



**PURE THEATRE:** Starfish swears a lot and shamelessly mugs for the camera.

# Pretty close to home

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## SQUEEGEE BANDIT

**Cast:** Starfish **Director:** Sandor Lau

**Running time:** 75 minutes **Rating:** R16, violence, offensive language, drug use

**Screening:** Academy from Feb 6 **Reviewer:**

Peter Calder **Verdict:** Engaging portrait of a traffic-light windscreen washer that morphs into a moving portrait of social dislocation.

A Waitangi Day opening seems apt for this slice of Kiwiana, written and directed by an American New Zealander of Chinese-Hungarian extraction. You won't see it on prime time television, though (although maybe TVNZ will find a small-hours slot for it on the new digital platform).

That's because its profanity count is up there with *Goodfellas* and most of the swearing comes from the

mouth of its Maori title character, a traffic-light windscreen washer who goes by the name of Starfish and who, for more than half the film's running time, seems little more than a foul-mouthed extrovert with a borderline personality disorder.

But as we get to know Starfish, the film morphs into a moving, even harrowing, portrait of a man who struggles with the cultural and economic dispossession suffered by so many of his people.

His often shamelessly hammy mugging for the camera — Starfish shows that windscreen washing is 10 per cent car maintenance and 90 per cent street theatre — gives way to artfully edited sequences in which he rails against every man who did him down and a society which has marginalised and victimised him and many like him.

You won't see this on *Close Up*, but it's pretty close to home.