

ALEA
O'SHEA

JAZZ
LAKER

JOSH
HEUSTON

NAOMI
SEQUEIRA

FINALLY ME

ONE CHEER COULD CHANGE EVERYTHING



RESPLENDENT PICTURES AND JASON STEVENS PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS "FINALLY ME" JAZZ LAKER, TONY NIKOLAPOULOS, NAOMI SEQUEIRA, ALEA O'SHEA, JOSH HEUSTON
FELICITY PRICE, RHYS MULDOON, TIARNE COUPLAND, M.J. KOKOLIS, WILSON GILBERT, WITH CHRISTIE HAYES AND RHONDA BURCHMORE
COSTUME DESIGNER: BECK STEVENS, PRODUCTION DESIGNER: JODIE ANDAKARIS, SCORE COMPOSED BY: DECLAN HARSENT, EDITED BY: YASMIN BRIGHT, DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: CHRIS BLAND, EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: BECK STEVENS, SHANE BURRELL, ANTHONY MARSH
WRITTEN, DIRECTED, AND PRODUCED BY JASON STEVENS

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A JASON STEVENS PRODUCTION

Resplendent Pictures presents Finally Me/ In selected cinemas and via Fan Force

LAUNCH MARCH 14th 2023

Written, Directed and Produced by Jason Stevens

Starring JAZZ LAKER JOSH HEUSTON NAOMI SEQUEIRA TONY NIKOLAKOPOULOS ALEA O'SHEA FELICITY PRICE RHYS MULDOON TIARNIE COUPLAND M.J KOKOLIS WILSON GILBERT WITH CHRISTIE HAYES AND RHONDA BURCHMORE

Check out our EPK <https://youtu.be/VQMMA0BcNkQ>

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d66P5dG960k>

PUBLICITY REQUESTS: jason@jasonstevensproductions.com

IMAGES High res images available to download via <https://www.jasonstevensproductions.com/films/finally-me>

SYNOPSIS

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Soula Mitsos 16, Greek, plus size, works after school in the family owned take away Souvlaki store

All her dad wants her to do is take over the store and marry a Greek boy named Jimmy.

All Soula wants to do is cheerlead for her school Westend High.

Despite being a complete novice at cheerleading, Soula's dream becomes a reality when she's unexpectedly chosen in the team.

Her opportunity however is laced with much opposition, ridicule from team mates, not to mention West End's high arch nemesis, the affluent Taylor White who'll use every dirty trick in the book to seal victory.

However Soula's greatest battle will come from within as she struggles to believe that she belongs.

Cast: Jazz Laker, Tony Nikolakopoulos, Josh Heuston, Alea O'Shea, Naomi Sequeira, Tianrnie Coupland, Felicity Price, Rhonda Birchmoore, Rhys Muldoon, Gary Eck

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TIK TOK FINALLYMEMOVIE

MAIN CAST

SOULA - JAZZ LAKER Jazz studied a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Acting) at The National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA) in Sydney, graduating in 2019, where she starred in the world wide debut of 'Starstruck the Stage Musical' as Jackie Mullens.

MELODY - NAOMI SEQUEIRA Naomi's latest film ROMANCE ON THE MENU debuted as the #1 feature film on Netflix earlier this year. She's also had leading roles in the feature films PEARL

IN PARADISE and RIP TIDE. This year Naomi has been nominated for best performance in a short film for her performance in BLOOD SISTERS. She was also the lead Disney's THE EVERMOOR CHRONICLES and this year one of the leads in Paramount Plus **PAPER DOLLS**.

BARRY - JOSH HEUSTON Josh is one of the most influential and hottest names under 25 in Australia at the moment. Josh has a mixed ethnicity background and will next appear in the Network Ten/Netflix television series DIVE CLUB as the lead male, HENRY POLLARD. He has just returned from Melbourne where he filmed the role of Sammy in the upcoming television series, LITERARY LETHARGY, as well as MORE THAN THIS for PARAMOUNT PLUS. Josh also a key component to Netflix's recent reboot of HEARTBREAK HIGH which was a huge success globally. In 2023 Josh scored a major role with HBO MAX series "DUNE:THE SISTERHOOD SERIES" starring alongside Travis Fimmel.

TAYLOR WHITE - ALEA O'SHEA Alea has a wealth of experience on set... from 12 to 18 years old she starred as series regular, Darcy Callahan, on Seven's Home and Away in Australia and recently had a supporting role in the feature film, Time to Come Home for Christmas.

MR MITSOS - TONY NIKOLAKOPOULOS Tony's feature film credits include the highly acclaimed Head On, Alex and Eve, The Independent, West of Sunshine, Dream of a Shadow, Joe Cinque's Concolation, Predestination, Space Travel, Big Mammas Boy, The Kings of Mykonos, The Extra, Tom White, The Wannabes, Kangaroo Jack, The Wog Boy along with various others.

STACEY - TIARNIE COUPLAND Tiarnie began her screen career at the tender age of 8. Since then Tiarnie has appeared in numerous local and international films, TV series, and short films. Known for her first regular television lead role as Maddy Kent in the ABC & CBBC global hit Children's TV series, "Worst Year of my Life, Again!" Logie award winning TV show "Love Child" as bona fide wild child, Maggie which earned her a nomination as Best New Talent at the 2017 Logies. Recently Tiarnie has acted alongside Guy Pearce in season 2 of "Jack Irish" as Gus.

Tiarnie's feature film credits include the 2016 thriller, Killing Ground by Damian Power where she plays Em. The acclaimed drama, The Final Winter as Jess Henderson, daughter of Mick (Matt Nable). As of 2019 Tiarnie starred as the antagonist mean girl Edie in the international football movie 'Back of the Net' opposite Sofia Wylie

COACH HUDSON -FELICITY PRICE Felicity is an established Australian actress and screenwriter and director. She co-wrote and starred in Wish You Were Here which saw her nominated for the 2012 AACTA Awards for Best Actress in a Leading Role and won Best Original Screenplay.

CHRISTIE HAYES COACH GREEN Christie made her professional debut on the Australian television show Water Rats at 8 years of age. Known for Neighbours (2019), Home and Away (2000-2012), I'm Still Here! (2020), Out here on my own (2020)

MRS MITSOS - DEBORAH GALANOS Deborah Galanos is an Australian actress of Greek heritage and a National Institute of Dramatic Art acting degree graduate. Deb works

extensively in the theatre and has been nominated twice for Sydney Theatre awards in 2015 and 2016. She is also known for her work in Chasing Comets (2018), Razzle Dazzle: A Journey Into Dance (2007) and Murder Call (1997).

KEITH - RHYS MULDOON Rhys Muldoon is a writer and director who has worked extensively in film, television, voice artistry, music, theatre and radio. Muldoon is best known for his 12 years as a host on long running Children's program Play School .Muldoon also appears in Les Norton, House Husband, Underbelly adaptation Informer 3838 where he played Melbourne Gangland War victim Terry Hodson and in 2021, featured in Goal Post Films New Gold Mountain.

MOLLY ABLE - RHONDA BURCHMORE From Sydney to London's West End to the depths of the South African jungle, Rhonda has endeared herself into the hearts of all Australians. Highlights of Rhonda Burchmore's illustrious career include performing on London's West End in Sugar Babies featuring Mickey Rooney and Ann Miller, Stop The World I Want To Get Off with Anthony Newley, starring opposite David Atkins in the original Hot Shoe Shuffle and opening Crown Casino with her cabaret spectacular Red, Hot & Rhonda - playing to over 60,000 people.

GEORGE KAPINIARIS George Kapiniaris is one of this country's best loved comedy, music and TV stars – having had an incredible impact on Australian popular culture over the last thirty plus years.

George Kapiniaris' claim to fame was his starring role in the hugely popular stage show 'Wogs Out Of Work'. Since then, the Australian public has continued to see him use his Greek heritage as inspiration for future roles and performances.

DIRECTOR/PRODUCER/WRITER – JASON STEVENS

About

Jason Stevens was not your average sports star. Jason completed a Bachelor of Commerce degree at UNSW and is an author of 2 books, one of which, Worth The Wait, became a best seller in Australia. Jason had a successful Rugby League career where he played at the highest level (NSW and Australian representative) for 14 seasons with both the Cronulla Sharks and St George Dragons.

Since retiring from the game in 2005, Jason's charismatic, warm and witty nature catapulted him onto our TV screens when he featured and had his own segments on The Footy Show, ABC's The Fat, Ch 7's Matty John's show and currently Sydney Weekender with his wife Beck. In 2010, Jason hosted his own lifestyle/variety show on 7Two called "Big J's Place".

Jason's various roles on TV have seen him swap smack down stories with The Rock, flex his muscles at a blushing Nicole Kidman on the red carpet, sing with The Village People, talk a good plan with Liam Neeson. He learned dance moves from Carmen Electra, though it didn't help him, as he finished last in the 2010 Dancing with the Stars series.

In 2006 Jason hosted The Disposable Ones, a documentary that explores the amazing strength and survival of Colombia's underprivileged children and child soldiers struggling to live amid harsh conditions, abuse and disease. Keen to discover how they survive, Jason travels to Colombia to explore what challenges they face daily and find out what he can do to help.

Jason has also undertaken various film courses at NIDA and performed as Pharaoh in Joseph and the Technicolour Dreamcoat and The Cowardly Lion in The Wiz both at the Seymour Centre.

In 2018, Jason wrote and produced his first feature, Chasing Comets, which was seen on 100 Australian screens, then CH 10 and is currently on Stan. The film received funding from Screen NSW and Australia and was nominated for an ADG award.

Q & A

How did you get into the film industry?

I've been in the entertainment industry for a while but I stumbled into the film industry. I still remember my brother Paul taking me to the city to see my first film - Star Wars - and am extremely excited and proud to have made two films. I remember in 2006, the year after I retired from Rugby League, I started writing my first script. Did I know how to write a script? No. Did I know what to write a script on? I used a pencil and pad! But I had a good concept. I started going to script writing courses and then it was a process of writing and re-writing, then re-writing. At the end of the day, a good concept is really only the start - to execute that concept is the grind of screenwriting.

I actually never thought I'd be in the film industry. For me the focus was on TV as I love to entertain. Over the years whilst I was playing, I had contracts with Ch 9 and 7 to do sport based entertainment shows. I would get great opportunities to travel and do movie junkets. But after my last year, the show I had a contract with, stopped doing the entertainment side of the show and I wasn't needed. I was pretty devastated. I mean, I had a commerce degree but there was no way I was going back to accounting! I eventually got a job with Fox Sports, who were great to work with, but they probably sensed, as did I, that it wasn't my passion. I'd be watching the game at half time in the green room and whilst other panellists were preparing what to say, I'd be stuffing my face with Thai food. Needless to say, that ended. I then began a longer and more intense journey with film to find my feet.

How did this film come to be made?

I initially wrote Finally Me in 2011. There were many, many rewrites as times had changed and the story evolved. I set the film in the USA and had tried for many years to reach out to producers overseas. I found out through a friend that Nia Vardalos (from Big Fat Greek wedding) brother lived in the area and had a café and so I endeavoured to try to get the script to her through him. This involved me meeting his friend in the city at a very early time of the day for a coffee, then him deciding that he wouldn't pass it on. The next step was actually going to see her brother and meeting him, which I did, but the doors were closed. I reckon everybody would hit him up and I felt sorry for him in that way and so I didn't push it by any means. So, I take heart from a quote from Einstein; "I am thankful for all of those who said NO to me. It's because of them I'm doing it myself."

By now you might be thinking; "What's an ex Rugby League player doing making a cheer film?" Well, I loved cheerleading films and my grandfather is Greek, so I wanted to blend the two themes into a film that would encourage younger people who had a dream but deep down didn't believe they could achieve it. The process of making the film was challenging, and although all independent films are challenging, I must say, this was at a different level. Firstly, we began to film just as Omicron had broken out in Australia, there was a national food shortage because drivers were going down with Covid, and also, we had to deal with El Nino which makes scheduling challenging when it comes to outdoor shoots... you're already limited because locations have their own commitments. Yep, you have to love challenges but I feel like in a way that being in the trenches with rugby league has prepared me to dig deep and just see the possibilities, when the horizon doesn't look so positive.

Most people won't know you have Greek Heritage?

Yes, my Pappou Angelo Papadopoulos, was Cyprian and also my Yaya on my Father's side was Greek. We grew up very much influenced by European culture - the food, the jokes, the loud talking! I remember introducing my wife (who was my girlfriend at the time) to my family and she was left often confused as

to whether we had just had a fight. But serious, my neighbour on Brighton were Toula, Stavroula etc. Very Greek community. I am very grateful for my background and the rich culture. But I still haven't been to Greece and that disappoints me. Hopefully one day.

This was your first time directing

It was. I actually tried to find a director for this film and actually had great interest from some directors with good profiles. But being on the lower sides of budget, they didn't think they could execute what was on the page. And I agreed, it was a tough ask. And I definitely had to compromise in order to get the shoot done within budget. But I see it as another step to earning my stripes to be able to handle something bigger.

Deep down I think I was meant to write, produce and direct Finally Me and in many ways I learnt to make films from my mother. No, she wasn't in the industry. My dad left when we were young and my sister was involved in a bad road accident. Somehow she managed to do two jobs and make ends meet with 4 kids, one now with special needs. She handled pressure, spotted a bargain and was resilient. She had a vision that kept her going. That's the nuts and bolts of filmmaking.

Your first film Chasing Comets was based on a true story...kinda?! What about this one?

When I was younger I was a much bigger kid and was often teased. But I had a dream to play rugby league but as you might imagine, had many people snickering away that I was way too big to be taken seriously. That was the motivation behind coming up with Finally Me and crafting Soula's character arc. I mentioned that I have a Greek background and so the Greek humour has always been something that came natural to me. I love the way Greeks talk and even though it freaked out my wife when she first met my family, because she would say; "why do you talk so loud why are you fighting?" I would laugh and inform her that we weren't fighting, that's just how we talked! I loved TV shows like Acropolis Now, and I was fortunate to work with George Kapiniaris on this film. That was a bit of a dream for me as he is so talented and I grew up on his humour .

Films cost money, how did you find yours?

Argh the money!! Initially I went about asking people of influence and wealth I knew for 100k instalments, deep down thinking I would possibly consider less. Ha!!! Boy I learnt fast that people, no matter how much cash they have, do not like giving to a first time director any coin. It didn't take long to readjust my expectations. But it was a challenging part of the process, and a humbling one, which has its benefits. My wife Beck, who did the wardrobe and costume design became an EP on the film and we decided to back the film ourselves.

Casting

I was very fortunate to have good relationships with agents from being in the industry. I also had great people in my world like Wayne Blair, Rhys Muldoon, Mary Coustas and Gary Eck who reached out to their network of friends. All these people have a great heart for Aussie stories and Aussie filmmakers. It's a lot of work casting for a film like this as there are so many roles. I look at some indie films and they got four maybe five characters and I'm like 20+ and that's not counting the hundreds of cheerleaders that I needed to organise from across New South Wales to all be available on one week. Bear mind we had to get all of these Covid tested which was a logistical and financial challenge.

Funny story, but for my first film I invited Alea O'shea to be a part of it the launch and as she left I remember she said to me; "if you need anyone for your next film, let me know" and smiled. And I never forgot that. And I didn't know Finally Me was gonna be my next film, but she was perfect for the role not only because she's a top actor but she is a trained dancer. It was also serendipitous when I cast Naomi Sequeira as when I was doing a vision board for the cheerleaders and their look, I just googled cheerleaders and there was a photo online of a much of a younger her in a cheerleading outfit. Actually didn't remind me of her or anything but after the filming, she posted a photo on Instagram about why she wore that cheerleading outfit and it was the exact photo that I had on my vision board.

What's the hardest part about writing?

Initially it was the rejection. I remember sending a pilot script to a network. I had a very good Director attached and the head of their T.V Production said to me "I don't read anything from first time Writers". I thought it was pretty narrow minded, but in the end, you make a decision to just keep going and never give up. And things always work out in the end. If that TV person had taken the project, I probably would've been shafted by more experienced writers and I would have never written the film.

But I welcome notes. You might get 5 things that don't resonate with you, but then you get one piece of gold and that can make the difference. I have learned though that experts can be wrong, and sometimes you must trust your gut.

What did you learn from this being your second film?

I learnt so much. Preparation, preparation, preparation. But that's hard when you've never directed a film before and you don't know exactly what to prepare for. I met with many directors. Wayne Blair and Gary Eck (Happy Feet 2) were unbelievably generous with their time. Wayne invited me to sit on set with him for Total Control and I learnt a lot about how he talks to the actors. . I was also reminded how important the edit was. It's here that the film was shaped and massaged.

We worked very hard to make the film work. I remember seeing an early draft of the edit and I couldn't sleep that night. I kept thinking: "What the heck have I filmed here".

What are some of your most memorable moments?

The whole shoot was a blur. I don't really advice taking on writing, directing and producing, but at the end of the day, there was no other way this film would've got made.. I think my favourite days were with Mr Mitsos in the shop. They were also the hardest and we only had the shop for a week and one actor changed days on us late in the piece. That meant we had to pull everything down and pack up gear, (which crew love) then come back another day and set up another day. You lose a lot of time and energy doing that.

Are you happy with the final product?

Yes, I hope the film resonates with our target audience. I'm always laughing when I watch it but the aim is for other people to laugh as well. I continually tried to find ways to up the comedy and would really like people to walk out feeling happy. I know it sounds cheesy, but its true, And also, I hope the them of never giving up will inspire someone to take that chance, even if at first, like Soula, you make a fool of yourself. That's all part of risk taking. As it's been said, "the bigger the risk, the bigger the reward".

What's next?

I have 9 other scripts, some great true Aussie stories and many for the International market, so I will do my best to get these made. One things for sure, I'm in the film industry for the long haul.

How does filmmaking compare to Rugby League?

Umm footy was a breeze compared to filmmaking!! Actually, I am grateful to league for teaching me how to work extremely hard and overcome challenges. You need that in film above any creativity or natural talent.

CREW

CINEMATOGRAPHER

Chris Bland is an Australian cinematographer who's work in short, commercial and long form narrative has been broadcast internationally, including an array of award winning films.

Understanding film making from the ground up, Chris began as a camera assistant and went on to complete an Advanced Diploma in Screen - Mastering in Cinematography and graduating top of his class.

Chris's collaborations with directors enables his work to have a strong sense of story and emotion. Chris has a strong technical understanding of all areas of the camera department, lighting, grips and coordinates logistics of each department.

Recently, Chris won 'Gold' at the NSW Australian Cinematography Awards for his work on Locusts, an Australian feature film, and 'Silver' for his work on Book Week, an Australian feature film. He went on to win the award for 'High Distinction' at the National Australian Cinematography Awards.

EDITOR

Yasmin is an Australia director/editor who began her story-telling career as an editor, before moving to producing, then directing.

She edited a Walkley award winning episode of SBS's INSIGHT program - YOUNG MOB - that offered a rare glimpse into the lives of Aboriginal teens in Alice Spings. As an editor she has worked in Australia and London for CNN, AlJazeera, Discovery, SBS, ABC and on the UK's X-Factor.

As a director she combines her love of story-telling with travel, from covering Eurovision for The Feed/Viceland in Portugal, to riding with gauchos in Argentina, midnight turtle conservation in Costa Rica, and female-run crematorium ghats in India.

She is currently telling the heart-warming stories of van dwellers in the USA.

COMPOSER

A self-taught composer, Declan Harsent's music is teeming with heart, soul, and guts. A master at capturing the sound of the zeitgeist, full to the brim with vibe, and shoot from the hip attitude. Dec's music can be heard bringing the mood and head nodding swagger on campaigns for Nikon, Jeep, Telstra, Volkswagen, AirBnb, and Audible. Declan's score for Rob Stanton Cook's debut short film 'Kilter' picked up the Outstanding Achievement award for Original Score at Indie Short Fest 2021

Production Company: Jason Stevens Productions

Runtime :

96m Format : Feature Film Aspect Ratio : 2.39-1 Sound : 5.1 & Stereo

RESPLENDENT PICTURES

JASON STEVENS PRODUCTIONS

Please let us know if you require any additional information

Best Regards,
Jason Stevens

JASON STEVENS PRODUCTIONS

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