

PLUMB CRAZY



Meet Kenny, portalo plumber and star of his own hit Aussie mockumentary. With actor Shane Jacobson otherwise engaged, **Scott Kara** was privy to an audience with the man himself

IT'S NOT every day you get to talk about poos and wees with an expert like Kenny. He's at the bowl face of the portalo business as part of Aussie company Splash Down which supplies portable toilets to big events like music festivals, the Melbourne Cup and Bathurst.

This hard-working, and extremely likeable Aussie bloke is the star of *Kenny*, a hilarious and touching movie which put thousands of Australian bums on seats when it was released there a few months ago. Financed by Splashdown, a real portalo company where "Kenny" works, it's one of the most successful Oz flicks of 2006 and is now heading across the Tasman — complete with the leading man doing promotional duties in character.

We meet at a Jervois Rd cafe. He's easy to spot in his Splash Down uniform of khaki overalls, teal polo shirt, and company cap. He speaks with a slight lisp and going by the big tummy you can tell he likes a beer or six.

But today he orders a latte in a bowl and is blown away by the size of it. "I'm staying here," he hoots.

You've got to get your hands dirty and in my job that's just part of the game.

At this point it's only fair to explain that Kenny is played by Shane Jacobson, who with his brother Clayton, co-wrote and co-produced the movie.

When Shane-as-Kenny says "the Jacobson brothers recognised quite a lot in my story and what we do at Splash Down" or "the Jacobson brothers were very careful not to make a fool of anyone in this film", you would never know he's talking

about himself and his brother.

There's no choice but to go with the ruse and get caught up in his matey charm and loo lingo — think John Clarke with a potty mouth.

Warning: the rest of this interview contains abundant toilet humour.

Kenny's terms for human excrement are endless — it's "legless wombats" one minute, "body salad" the next. He's seen ones the size of "Mike Tyson's wrist". "I don't know whether they put roller doors at the back end of themselves to back them out, but it would hurt. I don't know how they do it. Some of the noises coming out of the toilets sound like they're trying to wrestle a bear into a box," he smiles.

In the movie he tells his fellow workers how the ancient Greeks believed they forecast the future by analysing what was left in the bowl — just like tea leaves. Kenny is sceptical of that particular possibility: "I don't think I'm going to look into a bowl of human made fox tails and go, 'Here are next week's Lotto results,'" he laughs.

"But you can judge the past by looking at poo. I can judge the last 24 hours of a person's life pretty quickly. I can't tell you what they did last week. They'd have to be pretty crook for me to be able to decipher that.

"But I've been out there for a while looking after people's body salad and I guarantee you there is no goose that can lay the golden egg," he says.

"To be honest though, we don't stare at the stuff too much. Once it goes in those tanks it's gone. If I'm looking at it then I'm not doing my job properly."

He takes his job seriously although in his line of work there's rarely any thanks — the movie is a study in how the middle classes sneer at the working blokes who deal with society's grubbier jobs.

For example, when Kenny rescues a woman's wedding ring from the port-a-loo there's little appreciation. He doesn't let it worry him though. "I equate myself to the wheel nuts on your car. When was the last time you looked at them? But where would you be without them? I don't expect to be looked at, I don't expect to be congratulated for keeping a tight routine, and I'm not looking for recognition. 'My compliments to the chef' that you hear at a restaurant is not something I hear. My compliments to the janitor," he laughs.

"I think a sense of humour is a fantastic medicine. It's been my best companion in life and if you can get a

bit of a giggle out of a bad situation then you've got a good friend on hand."

And then there's the snobs and jobs he deals with.

A rich old lady and her snooty daughter at the Melbourne Cup tell him it's disgusting he's got his son working for him. "I'm very sorry that you feel that way," says Kenny politely.

At a dragstrip he's briefly set on fire by fans trying to set the toilets alight.

"It's our job to save the toilets," is Kenny's war cry as he leads his team into battle to defend the portaloos against the petrolheads.

Through it all — and that includes dealings with his equally cranky father and angry ex-wife — Kenny refuses to lose his rag. But when he finally does, it's priceless.

"Revenge is a dish best served cold, mate," he smiles.

The film shifts gears from character study to romance when Kenny heads to the Toilet Expo in Nashville, that he affectionately refers to as "Pissneyland".

On the plane he meets air hostess Jacqui and strikes up the beginnings of a relationship after he volunteers to unblock one of the plane's loos during the flight.

"She's a very nice lady," he says, not giving too much away. "I'm a servant on the ground to the back-sides of the world and she's a slave in the sky."

"There's a lot of movies about guy meets girl, he's got the sports car, she's from the wrong side of the tracks, but through dance it's all sorted out and they leave on a yacht. Well, that's not life is it?"

Kenny could go on for days about what life actually is. He's full-to-overflowing with his own philosophies.

"We're all working to put a couple of beers in your mouth, food in your belly, a bed under your bum, and a bungalow over your head," he declares.



ON CLOUD NINE: Kenny and air hostess Jacqui hit it off after he unblocks a loo on the plane.

He's a sentimental and caring soul is our Kenny and that's one of the reasons he has the respect of his fellow workers.

He leads from the front and doesn't mind getting his hands dirty. Kenny could get a junior Splashdown staffer to get inside the poop tanks to clean them. But no, "You've got to lead the team. Every now and then you've got to get your hands dirty and in my job that's just part of the game."

"My story is not extraordinary, it's extra ordinary," he smiles. "My story is a story we all understand I guess. And I'd like to think people are getting something out of [*Kenny*]. In Australia they're reporting lately that janitors and cleaners are having more fun on the job because they're being acknowledged, and I think that's gold."

No, Kenny. You're gold, mate.

LOWDOWN

WHAT: Kenny, hit Aussie mockumentary about the adventures of a portalo plumber starring Shane Jacobson as the title character
When and where: Opens at cinemas Thursday.