

# IN CONVERSATION: SHANE JACOBSON

Though he'll forever be known for his brilliant comic performance in the smash hit, *Kenny*, SHANE JACOBSON is the literal jack-of-all-trades. Currently in the middle of writing a book "about the first half of his life", this born performer has been a standup comic, corporate speaker, rock'n'roll roadie, stage planner, lighting expert, and pyrotechnic consultant... just to name a few. He's appeared on stage opposite Geoffrey Rush in *The Drowsy Chaperone* for The Melbourne Theatre Company, and sang and danced in the highly successful 2008 revival of the classic musical, *Guys & Dolls*. This rusted-on car lover was also one of the hosts of the Australian TV show, *Top Gear*, and has appeared in the films, *Newcastle*, *Cactus* and *Charlie & Boots*, as well as providing the voice for Santa Claus in the animated film, *Santa's Apprentice*. This month, Shane can be seen on DVD in the charming local drama, *SURVIVING GEORGIA*, where he gets to romance the lovely Holly Valance.

**So Shane, how did you enjoy playing the romantic lead in *Surviving Georgia*? I know you like doing different things in your career – was that another nice challenge for you?**

"I would like to consider myself a romantic, and my partner seems pretty happy! It was just nice to be a part of a film like this. Comedy definitely wasn't the focus of *Surviving Georgia* at all, though it has nice light moments. Just to work with Pia Miranda and Holly Valance was lovely. They're great people... and Holly is just a very good bloke that happens to be a very good looking woman! She's just like one of my mates! And Pia is one of the nicest people on planet earth. We had a ball making that, but everyone worked very hard. [Producer/co-star] Spencer McLaren and the directors, Sandra [Sciberras] and Kate [Whitbread], worked incredibly hard to get this thing happening. They had trouble with financing, but they got it off the ground, and for that, they should be applauded. It was a lovely project. When the DVD comes out, I'm buying it for my mum! She'll love it!"

**You've been acting and performing from a very early age. Is that something that you've always wanted to do?**

"I was surrounded by it right from the beginning. My mum taught dancers, so from the age of five or six, I was on a bus with 48 dancers travelling around country towns. My dad came from a carnival background, and they were basically carnies folk. My dad used to do standup comedy, and my brother played the drums, and my sisters danced. If I wasn't doing it too, it would have been weird."

**Where does acting fit into all of that for you? Or do you see it as just part of the greater sphere of performing?**

"Acting, dancing, singing and entertaining was the thing that I wanted to do all along. I thought of that as the spine of what I wanted to do."

But I know a lot of people, and none of them own a big house, or are financially stable, from acting. My dad would say the same thing to my brother [Clayton Jacobson, who co-wrote and directed *Kenny*] when he wanted to do directing. Dad would say, 'I know a lot of people – pilots, doctors... I've met them all – but as far as a successful director, well, I don't think that I've met one, or even met anyone that even knows one, so it must be pretty hard. You better really want to do it, or make sure that you work hard because it must be pretty difficult.' But acting was all that I ever wanted to do, and if someone was going to pay me just to do that from day one, I would have never got distracted and done all the other things that I've done throughout my life. Even now, in terms of getting projects up, I'm not going to sit back. It's not in my nature. I shouldn't be sitting back at home in a lounge chair with the opinion that someone should bring me my next script! You're not always going to be the favourite, plus I always want to be busy. I like to create, and I like to create from a nuts and bolts sense as well."

**Can you tell me about the TV presenting with *Top Gear*? Where does that fit in with the acting and creating, and everything else?**

"It's a bit like being a parent of four kids, you know? No one is taking any of them away; I'm just not going to let it happen! You've heard every cliché, but let's just boil this down until we get to the broth – I just like them all! They're just different. It's like meat pies, cheese, chocolate, and strawberries. Do you have to choose? Can't I just make that decision when I get up? When I get to next week, I might feel like a pie, but hey, I might feel like strawberries!"

**In Australia, it's obviously tough for actors, but do you worry about doing something like *Top Gear*? That it might change people's perceptions of you as an actor?**

"You do have to be very mindful of that, because as we know, a lot of things are about perception. *Top Gear* was essentially me being documented doing my hobby. I don't really consider myself the presenter of a car show, and I won't be doing it forever."

**You've also got the TV mini-series, *Beaconsfield*, coming up, where you play trapped Tasmanian miner, Brant Webb...**

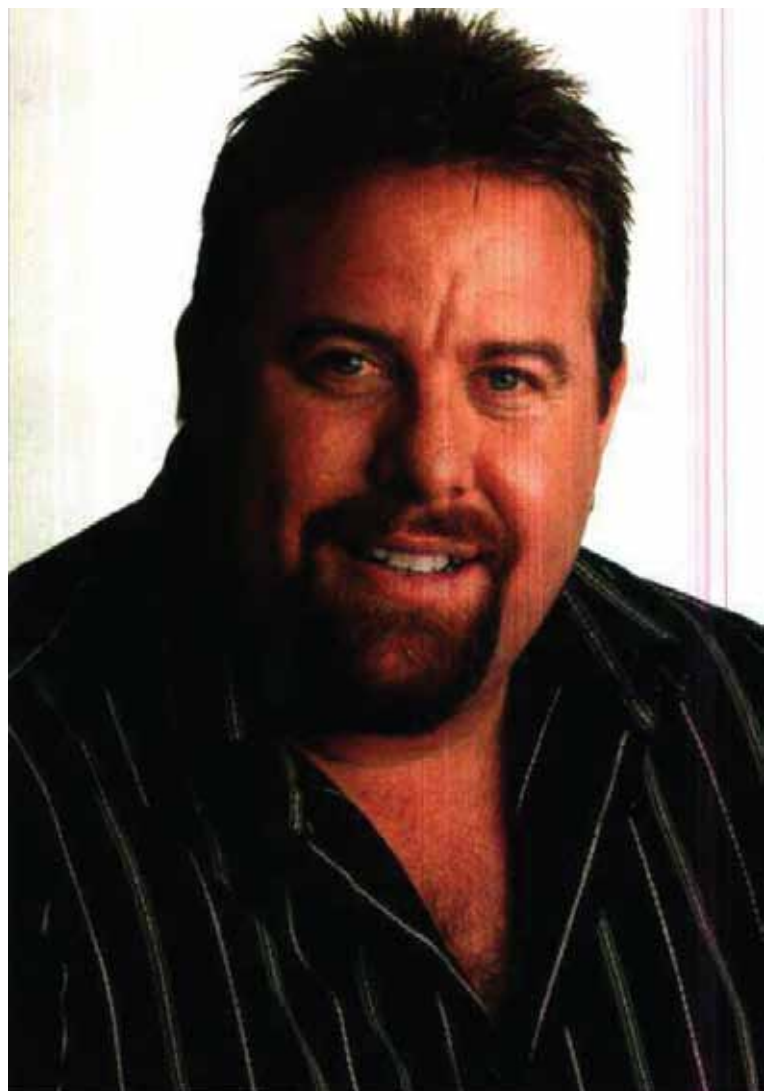
"That was amazing – without a doubt, that was one of the most challenging acting roles that I've done yet. They can all be challenging, but it took a lot from me. It was emotionally challenging. I've never been so affected by a role... ever. It was hard not to bring some of it home, and by that, I just mean that I would come home, and if I'd watched the news and there was a story about a kid who had gone missing or someone who had been hurt, I found myself tearing up. I can be emotional anyway – anyone that's a parent can – but I was very raw emotionally. I wasn't playing a character: I was playing Brant Webb, who is alive and down in Tassie as we speak as a result of the work of some extraordinary people who risked their lives in the same way that he did. It's pretty powerful stuff."

**And you're actually appearing in *The Bourne Legacy*?**

"Yeah, that's actually one that I can't talk about, but I was shooting a bit of that in the states this year, and I've got a bit more to do."

**You've doing a weight loss campaign with Jenny Craig. What sort of response have you been getting? Are people like, 'Don't do it! We like you the way you are!' Has it been like that?**

"If I had to boil it down to one question that people are almost asking, it's 'Is funny stored in fat cells?' Are they suggesting that I won't be funny? I don't think that funny is stored in fat cells, but people do get that idea that I'm just that big loveable guy or that big funny guy. There's an emotion that comes with that. You know, would Santa be as much fun if he was thin? But people like Jerry Lewis and Jerry Seinfeld and Robin Williams can prove that comedy is, in fact, just comedy. Whatever can make someone laugh, can make someone laugh. It hasn't been a big concern of mine, because I do first



and foremost, above everything, consider myself an actor. Acting is definitely the thing that I want to be known for. Comedy is something that people might expect me to do first and foremost, but that doesn't necessarily mean that it's something that I aim for. I guess that if someone said, 'Alright Shane, you have to choose one title and do one thing in your life from this day forward,' my answer would be to act. So from that point of view, losing the weight might just bring me different roles. But look, I'm still not a small guy! If I'm walking down the street, people aren't bumping into me, going, 'Get out of the way, twiggly!' I don't get sent scripts that now say, 'A stick-like character enters frame...' That's not happening!"

**Are you and Clayton astounded at how successful *Kenny* was? I know that you guys worked really hard on the marketing and did everything from the ground up, but are you just**

**astounded by how successful the film and the character have been?**

"Yes, we're still absolutely astounded. Clayton always says that no one sets out to make a bad film, the same as no one sets out to raise a bad child. You undoubtedly set out to make a great project that you want people to enjoy. But you can never do. I went on tour promoting *Kenny* for seven months, and it is without a doubt the thing that has afforded me the chance to act how I wanted my whole life. It is now my full time job. At the moment, I don't have to worry about landing on one of those cushions and mattresses that I laid around me in the form of other skills. It's amazing how much people still quote *Kenny* to me, or yell out, 'Hey, Kenny!' when I'm walking down the street. Without a doubt, Clayton and myself have to forever thank him – the character, *Kenny* – for our careers."

***Surviving Georgia* is available on DVD now. For more on Shane Jacobson, head to [www.shanejacobson.com.au](http://www.shanejacobson.com.au).**

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