

ICON



# the everyman's EVERYMAN

He created one of local cinema's most beloved characters with Kenny, and now SHANE JACOBSON is playing the down-to-earth nice guy once again, this time opposite Aussie legend Paul Hogan, in the comedy drama road movie *CHARLIE & BOOTS*.

BY HERNAN ALCERRECA

**T**here's hardly a more likeable character in movie-land than Shane Jacobson's Kenny Smyth. Even though Jacobson started his acting career at eight-years-old, 2006's *Kenny* propelled the actor to Aussie stardom, and earned him an AFI Award for Best Actor. "Kenny is the everyman's everyman," Shane enthuses. "He's the kind of guy that you want to have a beer with. He's the type of guy that likes you for what you are, and not for what you have or achieve. He sees the positive in everything."

You'd be hard pressed to find a nicer dude than Kenny. That is, of course, until you meet Jacobson's newest character, Boots McFarland, in director/co-writer Dean Murphy's *Charlie & Boots*, a comedy/drama that finds Jacobson sharing screen time with none other than Australia's all-time favourite comedy export, Paul Hogan.

Murphy had worked with Hogan before on 2004's *Strange Bedfellows*, a comedy about two straight men who pretend to be gay in order to be eligible for a newly introduced tax benefit. "Dean called me and asked if I wanted to do a film with Paul Hogan," Jacobson says. "I said yes straight away. Who wouldn't? Dean knows me and Paul very well, so he wrote a script that really suited the both of us. When I finally read the script, I was immediately drawn to Boots' character. I love comedies with heart."

In *Charlie & Boots*, Hogan plays Charlie McFarland, a farmer with a dry sense

Cape York. "Dean [Murphy] is a country boy who is now a man of the city" says Jacobson. "He's the son of a dairy farmer. The reason I say this is because he's one of those straight-up guys with real passion and heart; he understands people at their core. Working with him proved to me that he's every bit the director, scriptwriter and observer of people that I thought he was."

One of the biggest treats for Jacobson was the opportunity to work with his childhood hero, Paul Hogan. "I won't pretend that, before we started filming, I didn't wonder what it would be like having to act next to a man who I grew up idolising," he admits. "I've been watching him for as long as I can remember. Moreover, he is the man that made my dad and my brother – two of the people I admire, love and respect the most in the world – laugh. Paul is an incredibly funny and nice guy. When he arrived to the set, he brought nothing but his personality," Jacobson says that Hogan is not the kind of person that would offer advice on your performance, but that they did discuss lines every now and then. "I'd run some lines past him to see which approach worked better – he has an amazing laugh, so I always knew when I was doing okay."

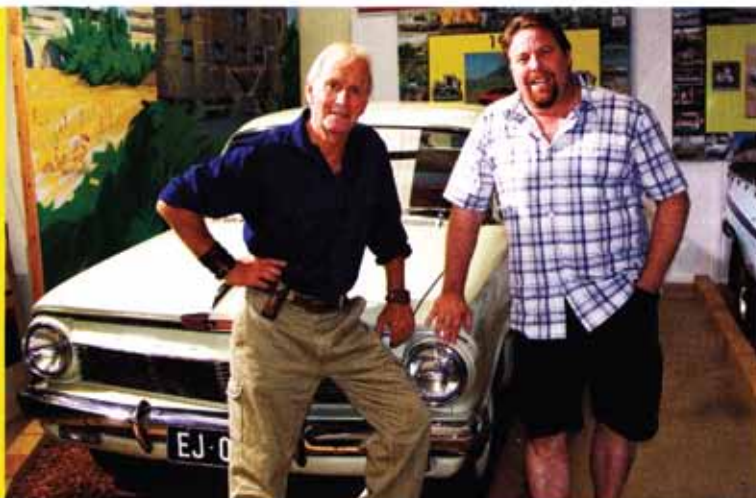
At its core, *Charlie & Boots* is a very intimate movie about a father and his estranged son trying to overcome tragedy – the few secondary characters in the film serve as comedy relief, or to expose Charlie and Boots' true feelings. "I loved the fact that I was filming every day," Jacobson

role in the story. Family owned diners, country music joints, anonymous motels, highways that cut through the Outback and seem to extend forever, and a Big Koala are just some of the gorgeous locations that Murphy and his team hand-picked for the movie, showcasing the director's obvious love for his homeland. "It's Australia as it really is, with none of the classic shots," Jacobson says. "At times, we would travel for hours between setups and there would be nothing there but the road. That's what makes Australia unique. I've travelled Australia a fair bit, so for me it was like reacquainting myself with an old friend. Lately, I've been travelling overseas a lot and, to be quite honest, I really felt at home in the Outback."

Jacobson doesn't consider himself a city dweller. He says that one of the greatest joys in life for him is to be able to grab a tent and camp by a river. "In every place we shot, the locals would come to meet us and say, 'Welcome to our town.' That was pretty special." As for having to travel almost daily from location to location, Jacobson assures us that he didn't find it rough at all. "I felt like I was being paid to go on a travel holiday," he laughs. "I can't think of anything worse than people having to read about me getting paid for travelling through Australia with Paul Hogan in my car! That, in my book, is pleasure, and not work. I'm sure that the crew had a much tougher time – they worked incredibly hard setting up everything."

When asked if he thinks that the

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of humour who finds great comfort in his life's routine: every day, he wakes up at the same hour to find 220 cows to milk and his adored wife, Grace (Peggy Thompson), at his side. Charlie has two sons, Graeme (Scott Harrison) – who works beside him at the farm – and Boots, who got married and moved to the city. When Grace unexpectedly dies, Charlie finds that his life has suddenly lost all its meaning. Worried about his dad's state, Boots, who's dwelling in the aftermath of another family tragedy and a very recent divorce, decides to take his dad on a 4,800-kilometre car ride to Australia's northernmost point,

confesses. "There's hardly a scene that I wasn't in. That allowed me to stay with my character for the whole shoot, which made things easier – I was always rolling with the script. Also, because of the film's logistics, we shot in chronological order." Jacobson says that he didn't mind knowing that the film basically rested on his and Hogan's shoulders. "Every actor knows that you will be judged by audiences just as harshly if you're on screen for two minutes or for an hour and a half."

Being a road film, Australia not only provides the perfect background for this pair's adventures, but it also plays a main

spectacular Australian background helps to increase *Charlie & Boots'* international potential, Jacobson says that he believes the movie could indeed translate very well. "Of course, there's probably not an actor in the planet who doesn't wish that his film would grow legs and get to a wider audience," he laughs. "But, to be honest, I really hope that the story becomes as attractive for international audiences as the scenery. Let's wait and see."

*Charlie & Boots* is released on September 3 and is reviewed on Page 85. ■



## HIT the SKIES

Shane Jacobson is ready to unleash a new character on the world wide web...

Shane Jacobson is quick to admit that he is inevitably drawn to comedy roles, but that he also loves drama and one day would like to play the bad guy. "I like to think that acting is like going to the lolly-shop: I want to have one of each flavour." At the moment, though, his villainous aspirations will have to wait, because Jacobson is about to present to the world his newest character, Mordy Koots – a WW2 pilot who, according to him, is "the eagle of justice, protecting the eggs of freedom, in the nest of liberty."

Created and directed by Clayton Jacobson, *Mordy Koots* is a highly innovative comedy series created exclusively for the web (or, as they like to put it, "for the small screen") using live action shots on green screen over scenarios from Ubisoft's video game franchise *Blazing Angels*. "Koots is a character that we've been waiting to release for a little while," Jacobson enthuses. "Clayton had the idea of shooting live action and combining it with a game-integrated background. Ubisoft loved the idea. It's a new and exciting format that adds a whole new dimension."

Jacobson also found filming with a green screen liberating. "It's great because you can cut loose," he says. "You know that the backgrounds are going to be so incredibly full of insane computer action, and that gives you a chance to really heat up your performance."

Check *Mordy Koots'* website to watch the trailer and for new episodes of Shane Jacobson's hilarious new hero ([www.mordykoots.com](http://www.mordykoots.com)).