

# "H IS FOR HAPPINESS"

directed by JOHN SHEEDY

starring

RICHARD ROXBURGH, EMMA BOOTH,

JOEL JACKSON, DEBORAH MAILMAN

and introducing

DAISY AXON  
as "Candice Phee"

and

WESLEY PATTEN  
as "Douglas Benson From Another Dimension"

with MIRIAM MARGOLYES

Happiness Film Productions Pty Ltd  
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# SYNOPSIS

## Tagline

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Happiness is inside all of us. You just have to find it.

## Logline

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A twelve year old girl with boundless optimism and a unique view of the world, is inspired by the strange new boy at school and sets out to mend her broken family - whatever it takes.

## Short synopsis

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Set in the colourful Australian coastal town of Albany, H IS FOR HAPPINESS is a classic feel-good film for all ages that will make you laugh, cry, and cheer with delight. Based on the award-winning book *My Life as an Alphabet* by Barry Jonsberg, it is the genuinely heart-warming and unflinchingly honest story of one twelve-year-old's determination to bring her family back from the brink and spark happiness in their lives. Using an entirely unique approach, Candice Phee is an unforgettable heroine whose exploits will inspire and delight anyone who has faced the trials of adolescence and the heartbreak of family tragedy.

Starring newcomers Daisy Axon and Wesley Patton alongside Miriam Margolyes, Richard Roxburgh, Emma Booth, Joel Jackson, Deb Mailman and a miniature horse, H IS FOR HAPPINESS shows us a quintessentially Australian world through the eyes of a quirky outsider, and is a joyous celebration of all things a little bit different.

## Long synopsis

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Set in the colourful Australian coastal town of Albany, H IS FOR HAPPINESS is a classic feel-good film for all ages that will make you laugh, cry, and cheer with delight. Based on the award-winning book *My Life as an Alphabet* by Barry Jonsberg, it is the genuinely heart-warming and unflinchingly honest story of one twelve-year-old's determination to bring her family back from the brink and spark happiness in their lives. Using an entirely unique approach, Candice Phee is an unforgettable heroine whose exploits will inspire and delight anyone who has faced the trials of adolescence and the heartbreak of family tragedy.

The optimistic Candice Phee (Daisy Axon) worries about her parents. Her father's (Richard Roxburgh) life dreams have been crushed after a falling out with his brother, Rich Uncle Brian (Joel Jackson). Her mother (Emma Booth) has shut herself off from the world since her baby sister died years before. Into this world comes her new best friend, Douglas Benson from Another Dimension (Wesley Patten). Douglas has his own problem – he believes he is visiting from another dimension and he is determined to return to the dimension he came from. And then there is a miniature horse.

Despite her best efforts, Candice can't put a foot right with her mother, she is confused by her burgeoning relationship with Douglas, and when she engineers a surprise meeting between her father and Rich Uncle Brian, Candice's plan to force them to reunite backfires spectacularly. But this doesn't dampen her determination – where most people would see the disaster looming Candice presses on with an optimism and sense of hope unseen in a film heroine since Pollyanna.

Set in a colourful Australian coastal town with sweeping ocean vistas, H IS FOR HAPPINESS shows us a quintessential Australian world through the eyes of a quirky outsider. Candice's unique approach to life provides a fresh exploration of the universal themes of family, friendships, loss, grief and the acceptance of difference.

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# ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

## Director's Quote

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"I have always been attracted to scripts that hold a fine balance of humour and pathos and admired the works of John Hughes, Pedro Almodovar and Wes Anderson. It is the influence of these filmmakers' styles and quirks that have come into play in shaping this truly unique and heartfelt film."

## Director's Statement

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I have always been attracted to scripts which contain a balance of humour and pathos. So when I read the treatment of H IS FOR HAPPINESS - by the talented writer Lisa Hoppe - I immediately knew this was a story I wanted to tell.

Full of laugh out loud moments, heartbreaking aches, endless charm and quirks, *Happiness* encompassed all the elements I needed to create an entertaining cinematic experience. It was 'pitch perfect' for my feature film debut, feeling akin to my short film MRS MCCUTCHEON, made only 18 months earlier.

I was also captivated by our lead protagonists, *Candice Phee* and *Douglas Benson from Another Dimension*, two peculiar little humans who find each other through their oddities and personal challenges and who protect the acceptance of each other through their differences despite the world around them. My other major attraction to the script was the love story woven throughout.

Save for Baz Luhrmann, we don't really *do* romance on Australian screens. Nor do we have many (if any) films with such an incredibly sharp and witty 12-year-old female lead (which I believe we need more of!) Needless to say, I was sold on the story and with legendary screen producer Julie Ryan at the helm of an all-female producing team, and the incredible visionary Bonnie Elliot as DOP, I knew both the project and I were safe in exceptional hands.

All the characters in H IS FOR HAPPINESS are beautifully nuanced and each of them privately suffer through their own personal struggles. The unexpected trauma that life can cruelly throw your way regardless of age or gender; the instinctive desire to try and fix those whom you hold dearest; or the desire for change and our frustration at those who refuse to accept it. Then there is falling in love for the very first time; being vulnerable to such an overwhelming force we have no control over and all the wonderful feelings that come with it. I felt all these themes combined made the story incredibly relatable and instantly accessible to a broad, global audience.

To present that *universality* in the script we needed to first reflect it through the world in which we set our story, a charming and quirky little seaside town. I knew I didn't want it to be geographically specific because it had to be a setting that could be anywhere in the world. A world where children and adults alike would both feel an instant familiarity to, as though it were a seaside town not too far from home. A magical place that kids in books I used to read might have once secretly ventured out to find for themselves.

So we created three worlds for Candice. First there is her *home life*, a house of silence, stillness and grief. Then there is her *school world* where everything is slightly exaggerated, strange and fun. And finally there is the *outside world* around her; a community of colourful locals and the dramatic landscape which provides an element of danger and adventure as Candice sets out on her quest to try and bring happiness to those she loves.

The seaside town of Albany was the perfect fit for this brief. It projects a sense of old world charm in its architecture, the bay and the quirky, earthy shapes in the breathtaking landscape of boulders and hills

which surround it. Albany has such a cinematic feel to it and no matter where I pointed the camera, I knew I was going to be able to frame the moment beautifully.

The same sense of universality could be said for the timeline in which our story takes place. Whilst there are specific references to contemporary technology and in the vocabulary of the younger characters, it still needed to have a timeless feel to it to thematically tie in with our visual design being slightly heightened and odd. Likewise, the idea of a self-contained yet strangely, familiar world is reflected in the sound design across the film. Like the best of Disney, I never wanted *H IS FOR HAPPINESS* to have an 'expiry date.' I hope that the children who watch it now will engage in a story that doesn't feel dated and then be able to take that memory and relive it again sometime in the future with their own children.

I have always admired the works of John Hughes, Pedro Almodóvar, Jane Campion and Wes Anderson and proudly drew upon their influence to shape the world of *Candice Phee*. These filmmakers have all helped me develop the film's tone in sensing how to strike the right balance between drama and comedy. To grant the audience the space and time to sit in on the more heartbreaking moments. To not patronise our young audience and trust that they will be able to navigate the emotional ups and downs Candice encounters on her journey. To be able to laugh and celebrate difference and above all be entertained by entering a world that is so visually appealing. Even though *HAPPINESS* is unashamedly a *feel-good* film, you can't feel good the whole way through. The audience has to *believe* that they've earned it.

To find the heart of the film, our leading character *Candice Phee* was a task we did not take lightly (after all she is in every single scene of the film!) We reached out across Australia and New Zealand screen-testing more than 400 girls and as is so often the case, the actor we eventually cast happened to reside only a few hours away from where we were filming.

Daisy Axon is *Candice Phee*! It was clear from the beginning that Daisy possessed all the qualities needed to deliver a heart-warming and hilarious performance. Daisy had also read the book multiple times with *Candice Phee* being one of her all-time favourite characters. And like Candice, she is equal parts charming, sharp, super intelligent with a unique take on the world around her. Visually she also looked exactly how I imagined the character to be. But most importantly, she was *real*. Needless to say Daisy's performance knocked it out of the ballpark.

*Douglas Benson from Another Dimension* is played by the multi-talented Wesley Patten, whom I first cast when he was just 10 years old as one of the leads in *MRS MCCUTCHEON*. Unnaturally loaded with charm and sensitivity, Wesley is one of the most instinctive and charismatic young actors I have ever been blessed to work with. Indeed on set, Miriam Margolyes immediately nicknamed him *Wesley Presley* and rightly so. Wesley was always my first choice for *Douglas Benson from Another Dimension*, a decision both the producers and Universal Pictures immediately supported. Hence it has been both a thrill and a privilege to direct Wesley in his feature film debut.

The range and maturity of the incredible adult cast perfectly complements our two young stars. Known to audiences of all ages, Richard Roxburgh, Emma Booth, Joel Jackson, Deborah Mailman and Miriam Margolyes brought their own thoughts, nuances and skill sets to their individual roles, delivering subtle performances embracing that fine balance between humour and heartbreak which I was after. Playful and excepting of the quite often, strange set of circumstances they found their characters in, the 'grown-ups' encouraged and protected the younger cast in a very supportive, professional and beautiful manner.

Creating any piece of story-telling - be it film, television or theatre - is above all else a collaborative process. I have been incredibly fortunate to have some of the best arts practitioners in the industry - actors, creatives, producers and crew - to help guide me and inspire me throughout the entire production. Whether they know it or not, they have all added their own touch of magic in assisting me to create what I hope is a truly unique and entertaining film for the ages.

*John Sheedy*

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## John Sheedy - Director's Bio

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JOHN SHEEDY is an Australian multi-award winning director of both film and theatre whose extensive body of work both in Australia and overseas has been praised for its visceral performances, innovative story telling and arresting visual style.

His recent short film debut, *MRS MCCUTCHEON*, was an international sensation. Selected for more than sixty festivals around the world, it collected more than 25 awards across the globe, locally winning Best Australian Short Film at both the Melbourne International Film Festival and the Melbourne Queer Film Festival, the SPAA Award for Short Film Production of the Year, the 2018 ADG Award for Best Direction of a Short Film and was also nominated for an AACTA.

Together with his extensive experience in theatre for young people, including adaptations of iconic Australian stories *Storm Boy*, *Jasper Jones* and *The Rabbits*, his productions showcase his affinity with stories about and for younger people.

With a Bachelor of Dramatic Art from Melbourne's National Drama School and a Masters of Dramatic Art (Directing) from National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA), John has worked with renowned theatre companies including Belvoir St Theatre, Sydney Theatre Company, Bell Shakespeare Company, Darlinghurst Theatre, London's National Theatre, Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, The Perth International Arts Festival and with Opera Australia.

From 2010 to 2015 John was the Artistic Director at renowned children's theatre company, Barking Gecko Theatre Company in Western Australia. Under his direction, Barking Gecko Theatre Company was nominated for eleven Helpmann Awards, including Best Children's Presentation. In this role, John wrote for the stage and directed *The Amber Amulet* adapted from Craig Silvey's children's book and directed a stage adaptation of Shaun Tan's children's book *The Red Tree*, which was adapted by John with designer Gypsy Taylor.

In 2013, he directed an adaptation by Tom Holloway of Colin Thiele's *Storm Boy*, a co-production with the Sydney Theatre Company for which he received the Performing Arts WA Award for Best Director.

In 2014, John directed a sold out world premiere season of Kate Mulvany's adaptation of Craig Silvey's best-selling novel *Jasper Jones*. 2015 saw him adapt and direct *The Rabbits*, the John Marsden book illustrated by Sean Tan. Featuring Kate Miller-Heidke, *The Rabbits* was a co-production with Opera Australia and Barking Gecko Theatre Company, presented by the 2015 Perth International Arts Festival. It was hailed as 'triumphant'.

H IS FOR HAPPINESS is his first feature film.

# ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

## THE BEGINNING OF HAPPINESS

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**“I don’t think I’ve ever enjoyed reading a script so much in my life to be honest.”**

**“Ultimately, it’s just really uplifting”**

The first spark for H IS FOR HAPPINESS, the heart-warming story of two young outsiders (and miniature horse), came from the multi-talented writer and producer Lisa Hoppe. The story of a young girl determined to bring happiness into the lives of everyone she cares about, occasionally by outlandish means, was such a refreshing story about highly original characters that it immediately came alive as a film for her.

Lisa, who had grown up with nine siblings herself, has always enjoyed watching live action family films with her young children. However, outside of the major studio productions, there were not many Australian productions being made where they could watch familiar local stories on screen.

While doing her masters in Film Producing at AFTRS she decided to look into why, and to explore the genre further. Lisa read dozens of young adult novels until she hit upon ‘*My Life as an Alphabet*’ by celebrated Australian author Barry Jonsberg. First published in 2013, ‘*My Life as an Alphabet*’ is a multi-award winning novel that has been published in a number of countries and languages and has won the hearts of readers around the world.

*Hoppe says, “It really popped for me. It stood out among all the others, and stayed with me for a number of years. It was funny, it was as profound as it was humorous, and it felt really original. It had all the elements needed to create a fantastic cinematic experience.”*

It wasn’t until a few years later, when another project Hoppe was developing with Producer Julie Ryan stalled, that she remembered Jonsberg’s novel and its instant appeal. Hoppe says *“I think an audience would like the same things that appeal to me, and that is the two leads are really original characters, they’re quite different, and it feels really good to be able to celebrate that difference with them in the story. Candice Phee feels like she belongs in the company of Anne Shirley (Anne of Green Gables) and Pollyanna, and I felt like we hadn’t seen a character like that for a long time, which was really important.*

*I think the characters are nuanced, that this family that is struggling is relatable and that it’s articulated in quite a new way. It’s got lots of twists and turns. It’s quite unexpected. It’s entertaining. And I think ultimately, it’s just really uplifting.”*

Hoppe optioned the book, wrote the screenplay and sent it to Ryan, who knew before she finished reading it that it was so good that it just had to be made. Ryan, who produced the Australian smash hit family film RED DOG, says *“What I loved about the story immediately, was that it was both very funny and heart-warming. And I love those films the most. They’re the films I watch. I’d always been looking for a film like that, I knew it would have an audience.”*

The other standout original quality of the film was that *“in Australia, we don’t actually make many family films with girls in the lead role. We’ve made them for teenage girls, but not pre-teens, and I felt that it would not only capture the 8 to 13 year old girl audience, but also their siblings, their parents, their grandparents. I knew everyone would just get a really good belly laugh out of it”*, says Ryan.

Julie Ryan then pitched the project to WA based producer Tenille Kennedy who recalls *“I fell in love with the project immediately. I thought about it all of the rest of that year, and then in January Julie called me and said ‘Do you want to do it, can we do it in WA?’ And so we started financing and, incredibly, we were financed within three months.”*

The H is for Happiness three-women strong producing team was ready to move forward and share the happiness.

They would soon find that the cast and crew would all be attracted to the same irresistible qualities of the film. Emma Booth, who plays Candice Phee’s mum, felt the same immediate joy, *“this is such a feel good film. It’s going to make people laugh and cry and, give people all the feels. It’s a really fulfilling and beautifully rewarding film. I read the script and I loved the fact that it was very funny. It wasn’t just trying to be funny; it was genuinely very funny, and very heartfelt. I was laughing, I was crying, I kind of got to the blow-up boob bit and I was like ‘I’m doing this’. I don’t think I’ve ever enjoyed reading a script so much in my life to be honest.”*

## THE DEBUT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HAPPINESS - JOHN SHEEDY

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***“He is fabulous. He is talented. He is funny. He’s very naughty.”***

***“He’s always got that sparkle in his eye that reminds me of Willy Wonka.”***

H IS FOR HAPPINESS is the feature film debut for the award-winning director of stage and screen, John Sheedy, whose creativity and vision bring a lively, refreshing new voice to Australian screens. Passionate

about telling good stories, his imagination is captured and his heart is won by stories that celebrate difference and diversity, and particularly those for children.

With 20 years experience directing award-winning theatre, most recently as the director of Barking Gecko Theatre Company (specialising in theatre for children and families) Sheedy has brought some of Australia's most iconic Australian children's and young adults' stories alive on stage, including the World Premiere season of Kate Mulvany's JASPER JONES adaptation, Tom Holloway's adaptation of STORM BOY, Sean Tan's THE RED TREE and THE RABBITS, a co-production with Opera Australia starring Kate Miller-Heidke.

In 2017 he made the short film MRS MCCUTCHEON, the feel-good, award-winning celebration of difference that he modestly describes as *'a story about a little individual, a ten-year-old boy, who wants to be called a fifty-year-old woman's name, basically. It's a beautiful little story that puts the spotlight on transgender children.'* His unique ability to bring children's life challenges to the screen, in an honest, joyous and celebratory way, is what drew the producers to John to direct the film.

Julie Ryan says of discovering John's work, *"He's such a visionary. I could see that watching his short film MRS MCCUTCHEON, I just knew he had great style and you could see he was great with young actors."* The producers sent John the script, and he fell in love with it straight away *"H IS FOR HAPPINESS really felt like an extension of the short film I'd just done [MRS MCCUTCHEON]. I really responded to it and, visually, the world was coming together as I was reading it. I loved the characters, I loved what it was saying, I love that it celebrates difference and I love that our protagonist is a twelve-year-old girl. I think we need more of those stories on screen.'*

John of course was the perfect choice, as Julie Ryan notes, *"It's been a real joy working with him, he is an amazing discovery!"* Tenille Kennedy agrees, *"It is so much fun working with John Sheedy. He brings it every single day, and his energy and enthusiasm are infectious. Every day I'm impressed, amazed and in awe of his ability to transition so easily from the theatre world to the feature film world. He's a natural."* He also fulfilled the vision of writer/producer Lisa Hoppe *"He is fabulous. He is talented. He is funny. He's very naughty. He had a great vision for this story and I think everyone who sees the film will be as excited and surprised with the result as those who've been working on it and watching his vision unfold."*

The cast too, adored him, including the internationally renowned Miriam Margolyes, who plays schoolteacher Miss Bamford, *"Our director John Sheedy, he's glorious. I'd never met him before, but it really for me was love at first sight. He's just full of fun, he's very bright, he's sharp. He knows how to deal with children; he knows how to deal with me. He gives you confidence. He makes the whole experience fun, and I think he's a wonderful director."*

Actor Joel Jackson, who stars as Candice's Rich Uncle Brian (RUB), also admires John's magic *"He's really hardworking, and he wants a lot, but he's also a ton of fun. He's always got that joy, and that sense of sparkle in his eye that reminds me of Willy Wonka. He sees things that we don't see, and he wants things that we didn't necessarily imagine or think of, and that's really exciting, because otherwise you get directors that just paint by numbers, or ask you 'stand there, say that, walk away."*

*But he would say things like 'find three things in this scene'. And then he'll just kind of smile at you and walk away, and you feel like you're on an Easter egg hunt. It's a lot of fun, you're always discovering."*

Emma Booth admires his detailed vision *"he's got a kind of child like wonder and awe about him, I think as a person, and that just comes through in his work. He's all about the detail and the nuance. The other day we were doing a scene in a restaurant, and I looked at all the extras, and they were so unique, and so brilliantly individual, and I was like 'Oh my god, there's nothing this man hasn't thought of."*

DOP Bonnie Elliott says, *"He is a hell of a lot of fun to work with. He's full of energy and a very bright sparky guy. He just sees things in the moment, and he's quite connected to his creativity in a very intuitive way, so he can be very playful with his ideas, which I love. I'm not sure if it's a theatre background thing, I have worked with one director before who was a choreographer, and I felt he had a similar ability to be very instinctive and able to follow his intuition in the moment. John's a natural. It's amazing to think it's only the second film he's made."*

## CREATING THE CATEGORICAL UNIVERSE OF CANDICE PHEE

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***"John really wanted to create a storybook world, which I thought was a great, refreshing take for a kids film"***

***"We looked at AMELIE, we looked at some Wes Anderson, we looked at SWEETIE."***

With John Sheedy's distinct visual style, the colourful, timeless world of the film was destined to do justice to Candice Phee's endless optimism in the face of the challenges in her and her family's life.

For director John Sheedy this was a delight, *"I think there's something really wonderful about dipping into the world of young people, especially children and their perspective, because for them everything is slightly heightened, slightly exaggerated. You are allowed to have a bit more fun and the imagination can go wild. I love that they're so very honest in how they see the world, how they see their parents, and how they navigate challenges, family challenges, personal challenges. I love that this is a bit of a love story too. What*

*I've enjoyed is being able to create a heightened world in the design and in some of the characters that we meet."*

Working with a highly experienced all-women heads of department team, together they created the world of the film. The result is a world that children, and the child in us all, would want to be in. Production Designer Nicki Gardiner notes *"we very much wanted the film to have a timeless feel to it"*.

DOP Bonnie Elliott elaborates, *"John really wanted to create a storybook world, which I thought was a great, refreshing take for a kids film. He wanted something that has a universal feeling to it, and isn't grounded in realism and naturalism, which I think a lot of Australian films can be. I was really excited at the possibility of sort of working into that more playful world of storytelling. So we looked at AMELIE, that was a big reference for us, we looked at some Wes Anderson, we looked at SWEETIE. I talked a bit about the Cohen brothers and their use of wider lenses I've used wider lenses on this film than I've used in a really long time, and it's been a lot of fun."*

Producer Julie Ryan adds, *"He's got this amazing sense of colour, and visual style. He's created this world for Candice which is so beautiful, it's been a real joy working with him"*.

## A IS FOR ALBANY

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***"It's one of the most beautiful little places I've ever been in"***

The picture postcard seaside town of Albany, on the southern coast of Western Australia, was not only cinematically and logistically perfect for the needs of this family film, but also had strong family connections for a number of cast and crew that only helped conjure the right energy and feel for the film.

It did not take long for the production to choose its hometown, as Producer Tenille Kennedy recounts *"Albany was the very first town that we came to and we knew instantly that it was A for Albany. It's been amazing shooting here. I've spent Christmases with family here growing up as children, and I've got my uncle and aunty here who've been part of the film as well. So that's been really delightful. Albany is just so beautiful. It's so cinematic, it looks amazing on the screen, and it creates this beautiful world for the story that we're telling."*

For John Sheedy *"For me, the setting of this story is very important. It's set in a small, charming, quirky seaside town. It had to be a place that could be picked up and placed anywhere in the world. I didn't really want it to be geographically specific. What I love about Albany is that it has a sense of old world charm in its*

*architecture, in its landscape. It has quirky hills and boulders, a beautiful bay, and for me, I could be anywhere in the world, in this story. And that's what I want, and that's what I saw in Albany, and what I loved about it. Cinematically it is elevated and no matter where you are, you are going to be able to frame something beautifully no matter where you turn the camera in this landscape, in this town."*

As well as producer Tenille Kennedy, two of the cast have very personal connections to this special seaside place. Nature loving actress Emma Booth was born in nearby Denmark, WA. Now based in LA, it meant a lot to her to return for the shoot *"what am I enjoying about shooting here is that Albany is just so gorgeous. That and the fact that I got to go back to Denmark where I was born, for only the second time in my life. That was really cool. I'm going to be back in LA soon, back in Hollywood. So it's, this for me, it's like luxury, super special."*

Joel Jackson was born and raised in Albany. He explains how the town and the film connect him to his hometown and will connect audiences to a childhood wonderland, *"I was born here. I grew up here and I've got four generations either side of both families that have grown up here, and made the first timber mill here, and worked on the wharf across the harbour there, and my great grandmother has a trophy from winning an opera contest at the Albany community hall. I'm in the bloodline of Jimmy Newell of Jimmy Newell's Harbour. I used to go fishing off of the pier as a kid. We grew up down the road from the Princess Royal Sailing Club, which was locked by a gate. But there was a hole where you'd reach round and put your foot in, and leap around, with your fishing reel and stuff on your back, and you'd steal a packet of mum's frozen peas and come down and try to catch herring and flathead and stuff like that."*

*It's a really beautiful place and everywhere we've filmed there's been a little memory that's come out, or there's been something that spoke to me. We were filming near Dylan's, the coffee shop the other day, and I walked in and there was a portrait of my grandmother because she had a shop along that main drag."*

*So, Albany is a huge part of my heart, and to be in something in your hometown is so special. Everyone's talking about it in the community. You walk in and someone goes, 'oh yeah what are you doing here?' 'Oh, I'm here filming.' 'Is that H for Happiness?' And you can see this huge smile hit them and they feel so proud that it's about their town. I feel really proud to have grown up here and be a part of it."*

*The landscape is so beautiful, and it's so picturesque, but if you're watching it from an international perspective it could be anywhere. I've got friends emailing me going 'Where are you at the moment? Are you in the Maldives, are you off in the Bahamas somewhere?' Because of the sunshine and the blue water and the white sand."*

*I think for an audience too, it's going to feel like home. No matter where you are, it feels like some picture of perfection, capturing your childhood imagination where you've created all of these stories, and reminds you of holidays that you've had as kids, of caravan parks. Because it's told from the kids' perspectives and is Candice's story, I think it's going to make it that much easier for adults to feel that. Because it feels like childhood. It feels like the childhood memories that you have where everything was brighter. The colours were brighter. For example in the film, my character RUB's Porsche is bright, bright red, and everything he wears is so colourful and sharp. It reminds you of what memories were as a kid. And I think that's what's going to be special for adults to see. And for the kids, it's just a wonderland."*

Originally hailing from the other side of the world, Miriam Margolyes too was delighted by the landscape of this unique corner of Australia *"It's one of the most beautiful little places I've ever been in. It's a seaside place, so there's ocean, and country, and flowers. It's a gentle environment, but also quite wild, and I find it very attractive."*

## FINDING CANDICE PHEE AND DOUGLAS BENSON FROM ANOTHER DIMENSION

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To find the film's heart of happiness, the character of Candice Phee, was a responsibility the team did not take lightly. A beloved character from the novel, Candice also appears in every scene. Working with highly experienced casting director Jane Norris, the casting call went out across all of Australia and New Zealand, with more than 400 girls auditioning for the role. The choice was soon obvious. John Sheedy says *"It was pretty clear with Daisy Axon from the beginning. She had such a charm, and such an extended vocabulary, and a way of thinking around that character. She had read the book multiple times and Candice is one of her favourite characters in literature. So she had a lot to say about her. Visually, she's exactly how I imagined Candice Phee to look and she knocked it out of the ballpark in her auditions."*

Julie Ryan adds *"we auditioned from every state in Australia, and it just turned out that Daisy Axon comes from Perth. Daisy had already been in a feature film, JUDY AND PUNCH so it was great that she already had some experience working with crew. She's really quite an amazing young girl, so we've no doubt that she'll go on now and do more features in the future."*

Daisy Axon who plays Candice Phee relished the chance to even audition, as 'My Life as an Alphabet' was her favourite book, *"It was a great experience to even audition for my favourite book. I love playing Candice Phee and one of the things I like about playing her is that she is a very peculiar character. You never know what she's going to come out with. She's a very honest and smart and intelligent person who has a caring side as well. And her honesty gets her into trouble sometimes, but it helps her bring people together, so I love exploring her personality, and the way she lives her life."*

*One of the things that I liked about the book was that Candice was very funny and relatable. I just couldn't put it down because I completely related to the story she told, and the way she reacted to problems and things in her life. So I loved exploring her life and the people who came into it, and her goal, which was to make everyone happy."*

Richard Roxburgh, who plays Candice's father says of her *"Daisy's so alive in the character, she's so on the go the whole time. She's obviously in every single moment in this film. But she's so good, and so professional, and so kind of heartbreakingly wonderful all the time, and is a great human being as well."*

Joel Jackson found Daisy an inspiration, *"Daisy is a dream, she's so much fun. To play her Uncle is so easy because we get along like a house on fire, she's so hard working, and so down to earth. She'll have big ideas or big hopes and dreams for a scene, and won't stop until she's found it, which is really inspiring because it's her world, it's her story. Every day that I come onto set, she's sprinting ahead like a cheetah, and you've just got to kind of catch up, and be like 'What are we doing Daisy? Where are we?' And that's brilliant, because the energy and the professionalism that she has, for someone so young, whilst still being a ton of fun, is beautiful. She's an absolute champion."*

Emma Booth also adores her *"Daisy is awesome. She's a beautiful person. She's very talented and she's a lot of fun. I think she's got great instincts, especially for someone who's so young and just starting out. I think she's got a huge career ahead of her, and I hope we get to work together again."*

Emma Booth also saw herself in the character of Candice *"When I was younger I was bullied because I was so skinny and so unbelievably freckly, and it was really awful. But it is really interesting because that is the character of Candice, so it's like I'm seeing myself in her. I suffered from low self-esteem in my younger years because of it, but now all these years later, it's like 'Oh, thank god' cause I can eat whatever I want!"*

Candice's special new school friend, Douglas Benson from Another Dimension, is played by the very charming Wesley Patten, one of the stars of *MRS MCCUTCHEON*, for which he won Best Young Actor at the St Kilda Film Festival. John Sheedy says of Wes *"He's the most charming, charismatic kid I've ever come across and worked with. He has a beautiful sensibility, and a lot of charm. And so, for me, I always wanted him to play Douglas Benson from Another Dimension. And I think that the producers and distributors had seen *MRS MCCUTCHEON* too, and were very keen to have Wesley on board."*

The incredibly experienced adult cast had only great things to say of working with Daisy and Wesley, Richard Roxburgh delighted in the youthful energy they brought to set *"It's just great working with kids and*

*their energy. I mean we had a great scene where I had to spit out a piece of sausage the other day, at a dinner table scene. And just having their uncontrolled glee in the room is really great. It's great working with kids, these kids in particular."*

Miriam Margolyes too, was impressed with the young newcomers *"Daisy Axon and Wesley Patten are the stars of the film. I'm not the star, they are. And they are just impressive young people. They're very intelligent, and very real. They're not precocious they're just honest. They're thinking in their heads, they're not pushing out stuff. It's working with lovely people. They are just people, they're not children really."*

## THE ADULT CAST

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The incredible adult cast of H IS FOR HAPPINESS is known to audiences of all ages for their work across both film and television. Together their experience in films for younger audiences includes some of the highest grossing titles both in Australia and internationally, such as George Miller's Oscar® winners BABE and HAPPY FEET, the HARRY POTTER films, PAPER PLANES, BLINKY BILL, MAYA THE BEE MOVIE and the TV classic, PLAYSCHOOL.

Adding such an exceptional adult cast to the world of Candice Phee and Douglas Benson was so important. As John Sheedy explains *"The first three weeks of shoot was really centred around the children's world. Having the adult actors come in was a big shift, because we got more into the heartfelt moments. People like Richard Roxburgh, Emma Booth and Joel Jackson, they bring such complexities to their roles, and their thoughts and ideas are right on the money."*

*That's what I love about actors, that they'll read something in that script that you possibly haven't seen and make little adjustments, and I find that really thrilling and exciting to work with. It's great to be able to go into a whole other world with the adult actors, and to see how the children respond to them. It really adds a whole other layer to this film."*

For some of the cast this is their first time working in a film told from a child's perspective, and they couldn't wait to be involved. For Joel Jackson, *"The script really grabbed my attention because of the kids and for it being told from a children's perspective. We all have our families, we all love our families dearly, and I'm really close with mine. But we've also all got those things that make our family 'our family', and the Phee family just kind of leapt out of the page and lived in my imagination for about two months after I read the story. It had the love, and the heartache that was there, but also the celebration of everyone being so vastly different. And RUB was kind of one of those characters that on a page, could just be read as difficult and someone that has everything, but hasn't really solved his problems, but I could see a really broken and kind of adolescent man. It almost felt like a man who was a kid. And that's how I feel, in most day to day*

*kind of situations, and I really kind of saw a bit of myself in that guy who loves his family so much, but has no way of letting them know just how much he loves them.*

*He wants to give Candice so much love and be there, and be the funnest uncle that you could be, in amongst the sadness and the grief that this family is dealing with. He wants to try to give her a beautiful place to shine, and be the best kid that she could be. That's all that I've ever tried to do with my nephew, and my dad's a primary school principal, and that's all he's ever tried to do with the kids that he teaches. I think that the relationships that adults can have with kids, they're so important. And that's what really spoke to me."*

Deb Mailman, who plays Douglas Benson's mum Penelope, like all of the cast and crew, was drawn to the way the film embraces difference *"It's got so much heart, it's charming, it's funny and it's heartbreaking as well. I love our two protagonists Candice and Douglas Benson from Another Dimension. They're very particular kids, they're very different, and I love that about them, and the way that they see the world. I love that they don't accept the situation that's in front of them and that their oddities draw them together. There's an acceptance around their difference, and I think that's a really beautiful message. It's a lot of fun and I think it's a beautiful, beautiful story."*

## CREATING FILM MAGIC BEHIND THE SCENES - THE BOOB RIG AND THE WONKY EYE

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***"What is a twelve-year-old boy going to buy to make this boob rig?"***

Miriam Margolyes plays the schoolteacher Miss Bamford, whose point of difference is an exceptionally busy lazy eye. Miriam recalls *"I was very worried about 'the eye', because I thought I was going to have to be stuffed with a contact lens, or some false eye. But John Sheedy made a special phone call to me and said, 'I will tell you how it's going to be done. They will photograph you, after each take, rolling your eyes around.'*

*And I have to roll both my eyes, cause I can't roll one separately, they seem to be joined. Once we've filmed it, we take it to the computer, and the computer can insert one rolling eye on top of the normal take, with my real eye. So I look as if I've got one rolling eye in my head. It's extraordinary that it's possible to do that, and I'm very relieved."*

The scene-stealing inflatable boob-rig was also something that surprised and delighted the team behind the scenes. According to Production Designer Nicki Gardiner, *"The funniest prop on this film that I've had to design would be the inflatable boob rig. We first see it as a gift that Douglas gives to Candice. So it's a pretty funny thing, because you think, well what is a twelve-year-old boy going to buy to make this boob*

*rig? And what's it going to be made out of? So we thought that it'd be fun if it was made out of beach balls and that Douglas would have been able to go to the shop and buy a couple of beach balls and inflate it with some air cans, and, well, there's been a lot of talk about that prop, and it has a pretty significant part in the film!"*

# KEY CAST

## "Candice Phee" – Daisy Axon

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Daisy moved from England in 2009 at the age of 3 and loves the Aussie way of life. She is very active and attended dance classes for four years before pursuing her love for acting, joining Filmbites Screen Academy in 2016.

In 2018 after a nationwide search, Daisy was cast as Scotty in JUDY AND PUNCH, which premiered at Sundance Film Festival in 2019. Daisy had an incredible time in Melbourne filming opposite Mia Wasikowska and Damon Herriman and meeting all the wonderful cast and crew.

When the call came through to audition for H IS FOR HAPPINESS Daisy couldn't believe she would have the chance to bring her favourite character Candice McPhee from 'A is for Alphabet' to life. Her time on the set of H IS FOR HAPPINESS was a truly special experience.

## "Jim Phee (Dad)" - Richard Roxburgh

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An award-winning actor of stage and screen, Richard Roxburgh's recent feature film roles include Mel Gibson's HACKSAW RIDGE, the adaptation of Tim Winton's novel BREATH with Simon Baker and Elizabeth Debicki and Sue Brooks' LOOKING FOR GRACE. His upcoming feature films include DANGER CLOSE with Travis Fimmel, ANGEL OF MINE with Noomi Rapace and Yvonne Strahovski and GO! opposite Frances O'Connor and Dan Wyllie.

Additional film credits include MOULIN ROUGE, DOING TIME FOR PATSY CLINE, MISSION IMPOSSIBLE II, OSCAR & LUCINDA, THANK GOD HE MET LIZZIE, CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION, THE TURNING (*Reunion*), MATCHING JACK and James Cameron's action adventure film SANCTUM. Richard is also known to young audiences for his voice work in animated features LEGEND OF THE GUARDIANS: THE OWLS OF GA'HOOLE, BLINKY BILL THE MOVIE and MAYA THE BEE: THE HONEY GAMES.

Richard's well-known television credits include the role of Cleaver Greene in the long-running ABC hit series RAKE, which he also co-created, writes and produces. His brilliant performance earned him a TV Week Silver Logie for Most Outstanding Actor and the 2012 AACTA Award for Best Actor in a Television Series. His other TV roles include as Prime Minister Bob Hawke in Channel TEN's telemovie HAWKE, as the notorious Roger Rogerson in the ABC mini-series BLUE MURDER and 2017 sequel BLUE MURDER: KILLER, in two part-drama THE SILENCE and as the lead in drama series EAST OF EVERYTHING. Richard can next be seen alongside Helen Mirren in the HBO/Sky UK Miniseries CATHERINE THE GREAT.

Richard is also an accomplished director. His debut film, ROMULUS, MY FATHER, starring Eric Bana drew critical acclaim when it was released in 2007.

Richard has performed on stage around the world and has shared the stage with some of Australia's finest actors including Cate Blanchett, Hugo Weaving, Jacki Weaver and John Bell.

## **"Claire Phee (Mum)" – Emma Booth**

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Emma started her acting career at the age of 13 in the Australian kids show THE ADVENTURES OF BUSH PATROL. She then went on to model internationally before getting her first film role in CLUBLAND, known as INTRODUCING THE DWIGHT'S in America. For her performance as "Jill" she won the both the AACTA Award and Film Critics Award for Best Supporting Actress, and Best Newcomer at the Filmink Awards.

Emma then shot BLOODCREEK directed by Joel Schumacher, where she starred with Henry Cavill and Michael Fassbender. After that Emma co-starred in HIPPY HIPPY SHAKE alongside Sienna Miller, Cillian Murphy, and Chris O'Dowd. Her next film was THE BOYS ARE BACK alongside Clive Owen, followed by PELICAN BLOOD in the UK. Emma then starred in the award winning Australian television series UNDERBELLY: THE GOLDEN MILE, feature film SWERVE, and the award-winning Australian TV series CLOUDSTREET.

Emma then starred opposite Jason Statham and Jennifer Lopez in Taylor Hackford's PARKER before returning to Australia for John Curran's TRACKS starring opposite Mia Wasikowska and Adam Driver.

Emma's other credits include the Lionsgate film GOD'S OF EGYPT, the AACTA and Logie Award winning NETFLIX Original series GLITCH and the 2016 feature thriller HOUNDS OF LOVE, directed by Ben Young. HOUNDS OF LOVE premiered at the Venice Film Festival, screened at SXSW and Tribeca Film Festivals, and earned Emma seven best actress awards worldwide including at the 2017 Brussels International Film Festival and the AACTA Awards.

## **"Rich Uncle Brian (RUB)" – Joel Jackson**

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Award-winning Australian film and television actor Joel Jackson was born in the Western Australian town of Albany, which is also the home of HIS FOR HAPPINESS.

Working all over the country, Joel's most recent feature film roles include Greg McLean's highly acclaimed feature, JUNGLE, in which he starred alongside Daniel Radcliffe, and the upcoming feature film I MET A GIRL playing the role of *Nick Cassidy*.

Joel's recent television performances include as the lead role in the 2019 Australian TV series MS FISHER'S MODERN MURDER MYSTERIES and in the AACTA award winning Matchbox Pictures miniseries SAFE HARBOUR.

Joel has been celebrated for his portrayal of Peter Allen in the 2015 Channel Seven AACTA Award winning miniseries PETER ALLEN: NOT THE BOY NEXT DOOR, for which he received the AACTA Award for Best Lead Actor in a Television Drama, the TV Week Logie Award for Most Outstanding Newcomer – Actor and a nomination in the Outstanding Actor category at the prestigious Festival de Television de Monte-Carlo Golden Nymph Awards.

Previously, Joel starred as Charles Bean in the award-winning 2015 Foxtel World War I miniseries DEADLINE GALLIPOLI aired to mark the 2015 Centenary of the Gallipoli landings. Starring alongside alongside Sam Worthington, Hugh Dancy and Charles Dance, the role saw Joel receive a second AACTA Award nomination for Best Lead Actor in a Television Drama and a TV Week Logie Award nomination for Best New Talent.

Joel's other TV credits include the NINE Network's crime event series HYDE & SEEK and Playmaker Media's TV series THE WRONG GIRL – Season 2. Joel is also an accomplished musician, singer, and stage performer, having appeared in numerous theatre productions. He also spent time growing up in North West Australia, and in 2010 he was recognised as the region's *Young Australian of the Year*.

## **"Penelope Benson" – Deborah Mailman**

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The multi award winning Deborah Mailman AM is one of Australia's most highly respected actors. Garnering national acclaim in 1998 for her portrayal of Nona in the film *RADIANCE*, for which she received both the AFI and Film Critics' Circle Award for Most Outstanding Actress, Deborah's other film credits include *THREE SUMMERS*, *A FEW LESS MEN*, *PAPER PLANES*, *ODDBALL*, the voice of Mrs Koala in *BLINKY BILL*, *MENTAL*, *BRAN NUE DAE*, *DEAR CLAUDIA*, *THE MONKEY'S MASK*, *RABBIT PROOF FENCE*, *THE BOOK OF REVELATION*, *LUCKY MILES* and the internationally celebrated and award winning feature *THE SAPPHIRES*, for which she received the 2013 AACTA for *Best Lead Actress*.

For television Deborah has created some of Australia's most enduring characters including her TV Week Silver Logie Award winning portrayals of Bonita Maboo in *MABOO*, Kelly in *SECRET LIFE OF US* and Lorraine in *REDFERN NOW* as well as lauded roles on the series *MYSTERY ROAD* (receiving the 2018 AACTA Award for Best Supporting Actress), *OFFSPRING*, *RUSH*, *THE ALICE*, *TWO TWISTED*, *JACK IRISH*, *BLACK COMEDY*, *TOMORROW WHEN THE WAR BEGAN*, *CLEVERMAN*, *WOLF CREEK*, *PLEASE LIKE ME*, *BITE CLUB* and *GET KRACK!N* as well as voicing Big Cuz in the award winning animation *LITTLE J & BIG CUZ*. A regular television presenter, she has hosted *PLAYSCHOOL* and *MESSAGE STICKS* for the ABC, Lonely Planet's *GOING BUSH* for SBS and co-hosted the 2015 Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Awards (AACTA) ceremony alongside Cate Blanchett for Network Ten.

One of Australia's most celebrated theatre actors, and previously a company member of the Sydney Theatre Company, Deborah's stage performances include the Matilda Award winning performances in *Radiance* and *The Seven Stages of Grieving*, the Helpmann Award Best Supporting Actress role in the STC production of *The Lost Echo* and the Helpmann Award nominated role for *Best Actress* in the theatre production of *The Sapphires*.

In 2017 Deborah was honoured to receive an *Order of Australia Medal* for Services to the Arts and as a role model for Indigenous performers. She is currently a Trustee of the Sydney Opera House.

## **"Douglas Benson from Another Dimension" – Wesley Patten**

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Wesley was the Winner of the Best Young Actor Award at the St Kilda Film Festival for his work in John Sheedy's multi award winning short film *MRS MCCUTCHEON*. To work again with John on his first feature; *HIS FOR HAPPINESS* in 2018 was a great delight.

Wesley's theatre credits include *The Long Forgotten Dream* and *The Secret River* for Sydney Theatre Company. Wesley will return to the STC in 2019 for their international tour of *The Secret River* to Edinburgh and London. Other acting credits include TV commercials and photo shoots for various companies, including SBS and NITV.

## **"Miss Bamford" – Miriam Margolyes**

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Miriam Margolyes was born in Oxford & read English at Newnham College, Cambridge. She was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for Services to Drama in 2001.

Miriam has had a prolific career both on screen and on stage, with hundreds of credits to her name. In 1993, she won the BAFTA Best Supporting Actress in Martin Scorsese's *THE AGE OF INNOCENCE*, having in 1989 collected the Best Supporting Actress award at the LA Critics Circle Awards for *LITTLE DORRIT*.

Of her many diverse roles, Miriam Margolyes is best known to young audiences worldwide for her role as Professor Sprout in the *HARRY POTTER* films, and through her distinctive voice for her work in animated features including George Miller's Oscar® winning features *BABE* and *HAPPY FEET*, as well as the Oscar® nominated adaptation of Roald Dahl's *JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH*.

After repertory in Edinburgh & Leicester, she has worked in theatre in London's West End, throughout Australia & played Madame Morrible in *Wicked* on Broadway. For Melbourne Theatre Company, Miriam starred in John Logan's solo show *I'll eat you last*. In 2010, she won the Theatregoers Choice Best Supporting Actress Award for Nell in *Endgame*.

Her one-woman show, *Dickens' Women* was nominated for an Olivier Award & toured Australia in 2012 as part of a triumphant World Tour for Dickens Bi-Centenary.

# THE TEAM

## Julie Ryan – Producer

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Over the past twenty years, Julie has produced, co-produced or executive produced fifteen feature films, two broadcast documentaries and one international short film. Her credits include Australian box office smash hit RED DOG; and festival favourites TEN CANOES (Jury Prize, Un Certain Regard, Cannes Film Festival 2006); SATELLITE BOY (TIFF 2012, Berlin Film Festival 2013); MY TEHRAN FOR SALE (TIFF 2009); ALEXANDRA'S PROJECT (Berlin Film Festival 2003); THE TRACKER (Venice Film Festival 2002); TRACKS (Venice, TIFF & Telluride Film Festivals 2013); 100 BLOODY ACRES (Winner, Best Film, Midnight X-treme, Sitges Film Festival 2013); and SCARE CAMPAIGN (Winner Best Film, MonsterFest Melbourne 2015).

Her most recent film released by Bleeker Street in the US and Icon in Australia is HOTEL MUMBAI (World Premiere, TIFF 2018) which reunited her with multi-award winning director Anthony Maras, THE PALACE (Telluride Film Festival 2011, AACTA Award Best Short 2012).

In 2019 Julie's company Cyan Films partnered with producer Tenille Kennedy of The Koop to produce the family feature H IS FOR HAPPINESS, based on the celebrated book "My Life As An Alphabet", with award winning director John Sheedy.

Julie has been nominated for seven AFI/AACTA Best Film awards winning for RED DOG and TEN CANOES, and (as Executive Producer) for the international short film THE PALACE. She has shot films in many remote regions around Australia including Arnhem Land, the Kimberley, the Pilbara, Alice Springs and the Flinders Ranges. Internationally she has shot films in Iran, Cyprus, the jungle of French Guiana, and most recently, in India. Her production company, Cyan Films, is based in Adelaide, South Australia.

## Tenille Kennedy – Producer

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Producer Tenille Kennedy's film projects have been selected for some of the world's most prestigious international festivals. She most recently produced the feature films BAD GIRL, selected for the 2016 Busan International Film Festival, and the upcoming Australian French co-production SLAM. Starring Adam Bakri, SLAM premiered at the 2018 Tallin Black Nights Film Festival where it was nominated for five awards.

Tenille co-produced not one but three chapters of the compendium feature film THE TURNING, which was selected for the 2014 Berlin Film Festival. Based on the celebrated Tim Winton novel, Tenille co-produced the chapters *Fog*, *Aquifer*, directed by Robert Connolly (*Paper Planes*) and *Commission*, directed by David Wenham and starring Hugo Weaving. She was also an Associate Producer on ABC telemovie AN ACCIDENTAL SOLDIER, directed by Rachel Ward.

As a producer's assistant, Tenille completed projects across television and feature film including the acclaimed SBS television series THE CIRCUIT starring Aaron Pedersen, Richard Frankland's STONE BROS and the children's animation series DOGSTAR. She has worked as a Production Manager for films including Ben Elton's THREE SUMMERS, as a Post Production Supervisor and in development for Screenwest. Tenille is the Vice President of the West Australian chapter of Women in Film and Television.

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## **Lisa Hoppe – Writer/Producer**

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The multi-talented Lisa Hoppe is an Australian writer and producer for film and television. Lisa wrote the screenplay for H IS FOR HAPPINESS, adapting it from the novel 'My Life as an Alphabet' by Barry Jonsberg. Lisa is also a producer of the film, as part of the three-women strong producing team. Lisa has a Graduate Diploma in Screen Business and a MA in Producing from AFTRS where she produced a number of short films that screened around the world including the ambitious GODEL, INCOMPLETE starring Elizabeth Debicki and the AWGIE Award winning HECK, which she also co-wrote.

Lisa recently completed two years as a Creative Producer with A Stark Production, producers of children's film and television content including THE DEEP, the international hit screened in over 130 countries. Lisa's extensive experience as writer, script editor and script producer has seen her work on Australian TV shows across a range of genres and formats including HEARTBREAK HIGH, ALL SAINTS, WHITE COLLAR BLUE, HIS and GUESS HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU - to name a few.

## **Barry Jonsberg – Author of “My Life As An Alphabet”**

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Beloved Australian author Barry Jonsberg has published more than a dozen successful books for young adults and younger readers around the world. *H for Happiness* is his first novel to be adapted for the screen, and is the first time he has taken an acting role, appearing in a cameo role at school as Mr Coolidge! H IS FOR HAPPINESS is based Barry's 2013 novel *My Life as an Alphabet* (published in the USA as *The Categorical Universe of Candice Phee*). Loved by young adults, including lead actor *Daisy Axon*, the novel won many awards including the Gold Inky (Australia's teen choice book awards), the Children's Peace Literature Award, German Readers' Choice Award 2014 in Gold (Children's Books), the Territory Read Award, the Children's Literature/YA Award and the 2014 Victorian Premier's Literary Award. It was shortlisted in the Prime Minister's Literary Awards, the Children's Book Council of Australia awards, the WA Premier's Book Awards and the Adelaide Festival Awards.

With more than twenty publications for Young Adults and Children, some of Barry's other award-winning publications include *The Whole Business with Kiffo and the Pitbull*, *It's Not All About YOU*, *Calma!*, *Dreamrider*, *Being Here* and *Pandora Jones: Admission*.

His most recent novel *A Song Only I Can Hear* recently won the Indie Awards, YA category, 2019.

Barry lives in Darwin with his wife, Nita, and a slightly crazed blue heeler called Zed. His books have been published in the USA, the UK, France, Poland, Germany, Hungary, Brazil, Turkey, The Netherlands, Slovenia, Italy, China and Korea.

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## **Bonnie Elliott ACS – Director of Photography**

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Bonnie is an award-winning cinematographer whose work has screened at major International film festivals, including Cannes, Berlin, Venice, Toronto, Tribeca, Sydney & Melbourne. She has received recognition for her work from the Australian Cinematographer's Society on numerous occasions.

Her most recent projects include TV series HUNTERS (Matchbox/Universal Cable Productions); the hit TV series ROMPER STOMPER, 2017 (STAN) and the acclaimed, multi-award winning six-part series SEVEN TYPES OF AMBIGUITY, 2016 (Matchbox Pictures/NBCU/ABC). For this she won an AACTA Award for Best Cinematography, becoming the first female cinematographer ever to win this award.

Bonnie shot her debut feature film, MY TEHRAN FOR SALE, in Iran. Other feature films quickly followed, including Zak Hilditch's much heralded debut, THESE FINAL HOURS, selected for Director's Fortnight, Cannes, 2014; and Kulikar Sotho's THE LAST REEL, set in Cambodia.

She worked with indigenous choreographer/director Stephen Page on SAND, a chapter of the Tim Winton adaptation of THE TURNING, which screened at the 2015 Berlinale, and on SPEAR, a visually stunning film story told through movement and dance, which premiered at the Toronto and Adelaide film festivals in 2015.

Most recently, Bonnie shot Miranda Nation's debut feature, UNDERTOW, Partho Sen-Gupta's SLAM, and TV series THE HUNTING (SBS TV, Closer Films) all set to screen in 2019.

## **Johanna Scott – Film Editor**

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Jo has been working in the film and advertising industry for over 20 years. She began her career in London, where she spent 10 years training under some of the best in the industry. Having long since returned to Australian shores she has established a reputation as one of the leading commercials editors in the country. Working with directors such as Garth Davis, Patrick Hughes and Justin Kurzel. Passionate about all formats of editing - long and short form, she has edited numerous short films which have been screened and awarded across the globe including BAFTA and Cannes.

Her first feature documentary HAVE YOU SEEN THE LISTERS for acclaimed director Eddie Martin gained her an AACTA nomination in 2018. She edited I USED TO BE NORMAL for Jessica Leski the same year and has just completed her first feature drama H IS FOR HAPPINESS with director John Sheedy.

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## **Nerida Tyson-Chew – Composer**

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Award-winning Australian film composer Nerida Tyson-Chew's diverse credits include the UNICEF Award-winning animated French-Australian feature film SANTA'S APPRENTICE, the Fox-Walden Media/Hallmark Channel movie RETURN TO NIM'S ISLAND, Sony Pictures' action/adventure/horror movie ANACONDAS: THE HUNT FOR THE BLOOD ORCHID (US), Nine Network primetime action drama TV series RESCUE - SPECIAL OPS, Warner Bros' BATMAN: THE ANIMATED SERIES (US), animation series TRACEY MCBEAN (ABC), the documentary series LIFE@ (ABC) and the National Geographic Channel series TABOO (US).

As well as being part of screen music history as one of the first female composers scoring on productions in the US when she was hired by Sony Pictures in 2003, Nerida has been recognised with numerous awards and nominations including Feature Film Score of the Year, Best Music for a TV Series, Best Music for a Children's Series and Best Music for a Telemovie and Mini-Series.

Nerida's score for Canadian/Australian animated underwater adventure series THE DEEP (A Stark Production, Technicolor and DHX Media) earned her an Australian Screen Music Award for Best Music in Children's Television, an Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television Award Nomination for Best Music in Animation, and an AACTA Nomination for Best Music in Television.

In 2018 Nerida was awarded the Inaugural Australian Women in Music Award for Musical Excellence.

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## **Nicki Gardiner – Production Designer**

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Nicki Gardiner graduated from the Australian Film and Television School with a BA specialising in Production Design and has since worked extensively as a Production Designer and Set Decorator across film and TVC production.

As a set decorator, Nicki's work can be seen in across a range of internationally successful feature films including the six-time Oscar nominated LION, starring Dev Patel and Nicole Kidman, for which she was nominated for the Art Directors Guild - Excellence in Production Design Awards. Nicki was the Australian Set Decorator's on the multi-award winning MAD MAX FURY ROAD directed by George Miller with production design by Colin Gibson. Nicki's extensive feature film credits range from small to big budget movies of evocative and diverse visuals including 2.22 directed by Paul Currie, GODS OF EGYPT directed by Alex Proyas, HOTEL MUMBAI directed by Anthony Maras as well as THE RAILWAY MAN, THE TREE, KNOWING, SUPERMAN, ANACONDAS, PETER PAN and THE MATRIX.

Nicki's recent Production Designer roles include GUILTY directed by Matthew Sleeth, the short film AUNTY MAGGIE AND THE WOMBA WAKGUN directed by Leah Purcell, THE DEFECTOR directed by Scott Mannion and the upcoming Network Seven two part drama TV drama AUSTRALIAN GANGSTER, directed by Gregor Jordan with John Edwards and Dan Edwards.

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## **Terri Lamera – Costume Designer**

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Terri Lamera is an Australian costume designer with over 25 years' experience in the Australian film industry.

With a key role in creating the characters in each film, Terri's work can be seen in the recent features, BREATH directed by Simon Baker set in the 70s; 1% starring Ryan Corr and Abbey Lee; Ben Elton's THREE SUMMERS; and the critically acclaimed HOUNDS OF LOVE, which screened at the 73rd Venice Film Festival. Other previous projects include LOOKING FOR GRACE which screened at the 72<sup>nd</sup> Venice Film Festival; SON OF A GUN starring Alicia Vikander and Ewan McGregor and KILL ME THREE TIMES. For television, Lamera's most notable work includes designing the costumes for AN ACCIDENTAL SOLDIER, for which she was nominated for an AACTA Awards for Best Costume Design in Television; and the adaptation of Tim Winton's CLOUDSTREET.

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# Technical Data

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<b>Title</b>	<b>H IS FOR HAPPINESS</b>
<b>Original Title</b>	Based on the book "My Life As An Alphabet"
<b>Genre</b>	Family
<b>Production Year</b>	2019
<b>Month &amp; Start &amp; End of Shooting</b>	12 November to 21 December 2018
<b>Country of Origin</b>	Australia
<b>Language Spoken</b>	English
<b>Duration</b>	96 mins (without credits)
<b>Shot on</b>	Arri Alexa / Digital
<b>Screen Ratio</b>	1.85
<b>Format (ex DCP, 35mm)</b>	DCP
<b>Sound Format</b>	5.1
<b>Domestic Release inc Distributor Name</b>	Universal Release date <i>to be confirmed</i> but possibly end January 2020
<b>Rating</b>	<i>To be confirmed</i>
<b>Target Group</b>	8 to 13 year old females & their families plus over 50s female skewed
<b>Production Companies</b>	Cyan Films Pty Ltd The Koop Pty Ltd
<b>Producers</b>	Julie Ryan Tenille Kennedy Lisa Hoppe
<b>Executive Producers</b>	Richard East Jonathan Page, Bryce Menzies, Avriil Stark Grady Habib, Roger Savage
<b>Cinematographer</b>	Bonnie Elliott ACS
<b>Editor</b>	Johanna Scott
<b>Sound Editor</b>	Chris Goodes CAS, MPSE
<b>Composer</b>	Nerida Tyson-Chew
<b>Still Photographer</b>	David Dare Parker
<b>Scriptwriter</b>	Lisa Hoppe
<b>Director</b>	John Sheedy
<b>Cast</b>	Richard Roxburgh, Emma Booth, Joel Jackson, Deborah Mailman introducing Daisy Axon and Wesley Patten with Miriam Margolyes
<b>Financiers/Investors</b>	Produced with the assistance of Screen Australia Screenwest and the West Australian Regional Film Fund Melbourne International Film Festival Premiere Fund Film Victoria and Universal Pictures  Financed with the assistance of Bonsai Films, Cyan Films, LM Hoppe, Marshalls+Dent+Wilmoth, Soundfirm, Sandbox and The Koop

# COMPANY PROFILES

## **Happiness Film Productions PL**

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Happiness Film Productions is the company of producers Julie Ryan of Cyan Films, and Tenille Kennedy of The Koop.

[www.cyanfilms.com.au](http://www.cyanfilms.com.au)

<https://au.linkedin.com/in/tenille-kennedy-08191b6b>

## **Australia & New Zealand Distribution – Universal Pictures**

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<https://www.universalpictures.com.au>

## **International Distribution - LevelK**

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<http://www.LevelK.dk>