

*Australian Film Finance Corporation
G.O. Films
and Film Victoria
present*

THE WOGBOY

*Directed by Aleksis Vellis
Produced by John Brousek and Nick Giannopoulos
Written by Nick Giannopoulos and Chris Anastassiades*

with

Nick Giannopoulos

Lucy Bell

Vince Colosimo

Geraldine Turner

Abi Tucker

PRINCIPAL CREW

<i>Director</i>	ALEKSI VELLIS
<i>Producers</i>	JOHN BROUSEK NICK GIANNOPOULOS
<i>Writers</i>	NICK GIANNOPOULOS CHRIS ANASTASSIADES
<i>Director of Photography</i>	ROGER LANSER
<i>Editor</i>	SURESH AYYAR
<i>Production Designer</i>	BERNADETTE WYNACK
<i>Costume Designer</i>	PAUL WARREN

CAST

Steve	NICK GIANNOPOULOS
Celia	LUCY BELL
Frank	VINCE COLOSIMO
Raelene Beagle-Thorpe	GERALDINE TURNER
Annie	ABI TUCKER
Dominic	JOHN BARRESI
Theo	TONY NIKOLAKOPOULOS
Nathan	STEPHEN CURRY
Derryn	DERRYN HINCH
Tran	HUNG LE
Van	TRENT HUEN
Bazza	PETER HOSKING
Shazza	LUCY TAYLOR
Supervisor	KIM GYNGELL
Nick	GEOFF PAINE
Tony	COSTAS KILIAS
Steve's Dad	NICK GIANNOPOULOS
Steve's Mum	NICK GIANNOPOULOS
Old Lady	IRINI PAPPAS
Old Man	EDWIN PANG
Redhead Kid #1	MITCHELL FAIRLIE
Guy	MARK WICKHAM
Mario	VINCE D'AMICO
Fulvio	PETER STEFANOU
Nightclub Girl	NIA GIANNOPOULOS
Girl in Street	GEORGIE SHEW
Girl #2	MARY INACIO
Greek Priest	ALEX ANTHOPOULOS
Pietro	ROBERT RABIAH
Nightclub DJ	ANDY RAMANAUSKAS
Norwegian Girl	NATASHA WEBER
Engineer	JAMES FREMANTLE

Massimo	LUIGU VILLANI
Chef	ROBERT FORZA
Nightclub Guard	PETER NIKOLAKOPOULOS
Reporter	DINO MARNIKA
Sergeant	STEPHEN HALL
Priest	GERRY CONNOLLY
Clayton	GLEN MELDRUM
Brianna	MOLLY McCAFFNEY
Andy	ROBERT RATTI
Mr. Walker	CHARLES TINGWELL
Building Security	ADAM BATT
Cleavage Woman	CATHERINE THOMPSON
Redhead Kid #2	DANIEL ROATH
Redhead Kid #3	HAYDN HARVEY
Opera Singer	ANNA LEE ROBINSON
Businessman	JAMES KLAVIN
Mrs. Walker	DIANA LEE
Taki	PETER PAPOYTHIS
Rally Dignitary #1	GINO MUNARI
Rally Dignitary #2	KIM PETALAS
Rally Boom Operator	DAMIEN ATHERTON
PA #1	KERRI LEE
PA #2	DANIELLE WRIGHT
Stunt Doubles	RUSSELL ALLAN LANCE ANDERSON BRETT ANDERSON DAVIN TAYLOR GRAHAM JAHNE
Steve's Stand-in	NICHOLAS ARIDAS

CREW

Director	ALEKSI VELLIS
Producers	JOHN BROUSEK NICK GIANNOPOULOS
Screenplay	NICK GIANNOPOULOS CHRIS ANASTASSIADES
Associate Producers	NANETTE FOX KAY DYSON
Executive Producer	ROGER ROTHFIELD
Director of Photography	ROGER LANSER
Editor	SURESH AYYAR
Production Designer	BERNADETTE WYNACK
Costume Designer	PAUL WARREN
Line Producer	ADRIENNE READ
Production Manager	VANESSA BROWN
Script Supervisor	CARMEL TORCASIO
First Assistant Director	JAMIE CROOKS
Second Assistant Director	NATHAN CROFT
Third Assistant Director	CLINTON FISHER
Location Manager	ALISTAIR REILLY
Casting	NANETTE FOX, KAY DYSON
Additional Casting	MULLINARS CASTING, KELLY O'SHEA
Extras Casting	JO RIPPON
Additional Extras Casting	JENNY LONCARIC
Production Co-ordinator	CLARE SHERVINGTON
Production Accountant	TRUDY TALBOT
Production Secretary	ANGIE BLACK
Production Runner	SANDRA SCIBBERAS
Focus Puller	DERRY FIELDS
Clapper Loader	ADAM HAWDEN
Video Split Operator	BETH KOCHENDORFER
Assistant Editor	STRUTTS PSYRIDIS

Sound Recordist	GARY WILKINS
Boom Operator	ROB DAWSON
Sound Attachment	MATTHEW TAYLOR
Gaffer	KEN PETTIGREW
Best Boy	DARRYN FOX
3 rd Electrics	MICHAEL BAKER
4 th Electrics	MARK NEWHAM
Key Grip	RICHARD ALLARDICE
Grip	TRAVIS WALKER
Unit Managers	ANDY PAPPAS NINO NERIN
Unit Assistant / Driver	SHANE DETMAN
Drivers	PETER KOTSOPOULOS JOHN WORTELBOER
Art Director	DARYL MILLS
Props Buyer	MONICA COGAN
Set Dresser	ANDREW MITCHELL
Art Dept. Co-ordinator	FRIDA COHEN
Standby Props	BRIAN LANG
Action Vehicle Co-ordinator	ROB McLEOD
Art Department Runner	GINA RICHARDSON-JONES
Story Board Artist	MARIA PENNER
Costume Co-ordinator	ROBYN BUNTING
Costume Assistant	LINNET GOOD
Costume Standby	JAQUI GOWER
Make-up / Hair Supervisor	JOSIE PEREZ
Make-up / Hair Artist	HELEN MAGELAKI
Catering	REAL TO REEL - JENNY STOCKLEY
Publicist	MARIEL BEROS
Stills Photographer	SKIP WATKINS
Safety Supervisor	TOM COLTRINE
Safety Report Writer	GEORGE NOVAK
Stunt Co-ordinator	ZEV ELEFThERIOU
Nurse	CLARE JOHNSON

Camera Equipment	PANAVISION AUSTRALIA
Completion Guarantor	F.A.C.B.
Film Stock	KODAK
Insurance	H.W. WOOD
Laboratory	CINEVEX
Legal	NINA STEVESON AND ASSOCIATES
Sound Post	PHILM SOUND

THE WOG BOY

LOG LINE

A comedy about love, politics, sex, religion, culture, cars and pizza. But not in that order.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Steve liked Celia from the moment they met. But following a clash with her boss, Raelene Beagle-Thorpe, Minister for Employment, he finds himself on national television, branded Australia's biggest dole bludger. Now Steve has to prove to Celia, to himself and to the whole country, that there's more to him than meets the eye.

And with a little help from his friends, he just might do it. As long as he can keep his best friend Frank away from Annie, Celia's little sister...*and* protect Frank's cousin Dom, from Tony, the insane local crime lord to whom Dom owes money...*and* prevent Theo, an enterprising neighbor, from throwing himself in front of a car to collect the insurance...*and* stop Frank's dad Mario from sustaining injury while he tries to body slam pizza dough.

Mate, there's just got to be an easier way to meet chicks.

The Wogboy. A comedy about love, politics, sex, religion, culture cars and pizza. But not in that order.

THE WOGBOY

FULL SYNOPSIS

For Steve, survival is all about doing favours...

In his close-knit, ethnically diverse community, there's a long-standing barter system, in which helping neighbors and solving their problems is just as important as money. And Steve, an unemployed Australian guy of Greek heritage, is master of the game.

Whether he's arranging the bomboniere for someone's cousin's wedding, or helping make sense of the local social security office, Steve is always in the middle of a deal. Within his community, he's achieved legendary status as 'Mr. Fix-it'. Everyone knows that when the going gets tough, you get Steve.

Being a local hero does have its drawbacks, though. Steve hasn't held a steady job in years and somewhere along the way has lost any ambition he once might have had. His world revolves around his friends, his neighborhood and the '69 Valiant Regal that he's re-built from scratch. Life appears unlikely to change, until the day he smashes into the ministerial limo of Raelene Beagle-Thorpe, Minister for Employment - an unscrupulous politician determined to be the country's next Prime Minister.

Brushed aside by the Minister's coolly efficient assistant, Celia, and furious at the damage sustained by his beloved Valiant Regal, Steve exacts revenge and sends them a bill for repairs. Big mistake.

Within days, he finds himself the victim of a media slur campaign in which he is branded 'Australia's Biggest Dole Bludger' on national television. With his unemployment benefits cancelled and his reputation in tatters, he demands to be heard on *24 Hours*, the scurrilous current affairs program that broke the story. Anticipating a ratings bonanza, the show agrees but is dumbfounded when Steve manages to turn the public's opinion in his favor. Overnight he becomes the hero of everyone who's ever received a rough deal. He's doing radio talk-back, appearing on life-style programs and attending grand openings of Fish and Chip shops. The 'Wogboy' has arrived. As if that's

not enough, he also has to contend with his best-friend Frank - a guy with a libido to shame Casanova - pursuing Celia's amorous little sister Annie; a situation neither Steve nor Celia are thrilled about. What's a guy to do?

But change is in the air. Never one to miss an opportunity, Raelene Beagle-Thorpe jumps on Steve's bandwagon by offering him a job as her 'special advisor' during a carefully orchestrated television appearance on national TV. How can he refuse? He accepts and finds himself working with Celia, who has been charged with revamping his image in keeping with his new role as spokesman for Raelene's 'revolutionary' employment policy.

Although they appear opposites in every way - he is content to drift aimlessly, 'hanging' with his friends and reveling in the fact that he's a 'wog', whilst she is ambitious, a workaholic, and has no social life - Steve and Celia quickly discover a mutual attraction. Each offers something the other lacks. For the first time, Celia finds herself having fun, whilst Steve realizes that without a purpose, life is pretty pointless. With her help he emerges as a politically astute go-getter, who quickly wins the confidence of everyone he encounters.

Then Celia's co-worker, Nathan, insanely jealous of their relationship, reveals policy details to Steve of which even Celia is unaware. Steve learns that Raelene's policy will have a disastrous effect on the unemployed and sees red. He confronts Celia, whom he assumes has been 'stringing him along' and quits; vowing to expose Raelene's insidious plans.

However, before he can act, Raelene's investigators unearth a video-tape that implicates him in a drug scandal. Steve finds himself on the wrong side of the law, unable to show his face in public for fear of being arrested.

With nowhere else to turn, he must call upon all the resources of his local community to clear his name, expose Raelene's deception and win the respect of the woman he loves.

THE WOGBOY

Production Information

PREFACE

In the early 1950's a visitor to Melbourne, or any city in Australia, seeking culinary stimulation would have been sorely disappointed. Steak and two veg, shepherd's pie or a good solid roast; these were standard menu items. As for ordering a latte, expresso, macchiato or cappuccino, forget it!

Fast track to the '90's and Melbourne has emerged as the gourmet capital of Australia with restaurants of every conceivable nationality catering to a spoilt population. Once toddlers were content with milk. These days they're weaned on 'baby-cinos'. In 40 years Australia has become one of the most cosmopolitan and culturally diverse societies to be found anywhere in the world, largely due to one factor - WOGS. WOGS of every nationality; Greek, Italian, Lebanese, Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian, Chinese, Polish, Turkish, Irish, Croatian, Tibetan. You name it and Australia probably has it - and has thrived as a result.

Since the early 1950's immigration was perceived as a 'sensitive' topic. The negatives - rarely the positives - were expounded in a host of well-intentioned, but generally downbeat plays, television dramas and features, which portrayed migrants as struggling battlers left with the fuzzy end of the lollipop. Being a migrant was rarely easy - nor was it a Greek tragedy. But in recognizing the inherent humor of the migrant experience writer/comedian/actor/producer Nick Giannopoulos has changed the face of Australian comedy.

One of the first films to humorously explore the viewpoint of a foreigner 'down under' was *They're A Weird Mob*, made in the late sixties and penned by an Anglo-Saxon under the Italian-sounding pseudonym of 'Nino Calotto'. However, unlike that film, *The Wogboy* and all of Giannopoulos' previous work come directly from someone who has

lived the experience. *The Wogboy* is a 100% homegrown Australian comedy with a cast that, multi-culturally speaking, are representative of the broader community.

Since his first stage show, the phenomenally successful *Wogs Out Of Work* which ran from 1987 until 1990, followed by his hit television series, *Acropolis Now*, to his subsequent stage productions *Wog-A-Rama* and *Wogboys*, Giannopoulos has been committed to emphasizing the positives of the migrant experience. "I think if *Wogs Out Of Work* had been another tearjerker, another 'poor immigrant' story, nobody would have come, because people are sick of those stories," he explained. "More importantly, we were tired of seeing people of first or second generation non-Anglo Saxon origin treated as the downtrodden; I never wanted to do that. I've always wanted to refer to the migrant experience as positive and as something that's actually invigorated the country."

The Wogboy is a classic 'fish-out-of-water' romantic comedy about Steve, a regular guy who, to some extent, has withdrawn from society; content to live in his local community amongst his friends and neighbors who affectionately consider him their 'Mr. Fix-It'. Through a chance encounter with Raelene Beagle-Thorpe, Minister of Employment and her coolly efficient assistant, Celia, Steve finds himself on national television billed as Australia's biggest dole bludger. However, things go awry when he turns the tables on his accusers, and is swept to iconic status as 'The Wogboy'. The Minister then tries to use his popularity to her political advantage, as Steve and Celia struggle against falling in love. Suddenly, Steve is forced to deal with the outside world and in the process becomes a person committed to a better society at large rather than just a microcosm.

No one is better equipped to tell this tale than Nick Giannopoulos. As the first generation son of Greek immigrants who settled in Melbourne around 1960, Giannopoulos, although born in Australia, didn't learn to speak English until he was six. "There's enormous benefits in being first generation," he reflected, "but I also think that you have a somewhat harder time than second or third generation, where a certain amount of assimilation has taken place. The rewards are great, but you're also the cultural torch bearer with enormous expectations placed upon you to keep the culture alive."

"To a degree this is Nick's story," reflected John Brousek, who in conjunction with Giannopoulos, is producing *The Wogboy*. "Nick was raised as a Greek boy in a very Greek neighborhood. He chose to be an actor but because of his ethnic background, found some resistance which he refused to accept. Now, because of his professional success, he is very much a celebrity. He knows both sides of the fence and can really understand where Steve came from and is going to."

"The film is largely about identity," observed Giannopoulos. "Who we are as Australians as we approach the millennium. We have a guy who's not sure what he is, so he decides to call himself a 'wog'. He can't claim to be Greek, as he doesn't live in Greece - he was born in Australia. Yet, he doesn't feel right about calling himself an 'Australian' because he's never really felt accepted as one. So I guess that ultimately Steve is posing the question, 'Am I as Australian as you?' And the answer is, 'Yes, of course he is - he's as Australian as anybody else.'

The migrant experience is familiar to many of the key players behind *The Wogboy*. Director, Aleksis Vellis, co-writer Chris Anastassiades and actors Vince Colosimo and John Barresi are all first generation Australians, whose parents chose to make Australia their home in the late 1950's. Producer, John Brousek's father was Czechoslovakian; leading lady, Lucy Bell is the daughter of Polish-born actor Anna Volska and actor Hung Le was born in Vietnam. Delve into the family history of most Australians and you will find a cultural melting pot.

Giannopoulos first toyed with the idea of bringing his humor to a wider audience in 1994. With long-time writing partner, Chris Anastassiades, he commenced work on the first draft of what eventually evolved as the screenplay for *The Wogboy*.

Enterprising from the first, Giannopoulos and Anastassiades commenced their writing partnership at the age of seven with a James Bond spoof. "We staged it and charged 10 cents a ticket - well I charged 10 cents a ticket," laughed Giannopoulos. "It was really obvious from early on that I was going to be the producer! Only one person came so we made 5 cents each. We knew then that there was only one way to go and that was up. We made films together when we were fourteen - super 8 and 16 - and when we were about fifteen, our parents gave us the money to make a sort of 'noirish' detective thriller which

we shot in the basement of Swinburne Uni. All we would do was sit around and discuss our favorite films, than go hire cameras and shoot. It was crazy. So we started making pictures together from the very start. It was really all we both ever dreamed of doing.”

Once the pair had finished their first draft, they contacted John Brousek - a respected writer/producer with whom Anastassiades had previously worked - to assist in determining the financial outlay required to mount the production. Possessing a business background combined with an innate knowledge of the film industry, it was soon apparent that Brousek was the best person to help get the project off the ground, so he joined Giannopoulos in the role of producer.

Director, Aleksis Vellis, came on-board soon after. Long regarded as one of the country’s most promising young directors, Vellis - who incidentally went to the same primary school at as Giannopoulos and Anastassiades - was always their number one choice as director. “We’d all known each other for ten years,” explained Giannopoulos, “and had been toying with the idea of working together since 1990, so it was always on the back-burner. Aleksis has a great ability to understand what an audience needs to see in order to make sense of a story visually. Once Chris and I heard that he was available, we had no hesitation in calling and saying, ‘hey, the time has come to do what we’ve always wanted to do - make a picture together!’”

“The project immediately appealed,” recalled Vellis. “I was a fan of Nick’s stage shows and impressed with him as a performer, with his fast and loose kind of style and incredible timing. I’m also a great admirer of Chris’ work. He’s a terrific writer and if required can watch a rehearsal and re-write a scene quickly with a minimum of fuss. I found their script extremely funny and liked the fact that it contained lots of broad humor and several sight gags - which for an Australian film is quite rare. Many people are too nervous to attempt broad humor, whereas in this case the broad humor was bold, brash and up-front. It was easy to see it was going to make an impact, particularly with the style Nick brings to his performances. We met to discuss the possibilities and I just remember going home that night and thinking, ‘this is going to be something really special.’

As with all involved, Vellis applauded Giannopoulos' knack of raising the issue of cultural identity with humor. "Even in the days of ancient Greece you had comedies that would bridge the gap between political parties, between the sexes," he mused, "and here we're doing it between ethnic minorities; that's been the major strength of Nick's work over the years. It's good for people to be able to laugh at themselves - it's very endearing." Brousek concurred. "Comedy is a great way in which to present any social scenario in a non-confronting way, yet still open people's eyes. If you're too dogmatic, they turn-off, but if a belief contrary to your own is presented satirically, you sometimes absorb it before your defenses are raised. It's an excellent means of penetrating people's pre-conceptions."

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With funding derived from the Australian Film Finance Corporation in association with G.O. Films and Film Victoria, production on *The Wogboy* commenced in Melbourne on June 4, 1999 concluding six weeks later on July 16. 20th Century Fox and Beyond Films will distribute domestically and Beyond Films will distribute internationally.

A CAST OF CHARACTERS

“Steve’s basically a guy who expected to follow in his father’s footsteps,” explained his alter-ego, Nick Giannopoulos, “but after his father’s business closes, he’s at a loose end - doing favors and errands for people in his neighborhood who give him a little money in return for his help. When he’s forced into action following an encounter with Raelene Beagle-Thorpe, it’s a re-awakening. He realizes that in life, you do need a purpose and he also meets the girl of his dreams - Raelene’s assistant, Celia - a strong, modern woman who helps him rediscover his values. In turn, he makes her laugh and inspires her to find time for a personal life.”

“Celia is like Steve in that she also leads a rather isolated existence,” observed John Brousek. To a degree she lives in an ivory tower, but needs to be made aware of how the ‘other half’ live as she advises a politician. She continually makes decisions that effect a lot of people without actually having any understanding of those people. So she meets Steve halfway. Superficially, Steve and Celia are poles apart. Yet, in many regards they’re very similar - that’s the essence of their love story.”

The vivacious Lucy Bell, familiar to audiences through her lead role in the television drama, *Murder Call*, was cast as Celia. “Every producer has a wish list,” enthused Giannopoulos, “and Lucy was at the top of my mine. When we met, she told me how much she’d enjoyed our script. I was ecstatic, as I consider her to be a very fine actor. She exudes charm, elegance and style without having to utter a word. Some say that casting is 50% of the battle, but I’d say it’s more. She’s a natural for the part.” Vellis agreed. “I saw a casting tape on Lucy and just flipped. She has the ability to convey what she’s thinking even when there’s no dialogue. She also has an incredible femininity without being overtly sexual that is spot-on for Celia.”

With a background largely in drama, Bell relished the opportunity of switching to comedy, noting, “Although the vibe is different comedy can still be quite serious, as you still have to find the emotional truth.” Working with Giannopoulos also proved a happy experience. “From the first audition, Nick was ready to play and take risks. He was very open to other people’s ideas, which was great, as there’s always that fear, when you’re

working with a producer/writer/actor, that they might say 'I hired you, so this is the way you're going to play it!'"

The part of Frank, lovable womanizer and Steve's best friend, was always written with actor Vince Colosimo in mind. Having worked on stage with Giannopoulos throughout the years, both shared a terrific rapport, which had its origins thirteen years earlier when they were drama students at Victorian College of the Arts. "What motivates Frank is his love for life and women," said Colosimo. "He's very loyal friend, and the closest thing that Steve has to a brother, but he's also quite eccentric. He likes to be the centre of attention and without even trying. He's one of those guys that other men look at and go, 'wow - I'd like to be like him' and women either love or hate - but mostly love. Ultimately, he's afraid of commitment, but then so are a lot of people."

"Frank's character is also a good counterpoint for Steve," commented Vellis. "Steve is far more sensitive in his relationships with women, whereas Frank chases girls continually. It's how he measures his success in life; it's his one and only purpose!"

Frank meets his match in the shape of Celia's younger sister, Annie played by Sydney actor Abi Tucker. Giannopoulos first saw Tucker in the ABC television drama, *Wildside*, and subsequently invited her to audition. "She was so on the money, it was uncanny," recalled Brousek of Tucker's first screen test. "To be a fairly sexually active character, like Annie, yet not be viewed in a derogatory sense is a trick in itself, which Abi manages effortlessly. Annie sees no need to apologize for having a sexual appetite - same as any guy - so that's why she's Frank's perfect match. However, she acts as she does because she's 'together' whereas Frank's doing it because he's 'screwed-up.'" Vellis agreed. "Annie is empowered by her own sexuality; she personifies 'girl power'. Ten or fifteen years ago she would have been categorized as a bimbo, but times have changed. In some ways she's the most well-adjusted character in the film."

The *Wizard of Oz* had the Wicked Witch of the West. *The Wogboy* has Raelene Beagle-Thorpe, an unscrupulous politician who makes Margaret Thatcher look like Julie Andrews. An encounter with Steve's Valiant Regal ruffles the Beagle-Thorpe feathers, causing her to exact the ultimate revenge - public humiliation on the ratings-hungry current affairs program - *24 Hours*. Steve's face is beamed into TV sets across the

country as Australia's biggest dole bludger; just the sort of no-good loser that the honorable Raelene, as Minister for Employment, is trying to eliminate. But Raelene has humiliated the wrong man. Steve appears on the show and turns the tide of public opinion. Suddenly he's the hero of the underprivileged and under-appreciated. The Wogboy has arrived. Changing tactics, Raelene publicly invites him to join her crusade against unemployment. With little choice, he accepts, initially unaware that he's simply another pawn in her amoral quest for power.

"Raelene's probably a combination of two or three politicians who have been in the news of late," conceded Giannopoulos, "but more importantly she's a person motivated by selfish needs, the embodiment of the old saying that 'power corrupts'. When you become close to such a powerful position as Prime Minister, the media can tend to herald you as the new 'messiah' to the extent that you start to believe your own publicity. In the process you tend to forget why you first entered politics and that's what has happened to Raelene. I've seen it happen to politicians in the past, and it's something I find incredibly dangerous. Her character could have been a man as much as a woman, but Chris and I wanted to explore the way she exploits the mother/daughter aspect in her relationship with Celia. It enabled us to give both characters greater depth and also added weight to Celia's eventual realization that Raelene has manipulated her in the same way that she's manipulated Steve."

Actor, singer and Australia's premiere star of musical comedy, Geraldine Turner, was eventually cast as Beagle-Thorpe. "Geraldine auditioned and just blew us away," said Giannopoulos. We were very aware of her work, but the thing that struck us was her presence. Her 'Raelene' is a woman you can believe came from 'the farm' and learnt the ways of the city, working her way to the top until she eventually surpassed her male competitors. She's perceived as 'establishment' but when compared to the businessmen in the film who represent 'old money' it becomes obvious that she's not, as she's still trying to convince these people that she's one of them."

Every group of friends has one member who's a thorn in the side and for Steve and Frank, it's Frank's cousin Dominic, a pharmacist and try-hard loser who owes money to the local crime lord; a problem he tries to solve by manufacturing 'speed'. Comedian

John Barresi, who appeared in the national tour of *Wogboys*, brings Dominic to life with just the right mix of sleaze and desperation. Then there's Tran and Van, two Vietnamese guys who consider Frank their guru when it comes to 'pulling chicks', played respectively by comedian Hung Le who toured in *Wog-A-Rama* and actor Trent Huen.

With over sixty parts, casting was crucial, particularly for the cameo roles. Television/radio icon, Derryn Hinch shows his sense of humor by appearing as the host of the current affairs program, *24 Hours* - the show that places Steve under public scrutiny. Veteran actor, Bud Tingwell, brings his innate style to the role of Walker, an influential businessman courted by Raelene Beagle-Thorpe. Comedian Gerry Connolly makes an unforgettable priest, whilst fellow-comedian Kim Gyngall plays the social security officer from hell - familiar to anyone who's ever nervously applied for unemployment benefits...!

THE PRODUCTION

An exceptional number of locations - approximately 28 - were incorporated within the shooting schedule for *The Wogboy*, at times creating a logistical nightmare - particularly given the size of the cast. Filming scenes scripted for summer during winter in Melbourne - a city notorious for having four seasons in one day - could also have proved disastrous, but luckily the rain and clouds mostly stayed away. Regardless, weather continuity still presented cinematographer, Roger Lanser, with a challenge. "The trick," he said, "is to try to make something that you shot at 7am in the morning and finished at 6pm at night, look as though it was filmed on the same day within a time-frame of 30 seconds." To further ensure an even grade was maintained, Lanser opted for just two film stocks - Kodak Vision 500 and 200T.

To contrast Steve's world with that of Celia and Raelene Beagle-Thorpe's, two distinct environments were orchestrated. "The look is dual," explained production designer, Bernadette Wynack. "Steve's world is very warm and colorful with the charm that old-fashioned suburbs in big cities can sometimes exude. By contrast, Raelene's surroundings are comprised of glass and other hard surfaces - very impersonal - with a strong use of cold blues and greys.

Visually, it was decided to adopt a clean, direct camera style as the first priority was to tell the central-story, rather than dazzling the audience with sweeping tracking shots. "It's very easy to include a lot of dramatic camerawork," opined Aleksis Vellis, "but in some ways it can clutter a comedy." Roger Lanser agreed, adding, "I'm always distracted when the cinematography overwhelms the story, as it really should serve to enhance and embellish."

Yarraville, in Melbourne's western suburbs, was used extensively for interior and exterior scenes depicting Steve's locale. The crew spent a week filming in Yarraville's main street and also sourced locations in the area which doubled for Steve's house, his father's former shoe shop, Mario's Pizzeria and Dominic's Pharmacy.

During the course of the story, we learn that Steve's father had owned a shoe shop which Steve had expected to eventually inherit. Progress and the arrival of huge

shopping centres had forced the business to close; a scenario echoed by the location chosen to represent the store via a flashback sequence. Ironically, the store selected was almost perfectly preserved from the 1960's "The gorgeous old man who owned the shop, told us that in the days when he was an apprentice cobbler, there were seventeen shoemakers in the main street of Yarraville," recounted Bernadette Wynack. "but sadly he was the last cobbler in the street and he'd actually sold the premises the week before we filmed there, so now there won't be any."

Other key locations included Chaser's Nightclub in South Yarra, which became the nightspot favored by Steve, Frank and their friends and the stately Windsor Hotel where Steve's first introduction to the movers and shakers of big business was shot. The Melbourne Stock Exchange had the dubious honor of officiating as the headquarters for Raelene's ministry and ABC Television Studios were used for the scenes depicting *24 Hours*.

"Ninety per cent of Australian Greeks," observed Vellis, "are fast talking, fun-loving and very, very emotional. When people bump into their cars, they don't just say, 'excuse me, you hit my car,' they freak-out. There's a level of hot-headedness which rather than being scary is actually very funny - and Steve's no exception."

When one of the tail-lights on Steve's beloved Valiant Regal is killed by an encounter with Raelene Beagle-Thorpe's limousine, he sees red. Beagle-Thorpe sees an insignificant 'dole bludger' whom she thinks she can obliterate via public humiliation. Fat chance. Nevertheless, finding a car worthy of Steve's affection was a serious task only solved when the art department stumbled across a young architect who, bored with his profession, had become a mechanic. His first project was transforming a wrecked 1969 Valiant Regal into the beautiful vehicle 'owned' by Steve.

Just as finding the right car for Steve was no mean effort, producing the collectibles closest to Frank's heart - his Polaroid's of past lovers, post-coitus - also presented a challenge. With a sexual history that would have left most men shriveled wrecks begging for Viagra, more than a few Polaroid's were required. Every time a female extra strolled on-set that they were commandeered by the art department and made to lie on the ground

- on Frank's sheets - whilst they were snapped. Needless to say, the required 'dazed' expression, called for little acting.

Given the film's broad humor, it would have been all too easy to dress the characters as caricatures, but that was never an option. "The basic style," explained costume designer Paul Warren, "was always focused on the leads and they needed to have mass appeal. The bigger looks were reserved for the people surrounding them, so we adopted a more exaggerated appearance for say, Frank and Dominic, whilst keeping Steve fairly neutral. Nick had a lot of input into Steve's wardrobe and we decided that because he was such a strong character, he should have a simple, contemporary style - adopting the 'less is more' theory. Celia's wardrobe softens as her relationship with Steve progresses. She needed to exude strength, but in a subtle way - no 'Dynasty' style shoulder pads - so we opted for a classical look in light shades. With Raelene we also steered away from the shoulder pad trap and if anything, emphasized her cleavage to accentuate her self-confidence."

A bold departure from many Australian movies that have perpetuated the myth of the bronzed Aussie adrift in the outback, *The Wogboy* is a very modern - and kangaroo free - depiction of Australia. From the start, the film's key players - Giannopoulos, Anastassiades, Brousek and Vellis - were convinced that *The Wogboy* would have international appeal, particularly as the key themes of racial harmony and social isolation were applicable to any major city. After all, human nature is universal.

"For international audiences accustomed to Australian films like *Crocodile Dundee*, it's certainly different," mused Giannopoulos. It's a contemporary, urban comedy that reveals a segment of our society that not too many Australian films have focused upon to the same degree. It's not perpetuating the Australian myth - it's actually turning the myth on its head. We have two Vietnamese characters who are as 'ocker' as anybody, which as Australians, we encounter every day. We continually meet people from a variety of backgrounds who are completely Australian, but I don't think that international audiences are accustomed to viewing us in those terms just yet. I'd love the world to regard Australia as a country that has shown an enormous amount of tolerance to migrants and has subsequently developed a unique community of people. When I travel overseas,

people assume that I'm Greek because I look Greek. But when I speak they instantly realize that I'm Australian, and once they've spent time with me they generally say, 'You're such a typical Aussie!'. And for me, there's no greater compliment."

ABOUT THE CAST

NICK GIANNOPOULOS (Steve) & (Co-Writer/Producer)

Undoubtedly one of Australia's most successful and popular entertainers, Giannopoulos has spent the last twelve years honing his skills on four fronts - as a performer, writer, director and producer.

On graduating from Victorian College of the Arts in 1985, Giannopoulos spent most of the following year in search of work. This period inspired him to devise and co-write the stage revue, *Wogs Out Of Work*, which ran for over three years, breaking box office records.

The show's phenomenal success led to the creation of the hit TV sitcom, *Acropolis Now*. Giannopoulos co-devised and co-wrote the program which ran for five seasons. As a sequel, he co-produced and performed in *Acropolis Now - Live On Stage* which toured nationally to capacity houses for eight months.

Giannopoulos' next production was *Wog-a-rama*, where he took the 'wog' theme a step further by exploring the discrimination faced by the Aboriginal community and the new 'wogs', The Vietnamese. The show, co-written, directed and co-produced by Giannopoulos, was another major theatrical success, running for eight months initially before embarking on a national tour that again broke box-office records around the country. In 1996, he launched *Wogboys* - to full houses from the first performance. Giannopoulos wrote, directed, produced and starred in *Wogboys*, which toured nationally throughout '97 and '98, surpassing the box-office records set by his previous shows.

1998 also saw Giannopoulos honored with Australia's highest comic accolade - the 'Mo Award' for 'Comedy Performer of the Year'.

LUCY BELL (Celia)

Having entered the world in Stratford-Upon-Avon, the birthplace of William Shakespeare, it is hardly surprising that Bell chose to become an actor. Following her family's return to Australia, her childhood was spent in Sydney, where she attended National Institute of Dramatic Art in the early nineties.

An audience favorite through her lead role in the top-rating television series, *Murder Call*, Bell has also starred in several other key TV shows including *Wildside*, *Water Rats*, *G.P.*, *Snowy* and *A Country Practice*.

Acknowledged as a fine theatre actor of considerable range, Bell has performed in a host of critically acclaimed plays, including *The Game Of Love And Chance* (for New England Theatre Co.) and Melbourne Theatre Company's production of *For Julia*. Other stage credits include *Darling Oscar* and *As You Like It* (for Sydney Theatre Company) *Pericles* and *Twelfth Night* (for Bell Shakespeare), *Blue Murder* and *Scenes From An Execution* (for Belvoir Street Theatre) and the role of 'Lizzie Gael' in director John O'Hare's production of *Wolf Lullaby*, staged at Sydney's Griffin Theatre.

The Wogboy is by no means Bell's first foray into feature films. One of her early big-screen roles was in director Bob Ellis' whimsical drama, *The Nostradamus Kid*, quickly followed by the lead in *Mary McKillop*. She also appeared in *Thank God He Met Lizzie*, directed by Cherie Nowlan, and alongside Cate Blanchett and Ralph Fiennes in Gillian Armstrong's adaptation of *Oscar and Lucinda*, based on the novel by Peter Carey. Bell will soon be seen in director Bruce Beresford's docu-drama *Sydney - Story Of A City*.

VINCE COLOSIMO (Frank)

Since graduating from Victorian College of the Arts in 1987, Colosimo has established himself as a sought-after actor. Whilst still a teenager, his talent was evident following star turns in the features *Street Hero* and *Moving Out*. For the former, he received an AFI nomination for 'Best Actor' and for *Moving Out* was voted 'Best New Talent' by the Sydney Film Critics' Circle.

In the years since, Colosimo has amassed a lengthy list of theatrical and television credits and also toured alongside Nick Giannopoulos in *Wog-a-rama* and *Wog Boys*, displaying his flair for comedy.

Along with a stint as a cast-member on the television comedy, *All The Way*, Colosimo has appeared in *Law Of The Land*, *Sins-Sloth*, *A Country Practice*, *Good Guys Bad Guys* and *Halifax fp*.

He has also worked extensively on stage and has starred in several Melbourne Theatre Company productions; *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Summer Of The Aliens*, *Othello*, *A View From The Bridge* and *The Club*. Additional theatre credits include *Romeo and Juliet* for director Glenn Elston, Aubrey Mellor's production of *Burning Time*, staged at Melbourne's Playbox Theatre and *Rose Tattoo* for State Theatre Co. of South Australia.

Movie-goers will next see Colosimo portray a drug-dealer in director Andrew Dominik's anticipated debut feature, *Chopper*.

GERALDINE TURNER (Raelene Beagle-Thorpe)

Described by Nick Giannopoulos as 'a national treasure', Turner is Australia's premiere star of musical comedy, as well as a dramatic actor of repute.

Turner has taken center stage in over 40 major theatrical productions, appeared regularly on television as an actor and singer, released several albums and starred in the features *Break of Day*, *Summerfield* and the haunting *Careful*, *He Might Hear You*.

A former member of the Ballet Theatre of Queensland, her professional career began as a child when she appeared on-stage in *Aladdin* and *The Sleeping Princess*. Blessed with a magnificent singing voice - which was fine-tuned with five years classical training

at the Queensland Conservatorium - Turner has worked with practically every major theatrical company in Australia, dazzling audiences with her vocal range and aptitude for both musical comedy and drama. Career highlights include lead roles in *A Toast To Melba*, *Guys and Dolls*, *The Elephant Man*, *Chicago*, *Oliver*, *HMS Pinafore*, *Sweeney Todd*, *La Belle Helene*, *Noel and Gertie*, *Anything Goes*, *A Little Night Music*, *Into The Woods*, *Kismet*, *Mikado*, *Cabaret*, *Grease* and the role of 'Pearl' in the celebrated Melbourne Theatre Company tour of *Summer of the 17th Doll*.

ABI TUCKER (Annie)

High-octane performer, Abi Tucker, brings her natural exuberance to the role of 'Annie' in whom Frank (Vince Colosimo) meets his lustful equal.

Born and raised in Sydney, Tucker's first big break came when she was cast as a member of the long-running teen-television drama, *Heartbreak High*. Following a sojourn in the UK, she returned to Australia and was promptly offered a regular role on ABC Television's gritty police drama, *Wildside*. Tucker has also appeared in the yet-to-be released independent feature, *Snowdrop*.

JOHN BARRESI (Dominic)

Barresi brings a wealth of comic experience to *The Wogboy* as the unfortunate 'Dominic' - a man with the fashion sense of a *Saturday Night Fever* extra.

Barresi has written, directed and performed in his own one-man show, *Eat, Eat And Grow Big* and also wrote and directed *What's Going On?* recently staged at Melbourne's Universal Theatre. In addition to his writing/directing credits, he performs regularly as a stand-up comic at venues in Melbourne and Sydney, has hosted his own radio show and is frequently sought as a voice-over artist.

Barresi previously worked with Nick Giannopoulos on the national tour of *Wogboys*.

ABOUT THE CREW

ALEKSI VELLIS (Director)

Renowned for his visual flair and inventive approach, Vellis graduated with first-class honors from Melbourne's famed Swinburne Film School in the mid-1980's. From that time onwards his skills have been in constant play across a variety of projects ranging from features and documentaries to commercials and music videos.

Co-incidentally, Vellis was raised in the same Melbourne suburb as Nick Giannopoulos and co-writer Chris Anastasiades and even attended the same primary school. His own experiences as the first-generation son of Greek immigrants combined with his directorial talents made him the ideal choice to bring *The Wogboy* to life on the big screen.

His first major film was the acclaimed black comedy/drama, *Nirvana Street Murder*, starring Ben Mendelsohn and Mary Coustas. *The Letter*, a drama/documentary, was released shortly thereafter and has the distinction of being the highest grossing non-theatrical title to be distributed by the Australian Film Institute. He has also made several short films and in 1995 directed the dramatic-comedy feature, *The Life of Harry Dare*.

For television, Vellis has helmed episodes of the ABC contemporary drama, *Raw FM*, the children's series *Genie From Down Under* and the documentary, *Win Some, Lose Some*, which also aired on the ABC. His many commercials have attracted international accolades and he has regularly held lectures for students from *Swinburne Film School (*now part of Victorian College of the Arts).

JOHN BROUSEK (Producer)

Despite an early passion for cinema, fate took Brousek in a different direction when he was posted to the South Coast of NSW as a teacher upon graduating from university. He soon realized that teaching was not for him, but stayed in the country spending the next few years owning and running a variety of businesses until the day director George Ogilvie chose to make a film close-by. Without hesitation, Brousek put his academic

skills aside, drove to the set and offered his services as a laborer - which turned into a six-week assignment as a grip.

Brousek switched career direction and opted to learn the movie business from scratch, working in every department - except wardrobe and make-up! In the mid-eighties he left the Australian Film, Television & Radio School with a Diploma of Producing and served on many productions in roles ranging from location manager to production accountant. For three successive years, he also attended, via invitation, the prestigious Writer/Directors' Summer Workshops at Robert Redford's Sundance Institute in the USA.

For theatre, Brousek has written, directed and produced several plays and has amassed a substantial portfolio of film and television credits, which include the features *Babe 1*, *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* and *Idiot Box*. He was also production consultant for the Jackie Chan films, *First Strike* and *Super Chef* as well as Universal Pictures' tele-movie, *The Ripper*, and has held senior positions with Sydney Theatre Company, Australian Children's Television Foundation and Melbourne Film Office.

Recent producing credits include the television musical program for children, *Let's Bop* and the documentary, *Against Wind & Tide*.

CHRIS ANASTASSIADES (Co-writer)

Anastassiades has often been content to work behind the scenes, but his keen wit and outstanding talent as a writer have been responsible for many an industry success.

For television he has penned scripts for *GP*, *Acropolis Now*, *Lift Off 2*, *Li'l Elvis Jones*, *Shark Bay*, *Round the Twist 3*, *Halfway Across the Galaxy* and *Turn Left* and *The Col'n Carpenter Show*. He has also served as script/story editor on many other shows from the popular TV series' *Flying Doctors*, *Acropolis Now (Series 3,4, & 5)* and *Shark Bay* to the hilarious short feature, *Five Easy Pizzas*.

For theatre he has co-written *Legends*, *Acropolis Now Live*, *Lift Off Live* and *Effie Exposed*, the hilarious one-woman show for comedienne Mary Coustas, which enjoyed a sell-out season for eight months.

The screenplay for *The Wogboy*, written in conjunction with Nick Giannopoulos, is the latest collaboration in a friendship that had its genesis when both were primary school students in the early seventies. Anastassiades currently has several feature scripts in development including *Yolngu Boy*.

ROGER LANSER (Director of Photography)

Another in the impressive list of Australian cinematographers whose skills have been sought internationally, Lanser was born in Sydney and commenced his career in the mid-seventies with the Australian Broadcasting Commission.

In the early eighties, whilst working on one of his first major assignments - the television series *Boy In The Bush* - he befriended a young English actor who was also struggling to make a name for himself, Kenneth Branagh. Years later, when that same actor was making his mark as a director, he invited Lanser to join him for his spirited cinematic adaptation of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*. Lanser has also acted as cinematographer on several other Branagh directed features including *Peter's Friends*, *A Midwinter's Tale* and *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (for which he took charge of 2nd Unit). Other big-screen credits include the musical extravaganza, *Billie's Holiday*, *Weekend In The Country*, Paramount Pictures' *Prince Valiant* and the wry comedy *Muggers*, directed by Dean Murphy.

Additional credits include the tele-movies *Beverley Hills Family Robinson*, *The Munsters' Scary Little Christmas* and the epic mini-series *Kings In Grass Castles*.

SURESH AYYAR (Editor)

Ayyar has worked with many gifted filmmakers and is the recipient of several industry awards and nominations.

For renowned auteur filmmaker, Rolf de Heer, he has edited *Tail Of A Tiger*, *Incident at Raven's Gate*, *Dingo*, and the critically lauded *Bad Boy Bubby*, for which he received an Australian Film Institute (AFI) award for "Best Achievement in Editing". He was honored with another AFI award for his work on director Gillian Armstrong's

documentary feature, *Not 14 Again* and was again nominated for *Thank God He Met Lizzie*, directed by Cherie Nowlan, and Craig Monahan's psychological thriller, *The Interview*. In total, his talent has been acknowledged by the AFI on nine occasions, with five awards to date.

Other feature credits include *Sacred Sex*, *All Men Are Liars*, *Floating Life*, *In The Winter Dark* and Neil Mansfield's *Fresh Air*.

BERNADETTE WYNACK (Production Designer)

Born and raised in Melbourne, Wynack initially studied stage management at Flinders University in Adelaide before switching to production design. As with many local industry professionals, she began her career at Crawford Productions, refining her skills on programs which have emerged as contemporary classics, including *The Sullivans*, *Cop Shop*, *Carson's Law*, *All The Rivers Run* and *The Flying Doctors*.

With an extensive list of art direction and production design credits for both television and film, Wynack is adept in applying her skills to either comedy or drama. *The Wogboy* is not the first time she has worked with Nick Giannopoulos, having served as art director for the television pilot of his comedy series, *Acropolis Now*.

PAUL WARREN (Costume Designer)

Currently based in Sydney, Warren's first foray into costume design was via the Adelaide Opera as a costume cutter. Since the mid-eighties, Warren has gained considerable design experience across all entertainment mediums, particularly theatre. In the early nineties, he re-located to London where he spent two years working for the Royal Opera House and Unicom Arts Theatre on productions ranging from *Paradise of Fools* and *The Magic Flute* to *Aladdin* and *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* before returning to Australia in 1995.

Additional credits include the television series' *Echo Point*, *Fire*, *Blue Sky* and *All Saints* plus the features *Me Myself I* and *Hitman's Hero*.