

SHANE JACOBSON

Although he found fame as the lovable Kenny, this talented 39-year-old comedian/dancer/singer/actor just wants to be known as a top bloke

I'm a boy from Melbourne's western suburbs. I was the kid at school always trying to make the other kids laugh. Sometimes I made the teachers laugh and sometimes I made them frown.

My family are entertaining to each other. I have a dad who made me laugh, and a mum who made me laugh and taught me how to love. I have sisters who danced and a brother who was already directing when I was a kid.

My dad said, "If you're going to have a girlie earring and learn to tap dance, you probably should learn to fight." He's been a boxing trainer for more than 50 years. My brother, Clayton, with whom I wrote *Kenny*, just finished a short film on Dad called *The Planner*.

I left school and didn't think I'd learnt enough. I wanted to feel a bit smarter and learn more, so I went to college to study accounting, law and English. After six months, I thought, what the hell am I doing here? So I left.

I worked in credit-card investigations when I was about 17. Then I was a medical sales rep selling teeth for a dental supply company. Through the '80s, I worked as a pyrotechnician with AC/DC, John Farnham, Bon Jovi and Guns N' Roses. It was pretty wild.

When I was a kid, I had a mullet. It was really, really short at the top and long at the back. Long hair was camouflage in the '80s - that's how you got lost in the crowd.

I was a warm-up guy for TV shows. I'd always wanted to do it, since I was a kid. I was working for an entertainment lighting company and we were lighting a show when someone said the warm-up guy was sick. I said, "I could do it for you, if you want." I did that for years.

I also sang in a barber shop quartet. That's where it all started, on stage. Live performance is where I cut my teeth.

Kenny is a mixture of my uncles and people we met at Splashdown - the toilet company we worked with. He's happy with what he's doing and sees the best in everything. Had it been left to me, he'd be coarser, as tradesmen usually are. My brother rounded him off and brought into the mix more of the things we love about our uncles.



"EVERYONE SAYS, 'WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE: TELEVISION, FILM OR STAGE?' CAN'T I HAVE THEM ALL?"

I played Nicely-Nicely Johnson in *Guys and Dolls*, and he's a lovely character. I made him Fred Flintstone's size, with Barney Rubble's heart. I want everyone to love Fred Flintstone, but it's Barney Rubble you wanted to cuddle.

I wanted to walk the Kokoda Trail, and I did it. I've backpacked around Europe twice. I'd like to travel more, but I've already seen a lot. I've been fortunate with the *Kenny's World* TV series, through just promoting the film.

Some personal stuff I talk about and some I don't, because it's special to me. It's the same way some people wear jewellery that's been given to them by their grandparents to show people this amazing thing, and some keep it in a box. Sometimes I keep my stuff as treasures.

My partner, Felicity, and I have a fantastic relationship. She's incredibly supportive. I have a son from a previous relationship; he's one of those little treasures.

It was mind-blowing to work with Paul Hogan on *Charlie & Boots*. I just went, "I'm gonna go work with this legend and I hope I can do what I do with him beside me." He was incredibly giving and generous and told me how much he loved my performance.

We filmed a scene where we drove up to the camera crew, pulling out in real traffic. As we did it, I watched a car pull up beside us; the people casually looked over and turned away. Then their heads snapped back with a look on their faces like, "That's Paul Hogan and that *Kenny* guy beside us." When we drove off, I thought, that's a different day for them.

If there's one sentence I'd like said at my funeral it would be, "He was a top bloke." You'd go, I've done well here.

If you're going to achieve anything in life, you need vision, belief, action and persistence. If you give up on any one of those, or any is absent, then most likely it's not going to work out.

I don't want to alter my course at all. Everyone says, "What's your favourite: television, film or stage?" It's like going, strawberries, beer, chocolate, champagne, white wine, red wine - which one do you want? Can't I have them all?

I have a bit of money and a mortgage, but I own this smile. And it doesn't feel like anything's going to take that off my face for a long while. I'm not going to turn that rudder one millimetre.

Charlie & Boots is in cinemas September 3.