

MEDIA KIT



A 98-minute feature documentary from writer and director Thomas Charles Hyland

We would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung, Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Wadawarrung land on which *This Is Going To Be Big* was produced.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

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Introducing *This Is Going To Be Big*

“...High school isn’t all, you know, just about reading and maths and stuff. It’s about those days of living your lives and feeling like you can act the way you are in front of people.”

Chelsea, student at Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Specialist School

This Is Going To Be Big is a heart-warming documentary unfolding as teenagers living with disabilities and neurodiversity share their dreams and confront their challenges while preparing for their high school musical. Their parents and teachers are with them, but the spotlight is on the teens coming of age wanting to show who they are and what they can do.

With unprecedented access to Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Specialist School (SMRSS) at Bullengarook, Victoria, the 98-minute feature was filmed across 2022 and 2023 against the backdrop of classes, lunchbreaks and the auditions, rehearsals and performances of the school’s biennial musical production.

Chelsea, Elyse, Halle and **Josh** each have their own reasons for wanting to be in the cast of their high school musical. Music teacher **Darcy Nolan** and drama teacher **Lori Nichols** are co-writers on the script for this jukebox musical, *The Time Travelling Trio*, telling the story of three students doing a project on John Farnham when they find a way to go back in time to cross paths with the singer at key moments in the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s. School facilities manager **Tony Rains** is the producer of the musical which is staged at the local community theatre.

Writer and director **Thomas Charles Hyland** presents *This Is Going To Be Big* as a life-affirming and tenderly humorous insight into young adulthood, with universal themes of love, friendship, belonging and self-acceptance. This is not a film focusing on disabilities and differences, it is a slice of life exploration with complex characters who have the power to bind audiences through the commonality of shared experiences and feelings at a critical moment in time - and have them singing and cheering along too.

The documentary producers are **Catherine Bradbury** and **Josie Mason Campbell** for **Fremantle Australia** and **Jim Wright** for **Truce Films**, with Mason Campbell and Wright also operating as executive producers along with **Abigail Hargrave** for **Abstar Productions**.

This Is Going To Be Big is a **Fremantle Australia** and **Truce Films** production with principal production funding from **Screen Australia**, in association with **Australian Broadcasting Corporation, VIC Screen, Melbourne International Film Festival Premiere Fund** and financed with support from **Netflix** and **Abstar Productions**.

Fremantle Australia and Truce Films partnered with **Bus Stop Films**, an inclusive filmmaking organisation, to develop and roll out the Disability Representation and Inclusion plan for *This Is Going To Be Big*. The plan includes ongoing collaboration through the production and launch strategies and a training attachment opportunity for a Bus Stop Films’ Accessible Film Studies Program student in the camera department. *This Is Going To Be Big* is certified as **Inclusively Made**.

“A lot of people underestimate people with a disability ... what I actually hope for this show to achieve is that saying ‘Hey, you don’t give us enough credit for what we actually can do’.”

Josh, student at Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Specialist School

Production Credit

***This Is Going To Be Big* is a Fremantle Australia and Truce Films production with principal production funding from Screen Australia, in association with Australian Broadcasting Corporation, VIC Screen, Melbourne International Film Festival Premiere Fund and financed with support from Netflix and Abstar Productions. Writer and director: Thomas Charles Hyland. Producers: Catherine Bradbury, Josie Mason Campbell and Jim Wright. Executive Producers: Josie Mason Campbell for Fremantle Australia, Jim Wright for Truce Films and Abigail Hargrave for Abstar Productions.**

Creator's statement | From writer and director Thomas Charles Hyland

Creating this film has been a both cathartic and joyful experience. In many ways, making it transported me back to my own high schooling years. As you watch it, I hope it does the same to you. This period of life is universally intense. It's infused with beauty, anxiety, and anticipation.

The idea for it came to me a few years ago, as I sat in the audience of a school production that was directed by my sister. Like my mother, she is a music teacher, and so over the years I've come to view a great amount of school plays.

They're always incredible.

They're creative in the best kind of way. Highly original, fearless, funny.

I was driven to make an authentic coming-of-age film that captured the essence of high school life. I love all those 80s high school comedies, and so I wanted to depict the teenage experience with an ensemble and in a manner that felt relatable.

What I didn't expect was to meet such wonderful, charming and emotionally intelligent students like Halle, Josh, Elyse and Chelsea. My hope is that by time our students and John Farnhams take the stage, you'll feel somewhat like a parent in the audience - incredibly proud - because you know the significance of each student's presence.

Hope you enjoy it,

Thomas

Synopses| Extended, short and one-liner versions

Extended synopsis:

Teenagers Chelsea, Elyse, Halle and Josh share their dreams and confront their challenges on and off stage in the lead up to the performance of the musical staged by their high school for students living with disabilities.

The Time Travelling Trio musical is the story of students who visit Australian national treasure John Farnham over four decades from the 60s to the 90s while doing an assignment on the singer. Music teacher Darcy Nolan and drama teacher Lori Nichols are the jukebox musical's co-creators and school facilities manager Tony Rains is on board as the veteran producer. All are firm believers in the power of performance and theatre to inspire confidence, spark connections and create fun.

So, the casting call goes out for the leading roles of the titular student trio and four singing John Farnham characters plus more actors, dancers and production crew.

Students at the Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Specialist School's Bullengarook campus are introduced as they prepare for auditions. Some of them have never sung out loud in front of their parents, let alone in front of a packed theatre. Chelsea, Elyse, Halle and Josh each have their own reasons for putting themselves forward. Through interviews and observations at school and insights into their lives with their families, these four teens tell their stories.

Chelsea is a force of energy and humour ... most of the time. At the age of five she was hit by a car, causing an acquired brain injury. When Chelsea gets tired or over-exerts, she can become anxious and prone to fainting. She is mindful the pressure of learning lines and performing may increase her stress levels, but she wants to take on the task to motivate herself and hopefully other people too.

Elyse is thoughtful and quietly determined. As a person living with an intellectual disability, she was the target of bullying at her previous school and this exacerbated her anxiety and eroded her confidence to attend classes. At SMRSS, she is building her self-assurance and making friends.

Halle is very creative and capable. She says living with an autism spectrum disorder means she sometimes likes doing things differently. Halle is a talented artist and a natural performer. For her, the opportunity to land the coveted role of John Farnham in the 80s represents a critical step in moving beyond the raw grief of losing an aunt whose favourite song was *You're The Voice*.

Josh is a master of optimism. An expert in all things related to aviation, his life outside school centres on his duties with the Australian Air Force Cadets. His plan to start pilot training is subject to a medical certificate considering his diagnoses of intellectual disability and autism spectrum disorder. For Josh, taking part in the musical is something he believes will focus attention on things he and his fellow students can do.

In the countdown to curtain-up, these four students have the love and support of family and teachers as they face crises of confidence, health issues and the momentous and ordinary rituals of teen life.

But ultimately, it is up to these young adults to challenge themselves to believe in their potential.

Short synopsis:

A humorous and heart-warming coming-of-age story unfolds as teenagers living with disabilities share their dreams and desires and confront their challenges while preparing for their high school musical.

One liner:

A heart-warming coming-of-age story as teens living with disabilities share their dreams and challenges while preparing for their high school musical.

Biographies | Students featured in *This Is Going To Be Big*

Students and their families have requested to be identified by first names only.

Chelsea, 17 (turned 17 during production)

Chelsea says: "You know we feel like we need to be something, but we actually have to be just ourselves."

Attributes: Lively and very funny.

Loves: Making her mum cry happy tears of pride.

Started at SMRSS in: Year 8 in 2020.

Chelsea refers to her medical diagnosis as an acquired brain injury. She participates in *This Is Going To Be Big* along with her parents, Susie and Geoff, and her sister, Isabella.

Chelsea is boldly funny and tenderly insightful. At the age of five she was struck by a car resulting in an acquired brain injury. She thought she would require a wheelchair for the rest of her life however she regained mobility. She gets tired easily and when she over-exerts herself it can lead to fainting or a seizure. She says one of her coping strategies is to scream into her pillow to "scream all the bad out." She hopes taking part in the musical will help her stabilise her self-confidence and inspire other people. Friends suggest Chelsea could become a comedian. Chelsea's plan is to become a businesswoman and motivational speaker.

Elyse, 16 (turned 16 just after production)

Elyse says: "You're always looking for the dangers with anxiety. You're not looking for the positives, you're looking for the dangers and that's what kept pushing me back and back and back and that's what made me worse is because I didn't know how to use positive self-talk or how to, kind of, help myself get out of this situation."

Attributes: Kind and determined.

Loves: Creatures great and small, including fragile insects and skinks.

Started at SMRSS in: Year 9 in 2022.

Elyse refers to herself as a person living with an intellectual disability. She participates in *This Is Going To Be Big* along with her parents, Tracey and Marcus.

Mainstream school became a nightmare for Elyse. Intensely bullied, the stress exacerbated her anxiety leading to tics and seizures, often up to 10 in a day, which would result in her being sent home from school. She also started to self-harm. The impact of the brutal bullying is long-lasting but since starting at SMRSS the intensity and frequency of her seizures have dramatically decreased. She is proud of how far she has come already. "Being able to go to school has been a blessing, instead of being sent home because of my seizures," she says. Elyse is determined to become more self-assured and yearns to step outside her comfort zone by taking to the stage with newfound school friends. Beyond school, Elyse wants to care for animals as a veterinary nurse.

Halle, 18 (turned 18 during production)

Halle says: "And I know that my friends and family will be proud of me. But more importantly, I need to be proud of myself and love myself for who I am, because I know that I can do it."

She also says: "This is going to be big." (Yes, Halle gets the credit for title of the documentary.)

Attributes: Creative and spirited.

Loves: Doing her artwork and performing.

Started at SMRSS in: Year 7 in 2018

Halle refers to her diagnosis as an autism spectrum disorder. She participates in *This Is Going To Be Big* with her mum, Shantelle.

Halle is very capable and charismatic, but her strengths have not shielded her from experiences of bullying and isolation. She describes herself as someone who likes doing things differently. She is a natural performer and a talented artist and hopes to channel her creativity into a career. She has a formidable capacity for absorbing information and learning lines. Taking part in the school musical has high personal stakes because Halle has been holding on to the grief of losing an aunt and the regret of her own behaviour during their final visit. The musical presents Halle with a chance to sing her aunt's favourite song *You're the Voice*. Halle believes securing this much coveted role and delivering a performance to honour her aunt can empower her to move beyond the remorse and forge ahead to her full potential.

Josh, 17 (turned 17 during production)

Josh says: "No matter whatever happens, you have to try. You can't just give up or say 'Ah this is too hard'. I mean, we're all different, we all have our strengths, weaknesses."

Attributes: Thoughtful and optimistic – a master at finding the silver lining.

Loves: His family first but then everything associated with aviation.

Started at SMRSS in: Year 7 in 2019.

Josh refers to himself as a person living with an intellectual disability and an autism spectrum disorder. He participates in *This Is Going To Be Big along* with his mum, Tanya, and grandma, Sandra.

Josh knows life is not always going to be kind, but he has a talent for finding the good in most situations. As he says, "Not everything works out ...my grandpa actually put this perfectly to my mum once, you know, 'You have to roll with the punches sometimes'." He sums up his commitment to wanting to work hard on being a part of the school musical, as wanting to cross the *Ts* and dot the *Is* because John Farnham has become one of "Australia's brilliant legends". Josh considers his own greatest enjoyment and achievements to date have been through his membership of the Australian Air Force Cadets. He is a keen plane spotter and an expert armchair aviator at home with his flight simulator set-up. Josh's goal is to become a pilot and he wants to join the defence forces after high school.

Biographies | Teachers and staff featured in *This Is Going To Be Big*

Darcy Nolan

Music teacher Darcy started working at Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Specialist School 14 years ago. He worked at another specialist school for 18 months but returned to SMRSS and *The Time Travelling Trio* is his fourth biennial musical production there. Darcy has an amazing relationship with the students and is very mindful of nurturing their mental health and confidence. So, he is determined to help this group of teens develop something special to experience for themselves and to share the enjoyment with the entire community of students and families. Darcy and drama teacher Lori Nichols are the co-creators of *The Time Travelling Trio*.

Lori Nichols

Drama teacher Lori believes everyone should have the opportunity to be on stage because “it’s a feeling that you can’t describe, it’s like nothing else”. She started at Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Specialist School in 2022 and is keenly aware that if many of the students were in a mainstream school they might not have the confidence or stimulus to go for a role in a musical. Lori believes in the power of theatre and performance to energise and inspire students to connect with fun – especially when it involves her personal favourite, John Farnham. That’s why she chose him as the inspiration for the school musical production, *The Time Travelling Trio*, which she co-created with music teacher Darcy Nolan.

Tony Rains

Tony is the facilities manager at Sunbury Macedon Ranges Specialist School and the producer of 2023’s *The Time Travelling Trio* musical. Tony has been an education support staff member at SMRSS for 11 years but even before this he volunteered his time to support school productions. He has a wealth of knowledge from a lifetime involvement with the local community theatre. Tony takes on the role of producer for all the school’s biennial musical productions, guiding the backstage crew of staff and students and putting his handyman skills to work set building.

Biographies | Production Team

Thomas Charles Hyland | Writer and Director

Thomas Charles Hyland is a compassionate filmmaker with a particular interest in exploring social issues and dilemmas. He has a history of writing and developing original concepts, whilst also working as story developer for SBS Viceland, creating an original series for AFL On Demand, and being a recipient of AIDC 2021's Leading Lights program. Thomas's most recent work, *This Is Going To Be Big*, was filmed on location in Victoria between 2022 and 2023. This project was a collaboration between Fremantle Australia and Truce Films. Prior to this, he directed two half-hour films, *Just Passing Through* for SBS and *How To See Through Fog*, which was released online with *The Guardian*. Apart from his narrative and documentary work, Thomas has produced several high-profile TV commercials addressing vital social issues, such as health care, suicide prevention, LGBTQI+ rights, gender equality and family violence. Thomas is a dual citizen of Australia and Ireland. Currently, he is based in Melbourne, Victoria, where he continues to write and direct for film and television.

Catherine Bradbury | Producer

An accomplished television production executive with more than 25 years' experience, Catherine Bradbury has credits across many much-loved programs both in Australia and the UK. In her current role as Fremantle Australia's Head of Production – Unscripted, Catherine is responsible for overseeing the unscripted production and development slate. Recent credits include *Grand Designs Australia*, *Restoration Australia*, *Inside the Sydney Opera House*, *Matildas – The World at Our Feet*, *Australia's Got Talent* and *Farmer Wants a Wife*. Born in Manchester, UK, Catherine has a reputation for taking on challenging productions and delivering high quality results, working all over the world. In Manchester and London, she worked across multiple genres and created shows for the BBC, Granada TV, Planet 24, MTV and World's End Television.

Josie Mason Campbell | Producer and Executive Producer

Josie Mason Campbell is a passionate storyteller with a drive to create surprising and innovative content. Josie is currently the Head of Unscripted at Fremantle Australia and is tasked with growing their factual and documentary slate. She has previously held the roles of Head of Non-Scripted at the ABC and Head of Production & Development for Foxtel. During this time Josie commissioned and/or oversaw the production of a diverse slate of many popular and award winning productions including the International Emmy award winning *Old People's Home for Four Year Olds*, multi award winning *Love on the Spectrum*, Walkley award winning *Revelation* as well as *Fight for Planet A*, Logie award winning *War on Waste*, *Shaun Micallef's On The Sauce*, *Miriam Margolyes Almost Australian*, *Australia's Ocean Odyssey*, *Sam Neill's The Pacific* and the recent *Tim Winton's Ningaloo*. Josie created a permanent impact team at the ABC with a focus on sustainability and stories of marginalised communities.

Jim Wright | Producer and Executive Producer

Jim Wright is an owner and Head of Film & TV at Truce Films. In 2022, Jim won Best Pitch at 37South 2022 for scripted feature *One More Shot* and produced the comedy web series *Monologue*. He was part of SPAA's 2019 'Ones to Watch' program and cut his teeth working under Anthony Bregman at Likely Story in New York. He has produced a number of short form projects including Screen Australia and VicScreen funded web series *Monologue*, Tropfest winner *We've All Been There*, and Flickerfest winner *Slingshot*. His slate of projects includes commercially driven feature films, television series and documentaries.

Production Notes | *This Is Going To Be Big*

Fremantle Australia

Fremantle Australia's expert storytellers are committed to a culture of creativity, curiosity, diversity and connectivity across a broad range of content including drama, comedy, entertainment and factual. Fremantle is the home of many successful and beloved programs with highly engaged audiences such as recent global hits *Heartbreak High* and *Wellmania*, starring Celeste Barber, as well as *Wentworth*, *Neighbours* and *Grand Designs Australia*.

Alongside a strong development slate across scripted and unscripted, 2023's Fremantle productions include darkly comedic drama *Totally Completely Fine*, filming on a second season of the acclaimed and awarded *Heartbreak High* plus a new era for *Grand Designs Australia* and *Restoration Australia* alongside the return of the hit children's series *The PM's Daughter* and *Rock Island Mysteries*.

Fremantle Australia is a key player in Fremantle's global entertainment powerhouse. With an outstanding international network of production teams, companies and labels, Fremantle is a leader in all genres from landmark dramas, game shows and epic entertainment to beautiful documentaries and the inspirational lifestyle shows you see play out on every platform, channel and screen around the world.

Truce Films

Truce Films is a Melbourne based production company working across commercial and creative production. They have a slate of projects across film, TV, and documentary. The team at Truce have won at Tropfest, Flickerfest, the AACTAs and a Cannes Palme d'Or. Their work has screened at Sundance, SXSW, Cairo, Santa Barbara, Palm Springs, MIFF, SFF and many more.

#inclusivelymade

Fremantle Australia and Truce Films partnered with Bus Stop Films, a disability led filmmaking organisation, to provide consultancy for *This Is Going Be Big*.

Bus Stop Films has been in operation since 2009, teaching adults with disabilities and others from marginalised communities film studies. BSF uses filmmaking and the film industry to change community attitudes globally around the rights and contribution to society of people with disability.

The BSF guiding principles focused on authentic representation in an inclusive filmmaking process and beyond into the campaign for launching the documentary.

The plan also included the production team attending Bus Stop's Inclusion in Action workshop and providing a training attachment with the camera department for a BSF Accessible Film Studies Program student.

In May 2023, *This Is Going To Be Big* received the Inclusively Made certification, in recognition of the fully inclusive approach to the production. Inclusively Made was founded by BSF and Taste Creative who have been working together since their inception, combining more than 20 years of filmmaking and commercial production experience as global leaders in inclusive filmmaking.

Thanks

The creators, cast and crew of both *The Time Travelling Trio* musical and *This Is Going To Be Big* thank John Farnham for being a legend!

Special thanks also to Gaynor Wheatley for her support and encouragement.

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This film was created inclusively with people living with disability





NETFLIX

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