



RIDE LIKE A GIRL

**TERESA PALMER
SAM NEILL
SULLIVAN STAPLETON
STEVIE PAYNE
GENEVIEVE MORRIS
MAGDA SZUBANSKI**

Running Time 98 mins

**Sound Dolby 5.1 & Atmos
Language English
Origin Australian
Year of Production 2018**

**Director Rachel Griffiths
Writers Andrew Knight, Elise McCredie
Producers Richard Keddie
Susie Montague
Rachel Griffiths
Director of Photography Martin McGrath ACS
Editors Maria Papoutsis, Jill Bilcock ACE ASE
Production Designer Carrie Kennedy
Composer David Hirschfelder
Costume Designer Cappi Ireland
Hair and Makeup Designer Chiara Tripodi**

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SYNOPSIS

As a little girl, Michelle Payne dreams of the impossible: winning the Melbourne Cup — horse racing's toughest two-mile race. The youngest of 10 children, Michelle is raised by single father Paddy. She leaves school at 15 to become a jockey and after early failures she finds her feet, but a family tragedy, followed by her own near fatal horse fall, all but ends the dream. But with the love of her dad and her brother Stevie, Michelle will not give up. Against all the medical advice, and the protests of her siblings, she rides on, and meets Prince of Penzance. Together they overcome impossible odds for a shot at the dream: a ride in the 2015 Melbourne Cup, at odds of 100 to 1. The rest is history.

ABOUT MICHELLE PAYNE



Michelle Payne is a sportswoman whose remarkable story has raised Australia's spirits.

The first ever female jockey to win the Melbourne Cup, she made “the race that stops a nation” a race that inspired one. Her graciousness in the face of untold triumph and tragedy is now a beacon for many people.

The youngest daughter of the ten children of Paddy and Mary Payne, Michelle grew up on a farm at Miners Rest, a locality near Ballarat in central Victoria. Mary died in a motor vehicle accident when Michelle was only six months old, leaving Paddy to raise the children as a single father. From when she was 5 years old she was determined to win the Cup and never wavered from that goal. She and Stevie watched the movie *Phar Lap* more than 300 times, planning their win.

Michelle entered racing aged 15, the eighth of the Payne children to do so.

In March 2004 Michelle fell heavily at a race in Sandown Racecourse in Melbourne, fracturing her skull and bruising her brain. Against her family's advice, she was determined to continue and she gradually rebuilt her career, starting to win some major races. She met the Prince of Penzance and genuinely believed that it was a great horse and could win a Cup. She navigated the Prince through numerous important wins, including the Toorak Handicap and the Moonee Valley Cup, which was a qualifier for the entry into the Cup.

On the first Tuesday in November 2015, Michelle Payne rode Prince of Penzance, at odds of 100 to 1, to win the 2015 Melbourne Cup, becoming the first woman jockey to win Australia's most prestigious horse race.

Michelle won the “The Don” Award 2016 for Most Inspirational Australian Athlete from the Sport Australia Hall of Fame. Most recently, in 2017 she received The Longines Ladies Awards, celebrating women who have consistently achieved at the highest level within the equestrian world.

Michelle will be written into our history books as that rare kind of icon – one who lives with gratitude and humility.

BACKGROUND TO THE PRODUCTION

Timing is everything in sport and in film production and *Ride Like A Girl*, the feature film directorial debut of internationally acclaimed actress Rachel Griffiths and the first feature produced under the Screen Australia Gender Matters program, came together because it was exactly the right time.

Rachel Griffiths knew it in every fibre of her being when she witnessed history in November 2015, as thoroughbred Prince of Penzance was ridden to victory by the first female jockey to win Australia's greatest sporting event, the Melbourne Cup. When Michelle Payne crossed the line, and in her first interview after dismounting commented that the naysayers who frowned upon female jockeys riding in elite races could "get stuffed", Griffiths, watching at a barbecue with friends, was involved in a race of her own – her mind was racing. "I'm already googling Michelle Payne," she recounts. "Oh my god, she's one of ten kids. Oh my god, her mother died! And I thought, this is a movie. It was so immediate, it was literally in five minutes I texted Richard and said, 'Did you watch that? We have to make this movie.'"

Producer Richard Keddie, who's previous box office hits include the features *Oddball* and *Little Fish*, and TV hits such as *Hawke* and *My Brother Jack*, was also at a Melbourne Cup barbecue, and of course he had watched the race. "None of us realised that a female was even in the race, and we're all excited, and then Michelle said, 'you can all get stuffed' and ten seconds later I got a text from Rachel saying, 'I'd like to direct this film. Would you produce it?'"

The timing really could not have been more perfect. Only one month later, Screen Australia announced Gender Matters as a direct response to the identified gender imbalance in lead creative roles across the screen sector. The story of Australia's sporting sweetheart, Michelle Payne, who overcame personal adversity – emotional, physical, and those critics and cynics in the racing industry – to win the Melbourne Cup, was a perfect subject for the "Brilliant Stories" segment of the Gender Matters program. And the fact that Griffiths wished to make her directorial debut on this ambitious project fitted in with the Gender Matters key objective – to unashamedly provide express-lane access to female business ideas and stories. A female-led Australian story directed by a strong female with filmic vision made it an ideal project for Screen Australia's new enterprise. And an ideal project for Keddie, the producer Griffiths asked to help realise her vision.

"I think if Rachel hadn't been involved with the film, I probably wouldn't have done it," says Keddie. "Because first of all I wanted it to be a female, it made perfect sense. It had to be a female to direct this movie."

To take the reins, in fact.

"It was an amazing initiative with Screen Australia," says Griffiths, pointing out that half the camera department were women, heads of department were women – casting, editing, production design, costume design, hair and makeup – and there were four female producers alongside the senior producer, Keddie. "And of course Elise McCredie co-writing with Andrew Knight," she adds.

"The thing is it's set in a man's world, so I still needed those male voices in there. Martin McGrath was our DOP; he understands, he grew up on the track, his first apprenticeship was with the ABC shooting racing, his brother is a race-caller, he comes from a big Ballarat family. The men's voices had to be so truthful and they're country voices, they had to be authentic. So to have that balance of Andrew Knight and Elise, Richard and me and Marty, the male and the female voice, I don't think we could have actually delivered this without balance. But the Gender Matters initiative is what gave birth to this project, and got us a script – and an amazing script at that critical time. Our script was essentially locked off five months out of shooting, which is the best thing that heads of department and a director can have."

“We were also incredibly lucky to meet Susie Montague who had just Executive Produced a terrific Australian movie PAWNO. Susie is a very successful businesswoman in her own right, and extremely well connected in horse racing.”

Equally as important as the gender emphasis was the central character’s story, which easily convinced all who were approached to work on and invest in the film. Michelle Payne’s Melbourne Cup win had a back-story you couldn’t invent. The youngest of ten children, Michelle was only six months old when her mother was killed in a car accident, leaving Paddy Payne to raise all ten on his own, one of whom, Michelle’s brother Stevie, has Down Syndrome. Such hardship could tear a family apart but for the Paynes it was about unity, strength and, above all, abiding love.

Says Keddie, “I didn’t realise just how gripping the story was and it’s been a very slow burn for me that started high and turned into a bushfire. I’ve made a lot of biopics, stories about real people, and the more I dug and the more I got to understand these people, the more I got to know them, the deeper my respect for them grew and the more bewildered I was that they have lived the life they’ve lived. I couldn’t say nicer or better things about these people and it’s genuine. They’re some of the greatest, finest people I’ve ever met. They’re tough – they lead the toughest life imaginable – and they’re humble, good folk. That’s pretty special.”

“For me a cinema experience is one that moves you and makes you either really scared in a horror movie or really laugh a lot in a comedy, or in a movie like this, deeply moved and inspired. That’s what it is. It’s difficult to articulate what she and the family have gone through to achieve what each of them has done, but especially Michelle and Stevie and Paddy.”

Griffiths knew that Keddie’s experience with biopics such as *Curtin*, *Hawke* and *Oddball* gave him the understanding essential to putting real life on the screen. That expertise teamed with Griffiths’ unbridled passion – never has that term been used more deliberately and aptly – proved a winning formula.

“With me it was the female passion,” says Griffiths. “My vision for delivering a kind of feminist coming-of-age sports film – I love sports films – and I think when we finally got the opportunity to pitch it, we were able to convince Michelle and her team that we would do the right thing by her, we would do the right thing by her family, and most importantly we would do the right thing by her story.”

Griffiths admits there was “a bit of stalking” to get the attention of Michelle; after not getting a response initially, She went to Randwick Racecourse and stood in a line of fans waiting to talk to the champion jockey.

“I get there and I lean in and I say ‘Hi, I’m Rachel Griffiths, I want to make your story, I think you’re incredible and I think your film would be the great Australian un-made sports film!’ And I met [her sister] Cathy, and I think [sister] Therese might have been there that day, and I said, ‘Listen, I just want to make a film that you will be proud and comfortable to watch with your whole family and you won’t want to kill me and it won’t cause any dissent because I couldn’t live with myself if I did that.’ So I think all those factors combined, despite the risk of me being a first time director on such an ambitious project, we were just very, very lucky that her management and Michelle picked us. Such a privilege.”

Keddie says Michelle was initially wary. “She is a very private person. She was somewhat intimidated by the fame. It’s not something she’d planned on. And then she had a terribly serious accident not long after we started on the script. So it was a really slow build of a relationship and I’d say It literally took a year before she thought, ‘Okay, this guy is going to do the right thing by me’ and ever since then we’ve grown closer and closer. I absolutely think the world of her. I’m in awe of her, which is an understatement. She’s the bravest human being I’ve ever met, and I’ve met a lot of brave people. And I grew very close to Stevie and that gave her great heart too. You know, there are a lot of problems in this film and it could’ve gone badly and it could’ve gone badly for Michelle and the family. I felt that responsibility very deeply.”

The problems were the challenges of filming what is at times an epic tale in the personal, intimate way that put the Payne family at the centre of the story. It was about finding a balance between the scale of the production with breathtaking horse racing scenes entailing huge casts of humans and animals with the very personal story of tremendous courage, a woman nurtured by the love of family and supported in taking on a man's world.

The financing model for *Ride Like A Girl* saw unique support from the private investment community and major sponsors Holden, Racing Victoria and Tabcorp. In addition, Screen Australia is a substantial investor, in association with the Victorian Government's Film Victoria, the Ministry for Racing, and Regional Development, as well as from the Ballarat City Council.

Susie Montague networked an incredible group of private investors, all of who loved the idea of a great Australian story, being told, with a daring approach to the racing footage.

Keddie was convinced that a new approach to filming the racing was vital, to attract a cinema audience. He spent two years working closely with the production's horse and racing consultant, multi-skilled jockey Chris Symons. "We just worked out an approach to the horses, jockeys, and of course experimented with lots of cameras to get a look and feel that no-one's ever achieved before. Keddie had a very clear vision and just before Production, hired Jamie Doolan, the Racing Scenes director, to bring the scenes to life – and put the audience in the jockeys' saddle."

"In most horse films it's the horse or it's the owner or it's the breeder. But this is the jockey's story so it was so important that we got in the war zone." Keddie continued -

"It nearly killed us. It's the scariest thing I've ever done. I don't think I've ever felt as much anxiety on anything I've ever done as filming the horses because I didn't want any horses hurt, I didn't want any jockeys hurt, and I didn't want any of our crew hurt. We had 60 crew just on our horseracing unit, separate to our drama unit. And I would say we took a lot of extremely careful calculated risks. Which is what horseracing is, to some extent. So we got right in there amongst it. We smashed six cameras with horses' hooves, so that's an example of how in there we got. But we didn't hurt a horse, which was amazing."

Taking the audience on the journey from Michelle's bucolic, poignant Ballarat beginnings to her groundbreaking triumph required that precise cinematic capability. "In many ways she is a classic Disney princess with a dream that's unconventional and a series of life challenges she needs to overcome," says Griffiths. "But when she goes into that race she's in battle, so I think that was the most challenging thing to pick up."

On a broader level, as a great Australian story, it needed to be a film for all audiences. "It's quite a rare thing to do in Australia right now," Griffiths explains, "It's very *Man from Snowy River*, *Phar Lap*. We wanted a family film that would play as well for older audiences as it might if you brought your children or your grandchildren. So we were always determined to make it a PG film and our writers understood that, to explore the more challenging aspects of being a woman in a man's world and yet have that sit comfortably in a really gorgeous PG film. That was a balance, to not shy away from sexism, the family tragedies, but to sit that somehow in a greater form that was comfortable delivering the tears, delivering the laughs and delivering that amazing kind of chill up the spine you get when she comes around the bend and makes it up the final straight."

So finding the right actor to play the pivotal role of Michelle was paramount. "She's the heart of the movie," says Griffiths. "She's a girl that Australian fell in love with. She's such a unique energy. In so many ways she's very simple, open, emotionally gorgeous, a giving loving person who has this incredible connection with horses. But she is a killer athlete, she's focused, she's driven. The falls she's had, the injuries, the setbacks, the losing rides from horses that she gets up to Group 1. She's a killer athlete in the way that to be at the top of your profession you have to be. And yet, if you were to meet her at lunch, it's really hard to reconcile

those two things. And a lot of that comes from that Payne family work ethic, that country, you get up at four or five, you get done what needs to be done, and it's so ingrained in her, but it hasn't made her hard."

The search for the lead covered British and American actresses but Griffiths was determined that she should be an Australian. "I'd worked with Teresa Palmer on *Hacksaw Ridge* and although I didn't see the athleticism in that, I have seen her in other work. I think she has this unbelievably open heart and a very rare thing where men love her, they love her as their daughter, as their girlfriend, they'd love her as their mother to their children. That's a really, really rare thing to get, that women and men respond to her in really similar ways." The distinction was vital.

"I'm a huge fan of Rachel Griffiths as an actress," Palmer says. "We met on *Hacksaw Ridge*, she was playing Andrew Garfield's mother, and I was playing Andrew Garfield's wife, so she was my mother-in-law in that movie and we really hit it off. She's such an interesting person and then to hear that she was interested in me for this role! There was so much about the Michelle Payne story that really made me feel excited to be a part of the movie. First and foremost, just Michelle and who she is as a human being. She has a big beautiful compassionate heart. She's a warrior, she's very committed to her goals and she had belief in herself, I think that's a beautiful message for young woman."

Palmer and Michelle got to know each other and become friends. Palmer spent time visiting the Payne family at their farm. She describes Michelle's father Paddy as "a ray of sunshine" and the family as a loving, connected and passionate unit, all of which is reflected in Michelle. "I'm so fond of her because she is beautiful inside and out and her heart shines and she's a loving and open and warm person and this couldn't happen to a more beautiful human being."

So attracted was Palmer to the story of the family and girl power, drawn to Michelle and her personality, that it was only some time later that it hit her that she would also need to play a jockey and learn how to ride a horse. "I have this incredible trainer, he's actually the clerk of the course at Flemington, so on Melbourne Cup Day he was there leading horses around – he's a familiar face to any jockey. His name's Peter Patterson and his father – everyone knows him as Patto – actually trained Michelle and she was an apprentice and learned a lot from Patto. So to have Patto's son Peter be my trainer was quite special." While Palmer was riding and getting familiar with horses for six months before the shoot, she only had three weeks of racing training prior to filming, first on an Equicizer and then nine lessons on the real horse. "There were a lot of Epsom salt baths for the first few weeks. My muscles were so sore."

Palmer found the deep connection to horses that was essential for playing this role. "I remember the moment it happened. I think it was my third lesson and I had free reign and he said, 'Just take the horse out, do what you wanna do with the horse.' So I took him out and I just remember feeling so bonded with my horse, Lorde, who plays Prince of Penzance, and the way he responded to me and how I would drop him with my energy. It was this almost unspoken bond between us. I thought how special is it to be animal and human and not be able to really communicate verbally but with our body language and our energy we can really speak to each other. It was incredibly therapeutic in so many ways."

Casting Sam Neill as Paddy Payne was the other critical decision. Paddy is originally a New Zealander, so the choice of Sam seemed perfect. Says Keddie, "Michelle was a bit freaked out by Sam Neill, because she just felt that Sam *got* her dad. I took Sam down to meet Paddy, and it's hilarious, I've never seen this before, because I've done a lot of biopics, but Sam filmed Paddy everywhere on his phone. Sam studied and filmed Paddy and then he embraced that character, and Michelle was completely spooked by it. Which is pretty special. And she says to this day, 'He's so like my dad.'"

Palmer also noticed the transformation in Neill as he took on the role of Paddy. "Sam was walking exactly like him, he has the stance, his arms behind his back, which is something that Paddy does all the time. Sam started doing that, the way he speaks, it's just a remarkable transformation."

Griffiths had worked with Neill several times and says he was her first choice for the role. “From when he was young and handsome, the Sam that I grew up with, but also more recently I’ve adored his embracing his older self – in *Hunt for the Wilderpeople*, that’s very much the audience we want to reach. He’s beloved. So when you have actors who are already loved, half the work’s done. He went up and hung out with Paddy. He became more and more Paddy the more he hung out with him. And of course both actors responded to the script, both actors were inspired by Michelle’s story, and I was just very fortunate to have them on board.”

Neill was impressed with the Payne family and their upbringing. “This is such a remarkable family and I think – don’t they call it helicopter parenting or something now? – I think children [today] are over-parented and there’s something about how all these kids have realised themselves in a serious sense, by just looking after each other, and looking after themselves. Just focus on what you’re going to be and what you’re going to do – it’s a very remarkable family. You know, who has 10 kids anymore? It’s just unthinkable and to have just one parent doing all that, it defies my imagination. I think there’s something about the circumstances which these kids were brought up that’s very exceptional these days and maybe we can all learn something from it.”

After warning Paddy that he wanted to represent him faithfully without becoming him, Paddy opened up to him and Neill was moved by who Paddy was at his core. “I think his faith is very important. I think that sustained him through some pretty tough times. And the racing game, God knows, the wins and losses, the losses must be really tough to take.”

Casting the large family of siblings that had to look similar was actually exciting for Griffiths. “They’re a big Irish rabble family. And beyond that I wanted real racing faces, so Nikki Barrett, our casting agent, flew out very wide to cast young Michelle, we had I think 12,000 people on Facebook sending in photos of their daughter, who has to look like Teresa Palmer obviously.”

As the younger Michelle, nine-year-old Summer North took on her first acting job with aplomb. She had already been riding horses since she was five. She related to the sadness in the younger Michelle, as the youngest of ten children, feeling ignored and just wanting to do something with her life. “I auditioned because I didn’t want to be that normal person who just sits there in school, I wanted to do something,” she says.

As for Stevie Payne, the beloved brother with Down Syndrome who has worked with Michelle and the horses throughout her career, there was really only ever one person who could take on that role.

Keddie recalls, “One day I said to Rachel, probably a year into the project, ‘Imagine if Stevie could play himself.’ We both loved the idea, but we put it on the backburner, thinking, nearer to the day, if we get financed, let’s test him and see how he goes. When I thought, we’ll get this film up, I contacted some of the family and said, ‘Would he be up for it?’ And they said ‘Yeah, he’d love to test for it.’”

Stevie rehearsed some scenes with Michelle at home and then went to see Griffiths and Keddie for a screen test. “I filmed and Rach directed him and he had something so special that I was really shocked by it,” says Keddie. “So we hired a couple of lovely actors to work with him, and he connected with them. We knew straight away this is the guy. It’s funny because he carries so much warmth and heart that we knew it would be good, but we didn’t realise it would be as good as it is, and we didn’t realise how much everyone would fall in love with him.”

Says Griffiths, “My first thought was fantastic, because it is his story and the thing that we have all been reaching for is authenticity. I have worked with actors with Down Syndrome before and apart from the fact that you never want to be on stage with them because they have such a compelling magic to them that nobody is looking at you, I do believe that anybody can be an actor. I actually do believe that. But particularly I think that actors with intellectual disabilities just bring their true selves. They reveal everything, they hide nothing, and something quite wonderful happens to the actors around. We live in a time where it would not be in any world appropriate for me to have cast a neurotypical actor playing Stevie Payne.

“He’s extraordinary with the animals and a really big part of this film is inclusivity. At its heart it is about a woman and a man with an intellectual disability, on that day, the two most improbable outsiders being at the top of their game. So for him to embody that and to have that relationship on-screen, everybody can see how much Stevie’s enjoying it. He loved coming in in the morning, he loved being in the trailer and getting his hair done and his makeup done. Film crews are a big family and he’s a boy who’s grown up with a big family but the beautiful thing that Stevie also brings apart from the fact that I think every single actor does their best work with him, is his horse skills. And I really was passionate about showing that this man with an intellectual disability is extraordinary at his job. He’s extraordinary at what he does, so seeing him train the Prince, seeing him with the horses, is something that I couldn’t have found another actor to do.”

Says Stevie, “Working with horses growing up, being in a film... I didn’t know I could do that! But lucky I’ve got both.”

“He is the real Stevie Payne and he’s really breathed life into this experience for everyone,” says Palmer. “He embodies family and love and I just feel incredibly special that I get to be in a movie that sings those themes so loudly.

“The Stevie aspect of this all has been just such a blessing. It’s funny, Stevie’s whole family describes him as a blessing. Whenever they talk about him they say ‘Oh, what a blessing.’ And it’s true, that’s what he is. And he is with the horses. I think that’s what makes him so successful as a strapper, you know Australia’s number one strapper, Stevie Payne, I also think it’s because of his energy and the way the horses respond to him. They trust him and they know that he won’t hurt them and I see the way the horses melt into him, they just adore him and he loves the horses too. They’re like his children. The bond between the horses and Stevie is like nothing I’ve ever seen before. So it’s just beautiful to see him in his element with the horses.”

Other key actors in the cast are Sullivan Stapleton as Darren Weir, trainer of the Prince of Penzance, Genevieve Morris as Michelle’s racing manager and, as the other Payne siblings, Brooke Satchwell, Sophia Forrest, Anneliese Apps, Katie Castles, Veronica Thomas, Zara Zoe, Aaron Glenane and Henry Nixon.

Casting the large racing community was pure fun for Griffiths. “We came across amazing stories, like Frank Reys, who won the 1973 Melbourne Cup as a jockey riding as a ‘Filipino’ who was in fact an Indigenous rider, I found his son driving a bus in Frankston, and he plays the trainer Rusty in the film. The ex-track manager from Flemington plays Darren Weir’s head of operations. My owners groups, my trainers groups, I populated real trainers up in the tower, and then I mixed in Mick Molloy and some other much-loved Australian characters. And then it just gets really fun, it’s like who do you want to play the Vice Principal at Loreto, and I said, ‘Do you think we could get Magda for two days?’ And she loves Michelle, loves the script and came on board. I think we have assembled a really extraordinary cast of much-loved people.”

Magda Szubanski says, “Michelle is amazing, she’s very down to earth, there’s no BS, what you see is what you get, very refreshing but there’s such an amazing core of kindness and hearing her talk about horses, the way she cares about them, it’s really quite fascinating, but also so gutsy. And seeing her with Stevie is really, really beautiful. A great family, I just love those big rambling Catholic families, and there’s a lot of rough and tumble but a lot of love there as well.”

Szubanski compares Michelle’s victory to Billie-Jean King’s win over Bobby Riggs. “Billie-Jean played a man who had been number one but was now in middle age. But Michelle was going up against the best men in the world, the elite, and she not only held her own, she bloody won, so her deeds and her words really belong in the feminist pantheon, along with Virginia Woolf and Gloria Steinem and all the others who have shown by example how not to underestimate people. And Michelle did it in a fantastic Aussie, colloquial way. You know, ‘they can get stuffed’. I think we all feel that at times, but she’s a really important figure that will have impacted on the psyches of so many people. That’s it now, you can’t discriminate against women in that field again in the same way.”

The entire crew for *Ride Like A Girl* came to more than 300 people, mainly because of the logistics of filming horses racing. As horses are only able to run every three days, it meant multiple simultaneous racing shoots. It all ran smoothly because the key department heads had all worked with Griffiths or Keddie before. Cinematographer Martin McGrath had shot *Muriel's Wedding* so he and Griffiths had a long friendship. Production Designer Carrie Kennedy was a favourite of Keddie's. "Carrie's done a lot of my films, she just gets story." Cappi Ireland and Chiara Tripodi were also brought on for their strong suits as storytellers through costume and hair and makeup.

For Tripodi the makeup and hair design involved extensive wig work, character ageing over a thirty-year period, natural looks to reflect the world of jockeys and glamorous looks attached to the Melbourne Cup.

Kennedy became immersed in the details that would enable all the characters, especially those playing the Payne family, to get into their stories in depth. "All the detail that we had on the wall in the Payne house – we researched what horses Paddy had and we made up all those racing pics from scratch, period correct, and font. If you are more authentic with your design, the more belief that people – the audience – will have in the story."

A family photo shoot was arranged with the cast in the Payne family before filming began. Recalls Kennedy, "It was the first time that all the siblings had got together, and they clicked immediately, and then it was like a gaggle of geese, like a full-on real family, and you could just see this real camaraderie between all of them with Paddy – Sam – sitting back, just taking it all in."

Finding the location for the family farm in Ballarat led them to Huntly Lodge. Says Kennedy, "What made Huntly Lodge so perfect was this aspect of the stables directly to the living room in the house – you could see the proximity was so close that we could tell that story immediately, that this is a family of horse-loving jockeys."

"My first thoughts when I signed up for this film was that I'd better start learning about jockey silks and the meaning of them and why they are the way they are," says costume designer Cappi Ireland. "To really get my head into the whole racing world. Obviously we had the Melbourne Cup 2015 race to reference and we spent a lot of time researching the colours of the silks and what each individual jockey wore. Because in the early '90s it wasn't so apparent, but in the more contemporary racing world jockeys tend to have their own little nuances with their silks, the collars, skivvies underneath, caps, goggles, boots, the way their breeches are branded or their names are written, so we had to pay a lot of attention and make sure we replicated all of that, particular the 2015 Melbourne Cup.

"But we also have a lot of other races that we're re-enacting and using stock footage of that we had to pay attention and make sure we had the right colours, which went back to early 2000s. And we even had silks for Sunshine Sally that Patrick Payne rode in the 1991 Cup." Hyland Silks, who made Michelle's Prince of Penzance silks for the Melbourne Cup, was the first port of call and other suppliers were called upon as well.

Says Ireland, "The important thing about this film in particular was that we were portraying a real-life family that were still alive and we wanted to be as accurate as we could with portraying them and as sensitive and as kind as possible as well in a way. So we had a lot of material to work with and photos and references to start off with. We're talking about a country family here who were so busy raising each other and riding horses that they didn't really have time to be up with the latest fashions, nor did they probably want to. But having said that they were still a family that had a lot of pride in how they appeared and we needed to portray that as well."

The story covers a family wedding, a funeral, and numerous race events including the 2015 Melbourne Cup. Michelle Payne had up to 65 costumes, according to Ireland, and finding replicas of the dresses Michelle's sisters wore at the Cup was one of many tasks to get it accurate.

In the hands of first-time director Griffiths, everyone rallied around her and gave her tremendous support.. Says Keddie, "I've got a couple of friends who are fabulous female directors but Rach was very passionate about this story. And I think the world was waiting for her to direct something. A huge leap for her, and incredibly gutsy of her to take it on."

So back to timing. The Me Too movement was not far from anyone's mind throughout the shoot, the importance of women being empowered to step up. Keddie is known for his success with female directors, and most of his senior team are nearly always female. "They leave their ego at the door, they bring emotional intelligence in spades – vital in story telling as well as in managing massive groups of people. "I'm proud to say that 6 of the 7 most senior people on the film were female and it was all based on merit."

Griffiths stepped up to tell the story of one of Australia's most inspiring modern women, Michelle Payne. "This is such a perfect time to be telling this story because of the climate right now," says Palmer. "With the focus on gender equality and embracing female filmmakers. What Cate Blanchett did recently at Cannes, getting all the female directors to come and stand on the steps with her, I think there's a focus and a spotlight on these directors who just so happen to be female, and they're telling brilliant stories and letting us into these enriching and layered worlds. That is what Rachel is doing with this film and I could not be happier to be a part of it and to be doing it with her."

Szubanski sees the long-term benefit of this film. "Where we are in the world globally, in relation to women and cinema, it would have been so wrong to have a man as the director of this film. Rachel has a huge body of experience as an actress, one of our finest actresses, and an amazing storyteller, and I think this is fantastic that she is taking the reigns as it were on a major feature film because in the telling of the story we've also got to be walking the talk and nurturing careers, not just for young people but older people who want to go in a different direction who have a lot of talent and experience to bear. I think we're learning that equality is really about the smart decision to have different voices coming in to problem solve, really, as much as anything. It's something that I've become increasingly passionate about. So the message of this film very much aligns with my values."

Keddie is moved and proud of bringing this story to audiences at this exact time. "I think in the now world, in the world of Donald Trump, a story about a girl who defies everything, every assumption about what girls' limitations are, and every misplaced assumption that they may well be, she destroyed them. And she did it in a humble, brave way. She's got no ego, she wasn't out to make money, she wasn't out to promote herself, she was just out to do something that she dreamed of as a little girl, in a family of people that dreamed of doing it. To do that, is that not the best story you've ever heard?"

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

TERESA PALMER as Michelle Payne

Teresa Palmer is becoming one of the most globally recognized actresses, bringing her talents to the US and worldwide from Adelaide, Australia. She currently appears in the AMC television series *A Discovery of Witches*, playing Diana Bishop alongside Matthew Goode. Teresa has starred in many major films including her most recent, Mel Gibson's Oscar-nominated, critically acclaimed film *Hacksaw Ridge*, with Andrew Garfield, Vince Vaughn and Luke Bracey. She was nominated by the Australian Academy of Cinema Television Arts (AACTA) for Best Supporting Actress at the AACTA International Awards for her performance in the film.

She recently starred in the Australian film *Berlin Syndrome*, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2017, as well as *Message From the King* with Chadwick Boseman, which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2016, the Australian thriller *2:22*, James Wan's thriller *Lights Out*, Terrence Malick's *Knight of Cups* with Christian Bale, and in Lionsgate's *The Choice*, with Benjamin Walker, based on the popular novel from highly acclaimed author Nicholas Sparks (*The Notebook*).

Teresa's additional film credits include Summit Entertainment's box office hit *Warm Bodies* with Nicholas Hoult and John Malkovich; Michael Bay and Steven Spielberg's *I Am Number Four*, Warner Bros. highly anticipated remake of the 1990's hit film *Point Break*; the crime thriller *Triple Nine*, with an all-star cast including Kate Winslet, Casey Affleck, Chiwetel Ejiofor, and Woody Harrelson; the tumultuous love story *The Ever After*, which she also co-wrote and produced with Mark Webber; *Cut Bank* starring opposite Liam Hemsworth; the Australian film *Kill Me Three Times; Parts Per Billion* with Josh Hartnett and Rosario Dawson; the 1960s period drama *Love and Honor* starring with Liam Hemsworth; the Australian thriller *Wish you Were Here* with Joel Edgerton; Relativity Media's 80s coming-of-age comedy *Take Me Home Tonight* with Topher Grace and Anna Faris; Jon Turteltaub's *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* for Jerry Bruckheimer Films and Walt Disney Pictures with Nicolas Cage; Adam Shankman's comedy *Bedtime Stories* with Adam Sandler; *December Boys* with Daniel Radcliffe; and *Restraint* with Stephen Moyer.

Palmer was awarded the 2011 Australians in Film Breakthrough Award. She was named one of Australia's "Stars of Tomorrow" by Screen International and first caught the attention of audiences worldwide with her leading role in *2:37*, an Australian independent film that screened to acclaim at both the Cannes Film Festival in "Un Certain Regard" and at the Toronto International Film Festival. The Australian Film Institute nominated Palmer as Best Actress for her complex portrayal of a high school student with a dark secret in the film. Beyond her acting pursuits, she has also segued into working behind the camera as a director, writer and producer developing both features and documentaries.

Additionally, she is the global face of Artistry Cosmetics (Amway) and has done several advertising campaigns with them that have been seen worldwide. She also has a health and wellness blog called YOURZENLIFE.com and recently launched the parenting arm YOURZENMAMA.com. Teresa resides in Los Angeles, California.

SAM NEILL as Paddy Payne

A recipient of an Order of the British Empire for Services to Acting, and a Distinguished Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit, Sam Neill is internationally recognized for his contribution to film and television, with more than 75 films and over 45 television programs to his credit.

Neill made his film debut in Roger Donaldson's *Sleeping Dogs* and his feature breakthrough in a starring role opposite Judy Davis in *My Brilliant Career*. The two films that subsequently brought him international stardom and acclaim were writer/director Jane Campion's *The Piano* and Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park*. Written and directed by visionary filmmaker Jane Campion, *The Piano* starred Neill, Holly Hunter, Harvey Keitel and Anna Paquin and won three Oscars, 3 BAFTA and 11 Australian Film Institute (AFI) awards, along

with an AFI Best Supporting Actor nomination for Neill. In 2016 he received an AFI Best Supporting Actor nomination for his work in *The Daughter*.

His film credits include *Dead Calm* opposite Nicole Kidman for director Phillip Noyce; *A Cry In The Dark* opposite Meryl Streep for director Fred Schepisi; *The Hunter* opposite Willem Dafoe (for which Neill received an AACTA Best Actor nomination); *Little Fish* opposite Cate Blanchett; *The Horse Whisperer* alongside Kristin Scott Thomas, Robert Redford and Scarlett Johansson; *Perfect Strangers*; *The Hunt For Red October* alongside Sean Connery and Alec Baldwin for director John McTiernan; *Dirty Deeds* alongside Bryan Brown and Toni Collette; *Bicentennial Man* opposite Robin Williams for director Chris Columbus; *Wimbledon* opposite Kirsten Dunst; *My Talks With Dean Spanley* alongside Peter O'Toole and Bryan Brown; *Skin* opposite Sophie Okonedo; *Yes for Orlando* director Sally Potter; *Daybreakers*; the animated film *Legend Of The Guardians: The Owls Of Ga'hoole*; and Czech production *The Zookeeper*. Recent features include *The Daughter*; *Hunt for The Wilderpeople*; *Tommy's Honour*; *Thor: Ragnarok*; *Sweet Country*; *The Commuter*; and *Peter Rabbit*.

Sam's work in television has earned him three Golden Globe *Best Actor* nominations. In 1998 he received Emmy and Golden Globe nominations for his performance in the title role of the NBC miniseries *Merlin*. He received a Golden Globe nomination in 1992 for his performance opposite Judy Davis in *One Against the Wind* and a third Golden Globe nomination, along with the BAFTA Award for Best Actor, for his performance as British spy Sidney Reilly in director Martin Campbell's *Reilly: Ace of Spies*. He also received the Australian Film Institute (AFI) Best Actor Award for the Australian drama *Jessica*.

His most recent television credits are the miniseries *House of Bond* and as presenter and executive producer of the 2018 documentary miniseries *The Pacific: In the Wake of Captain Cook with Sam Neil*. Other television credits include the ITV miniseries *Tutankhamun*; the first two seasons of the hit BBC series *Peaky Blinders* starring alongside Cillian Murphy; the Australian crime drama *Old School* opposite Bryan Brown; the FOX drama series *Alcatraz*; the acclaimed Australian television series *Rake*; NBC's *Crusoe*; Showtime's *The Tudors* with Jonathan Rhys Meyers; the miniseries *To The Ends Of Earth* with Benedict Cumberbatch; and Granada's epic miniseries *Doctor Zhivago*.

Sam has a small organic winery called Two Paddocks and is a long-time activist and spokesman for environmental causes.

STEVIE PAYNE as himself

Stevie Payne was born the ninth child of Paddy & Mary Payne, and is Michelle Payne's brother, and closest friend. When Stevie was 3 years old Mary was killed in a tragic car accident, and the family closed ranks to support each other and continue as one large family. Stevie became the "light" of the family. He was never treated as if he had any different ability, and he grew up around horses, farming and horse racing. He has a special way with horses, and this talent was noticed by Darren Weir, a horse trainer based in Miners Rest as well as Warrnambool. He offered Stevie a job, and he went on to become a stable hand and strapper, and much admired member of staff.

He worked closely with co-strapper Maddie Raymond, and Michelle in looking after the Prince of Penzance. After winning the Cup, he and Michelle joined forces and established their own training facility in Miners Rest, where Stevie still works. Ride Like A Girl was his first foray into acting. When Paddy, his dad, learned that a film was being made, he commented to Richard Keddie, "I am happy about that yes. But what makes me most happy is that Stevie's story will be told. He has been a blessing to this family." It was said with a big smile.

SULLIVAN STAPLETON as Darren Weir

In recent years Sullivan Stapleton has emerged as an actor of international renown; he currently stars in NBC's acclaimed television series *Blindspot*, in the leading role of FBI Agent, Kurt Weller. He also recently starred in Steven Quale's feature film *American Renegades*, opposite J.K. Simmons.

Sullivan's compelling performance as Craig Cody in David Michod's *Animal Kingdom* proved to be his breakthrough role and garnered him international recognition. The film premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2010 and received numerous awards and nominations, including a nomination for Sullivan as Best Supporting Actor at the AFI awards.

Sullivan appeared in the 2013 Ruben Fleischer-directed film *Gangster Squad* alongside Sean Penn, Ryan Gosling and Emma Stone. In the same year he was cast in a leading role in the SKY (BSkyB)/Cinemax/HBO television series *Strike Back* and he then starred in the Warner Bros. film *300: Rise of an Empire*, the latest in the *300* franchise.

Prior to Sullivan's international career he appeared in numerous local film and television productions including the hugely popular Network Nine franchise series *Underbelly*, Network Ten's *Rush* and *The Secret Life Of Us*, Foxtel's *Satisfaction*, and SBS's *Carla Carmetti PD*.

Sullivan's Australian screen credits include the coming-of-age film *December Boys* with Daniel Radcliffe; *The Hunter* alongside Willem Dafoe and Sam Neill; Kriv Stenders' *Kill Me Three Times* with Teresa Palmer and Simon Pegg; and the Tony Ayres-directed *Cut Snake*.

In 2013 Sullivan was awarded the Breakthrough Award by Australians In Film in Los Angeles.

GENEVIEVE MORRIS as Joan Sadler

Genevieve Morris has been an actor/improviser and co-creator for 28 years. Her vast television, film and web series credits include *Bloom*, *Squinters*, *Mr Black*, *Little Acorns*, *Sexy Herpes*, *That's Not My Dog*, *Get Krackin'*, *Family Law*, *Sisters*, *Hamish and Andy's True Story*, *No Activity*, *Sammy J and Randy in Ricketts Lane*, *Randling*, *City Homicide*, *Comedy Inc*, *Ben Elton Live*, *Little Johnny the Movie*, *Can of Worms*, *Talking About Your Generation* and *Wednesday Night Fever*.

In 2016 she was seen by millions of viewers in the USA on the Doritos Super Bowl Commercial "Ultrasound", which was played at half time. It was Ellen DeGeneres' favourite ad. However, she is most recognised for her role as "Barbara the Bank Manager" in the 2010 ANZ ads.

Theatre companies she has worked with include MTC, STC, Circus Oz, Ranters, The Malthouse, Terrapin, and she has been a co-creator on several shows for Arena and Back to Back Theatre including the internationally renowned touring sensation *Small Metal Objects*. Her theatre roles have taken her around Australia as well as to New York, Athens, Vancouver, Dubai, Beijing, Shanghai and Wellington.

Genevieve also works as an MC and Host for various events, and recently focused her considerable industry experience and organisational skills (bossiness) into the area of production, as co-producer on the web series *Little Acorns*.

MAGDA SZUBANSKI as Sister Dominique

Magda Szubanski has been famous for making Australia laugh for over three decades. She was named the "Most Talked about Person of 2017" following what many have called her "crucial role" in the complex and difficult 2017 Same-Sex Marriage Survey. In 2012, Magda came out live on national TV and has been an active and high-profile campaigner for LGBTI+ rights ever since. She is patron of Twenty10, an ambassador for the Pinnacle Foundation and also volunteered for the Orlando Victims' Fundraiser concerts in Melbourne

and Sydney. She has spoken at numerous Marriage Equality fundraisers. *Vogue Australia* included her in its list of 2018 “Game Changers” for her work on the Marriage Equality campaign.

Magda has received many accolades in the course of her career, including a Mo Award, seven Logie Awards, three Awgie Awards, two People’s Choice Awards, two Astra Awards and the AFI for Best Supporting Actress for her performance as Australia’s favorite second-best friend, Sharon Strzelecki, a character she created herself. She was awarded the 2018 Victorian Award for Excellence in Women’s Leadership by Women and Leadership Australia. She was also the 2018 recipient of the nation’s top free speech honour, the Voltaire Award, given by Australia’s oldest human rights organisation, Liberty Victoria.

Magda completed a Bachelor of Arts at Melbourne University, majoring in Philosophy and Fine Arts. After early training with the ABC-TV cult show *D-Generation*, Magda shot to fame in 1989 in response to the huge variety of comic characters she created. For three decades she has been a household name as one of Australia’s most loved and respected actors, writers and producers. She was a key player in some of this country’s most successful, iconic and groundbreaking shows – *Kath and Kim*, *Fast Forward*, *D-Generation*, and *Big Girl’s Blouse*. She had an emotional journey when the SBS television show *Who Do You Think You Are?* did a story on her family’s heritage.

Magda’s film credits include *Babe*, *The Crocodile Hunter: Collision Course*, alongside the late Steve Irwin and *The Golden Compass*, with Nicole Kidman and Daniel Craig. Australian films include *Dr Plonk* directed by Rolf de Heer, *Bran Nu Dae* by Rachel Perkins and starring alongside Ronan Keating in the musical comedy *Goddess* in 2013. In 2017 she starred opposite Michael Caton in Ben Elton’s *Three Summers*.

Magda’s many stage appearances include hit productions of *Guys and Dolls*, the late Nora Ephron’s *Love, Loss and What I Wore*, The Melbourne Theatre Company production of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, and the national tour of *Grease: The Arena Spectacular* with John Farnham. In 2012 she performed alongside Geoffrey Rush and Hugh Sheridan in Simon Phillip’s *A Funny Thing Happened on The Way to The Forum*.

More recently she has become a best-selling, award-winning author, following the release of her internationally acclaimed memoir *Reckoning*. Released late 2015, *Reckoning* won a slew of literary awards including winner of the 2016 ABIA Book of the Year, Biography of the Year, Booksellers Choice Award, NSW Premier’s Literary Awards, the Indie Award for Non-Fiction; Winner Victorian Community History Award and was shortlisted for several more awards including the National Biography Award. Relating the story of her father’s activities as an assassin in Nazi-occupied Poland, Szubanski’s story of intergenerational trauma, migration and coming-of-age as a young gay woman received rave reviews.

Over the years Magda has campaigned for several charities including Very Special Kids, Starlight Foundation, Oxfam, and Royal Children’s Hospital.

SOPHIA FORREST as Cathy Payne

Sophia Forrest is one of Australia’s most exciting new performers. Sophia trained at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) graduating in 2016. There she performed in various productions including *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, which toured to Hong Kong and *Coriolanus*, which toured to the Hydra Festival in Greece.

Almost immediately after graduating from WAAPA, Sophia landed her first TV role on the hit Nine Network show *Love Child* as Debbie Hampshire. From there she has featured in the independent film *Reaching Distance* and the highly anticipated *Aquaman* Directed by James Wan. She was recently seen on stage in Black Swan State Theatre Company’s production of *Let the Right One In*.

ANNELIESE APPS as Brigid Payne

Anneliese is an acting graduate of the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts. Her theatre credits are diverse, having played roles such as a young Mary Warren in *The Crucible* to an elderly and neurotic Aunt Pullet in *The Mill on the Floss*. It was her first experience playing Lady Macbeth that catalyzed Anneliese's passion for performing Shakespeare.

Since that role, she has had the pleasure of performing as Hero in *Much Ado About Nothing* and Volumnia in *Coriolanus*. In her last year of WAAPA in 2016, Anneliese won the prestigious Sally Burton Award for her self-directed performance as Rosalind from *As you Like It*.

Anneliese made her television debut playing the role of Beth Ellis in *Home and Away*. *Ride Like a Girl* is her feature film debut.

BROOKE SATCHWELL as Therese Payne

Brooke Satchwell has been working as an actress since 1994. Her first role was on *Neighbours*, where she won a Logie Award for Most Popular New Talent and a People's Choice Award for Most Popular Teen Idol. She turned her hand to theatre and starred in a production of *The Caribbean Tempest* and later *The Graduate*. She returned to television with a regular role on the series *Water Rats* followed by *White Collar Blue*. All this before she was 21 years old.

Brooke was cast in the acclaimed miniseries *Tripping Over*, which shot in the UK, and then the telemovie *Small Claims*. She has also starred in Fox8's *Dangerous* opposite Joel Edgerton. Disney cast her for the female lead in Sue Brooks' Australian comedy feature *Subdivision*. Audiences also enjoyed seeing her back on stage in *The Clean House* for Black Swan and QTC. In 2012 Brooke joined the cast of Seven's *Packed To the Rafters*. Following this, Brooke was cast in the lead role of Grace in *Wonderland* (2013-15), which ran for three seasons. During this time, Brooke completed three seasons of *Dirty Laundry* for ABC1 as co-panelist to Lawrence Mooney.

Brooke also appeared in *Black Comedy* for the ABC. She appeared in the web series *Footballer Wants a Wife*, *Bleak* for ABC TV, the feature film *What Time is My Heart* and *Jack Irish* with Guy Pearce. Brooke also returned to the stage in the Ensemble Theatre's *Jack of Hearts*, directed by David Williamson. In 2017 Brooke toured nationally in the UK's Lunchbox production of comedy *The Play That Goes Wrong* in the lead role of Sandra. Following this she has returned to television playing Ally in *Mr Inbetween* directed by Nash Edgerton, and in *Dead Lucky* directed by David Caesar for SBS. Brooke has appeared on *Play School* to the delight of children and parents alike.

In 2014 Brooke narrated *Crack Up*, a heart-warming documentary following a group of Australians participating in a comedy course aimed at people with mental illness and breaking the stigma surrounding mental health. After this project Brooke also worked alongside Northern Pictures as a narrator on *Blue* and *Employable Me*. Brooke has worked as a camera operator on documentaries, produced short films and continues to develop her own projects. In 2015 Brooke was asked to join a select group of high profile Australians on ITV & Network Ten's *First Anzacs* reading the letters and diaries of men and women from World War I.

Brooke is a ceaseless campaigner for causes she is passionate about and has been an ambassador for the RSPCA, World Vision and the Make A Wish Foundation. She continues to be an ongoing campaigner for Make Poverty History and The Bottled Water Alliance, and is a donor and advocate of the Sunrise Orphanage Siem Riep. As an ambassador for Save the Children, Brooke confronted her fear of heights by abseiling 36 floors of the Gold Tower in 2012 and again in 2013. Brooke was also part of the "Don't DIS My Appearance" campaign launch, supporting the work of the Butterfly Foundation.

KATIE CASTLES as Margaret Payne

Katie graduated in theatre at the University of Southern Queensland in 2008 and moved to London to perform in independent theatre and stand-up comedy. She then relocated to Melbourne, and performed stand up shows in the 2013 and 2014 Melbourne International Comedy Festivals and was chosen to perform for Triple J on the 2014 Good Az Friday lineup. Since then she has worked in commercials and voice over, with her debut on television in 2018 as the irrepressible sex worker Mullen in the award-winning series *Sexy Herpes*. Her role as Margaret Payne in *Ride Like A Girl* is her feature film debut.

Katie's ultimate goal is to work collaboratively with like-minded people, and write and direct her own comedy, drama and documentaries, knowing that media is a powerful platform to push the boundaries of societal norms.

VERONICA THOMAS as Bernadette Payne

A Melbourne local, Veronica has been an avid performer since the age of seven. An accomplished dancer and cellist from an early age, she then found her calling in acting, performing in various productions and short films, before being accepted into the Victoria College of the Arts.

While training, Veronica performed in the Melbourne International Comedy Festival and the Adelaide Fringe, and sustained her interest in dance, teaching casual classes.

Among her theatre credits are Ruth in *Cosi*, Perdita in *A Winter's Tale*, Alister Smith's *Hose*, and *Himmelweg* performed at Theatreworks, and the title role in *Alice in Wonderland*.

Her screen experience includes a lead role in the international award-winning *Bruce*, *Sexy Herpes* and *The Dr Blake Murder Mysteries* on ABC. She has appeared in television and radio commercials for RACV, iSelect, ANZ, Medibank, and Dennis Family Homes.

ZARA ZOE as Maree Payne

Zara Zoe's acting credits include starring in the Amblin pilot *Lumen* for TNT, having been selected by Spielberg to lead the series; the award-winning independent feature *Skin Deep*; the critically-acclaimed *Chasing Clouds*; as well as *The Green Swan*, *Letting Go* and Hayley Kendall's *Blood Sisters*. She has had rave reviews on stage for her performances in *Killer Joe*, *Reality Bytes* and *The Three Sisters* among others.

Zara studied at the Talent Development High School in Sydney Australia and then was one of the youngest people to be accepted into the Actors Centre of Australia (ACA) where former graduate Hugh Jackman is the proud Patron.

AARON GLENANE as Patrick Payne

One of Australia's most promising young actors, the multi-talented Aaron Glenane has recently completed filming the upcoming feature *Danger Close: The Battle of Long Tan* directed by Kriv Stenders. Heralded for his performance as Chook in the critically acclaimed feature *Killing Ground*, which had its world premiere at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival, Aaron also appeared in the political thriller *Truth* starring Academy Award winners Robert Redford and Cate Blanchett. Gaining national and international attention for his performance as Gus in *Drift* alongside Sam Worthington and Xavier Samuel, Aaron's other feature credits include Bucko in *The Black Balloon* starring Toni Collette and Larry in *Concealed*.

Acclaimed for his outstanding depiction of Mushroom Records founder Michael Gudisnki in the special event miseries *Molly* and his performance as Reg Lumley in the internationally acclaimed *Picnic At Hanging Rock*

alongside Natalie Dormer and Yael Stone, Aaron also recently completed filming for Nash Edgerton's upcoming *Mr Inbetween*.

His television credits include the award winning World War I miniseries *Deadline Gallipoli* alongside Sam Worthington, Hugh Dance and Charles Dance, *Wham Bam Thank You Ma'am*, *Soul Mates*, *Old School*, *Puberty Blues*, *Janet King*, *Tricky Business*, *Home and Away*, *Packed to the Rafters* and *Rescue Special Ops*. Aaron also appeared in the UKTV telemovie *Dripping in Chocolate* alongside David Wenham.

An accomplished stage actor and dancer, Aaron's numerous stage credits include Darlinghurst Theatre Company's *Silent Night* and *Ride & Fourplay*, The Old Fitz Theatre's *Orphans* and The Kings Collective's *Groesome Playground Injuries* as well as *Journey's End* and *The Boy From Oz* alongside Hugh Jackman. Aaron was also a key motion capture artist on George Miller's *Happy Feet 2* and a member of Dein Perry's *Tap Dogs*.

HENRY NIXON as Andrew Payne

Henry Nixon is an award winning actor and voiceover Artist. His film credits include: *Happy Feet*, *Somersault*, *Noise*, *Triangle*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *The Black Balloon*, *A Month Of Sundays* and *Little Monsters*. His television credits include playing the role of 2nd Lieutenant Hugh Corrigan in the HBO/Dreamworks/Playtone Mini Series *The Pacific*, produced by Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks. Other TV credits include *NCIS*, *Underbelly*, *All Saints*, *Mcleod's Daughters*, *Rake* and *East West 101*. In 2016 Henry appeared as Snr Constable Fergus Mcfadden in the Foxtel/ Amazon Prime Mini Series *The Kettering Incident*, for which he received the Silver Logie for Most Outstanding Actor at the 2017 Logie Awards. Henry has been very active as a voiceover artist since 2010, having voiced major campaigns for many major brands including: McDonalds, Mistubishi, Nissan, NIB and IGA.

SUMMER NORTH as Young Michelle Payne

Ride Like a Girl is Summer's first venture into acting. She is part of the "Strive Creative Thinkers Program" at her school and up until now, has been concentrating on her education. She is an avid horse lover and rides in her school equestrian program, as well as at home on her beloved pony. Since being involved in *Ride Like A Girl*, Summer is now keen to expand on her acting career.

SHANE BOURNE as Trevor Smart

Shane Bourne is one of Australia's most versatile and best-loved comedians. He appeared on *New Faces* in 1972 and from there he appeared in a variety of variety shows including the *Graham Kennedy* and *Paul Hogan* shows. He also entertained in clubs both in Australia and Britain. Shane's career took off in the 1980s when he became a regular on many television programs in diverse roles in comedy and drama. His television credits include *Cop Shop*, *Are You Being Served*, *Prisoner*, *The Daryl Somers Show*, *The Flying Doctors*, *Bingles*, *Blue Heelers*, *MDA*, *City Homicide*, *Tricky Business* and the telemovie *Tricky Business*. He has hosted numerous TV shows including *Thank God You're Here*, *Dancing with the Stars* and the AACTA Awards. His previous feature film roles are *Kokoda: 39th Battalion* and *The Dressmaker*.

CREW BIOGRAPHIES

RICHARD KEDDIE – SENIOR PRODUCER

Richard Keddie is a producer/director/writer who has had an extensive career across movies, TV drama, documentaries, political TV campaigns and social media work. He has written and directed hundreds of social justice ads including the entire *Your Rights At Work* Campaign that dislodged John Howard from The Lodge in 2007; as well as various ALP Federal election campaigns and launches; teacher union campaigns; and extensive work on environmental issues including the WWF campaign to save the Great Barrier Reef and the fight to save the Coorong and Murray Darling Basin. Richard was also shortlisted for the Australian Conservationist of the Year back in the 90's.

In the communications business he has worked closely with a number of Australian leaders including Bob Hawke, Julia Gillard, Kevin Rudd, Steve Bracks and John Brumby.

His film and TV dramas and documentaries have garnered numerous AFI, Logie and Rockie awards. His main credits include *Oddball* (top 25 highest Australian box office gross of all time), *Alias Ruby Blade* (Berlin Film Festival Cinema Peace Award for Most Valuable Documentary), *Goddess* (with Ronan Keating and Magda Szubanski), *Little Fish* (Cate Blanchett, Sam Neill and Hugo Weaving; winner of five AFI Awards and highest Australian box office 2005), *Hawke* (winner AFI Best TV Drama), *Curtin* (winner Logie for Best TV Drama), *After the Deluge* (winner Banff Rockie Award Best TV Movie; as well as AFI Best TV Drama and Logie Best TV Drama), *My Brother Jack* (winner AFI Best TV Drama) and *Waiting at the Royal* (winner of two AFI Awards and the Banff Rockie for Best Telemovie).

Richard has served on numerous boards including the Federal Government Board of Screen Australia, St Michael's Grammar School, and Film Victoria.

RACHEL GRIFFITHS – DIRECTOR/PRODUCER

One of Australia's most prolific thespians, Rachel Griffiths makes her directorial debut with *Ride Like A Girl*. She is an Academy Award Nominated and multi-award-winning actress. After a successful career on the Australian stage, Rachel Griffiths burst onto the international scene in 1994 with P.J. Hogan's much-loved feature film *Muriel's Wedding*. Her film credits since then include *My Best Friend's Wedding* alongside Julia Roberts, *The Rookie*, *The Hard Word* with Guy Pearce, *Blow*, *Step Up*, *Burning Man*, *Ned Kelly*, *Patrick*, *Saving Mr Banks* with Tom Hanks, *Beautiful Kate*, *Hilary & Jackie* in a performance which earned her an Academy Award Nomination, and *Mammal*, which premiered at Sundance Film Festival 2016. Most recently Rachel starred alongside Hugo Weaving in Mel Gibson's *Hacksaw Ridge* to critical acclaim.

In television, Rachel earned a Golden Globe for her portrayal of Brenda in the critically acclaimed and long running HBO series *Six Feet Under*. She also received an Emmy Award Nomination for her role in fellow US series *Brothers & Sisters*. Other television credits include the HBO/NBC series *Camp* and the Julian Assange biopic *Underground*, which screened at the Toronto International Film Festival, *Paper Giants: Magazine Wars* and *Deadline Gallipoli* for Foxtel alongside Sam Worthington, Hugh Dancy and Charles Dance. In 2017 she starred alongside Guy Pearce in ABC's *When We Rise*. She can most recently be seen in Subtext Picture's four-part miniseries *Dead Lucky*.

SUSIE MONTAGUE – PRODUCER

Susie Montague is a Melbourne Based businesswoman whose interests are in property investment and development. She has a passion for thoroughbred horse racing, owning and racing globally and enjoys having a role in filmmaking within Australia. The Montague family are in the agricultural fruit industry with orchards scattered across the country. They remain Australia's pre-eminent fruit growers. Susie is especially passionate in supporting women in business and sport. She is a mother and grandmother and enjoys traveling with her husband Ray.

ANDREW KNIGHT – WRITER

Andrew Knight is one of Australia's most prolific and successful writer/producers. His career spans more than 35 years. He has written across a wide range of genres – everything from comedy to high drama, mini-series, series television to features. He has been show-runner on some 15 series and is viewed as instrumental in the creation and success of some of the country's biggest comedy hits. He was head writer, producer and executive producer of hits shows *D Generation*, *Fast Forward* and *Full Frontal*. In 1989 he formed Artist Services Pty Ltd with Steve Vizard and it became one of Australia's most successful production companies.

In the early 1990s he moved back into drama and created, wrote and produced many memorable films and television shows. Some of his career highlights include *Rake* (now in its fifth series), *Jack Irish* (three telemovies and two series), *SeaChange* (the highest rating show in the country at the time), *The Broken Shore*, *After the Deluge*, *My Brother Jack*, *Kangaroo Palace*, *Tripping Over*, *The Fast Lane* and several others.

He co-wrote the feature films *Spotswood*, *Siam Sunset*, *The Water Diviner*, *Ali's Wedding* and most recently the Academy Award-nominated *Hacksaw Ridge*. Both *The Water Diviner* and *Hacksaw Ridge* won the AFI Best Picture award in consecutive years. He has won many other industry awards including AFIs, AACTAs, Logies, AWG Screenwriting awards, SPAA awards and various international film awards. He was a nominee at the 2017 BAFTAs for Best Adapted Screenplay for *Hacksaw Ridge*. In 2014 Knight became the recipient of the industry's highest honour, the AACTA Longford Lyell Award for lifetime achievement, and in 2017 was also awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Australian Writers Guild.

He has no hobbies and several children as a result.

ELISE MCCREDIE – WRITER

Elise McCredie is an award winning director, screenwriter and actor. She has written and directed extensively for television and has been nominated for four Australian Writers' Guild AWGIE Awards, winning for *Sunshine*, the AACTA winning miniseries that she is writer and co-creator of. She has written two seasons of the AACTA and Emmy winning ABC series, *Nowhere Boys* and the new season of *Jack Irish*, both for Easy Tiger Productions. She has also written for *Secret City*. Elise is currently developing her original crime mystery series *Overflow*, and her original drama *Stateless*, produced by Cate Blanchett and Tony Ayres.

Elise's first feature *Strange Fits Of Passion* on which she was writer/director was selected for the 1999 Cannes Film Festival. It received three AFI nominations, an IF nomination, an AWGIE nomination and was nominated for the Bronze Horse at The Stockholm Film Festival. *Ride Like a Girl*, co-written with Andrew Knight, is Elise's second feature. She is currently writing her third feature *The Boat Builder* for Nordic Production Company SF Studios and developing television projects in the UK.

Elise has also worked as an actor for the past 20 years, appearing in numerous television series.

MARTIN McGRATH ACS – DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Martin McGrath's career took off when he shot Jocelyn Moorhouse's *Proof* and the hugely successful *Muriel's Wedding* two years later. He was nominated for the AFI Best Achievement in Cinematography for his work on both *Children of the Revolution* and *Blackrock* and won an AFI Award for *Passion* starring Judy Davis and Richard Roxburgh. His other film credits include *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*, *A Little Bit of Soul*, *Swimming Upstream* (which earned him the ACS Award), *Footy Legends* with Claudia Karvan, and *Irresistible*, starring Susan Sarandon and Emily Blunt. Martin shot second unit on a number of US productions filmed in Australia, including *Peter Pan*, *Son of the Mask*, and *Star Wars III: Revenge of the Sith*. Recent feature films include *Around the Block* directed by Sarah Spillane and starring Christina Ricci, which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2013; *UNindian*, an Australian/Indian co-production directed by Anupam Sharma; and *Dance Academy: The Movie*, which recently won Martin the ACS Gold Award for Best Feature – Cinema.

Martin's television credits include the locally produced *Packed to the Rafters* for the Seven Network, *Dance Academy* for ABC3, *My Place* for the ABC, TV1 real crime drama series *Killing Time*, ABC courtroom drama *Rake*, and telemovies *Jack Irish* and *The Broken Shore* with Essential Media. His other credits include kung-fu comedy series *Maximum Choppage*, Australian/UK co-production *Banished*, ABC3 children's series *Ready For This*, *Blue Murder*, *Blackjack*, *Valentine's Day*, and the Golden Globe-nominated *On the Beach*. Martin also shot the docudramas *The Last Confession of Alexander Pearce* and *The Extraordinary Tale of William Buckley* for the ABC. Martin won two ACS Awards and the 2015 AACTA Award for Best Cinematography in Television for *The Broken Shore* for Essential Media and the ABC. Martin has shot the children's series *Ta Da!* and US television series *Difficult People* for Hulu. He most recently shot the telemovie *Riot* for Werner Film Productions, and is in production on a documentary TV series *Revelation*, about the investigation into abuses in the Catholic Church.

CARRIE KENNEDY – PRODUCTION DESIGNER

After completing a Fine Art degree in Sculpture at RMIT in Melbourne Australia, Kennedy trained in London as a scenic artist and model maker, which led her to Production Design. Carrie has more than 25 years experience in the Film and TV industry.

Feature films include *The Castle*, *The Extra*, *The Dish* and *Oddball*. Among her television projects Kennedy has designed all five seasons of *The Doctor Blake Mysteries*. She has also designed for *Offspring* and *Tangle*, Chris Lilley's *Angry Boys*, *We Can Be Heroes* and *Summer Heights High*. Kennedy co-designed the telemovies *Hawke*, *INXS Never Tear Us Apart*, and *Molly*. Her work has been nominated for several awards including an AACTA and APDG for best production design. She recently designed the six-part series *Bloom* for Stan and is now working on the TV series *Hungry Ghosts* for SBS and Matchbox.

A practicing visual artist, Carrie exhibits her work regularly.

CAPPI IRELAND – COSTUME DESIGNER

Cappi Ireland is one of Australia's leading and most sought-after costume designers. She has worked for some of the best directors in Australia on some of the most awarded projects. Her film and television credits are impressive and varied. Cappi is currently working on the feature *The Dry*, reuniting her with director Robert Connolly. She recently finished work on *Glitch 3*, the third series of the acclaimed drama *Glitch* by Matchbox Pictures/NBCU, co-produced by Netflix. Cappi designed the first series in 2014 and second series in 2017. In 2016 Cappi designed Matchbox Pictures/NBCU TV series, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* and *Newton's Law*, an eight-part ABC series by the producers of *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries*.

In 2015 Cappi designed the costumes on Garth Davies' film, *Lion*. For her work on *Lion* she received the 2017

AACTA Award for Best Costume Design for a Feature Film, the 2017 APDG Award for Best Costume Design for a Feature Film and a nomination for Excellence in Contemporary Film at the 19th Costume Designers Guild Awards (USA). In 2015 Cappi also designed Matchbox Pictures/NBCU TV miniseries *Barracuda*, for which she has also received a 2017 APDG Award Nomination for Costume Design in a TV series. In 2014 Cappi worked on *Gallipoli*, an epic seven-part TV mini-series for Channel 9/Endemol, which garnered her a 2015 APDG award for Best Costume in a TV series. In 2012 Cappi completed work on Stuart Beattie's, *I Frankenstein* making her mark in big budget film territory.

Other film credits include *Cut Snake*, *The Mule* and *The Rover*, which reunited her with award winning directors David Michod and Tony Ayres. Cappi has also designed costumes for acclaimed films such as, *Animal Kingdom*, *Oranges and Sunshine*, *Balibo* and the multi award winning TV drama, *The Slap*.

Cappi has received in total seven AFI/AACTA nominations, and three AFI/AACTA wins. *The Home Song Stories* directed by Tony Ayres awarded Cappi with her first AFI Award for best Costume Design in 2007. She also won an AFI in 2008 for Best Costume Design for Jonathan Ogilvie's *The Tender Hook*.

CHIARA TRIPODI – HAIR AND MAKEUP DESIGNER

Chiara Tripodi is an Emmy award winning make-up artist with a long list of credits in film and television, Australian and international, period and contemporary work. She won the Primetime Emmy in 2010 for Outstanding Makeup for a Miniseries or Movie (Non-Prosthetic) for *The Pacific*.

Her film credits include *Upgrade*, *Berlin Syndrome*, *The Hunger*, *Don't Be Afraid of the Dark*, *Where the Wild Things Are*, *The Great Raid*, *Moulin Rouge!*, *The Thin Red Line*, *Paradise Road* and many more. Her television credits include *Jack Irish*, *Sisters*, *Offspring*, *The Warriors*, *The Katerin Show*, *Glitch*, *The Beautiful Lie*, *Mary: The Making of a Princess*, *Gallipoli*, *Puberty Blues*, *Rush*, *The Pacific*, *Love My Way*, and many productions from the 1990s such as *Murder Call*, *Bordertown*, *The Leaving of Liverpool*, *Brides of Christ* and *Police Rescue*.

JILL BILCOCK – EDITOR

Jill Bilcock is one of the world's leading editors, working with directing heavyweights such as Sam Mendes, Baz Luhrmann and Fred Schepisi. An award-winning editor at an early age in Australia, Jill rose through the ranks breaking through to the lucrative American market in the mid 1990s. She is now one of the most sought-after editors in the world and in an envious position of being able to pick and choose her projects due to overwhelming demand. Her strength remains her remarkable diversity in projects she chooses spanning many genres as she continues to pleasantly surprise her audience. A graduate of the Swinburne College of Technology, Jill won the 2002 American Cinema Editors Eddie Award for Best Edited Comedy Or Musical Feature Film for *Moulin Rouge!*, for which she also received an Academy Award nomination for Best Film Editing. She has been nominated four times for the BAFTA Award for Best Editing. Three of these nominations were for the first three films directed by Baz Luhrmann – *Strictly Ballroom* (1992), *Romeo + Juliet* (1996), and *Moulin Rouge!* (2002). The fourth BAFTA nomination was for *Elizabeth* (1998), directed by Shekhar Kapur and starring Cate Blanchett. She has won the AFI Award for Best Editor five times, as well as the Byron Kennedy Award in 1995 and the AFI International Award for Excellence in Filmmaking in 2006. Jill won the IF Living Legend Award in 2003, and in 2018 was awarded the Companion of the Order of Australia.

Jill's other credits include *The Dressmaker*, *Red Dog*, *Blessed*, *The Libertine*, *Japanese Story*, *Road to Perdition*, *How to Make an American Quilt*, *The Dish*, *Head On*, *Muriel's Wedding*, *Evil Angels* and *Driving Miss Daisy*.

The documentaries *Jill Bilcock: The Art Of Film Editing* for ABC TV and the cinema-released *Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible*, both in 2017, explore her life and work.

MARIA PAPOUTSIS – EDITOR

Maria Papoutsis is a Melbourne based Editor working across a wide variety of genres in both short and long form.

Originally from Sydney Maria first gained valuable experience in the industry at boutique Post Production Facility Guillotine where she cut her teeth as an Assistant Editor on a wide range of projects from short films to high-end television commercials. It was here that Maria first began her mentorship with renowned Editor Alexandre de Franceschi (ASE), and was given the opportunity to assist and help assemble Feature-length films *Tracks* directed by John Curran and *Dead Europe* directed by Tony Krawitz, followed by two seasons of Jane Campion's Emmy Award winning BBC mini-series *Top of The Lake*, (co-directed by Garth Davis and Ariel Kleiman respectively).

After several years learning the craft and developing her storytelling skills over a range of formats such as short films, documentaries and music videos. Maria then went on to work as 1st Assistant Editor and VFX Editor on the Academy Award nominated film *Lion* by Garth Davis and eventually advanced to the role of Associate Editor on his second feature, *Mary Magdalene*.

Most recently Maria was fortunate to progress to the role of Editor on Rachel Griffiths' feature length directorial debut, *Ride Like A Girl* where she received mentorship whilst working alongside one of her lifelong heroes; the hugely influential editor Jill Bilcock (ACE ASE).

DAVID HIRSCHFELDER – COMPOSER

David Hirschfelder is recognised globally as one of Australia's most distinguished screen-composers, having garnered Academy Award nominations for Scott Hicks' *Shine* and Shekhar Kapur's *Elizabeth*. He is the winner of two BAFTA awards for *Strictly Ballroom* and *Elizabeth*, the AFI Award for Best Original Score for *Shine* and the AACTA Award for Best Original Score for *The Railway Man*. He is also the recipient of APRA Music Awards for Best Film Score for *Shine*, *Elizabeth* (which also won the ARIA Music Award for Best Original Soundtrack), *Better Than Sex* and the APRA-AGSC Screen Music Award for *The Children of Huang Shi*. In 2002 David was awarded the International Achievement Award at the inaugural APRA-AGSC Screen Music Awards.

David's many other film scores include Russell Crowe's *The Water Diviner*, which was nominated for an AACTA in 2014, won the 2014 FCCA Regal Cinema Award for Best Music Score, and also APRA Soundtrack of the Year Award in November 2015; Jocelyn Moorhouse's *The Dressmaker*, which was nominated for the AACTA Best Original Score and APRA-AGSC Screen Music Awards for Best Soundtrack and Feature Film Score of the Year. Other recent credits include scores for *A Few Less Men*, *Dance Academy: The Movie* and *In Like Flynn*. His extensive television scores include *Riot*, *House of Bond*, *Banished* and the *BlackJack* telemovies.

Other works include *Eternity* for orchestra, choir and 1000 tap-dancers, commissioned for the Opening Ceremony of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games; *Mixed Doubles* for string quartet, commissioned for the 2004 Adelaide Arts Festival; *Branches of Vayu* for trombone, two pianos and percussion, commissioned for the 2011 Melbourne Symphony Orchestra Chamber Series; and *To a Child* for soprano and string quartet, part of a song-cycle set to ten poems by Judith Wright, recorded and released in 2016 by Katie Noonan and The Brodsky Quartet.

End Credits