

TRUE FRIENDSHIP DIVES DEEP



Stan. ORIGINAL  
**Whale Shark**  
**JACK**



PREMIERES **APRIL 2**

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**Stan.**



**STAN, SCREEN AUSTRALIA**  
AND THE **AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S TELEVISION FOUNDATION**  
IN ASSOCIATION WITH **SCREENWEST, LOTTERYWEST**  
AND THE **WESTERN AUSTRALIAN REGIONAL SCREEN FUND**  
PRESENT A **COTTESLOE FILMS** AND **SOUTHERN LIGHT FILMS** PRODUCTION

**Stan.** ORIGINAL  
**Whale Shark JACK**

DIRECTED BY **MIRANDA EDMONDS** AND **KHROB EDMONDS**  
PRODUCED BY **TIMOTHY WHITE** AND **MIRANDA EDMONDS**  
WRITTEN BY **KATHRYN LEFROY**  
CO-PRODUCERS **GEORGIA WHITE** AND **ESTELLE BUZZARD**  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS **BERNADETTE O'MAHONY, CAILAH SCOBIE,**  
**DONNA CHANG, KELVIN MUNRO** AND **MALINDA WINK**  
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER **HAZEL WALGAR**  
CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS **DEANNE WEIR, OLIVIA HUMPHREY,**  
**KHROB EDMONDS** AND **KATHRYN LEFROY**  
CAST **ABBIE CORNISH** AS NITA KEELE **ALYLA BROWNE** AS SARAH MITCHELL-KEELE  
**MICHAEL DORMAN** AS MARCUS MITCHELL **URSULA YOVICH** AS HAZEL COOPER  
**KAREN O'LEARY** AS ROSIE FINN **LUCA MILLER** AS EJ COOPER  
**GISELLE PHILOGENE** AS ASHLEIGH **JAYDEN BOUNDRY** AS PETER COOPER  
**EMMI WILLIAMS** AS YOUNG SARAH **RACHEL WARD** AS AUNTY DOT

ONE-LINER

**A heartwarming story about family, friendship, and the natural world as a young girl comes to terms with the loss of her father by embarking on a risky mission to save her best friend, a whale shark named Jack.**

SHORT SYNOPSIS

SARAH (12yo) (played by Alyla Browne) lives on a boat with her parents, who research whale sharks. Her only friend is a whale shark named JACK, who Sarah rescued when he was a pup. But following a tragic accident, mum Nita (Abbie Cornish) and Sarah move to the coastal town of Exmouth. Desperate to return to her old life, Sarah pegs all her hopes on Jack, certain that when his migration brings him back to Exmouth, mum will take her out on the boat again. But Jack fails to return, so Sarah embarks on a risky mission to find him. WHALE SHARK JACK is a heartwarming adventure story about family and friendship, the natural world, and moving forward when all hope seems lost.



LONG SYNOPSIS

SARAH (12yo) (played by Alyla Browne) has a life that is different to other kids. Her home is a research catamaran called Playground, where she lives with her parents, marine biologists Marcus (Michael Dorman) and Nita (Abbie Cornish). Together, they follow the migratory path of the biggest fish in the ocean - the majestic, gentle, and awe-inspiring whale sharks.

Sarah spends blissful days swimming, surfing, and playing with her best friend, a whale shark named JACK who she rescued when he was just a pup. Her life is perfect.

But when Marcus is killed in a freak storm, everything changes. Nita is terrified the ocean might steal her daughter too, so she moves them to the remote coastal town of Exmouth in North-Western Australia. She believes that a new start on solid ground will help them both heal and be close to family: Aunty Dot (Rachel Ward).

Sarah doesn't want to be there, and she struggles to fit in on land. At 12, she can chart a course through the Pacific Ocean no problem, but she hasn't got the first clue how to navigate school or relate to friends

that don't eat plankton. She's desperate to return to her old life, but Nita can't even bring herself to look at Playground, let alone take the old boat out for a sail. She's determined to make life on land work - whatever the cost.

So, Sarah pegs all her hopes on Jack. She's certain that when Jack's migration brings him back to Exmouth and the Ningaloo Reef, mum will take her out on the boat again and realise that's where they belong.

But Jack fails to return. So, to save her family and her friend, Sarah must go against her mum's wishes and embark on a risky mission to find him with the help of new friends EJ (Luca Miller) and Ashleigh (Giselle Philogene).

Set against the breathtaking backdrop of Western Australia, WHALE SHARK JACK is a heartwarming adventure story that explores themes of family and friendship, our relationship to the environment, and moving forward when all hope seems lost.

WHALE SHARK JACK is a joyous, poignant and fun-filled family film, with an ocean full of heart.



## // DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

Miranda Edmonds and Khrob Edmonds

WHALE SHARK JACK is a story inspired by our love of the ocean, and the deep belief that the natural world has the power to heal, to connect, and to transform us.

At the centre of the story is Sarah, a fearless girl raised on the ocean, who rescues an endangered whale shark pup named Jack, forming an unbreakable bond between them. Years later, when Jack disappears, she sets out to save him once more, risking everything in the process.

Sarah's world is wind, salt, sky and sea. She's never lived on land, so when she is suddenly forced to live in a house, go to school, and try to make friends, the ocean's absence is a grief of its own. This shift, from freedom to constraint, from belonging to alienation, reflects a larger truth: we are not meant to be separated from nature. It is where we feel most whole.

We were drawn to this story because it captures the wild magic of childhood, the deep bonds between humans and animals, and the kind of quiet bravery that exists in the face of losing someone we love.

The experience of swimming with a creature as large and grand as a whale shark is something that stays with you forever. You feel small, but not insignificant, held in the vastness of something great. It is peaceful, humbling and unforgettable. We want to share that feeling with audiences, not just the visual beauty, but the emotional power of being in the water with these gentle giants.

It has been a privilege to develop this film on Baiyungu Country. We've worked closely with Associate Producer and Baiyungu Traditional Owner Hazel Walgar, who has been generous in helping us understand the deep cultural connection to this land and sea, and with her sister, Gwen, wrote the 'Healing Song' for the film.

We were also extremely fortunate to cast actors with a natural affinity with the ocean. Alyla, in particular, is like a fish, able to free dive for minutes at a time and become one with the underwater world. Her genuine love for the ocean and the whale sharks comes across powerfully on the screen.

WHALE SHARK JACK is a story about family, friendship, and the extraordinary power of the ocean. It is a film we are proud to bring to life, and we can't wait to share it with the world.





## // WRITER'S STATEMENT

Kathryn Lefroy

Growing up in Western Australia instilled in me a deep connection to this extraordinary landscape and its unique culture. After spending over 20 years living around the world, I arrived back in WA at the start of the pandemic. It was during this period of reflection and reconnection that I wrote the first draft of WHALE SHARK JACK.

This homecoming became the catalyst for a story that captures the distinct spirit of a special part of Western Australia, Ningaloo, while exploring universal themes that resonate across cultures and generations. At its heart, WHALE SHARK JACK is about family, friendship, and our profound relationship with the natural world. It's a heartwarming tale that will make audiences laugh, cry, and yearn to dive into the ocean themselves!

The development of this screenplay has been enriched by collaboration with some of Australia's most respected storytellers. Working alongside award-winning screenwriter John Collee (Boy Swallows Universe, Master and Commander, Happy

Feet) and celebrated Noongar screenwriter Dot West (The Circuit, Little J and Big Cuz) as script consultants brought invaluable perspectives that deepened and strengthened the narrative.

Equally important was my collaboration with Associate Producer and Baiyungu Traditional Owner Hazel Walgar, who guided the authentic development of the Baiyungu characters. Hazel's wisdom and generosity made such an impression that I named a character after her. Together with her sister, Hazel also composed the moving 'Healing Song' in the film, a contribution that adds genuine cultural resonance to the story.

WHALE SHARK JACK is a celebration of Western Australia's breathtaking beauty and rich cultural heritage, wrapped in a story designed to touch hearts worldwide. The entire journey - from that first draft written in lockdown isolation to bringing the story to life with this extraordinary team - has been an absolute joy.

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**This film is a love letter to a very special part of Western Australia and an invitation for audiences everywhere to discover the magic that exists where the red earth meets the turquoise ocean.**

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## CHARACTER SUMMARIES

### NITA KEELE

// Played by **Abbie Cornish**

Nita is a brilliant marine biologist with a PhD and a lifelong love of the sea. She is never happier than when she's far from shore, plunging into deep blue water with a Niskin bottle or using eDNA to uncover the ocean's secrets. But when her husband Marcus is killed in a storm, the ocean that once gave her joy becomes a source of fear. Terrified it might take her daughter too, she abandons their life at sea and moves them to Exmouth, determined to build a safer future on solid ground. Nita buries every reminder of the past, convinced it's the only way to protect Sarah, and herself. Yet her greatest strength, her fierce instinct to shield her daughter, also becomes her biggest obstacle. To truly keep Sarah safe, Nita must find the courage to open her heart to the ocean again.



### SARAH MITCHELL-KEELE

// Played by **Alyla Browne**

Sarah is smart, brave, and fiercely protective of the things she loves - especially her family and her best friend, Jack, a whale shark she rescued as a pup. She's grown up on the ocean with her marine biologist parents, her days filled with swimming, sailing, and surfing. But when a storm takes her dad's life and her mum moves them to Exmouth, Sarah suddenly feels like a fish out of water. Desperate for the sea, she pins all her hopes on Jack's return to Ningaloo Reef. When he doesn't appear, Sarah makes the bold choice to defy her mum and set out to find him. What begins as a fight to claw back the perfect life she lost becomes something bigger: a journey that teaches her she can't live in the past, and that sometimes the bravest thing is learning how to move forward.



## MARCUS MITCHELL

// Played by Michael Dorman

Marcus grew up in Exmouth with his Aunty Dot, where his love for the ocean shaped him from the start. At university, he met Nita, and after they'd completed their PhDs in marine biology, they combined their love of science and the sea to build a life together on the water, researching whale sharks from their boat, Playground. Marcus is warm, generous, and utterly devoted to his family. But when a freak storm takes his life, the loss ripples out like a wave, leaving Nita, Sarah, Aunty Dot, and the wider marine biology community struggling to fill the space he left behind.

## AUNTY DOT

// Played by Rachel Ward

Aunty Dot is no-nonsense with a heart of gold. A meteorologist who has travelled the world, she lives in Exmouth in a house crammed with treasures from her journeys. She loves to cook and treats every meal like a personal challenge to invent the weirdest recipe imaginable. Most of her creations turn out to be surprisingly tasty. More than anyone, Dot understands what Nita and Sarah need to survive Marcus's death, but in true Aunty Dot fashion, she won't interfere unless she has to.



## HAZEL COOPER

// Played by Ursula Yovich

Hazel is EJ's mum, with a deep sense of family and a strong bond to the ocean. She runs a sustainable fishing business with her husband, Peter, and carries the knowledge and traditions of her Baiyungu heritage. Hazel notices what others miss, especially the feelings people try to hide. She sees Sarah's grief and offers comfort through a 'Healing Song' that eases some of the pain. She's quietly delighted to see her son building a friendship with Sarah, having long worried that he spends too much of his life behind a computer screen.



## ROSIE FINN

// Played by Karen O'Leary

Rosie is the ever-watchful guard of Ningaloo Marina, and nothing slips past her. With her bright blue hair and a fish tattoo on her arm, she wears her love of the sea proudly. Friendly and generous, she's always ready with a smile or a helping hand. But don't be fooled. Rosie lives for rules and regulations, and if you break one of her marina laws, she'll be on you faster than a seagull on hot chips.



## EJ COOPER

// Played by Luca Miller

EJ is a computer genius. He's the kid everyone in Exmouth calls when their laptop crashes or their phone eats all their photos. He can fix anything, code his way around any glitch, and dreams of one day launching his own tech start-up in Silicon Valley. While his parents run a sustainable fishing business, EJ has no desire to spend time in the ocean and prefers solid ground. When Sarah asks him to repair her dad's laptop, he treats it like just another job, but it sparks an unlikely friendship. As they use real-time data to track whale sharks, the computer whiz and the ocean girl discover that even total opposites can find common ground.



## ASHLEIGH

// Played by Giselle Philogene

Ashleigh is the queen bee of the school, sharp-tongued and in charge, and she wastes no time deciding she doesn't like Sarah. Beneath the attitude, though, lies insecurity: she envies Sarah's ease in being herself and the closeness she shares with her mum, while Ashleigh's separated parents are too wrapped up in their own lives to notice her. She uses her queen bee status like armour, keeping everyone in line. But when Sarah takes the blame for a fight she started, Ashleigh's view shifts. For the first time, she sees Sarah not as an enemy, but as someone she might trust.



## PETER COOPER

// Played by Jayden Boundry

Peter is a big-hearted Baiyungu man who runs a sustainable fishing business with his wife, Hazel. He would do anything for his family and carries a deep respect for the land and ocean that sustain them. Warm and easy-going, he's also a joker who loves to tease EJ and embarrass him in the way only a dad can - equal parts annoying and full of love.



## MR FELDMAN

// Played by Khrob Edmonds

Mr Feldman is a warm-hearted, larger-than-life teacher who throws himself into his work. Instantly recognisable in his collection of outrageously colourful shirts, he brings spark and energy into the classroom. Firm but fair, he pushes his students to do their best and makes sure they know he's right there backing them every step of the way.



## // BACKGROUND PRODUCTION NOTES

### Indigenous Influence in Story, Design and Performance

WHALE SHARK JACK is a heartfelt tribute to the breathtaking wilderness of Western Australia's Nyinggulu Coast, a region that has been home to its Traditional Owners - the Baiyungu, West Thalanyji, and Jinigudera peoples - for tens of thousands of years. At the heart of the film lies a deep respect for Country and culture, embedded throughout the storytelling, music, and visual design.

Central to this collaboration is the Nyinggulu Mob, who maintain a strong spiritual connection to the Emu Spirit Dreaming, Gajalbu Malanmayi. Their guidance has been instrumental in authentically shaping the film's Baiyungu characters, dialogue, and storyline. The production worked closely with the Traditional Owners of the Ningaloo region to ensure cultural accuracy and sensitivity.

Associate Producer and cultural consultant Hazel Walgar played a vital role in the film's development. Alongside her sister, Gwen Peck, Hazel composed an original 'Healing Song' - a powerful piece of music that marks a historic first: the Baiyungu language and song will be featured on the big screen for the very first time. Performed by Ursula Yovich in her role as Hazel, the song is a soul-stirring moment of cultural pride and resilience.

Indigenous fashion is a cornerstone of WHALE SHARK JACK's costume design, with First Nations creatives bringing cultural identity to the forefront.

Hazel's niece, designer Rachael Cooyou, crafted custom outfits for the First Nations cast, including unique school uniforms adorned with emu logos - symbolising the local wildlife and its deep connection to the land. Custom workwear was also created for the on-screen family to reflect their cultural and regional identity.

Personal touches were added by the cast themselves: Jayden Boundry (Peter) collaborated on a specially made hat featuring his totem animal, symbolically burnt into its side. Jayden's Welcome to Country during production offered a moving, inclusive reflection on the importance of land, animals, and heritage. Luca Miller (EJ) wears board shorts that visually echo his character's connection to Country, reinforcing the film's grounding in place and culture.

Queensland-based Indigenous swimwear designer Natalie Blacklock also contributed to the film's wardrobe, providing patterned bathers designed by her family and other First Nations artists from across Australia. The filmmakers hope the film's exposure will help reintroduce Blacklock's designs to a wider audience and empower her next chapter.

Ultimately, WHALE SHARK JACK is a cinematic love letter - not only to Western Australia's unique beauty, but to the enduring cultures that have shaped and protected it for millennia.



## Creating Jack

Two distinct versions of Jack were created for the film - affectionately dubbed 'Baby Jack' and 'Big Jack'. Baby Jack was brought to life as a detailed puppet, while Big Jack was a striking 8-metre-long prosthetic/puppet model.

To develop Baby Jack, the production team collaborated with Oscar-nominated Jason Baird of JMB FX Studio. Over the course of two months, four versions of the puppet were meticulously crafted - each designed for specific movements, either operating independently or with assistance from a puppeteer.

Because sightings of baby whale sharks are incredibly rare - fewer than 40 confirmed between 1970 and 2020 - the design process was shaped by the limited scientific knowledge available, adding both challenge and creativity to bringing these elusive pups to life on screen.

When it came to Big Jack, a number of talented technicians and artists contributed throughout the design and build process of an 8-metre whale shark. A key underwater scene was filmed in the controlled environment of Perth's ERGT pool, with Big Jack taking centre stage during a pivotal moment in the story.

When filming on-location in the waters of Ningaloo, Exmouth, the cast and crew swam alongside real whale sharks, and there was one especially charismatic creature who seemed unfazed, even interested, by the cameras. After the shoot, the Ningaloo Discovery team, in collaboration with the Western Australian Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, named the young whale shark after "Jack," a fitting tribute that now links the real-life whale shark forever to the film.



## Our Locations

WHALE SHARK JACK is a deeply rooted Western Australian story, brought to life through the breathtaking landscapes of the Ningaloo region. Set in and around the coastal town of Exmouth, the film captures the raw beauty and unique character of a place where red desert meets turquoise sea. Exmouth serves as the gateway to both the Ningaloo Marine Park and Cape Range National Park, making it a hub for eco-tourism and marine adventure. The surrounding beaches - often ranked among the most stunning in the world - provide a

striking visual backdrop, while the Ningaloo Reef, one of the longest near-shore reefs on the planet, teems with vibrant marine life. Spanning over 600,000 hectares, the Ningaloo Coast is a UNESCO World Heritage site and home to the majestic whale shark, whose seasonal migrations inspire awe and conservation efforts alike. These extraordinary locations are not just settings in the film - they are integral to its heart, offering an authentic and immersive Western Australian experience.

## Acting and Filming Underwater

Acclaimed cinematographer Rick Rifici, known for his work on feature films, *Breath and Blueback*, brought his expertise in capturing the underwater world to *WHALE SHARK JACK*. All underwater sequences were filmed using a combination of open-water locations off the coast of Western Australia and controlled environments, including a purpose-designed underwater set. This allowed for both the dramatic scale of the ocean and the precision needed for intimate character-driven moments beneath the surface.

The key cast underwent extensive preparation to perform authentically and safely in the water. Prior to filming, they trained together in Los Angeles to build physical stamina, water confidence, and chemistry. Once on location, they performed in the open sea - specifically in the Indian Ocean waters surrounding the Ningaloo Reef and offshore in waters to the south of Perth - working closely with safety divers and marine coordinators, and inquisitive jellyfish.

Ayla Browne, cast early in the process as the young lead, undertook two years of personal preparation for the role. Her dedication included regular diving practice. By the time filming began, Ayla could hold her breath for over two minutes and free dive to many metres. Her confidence and skill underwater were crucial in bringing authenticity to her performance - her composure in the open ocean was something to behold, and her natural ease in the water elevated every scene she was in.

## Environmental Messages

Whale sharks - often called the gentle giants of the ocean - are a wonder of the natural world, renowned for their graceful presence and for their annual aggregation at Western Australia's Ningaloo Reef. Despite their size and visibility in certain regions, much about their life cycle remains a mystery, including where they breed and where their young grow and develop. Classified as vulnerable on the IUCN Red List, whale sharks face increasing threats from climate change, habitat loss, marine pollution, and unsustainable fishing practices.

*WHALE SHARK JACK* draws attention to this fragile reality. While the story is fictional, it reflects the real and urgent need for greater understanding and protection of these awe-inspiring animals. Through the eyes of the young protagonist and her bond with the ocean, the film aims to spark curiosity, compassion, and a deeper commitment to marine conservation. By showcasing the beauty and mystery of the Ningaloo Reef and its inhabitants, the filmmakers hope to inspire audiences - young and old - to care for our oceans and take part in preserving their future.



## ABBIE CORNISH

// as NITA

Abbie Cornish is an internationally recognised Australian actress whose multifaceted career has garnered accolades around the world.

After beginning modelling at age 13, Cornish very quickly found success on screen. In 1999, she was awarded the Young Actor's Award by the Australian Film Institute for her role in the ABC's television show WILDSIDE, and was shortly offered her first role in a feature film in THE MONKEY'S MASK.

Cornish had her breakout performance in 2004, starring in Cate Shortland's SOMERSAULT alongside Sam Worthington, a role which earned her the AFI Award for Best Actress in a leading Role, Best Actress at the FCCA and IF Awards, and Best Breakthrough Performance at the 2005 Miami International Film Festival.

She continued to receive critical acclaim in 2006 for her role in CANDY opposite Heath Ledger – again winning the FCCA Best Actress Award and earning nominations at the AFI and IF Awards – and in 2009 her role as Fanny Brawn in the Oscar-nominated film BRIGHT STAR.

On the big screen, Cornish also starred in A GOOD YEAR opposite Russell Crowe; ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE alongside Cate Blanchett; Zack Snyder's animated family film LEGEND OF THE GUARDIANS: THE OWLS OF GA'HOOLE, alongside Hugo Weaving and David Wenham, and in his film SUCKER PUNCH alongside Emily Browning and Vanessa Hudgens; LIMITLESS opposite Bradley Cooper; W.E. directed by Madonna; THE GIRL which premiered at Tribeca Film Festival; SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS opposite Woody Harrelson and Colin Farrell; ROBOCOP; SOLACE alongside Anthony Hopkins; and the Oscar-winning film THREE BILLBOARDS OUTSIDE EBBING, MISSOURI alongside Frances McDormand. Cornish will next be seen in I'M BEGINNING TO SEE THE LIGHT opposite Jack Husten, and Thane Economou's TRUST ME, I'M A DOCTOR.

On the small screen, Cornish reprised her role as Cathy Mueller in Amazon's JACK RYAN series, based on the books by Tom Clancy. Cornish appeared in both the first and fourth seasons alongside John Krasinski.

Off-screen, Cornish is also a rapper, singer, and songwriter, and has performed under the name Dusk since 2000. Originally part of the Australian hip-hop group BLADES, Cornish also opened for American rapper NAS on his Australian Illmatic tour as a solo artist and released an EP titled KEY OF THE SUN in 2021.



# ALYLA BROWNE

// as **SARAH**

Alyla Browne's career spans both film and television in Australia and abroad. In 2024, Alyla starred as the 'Young Furiosa' in George Miller's MAD MAX: FURIOSA. She and Anya Taylor-Joy share the role made famous by Charlize Theron. Alyla's performance saw her nominated for a Critics' Choice Award for Best Young Artist and an AACTA Award for Best Supporting Actress. Recently, Alyla starred in SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 3 playing the fan favourite role of 'Maria' alongside James Marsden, Jim Carrey, and Idris Elba.

Her very first role was in the hit series MR INBETWEEN, directed by Nash Edgerton. She played Nicole Kidman's daughter in the 2021 television series NINE PERFECT STRANGERS and the role of 'Young Hedwig' in the Stan original series, EDEN.

Following this, Alyla was cast as 'Young Alice' in the critically acclaimed Amazon series THE LOST FLOWERS OF ALICE HART alongside Sigourney Weaver, Asher Keddie, and Alycia Debnam-Carey, for which she received a Nomination for the Graham Kennedy Award for Most Popular New Talent at the 2024 Logie Awards and a Nomination for Best Performance in a Streaming Series: Leading Youth Artist in the 2024 Young Artist Awards.

Alyla has also appeared in many feature films including the remake of the classic film CHILDREN OF THE CORN, George Miller's THREE THOUSAND YEARS OF LONGING in which she played a young Tilda Swinton, the film TRUE SPIRIT, based on the true story of pioneering teenage sailor Jessica Watson, and the lead role of 'Charlotte' in the indie horror feature film STING alongside Ryan Corr.

Other forthcoming credits include shark thriller SHIVER directed by Tommy Wirkola.

Alyla was awarded a Rising Star in the Casting Guild of Australia Awards in 2024.



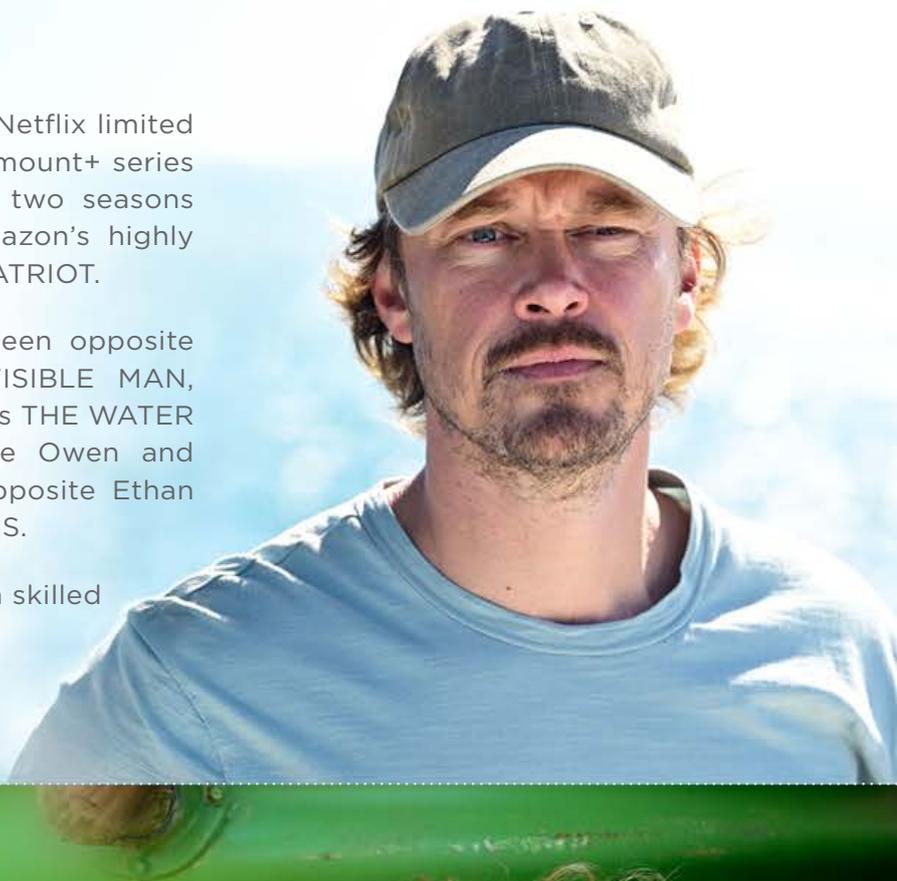
# MICHAEL DORMAN

// as **MARCUS**

Michael Dorman was recently seen in the Netflix limited series TERRITORY. He starred in the Paramount+ series JOE PICKETT and previously starred in two seasons of Apple's FOR ALL MANKIND and Amazon's highly regarded Steve Conrad spy satire series PATRIOT.

On the features side, he was recently seen opposite Elizabeth Moss in Universal's THE INVISIBLE MAN, opposite Russell Crowe in Warner Brother's THE WATER DIVINER, opposite Jason Statham, Clive Owen and Robert De Niro in KILLER ELITE and opposite Ethan Hawke in the Lionsgate film DAYBREAKERS.

Michael's talents are also rich in music as a skilled guitarist, songwriter, and singer.



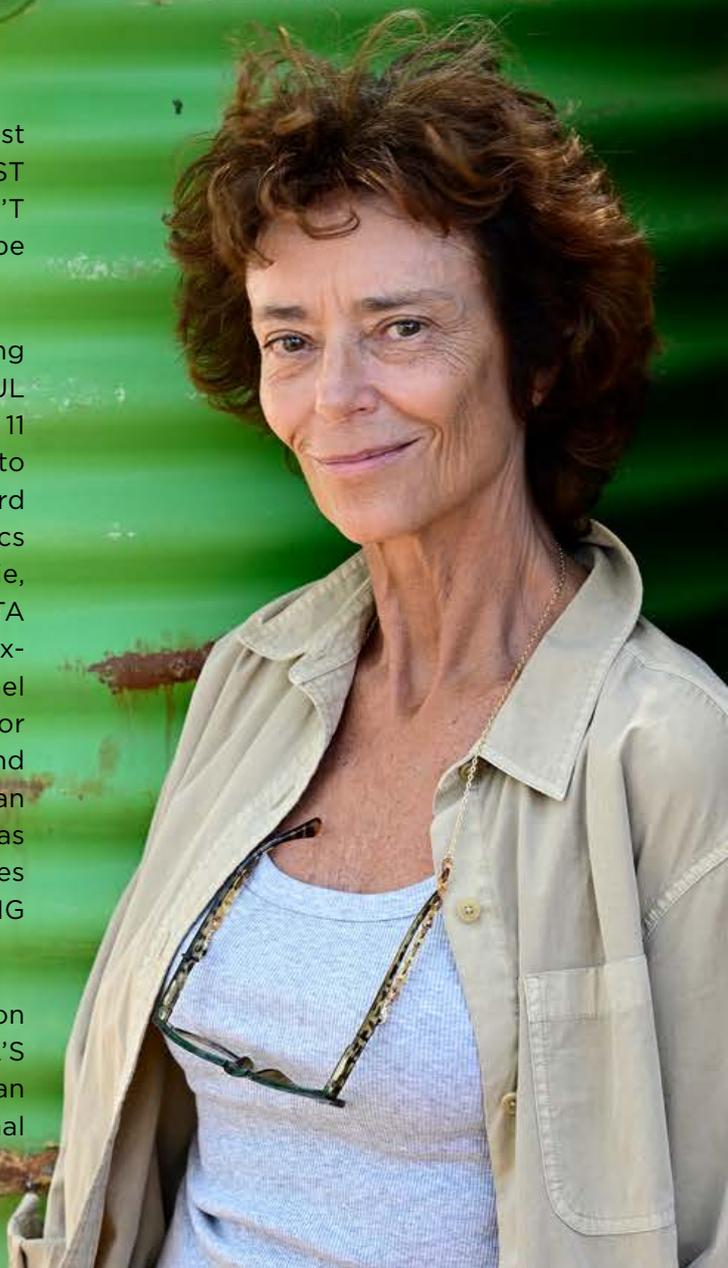
# RACHEL WARD

// as **AUNTY DOT**

Rachel Ward is an actress who starred in the CBS's biggest rating mini-series ever, THE THORNBIRDS and films AGAINST ALL ODDS, SHARKEY'S MACHINE and DEAD MEN DON'T WEAR PLAID. She has been nominated for a Golden Globe Award three times.

For the past 15 years, Rachel has been focused on writing and directing film and TV in Australia. Her film BEAUTIFUL KATE screened in the Sydney Film Festival, garnered 11 AFI nominations and screened in competition at Toronto and Palm Springs Film Festival. She won an AACTA Award for her short THE BIG HOUSE and has received 3 Critics Circle nominations for best director. For the ABC movie, AN ACCIDENTAL SOLDIER, Rachel received an AACTA nomination for best director and best film. Showtime's six-part series THE DEVIL'S PLAYGROUND, of which Rachel directed three episodes, won both a Logie and AACTA for best film or miniseries. PALM BEACH, directed by Rachel and written by Rachel and Joanna Murray-Smith, starring Bryan Brown, Greta Scacchi, Sam Neill and Richard E. Grant was released in August 2019. Lately Rachel directed episodes of LAST DAYS OF THE SPACE AGE for Disney+, FLYING DOCTOR for Channel 7 and DARBY AND JOAN for ABC.

In 2023 she made a documentary of her farm's transition from conventional to Regenerative farming, called RACHEL'S FARM. It was produced by Wildbear Films and Madman Entertainment, streamed on Stan and won the National Critics Award for Best Documentary.



## URSULA YOVICH

// as **HAZEL**

Ursula Yovich is an award-winning actor, playwright, singer, songwriter and storyteller on both stage and screen. Ursula created and originated the titular role in *BARBARA AND THE CAMP DOGS*, which premiered at Belvoir Street Theatre. Her film credits include *TOP END WEDDING*, Baz Luhrmann's *AUSTRALIA*, *AROUND THE BLOCK*, *GOLDSTONE* and *JINDABYNE*. Her small screen credits include: for ABC - *THE GODS OF WHEAT*, *MYSTERY ROAD*, *PLAY SCHOOL*, *PREPPERS*, *RAKE*, *REDFERN NOW*, *WAKEFIELD*; for Amazon - *THE MOTH EFFECT*; for Foxtel - *THE TWELVE*; for Netflix - *IRREVERENT*; for Nine Network - *THE CODE*, *DOCTOR DOCTOR*, *THE GAMERS 2037*; for SBS - *FABORIGINAL*; for Seven Network - *WANTED*; and for Stan - *DEVIL'S DUST*.

Other theatre credits include: for Belvoir - *WELL BEHAVED WOMEN*, *20 QUESTIONS*, *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*, *THE DREAMERS*, *THE GOVERNOR'S FAMILY*; for Sydney Theatre Company - *BLOODLAND*, *THE GOLDEN AGE*, *LOVE AND INFORMATION*, *THE RESISTABLE RISE OF ARTURO UI*, *POWER PLAYS*, *THE SECRET RIVER*, *SEVEN STAGES OF GRIEVING*; for Griffin.

Ursula won a Best Supporting Actor Film Critic's Circle Award in 2020 and an AACTA Best Supporting Actor nomination in 2019 for her role in the feature film *TOP END WEDDING* and a Helpmann Award for Best Female Actor in a Musical in 2019 for *BARBARA AND THE CAMP DOGS*.



## KAREN O'LEARY

// as **ROSIE**

Karen made her acting debut in Taika Waititi and Jemaine Clement's cult-classic feature *WHAT WE DO IN THE SHADOWS*. Her head-turning performance as Officer O'Leary led to comedy spin-off series *WELLINGTON PARANORMAL*, a show that is broadcast in 70 countries around the world, including HBO Max in the US.

She has enjoyed roles in features *THE MOON IS UPSIDE DOWN*, *MILLIE LIES LOW* and SXSW darlings *THE BREAKER UPPERERS* and *NUDE TUESDAY*. Her talents are a perfect fit for improvised NZ television comedy *EDUCATORS*, and she's also an excellent television host, as illustrated by her 2024 NZTV Award win for Best Entertainment Presenter, for her work in *PADDY GOWER HAS ISSUES*.



## LUCA MILLER

// AS EJ

Luca Miller is a 13-year-old actor from Adelaide, making his feature film debut in WHALE SHARK JACK. He is a proud Aboriginal person with strong connections to Central Australia through his Arrernte family. Outside of acting, Luca is a passionate and talented athlete who loves playing rugby, basketball, football, and competing in athletics. In 2024, Luca was named MVP for the South Australian State Touch Football team, and in 2025, he was selected for West Adelaide Football Club Under 13 team. When he's not on the field or in front of the camera, Luca enjoys listening to music, playing video games, making sports clips for his YouTube channel and spending time with his friends.

## GISELLE PHILOGENE

// AS ASHLEIGH

Giselle is 14 years old and lives in Perth, Western Australia. She has studied acting at the Ali Roberts Studio in Perth since 2024. She has been studying singing since 2022, and from the ages of 6 to 12, she was selected for the National Squad where she trained in gymnastics. WHALE SHARK JACK marks her first ever role in a feature film.

## JAYDEN BOUNDRY

// AS PETER

Jayden Boundry is a proud Wadjak, Balardong, Yued, Wilman Noongar and Badimaya Yamatji man with strong family connections to much of the south-west of Western Australia. Jayden is a cultural man and spends much of his time sharing culture with the wider community through his business 'Ngalak Nidja' which translates to 'We are here' in Noongar.

Jayden is a storyteller, traditional dancer, didgeridoo player, tool maker and cultural consultant who delivers cultural workshops to people from all walks of life. He is a qualified Noongar language LOTE teacher and currently works teaching Noongar Language and Cultural Studies classes in schools. He is the author of 'Noongar Boodja Waangkan' and 'Boodja Barna', two introductory Noongar first words books published by Fremantle Press. WHALE SHARK JACK marks his first-ever role in a feature film.

## EMMI WILLIAMS

// AS YOUNG SARAH

Emmi studies acting at the Ali Roberts Studio in Perth, Western Australia. She is an outgoing 7-year-old with a love of physical activities, including tennis, running and gymnastics. WHALE SHARK JACK marks her first-ever role in a feature film.



## MIRANDA EDMONDS & KHROB EDMONDS

### // Directors

Miranda and Khrob are an Australian sister and brother directing team who have directed a number of award-winning short films, including TANGO UNDERPANTS. Written by John Collee (Master and Commander, Happy Feet) and starring Emma Booth (Hounds of Love, Gods of Egypt), it was filmed in Buenos Aires. Its accolades include the audience award at Palm Springs International ShortFest and Best Short Film at St Tropez Cinema des Antipodes. It is now being adapted into a feature film.

Their musical short LIBRARY OF LOVE starring Golden Globe-winner Ian Brennan (creator of Glee, Scream Queens, and Monsters), premiered at Palm Springs International ShortFest and screened at the Lincoln Center in New York. Khrob and Miranda hold postgraduate degrees in Film from the Victorian College of the Arts.

WHALE SHARK JACK is their debut feature film.



# TIMOTHY WHITE

## // PRODUCER

Timothy is a veteran of the Australian and New Zealand film and television industries. Australian producing credits include: MALCOLM (AFI Best Film 1986); SPOTSWOOD, with Anthony Hopkins; Vincent Ward's MAP OF THE HUMAN HEART (Cannes); DEATH IN BRUNSWICK, with Sam Neill; COSI, with Ben Mendelsohn and Toni Collette; ANGEL BABY (AFI Best Film 1995), Gillian Armstrong's OSCAR & LUCINDA, with Ralph Fiennes and Cate Blanchett; TWO HANDS (Sundance, AFI Best Film 1999), with Heath Ledger and Bryan Brown; Scott Hicks' THE BOYS ARE BACK (TIFF), with Clive Owen; Julia Leigh's SLEEPING BEAUTY (Cannes Competition); SON OF A GUN, with Ewan McGregor and Alicia Vikander; and Taryn Brumfitt's feature documentary, EMBRACE.

New Zealand credits include: Toa Fraser's NO.2, (Audience Prize Sundance 2006); Robert Sarkies' OUT OF THE BLUE (TIFF 2007, Best Film 2008 NZ Film Awards); THE DARK HORSE (TIFF, Best Film 2014 NZ Film Awards) with Cliff Curtis; Andrew Adamson's MR PIP (TIFF 2016), with Hugh Laurie; and Lee Tamahori's MAHANA (Berlin).

In 2019, he produced the sci-fi thriller I AM MOTHER (Sundance, picked up by Netflix), with Hilary Swank and Rose Byrne. In 2020: THE FURNACE (Venice) and FALLING FOR FIGARO, with Danielle Macdonald and Joanna Lumley; and Gracie Otto's SERIOUSLY RED (SXSW 2022).

More recently, he produced the Irish/NZ television series THE GONE (Best TV drama series 2023 NZ TV Awards) and a second season in 2024. He is currently in post-production with Andrew Niccol's I, OBJECT with Anna Faris and Karl Urban, and Robert Sarkies' PIKE RIVER with Melanie Lynskey and Robyn Malcolm.





## KATHRYN LEFROY

### // WRITER, CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Kathryn is an award-winning screenwriter and novelist. Her short film LIBRARY OF LOVE premiered at the Palm Springs International ShortFest, and she is currently developing and producing a diverse slate of film and TV projects with partners around the world.

She is the author of three acclaimed novels for young readers — ALEX AND THE ALPACAS SAVE THE WORLD, ALEX AND THE ALPACAS RIDE AGAIN, and THE SECRET OF THE STONE — and has recently adapted her screenplay WHALE SHARK JACK into a novel, published by Penguin in 2026.

Kathryn holds a first-class honours degree from the University of Melbourne, a PhD from Monash University, and is a graduate of the UCLA Professional Screenwriting program. She's lived and worked in many different cities, including San Francisco, Los Angeles, London, Dublin, and Melbourne, but currently calls Fremantle home.



## GEORGIA WHITE // CO-PRODUCER

Georgia completed the Foundation Diploma at AFTRS in 2011 and the Advanced Diploma in Feature Film Screenwriting in 2015. Focused on writing, producing and script editing, Georgia is the Head of Creative Development for Southern Light Films.

Her first production role was on Julius Avery's SON OF A GUN (2014). Later that year, Georgia interned as a script reader at the preeminent UK television production company, Drama Republic. Returning home, Georgia was a publicity assistant for Tracey Mair Publicity (SUFFRAGETTE, CAROL), before going on to work at Animal Logic on LEGO BATMAN, Ridley Scott's ALIEN: COVENANT and then within CEO Zareh Nalbandian's development team (PETER RABBIT). Georgia was awarded a Gender Matters attachment through Screen Australia to assist Grant Sputore on his debut feature, I AM MOTHER, which screened at the Sundance Film Festival.

Georgia Co-Produced Roderick MacKay's debut feature film, THE FURNACE, which premiered in Venice Film Festival's prestigious Orizzonti competition in 2020. In 2022, she produced the short film HOME, starring Samson Coulter. Georgia is currently in development on such projects as a retelling of the iconic television series SKIPPY (as Writer/Producer).



## ESTELLE BUZZARD // CO-PRODUCER

Estelle is a publicist, film producer and founding director of Buzz Corporate Communications (est. 2006), Buzz Productions (est. 2012) and the Cottesloe Film Festival (est. 2017). A journalist by trade, she began working in entertainment publicity in 2000, promoting licensed productions from Disney/Pixar, World Wrestling Entertainment, Britney Brands and Nickelodeon, to name a few.

As a publicist, Estelle's clients have included numerous documentary and film production companies, international film festivals, sales agencies, actors, and directors. Her publicity credits include award-winning films LITTLE SPARROWS, MORE 4 ME, BITTER ART, BROKEN CONTRACT and CRUSH. Her producing credits include the US drama THE LIFEGUARD (starring Kristen Bell) which premiered at Sundance; award-winning US feature MISSING PIECES (starring Mark Boone Jnr. and Melora Walters); award-winning short TANGO UNDERPANTS (starring Emma Booth); musical comedy LIBRARY OF LOVE (starring Trilby Glover and Ian Brennan); Australian feature FORESHADOW; and most recently, WHALE SHARK JACK. Currently, she is in development on the television series BELONGING, an 8 x 45 min psychological thriller.

Estelle has a Bachelor of Arts – Journalism, and Professional Certificates in Executive Screen Production, Documentary Production Management, and Essential Producing.

# HAZEL WALGAR

// ASSOCIATE PRODUCER,  
CULTURAL CONSULTANT

Hazel Walgar (née Cooyou) is a Senior Cultural Knowledge Holder and Traditional Owner of the Baiyungu people, with deep ties to Nyinggulu (the Ningaloo Coast), a UNESCO World Heritage-listed site.

As Director and Owner for Baiyungu Dreaming, Hazel plays an integral role in preserving her culture and sharing it with the wider community. She's also the Cultural Advisor to the State Government Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) on the Ningaloo Coast Joint Management Arrangement. She's a Cultural Advisor to the Nyinggulu Mob for the Desert People Project, which explores the long-standing connection of Aboriginal people to the Nyinggulu Coast and their connections to the Pilbara Mob.

Hazel has provided the cultural lead on several notable arts projects, including the First Lights - Nyinggulu Dreaming Story and Light Show, and the

award-winning documentary Ningaloo Nyinggulu. The Jamba Nyinayi Festival, now in its third year, is another of her successful initiatives, showcasing Baiyungu culture through music, dance and film.

Hazel's work inspires many Mobs all over Australia and helps to increase cultural knowledge and awareness. She invites others to learn the stories, experiences and traditions of the Baiyungu people. Hazel and her sister Gwen Peck (née Cooyou) are the last fluent speakers of the Baiyungu language. Hazel has helped revitalise the language through resources co-authored with the Wangka Maya Pilbara Language Centre, and she is committed to ensuring the language is spoken by new generations of Baiyungu people.

One of Hazel and Gwen's most significant cultural contributions to the film is the 'Healing Song' they created, which is meant for women to sing and is used for recovering from serious trauma. This song is a deeply personal and powerful expression of Hazel's commitment to healing through cultural traditions and features in WHALE SHARK JACK.





## MICHAEL MCDERMOTT

### // DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Michael McDermott is an ACS-accredited cinematographer based in Western Australia and represented by Gersh, Los Angeles. With almost 30 years of industry experience, Michael has worked across the globe, contributing to various facets of motion picture production.

He has lensed advertising campaigns for major national and international brands, including Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Telstra, Commonwealth Bank, Toyota, KIA Automotive, Optus, and Fosters, among others.

Michael's filmography includes numerous short films and feature films, with notable international festival successes such as HOUNDS OF LOVE (directed by Ben Young), JUDAS COLLAR (directed by Alison James), and THE FURNACE (directed by Roderick McKay). THE FURNACE was the only Australian feature film accepted into competition at the 2020 Venice International Film Festival.

In 2021, Michael shot DEVIL'S PEAK, directed by Ben Young and starring Billy Bob Thornton and Robin Wright, which was released in February 2023. In 2023/24, he completed principal photography on the Dev Patel-produced feature SAHELA, Sarah Legg's HONEYMOON, Zoe Pepper's BIRTHRIGHT and the Stan TV series SCRUBLANDS - SILVER, directed by Ben Young.

## RICK RIFICI // WATER DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

An award-winning director of photography, Rick Rifici has over 35 years' experience in documentary, feature film and television industry. Based in Australia, Rick has been a leading cinematographer on a variety of critically acclaimed projects over the past decade.

Rick's passion for cinematography has seen him recognised by and The Film Critics Circle of Australia (2024 nominee for BLUEBACK, and 2018 winner for BREATH), and the Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts (AACTA). He has twice been nominated for the AACTA Award for Best Cinematography in a Feature Film (BREATH/DRIFT), and in 2022, he won both the AACTA Award for Best Cinematography in a Feature Documentary and the WASCA Award for Outstanding Achievement in Cinematography for FACING MONSTERS.

With a talent for capturing the authenticity of individuals in diverse environments, Rick enriches narratives through careful visual composition, use of light and shade, and technical means. Passionate about using varied formats to achieve high production value, Rick brings a collaborative, calm, and creative approach to every project - crafting beautiful cinematography that visually elevates story and connects audiences.

Rick's feature film credits include THE SURFER, BLUEBACK, THE FURNACE, BREATH, DRIFT, DIRT MUSIC, H IS FOR HAPPINESS, and STORM BOY. His television credits include Netflix's THE SURVIVORS and SURVIVING SUMMER, STATELESS (SBS), THE HUNTING SEASON (SBS), ITCH (ABC), DRAIN THE OCEANS (National Geographic), and LAST DAYS OF THE SPACE AGE (Disney).



# CLAYTON JAUNCEY

## // PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Originally trained as a photographer, Clayton transitioned into Production Design over 25 years ago, working across a wide range of genres in both film and television. Most recently, he completed work on THE TRAVELLERS, directed by Bruce Beresford for Sony Pictures.

His extensive portfolio of credits includes feature films WE BURY THE DEAD, RUNT, KID SNOW, BLUEBACK, THE FURNACE, RAMS, SLAM, THREE SUMMERS, HOUNDS OF LOVE, LOOKING FOR GRACE, KILL ME 3 TIMES (starring Simon Pegg), THE TURNING, DRIFT, BENEATH HILL 60 (nominated for a 2010 AFI Award), BLAME, LAST TRAIN TO FREO, LAST CAB TO DARWIN, and PAPER PLANES (both nominated for Best Film at the 2016 AACTA Awards).

On the television side, Clayton's credits include 13 episodes of the Sci-Fi series HUNTERS, THE PRINCIPAL (nominated for Best Telefeature or Miniseries at the 2016 AACTA Awards), the telemovies AN ACCIDENTAL SOLDIER (nominated for an AACTA Award in 2013), PANIC AT ROCK ISLAND, THREE ACTS OF MURDER, RAPTURE OF THE DEEP (Granada Germany), the critically acclaimed miniseries THE SHRK NET, and the AFI and Logie Award-winning series LOCKIE LEONARD.

In recognition of his exceptional work, Clayton was awarded the Australian Production Designers Guild Award for feature film design in 2011 for BENEATH HILL 60.

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# MURRAY POPE

## // VFX SUPERVISOR

Murray Pope is a highly experienced VFX Supervisor and Producer. His Supervisor credits include the feature films RABBIT-PROOF FENCE, THE PORTABLE DOOR, MONKEY MAN, THE QUIET AMERICAN and most recently FING!. Murray's credits as VFX Executive Producer include THE MATRIX RELOADED, LORD OF THE RINGS: THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING, MOULIN ROUGE!, and HOUSE OF FLYING DAGGERS.

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# JASON BAIRD

## // PROSTHETICS / CREATURE DESIGNER

Jason Baird is the founding director of JMBFX Studio which is internationally recognised as one of Australia's leading makeup effects studios. This was highlighted during the 2023 awards season with an Oscar nomination, BAFTA Award, Critics Choice Award, and AACTA Award for the studio's Prosthetic Makeup Effects on the Baz Luhrmann film, ELVIS.

Jason has had a driven passion for all things relating to 'monsters' and 'character' makeup since the age of 11 and has taken his company from strength-to-strength creating makeup effects for international blockbusters, STAR WARS EPISODE 2 and the MATRIX trilogy. Most recently JMBFX created makeup effects, creatures and prosthetics for KONG - SKULL ISLAND, THOR - RAGNARÖK, AQUAMAN, LEGEND OF SUN AND MOON, MORTAL COMBAT 2, and Ron Howard's EDEN. Currently Jason is designing prosthetic makeup on the China Brothers film STAKEOUT, a re-invention of the classic Dracula tale.



## MONIQUE WILSON

### // COSTUME DESIGNER

Monique Wilson is a multi-disciplined artist, actor, screenwriter, and costume designer. In 2022 she wrote, starred in, and co-created the costume and production design for the film *PIECES*, directed by Martin Wilson, which premiered at CinefestOz, opened Mental Health Week and was later broadcast via Binge and Channel 9. *PIECES* received an AACTA nomination for Best Costume Design and Best Independent Feature, and Monique was awarded a WA Screen Culture Award for Outstanding Achievement in Production Design, as well as a nomination for a WASCA for Outstanding Performance. Monique's diverse experience spans theatrical collaborations, script editing, ghost writing and children's book illustration. She is currently developing multiple TV and film projects.

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## KAREN SIMS

### // HAIR & MAKEUP DESIGNER

Karen has built an impressive career spanning over 30 years in the film industry. Based in Western Australia, her recent work includes feature films *H IS FOR HAPPINESS*, *BLUEBACK*, *KID SNOW*, and Bruce Beresford's *THE TRAVELLERS*. Beyond her dedication to film, Karen has a keen interest in face and body reading, a passion that enriches her approach to character development.





# Stan.

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