to the page of a young marine activist. She clicks on a video. We move into the screen of her phone to the woman standing on a beach, talking about whaling and the dark side of the song. “Why are we glorifying whaling in 2021?” “Toungin’ is the process of stripping blubber off a dead whale”. And so begins Hana’s descent down the rabbit hole.

Comments start to turn more critical of the song’s lyrics. A panel of influencers sit around a desk discussing it on a podcast. Images start to layer the screen as Youtubers and influencers upload videos critiquing the song. Macro shot of Hana’s fingers clattering across a keyboard. The image of a search bar fills our screen. She searches “is whaling still happening today?”. Stock footage of a recent news story detailing Japan’s whaling industry and illegal whaling.

We see Hana’s face through the laptop screen as she continues her search. A rush of horrific imagery and headlines layer the screen again. A TED talk about ocean conservation. Stock footage of crowds marching in the streets, protesting whaling and ocean pollution. Quick cut sequences - close-ups of their signs - “Stop the slaughter in the water”, “Whales are climate warriors”, “Boycott whale products” “Whale you please leave us alone”. The protesters chant a version of The Wellerman shanty, but with modified protest lyrics:

*Soon may the Whalers come  
Reducing life to a simple sum  
One day, when the killing is done  
There’ll be no sea at all.*

Hana continues her search and the tone shifts as we cut to majestic whales. Pods of dolphins frolicking. Bioluminescent fish and vegetation with an ethereal glow that transitions into...

...the light from Hana's tablet screen as she sits at her desk wearing a sea shepherd t-shirt. The walls of the bedroom are no longer filled with bands and celebs, but whales and conservation posters. She writes on her tablet with a stylus pen. We whip up to her face, mirroring our shot of the young sailor who first penned the shanty.

The screen shows a preview of a video Hana has made. She stands on a picturesque beach talking about the importance of ocean conservation and issues with whaling. Her eyes are focused, determined, but optimistic as she clicks upload.

VO: The world needs entertainment.

Join the conversation.

**Spark.** Little Can Be Huge.

## Casting

The Wellerman was a global phenomenon. So our casting should reflect that diversity. They should feel like authentic characters, rather than actors, possessing a vibrancy and charm even in the smallest of roles.

At the centre of this is our hero, Hana. The conduit for our story. She represents us and our shared belief that change is possible as she transitions from youthful innocence to adolescent maturity by the end of the film. We'll need an actor who can play both, varying her look and performance as the character evolves while captivating us throughout.

## Music

We can really have some fun here. Using and creating multiple versions of the Shanty. A traditional version, something more modern, as well as acapella, instrumental and remixed versions.

It would be great to get access to Nathan Evan's original TikTok audio and video as he's the foundation of this story and instantly recognisable. Similarly, the Argules' remixed

version would offer up a nice counterpoint to Nathan's sound. Beyond these, we will record some of our own versions. The first lone sailor, the crew of the ship, our own remix, a few individual TikTok versions, and the protest re-edit.

## **Graphics**

Graphics are a core element of this film, helping to convey information but also setting the tone - visually and emotionally.

Let's take a broad approach and combine a range of styles, mixing computer-generated text, alerts, notifications, headlines, and animations. We'll include comments from every platform (FaceBook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok), from across the world and in different languages, using films like the Guardian's 'Three Little Pigs' and FIFA's 'More Than A Game' as references.

The graphics will be bold, vibrant, and energetic. When an emoji appears it won't just be an image on a phone but will take up a whole frame. We'll work with animators to create our memes and 8-bit animations that feel unique and specific to the story we're telling.

## **Sound Design**

Immersive sound design will set the tempo and mood for this film, shifting the tone between sombre and downbeat, exciting and exuberant, thoughtful and empowering, while pulling us into the world of our heroes and taking us on this journey with them. Whether it's that singular Scottish voice cutting through the dark tone of the news report, or the rabid intensity of the frenzy section as a cacophony of voices, pops, dings and other SFX compete for our attention, sound will be used to build momentum, energy, and emotion into the film.

## **PEACE**