

Local film a big screen hit

By Rebecca Belt

THE locally-filmed movie, *The Backpacker*, has been such a hit with Tamworth audiences it has had its season extended at Forum 6 by one week.

This is a first for the independent film, which made its Tamworth debut on Thursday, June 2 at Forum 6.

"This is something huge because it's a low-budget film and has to compete with other big films," co-writer and producer Tara Simmonds said.

"It's a huge achievement for us."

Ms Simmonds grew up in Tamworth and filmed her latest offering in Murrurundi, Nundle, Quirindi and Wallabadah.

"It was great for me to be back in my hometown and having everyone's support was wonderful," Ms Simmonds said.

"You spend so much effort making the film and it's all about seeing it on the big screen."

The film features Murrurundi man, 82-year-old Vivian Carter, who plays a hermit and has been offered other roles since the film was released.

After the Tamworth premiere, the audience had the chance to ask Ms Simmonds questions about the film.

She said many of the questions focused on locations that featured in the movie, the filming around Nundle, how the weather affected filming.

There were also plenty of questions about Nathan Waring, who plays returned soldier Ben Cross.

Ms Simmonds said the film seemed



MOVIE MECCA: *The Backpacker* co-writer and producer Tara Simmonds at the Tamworth premiere at Forum 6. Photo: Barry Smith 020611BS101

to appeal to a wider audience in the country than she had expected.

"Even though our film is targeted to 16 to 30-year-olds and mostly males, in the country, that doesn't seem to matter because people in the country get behind you," she said.

"We had people of all ages. People in the country will support you if they see you on the ground, out there making an effort and trying to get the product out there. They seem to sense your enthusiasm and they really get behind you."

Due to the success of *The Backpacker*, Ms Simmonds and her company Embassy Pictures were planning their next New England film.

The Backpacker will screen at Forum 6 in Tamworth until next Thursday, June 16.