

LIFTING

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SACHA MOLITORISZ DISHES THE DIRT ON KENNY.

Most Australian films are government funded. *Kenny*, however, is entirely funded by dirty money.

"It's the first film funded directly by poo money," says Glenn Preusker, the owner of portable loo supplier Splashdown and *Kenny*'s chief investor. "You know the expression, 'It's in the can'? Well, in this film the can is open."

Kenny breaks all the rules. As well as the odd funding, all the major acting and production roles are filled by the director's family. It's also the best Australian comedy in years. The creative duo responsible for *Kenny*, Melbourne brothers Clayton and Shane Jacobson, have taken the unheard-of step for first-time filmmakers of refusing to do interviews to promote their film, leaving the talking to its star, mobile loo plumber Kenny.

"They aren't exactly kingpins in the film world," Kenny says of the Jacobsons. "The bitchin' brothers, we called 'em. They bitched at each other all day. The director, I still talk to him - he's a good bloke. Shane Jacobson was the co-producer and we called him Casper the ghost because every time I was on set I never saw him."

According to the film's production notes, Clayton graduated from the Swinburne School of Film and Television, has directed TV commercials and music videos for INXS and Jimmy Barnes and has worked with filmmakers Jane Campion (*The Piano*) and Andrew Dominik (*Chopper*). As well as directing *Kenny*, he also wrote, produced and edited it, operated the camera and worked on the sound.

Shane Jacobson, co-writer and co-producer, started doing stand-up comedy and working in theatre restaurants at age 18 before being hired to impersonate well-known businessmen and celebrities at corporate functions. He has had roles in short films and ads, and has been a regular on

Melbourne radio station Gold FM.

Shane also works in events management, which is how he met Preusker, who was delivering dunnies to an event he was organising. The two struck up a friendship.

With Preusker's blessing, the Jacobsons set out to make an observational film inspired by the comical goings-on at Splashdown. The result was a 45-minute short that won the best comedy and audience awards at the 2004 St Kilda Film Festival. Impressed, Preusker offered to fund a feature, so the Jacobsons kept filming. In their words, they planned to film at Splashdown "for a little while". Two years later, they were still at it.

Kenny is the result, and it relies on friendships Clayton made in the music industry. Jacqui, Kenny's love interest, is played by Eve von Bibra, who sang with the Victorian State Opera before joining the Chantoozies, the Aussie forerunners to the Spice Girls, who enjoyed two platinum albums.

The film's music is written by Richard Pleasance, the Melbourne producer and founding member of Boom Crash Opera who also wrote the theme music for *SeaChange*.

Kenny's son is played by Clayton's son, Jesse, and *Kenny*'s dad is played by the Jacobsons' father, veteran actor Ronald Jacobson. He is also a boxing coach; the scenes where *Kenny* spars to relieve stress were filmed at Ronald's gym. Ronald's first screen role was in 1972 film *Come Out Fighting*, which starred Michael Karpaney as an Aboriginal boxer. Karpaney plays *Kenny*'s sparring partner.

And what about this nasty rumour that *Kenny Smyth* is not a real person? That he is a fictional character played by Shane Jacobson? Preusker denies the allegation.

"*Kenny*'s been working for Splashdown for a good while," the portable throne king says. "Kenny and I have got a great friendship. We've known each for 10 years now and he's got great ethics in everything he does."

Kenny laughs off the rumour: "That's as mad as a monkey on a merry-go-round."