

Catching a Wave

AUSTRALIAN ACTOR AARON GLENANE
IS ABOUT TO SET THE BIG SCREEN ALIGHT
WITH HIS BRILLIANT PERFORMANCE IN
THE NEW MOTION PICTURE, DRIFT.

Aaron GLENANE

AUSTRALIA'S AARON GLENANE ALWAYS HAD DREAMS OF SUCCESS, THOUGH NOT IN THE FIELD OF ACTING. A TALENTED SPORTSMAN FROM A YOUNG AGE, AARON WANTED TO FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF HIS IDOL, MICHAEL JORDAN BUT WAS BITTEN BY THE ACTING BUG AFTER LANDING A PART IN THE LOCAL PRODUCTION OF OLIVER! WITH HIS PASSION IGNITED, AARON MOVED TO SYDNEY TO STUDY SINGING, ACTING, JAZZ, HIP-HOP, BALLET AND TAP. THE LATTER LANDED HIM A PLACE IN DEIN PERRY'S TAP DOGS TROUPE AND A YEAR OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PERFORMANCES. IN 2007 AARON WAS CAST ALONGSIDE TONI COLLETTE, LUKE FORD, RHYS WAKEFIELD, GEMMA WARD AND ERIK THOMPSON IN *THE BLACK BALLOON*. A RUN OF GUEST TV ROLES FOLLOWED, INCLUDING *RESCUE SPECIAL OPS*, *TRICKY BUSINESS* AND *PUBERTY BLUES*. **DARREN HOUSE** SPOKE TO AARON ABOUT HIS LATEST BIG SCREEN OFFERING, STARRING ALONGSIDE SAM WORTHINGTON AND XAVIER SAMUELS IN *DRIFT*, A SURF FILM THAT HITS CINEMAS IN AUSTRALIA IN MAY AND THE USA IN AUGUST.

YOUR NEW FILM, *DRIFT*, IS ABOUT TO BE RELEASED.

It's a surf film set in the 1970s in Western Australia and is inspired by the beginnings of surf brands such as Quicksilver, Rip Curl and Billabong. It follows the Kelly brothers; they are working but not getting paid much and they have the mortgage to pay off. One of the brothers is like, 'Stuff this, we have loved the surf our whole lives, let's just start making our own gear.'

So they are building up this surfing business from scratch and trying to make it work. They face challenges, like operating in a conservative town, and they have bikers who are hanging around and causing a bit of trouble. Being set in the '70s there are drugs so they

have to deal with that and how it affects relationships

TELL ME ABOUT YOUR ROLE.

Myles Pollard plays one brother and Xavier Samuel plays the other, I play their best mate. My character is really cool. He has got polio, so he grew up as a bit of an outsider and because the two brothers moved there, he clung onto them because they were also outsiders. They all became friends.

My character does the glassing of the boards for the brothers. He starts off all innocent and naïve but then he faces his own challenges, like whether or not to try drugs and how they affect him. He becomes very morally challenged and finds out where his loyalties lie, so he

puts a bit of a spanner in the works for everyone.

IT'S A CHARACTER YOU CAN SINK YOUR TEETH INTO.

Yeah, when I read it on the page I thought this character was one of the coolest characters in the film. I've got so much to do between the polio and the drugs, and then to make him really innocent and lovable so that the audience can really care for this guy. I am just so grateful that I got the opportunity. I was very lucky indeed.

HOW DID YOU APPROACH THE POLIO ASPECT?

I researched the Hell out of it - stuff on the internet and I watched a heap of You Tube videos. Mum





has a family friend who has polio so I spoke to him a number of times over the phone. I asked him what I would be able to do, what I wouldn't be able to do, how it changed his mindset, how he was treated by other people and what he did as a result of that. It was awesome talking to him and I can't wait for him to see it. I also got to speak to a couple of other cool guys who have been through what my character had been through. Getting that first-hand information was really cool.

I would walk around street acting as though I had polio and test whether people believed it or not. I find that when you take characters out on the street you can't look like you are faking it because people just look at you like you are an idiot.

HOW DID THAT GO?

It went well. It was very interesting. People were helpful but walking around, seeing guys with flash suits on, I felt a little bit inferior. I would see some beautiful girls and feel shy and not want to make eye contact with them. On the day of the audition, I walked around for about two hours beforehand and



I took that feeling in with me, so it paid off. I really like working that way, really getting into it and feeling it out. Once I got the part I did a heap more research. I didn't find it a chore or hard work.

YOU WOULD HAVE RESEARCHED SURFING CULTURE TOO, AS THERE IS NOT A LOT OF SURF IN YOUR HOME TOWN, BALLARAT.

Definitely not. I went and talked to Shane Stedman, he invented Ugg Boots and he had his own surf gear for a while. He had a whole photo collage of surfers like Michael Peterson and all of these Aussie guys that he grew up with. It

was set in his time as well. He is in his 60s now so in the '70s he was hanging around with people like my character, so it was awesome to talk to him.

I read a book on Michael Peterson, who was pretty much THE surfing guy in the world at the time. I went to Warner Surfboards up in Sydney and hung out at their workshop for about three days, just watching them make boards and how they did glassing and put them all together. It was similar to the polio research, I just tried to hang out with guys who live it so I could make the character believable.



WHERE WAS DRIFT FILMED?

Western Australia. We were over there for six weeks, filming all around Margaret River, Dunsborough, Albany. The surf stuff in the film is awesome. There was a monster of a wave that is a crucial part of the story and that could be the biggest wave that has ever been caught on a narrative film, not so much documentaries and You Tube, but for narrative film it is a massive wave.

And just hanging out with guys like Sam Worthington and Xavier and Robyn Malcolm, Steve Bastoni, guys who have been acting for ages was just a really good learning experience. I loved it.

WAS EVERYONE WELCOMING?

Everyone was awesome. I didn't get a bad vibe from anyone on that film set. Sam has built up an awesome career for himself and before meeting him I was super nervous. But straight away he said, "Oh man, I have got this idea for our scene," and then we talked about how the characters interacted and it was just unreal. He is awesome. I can't speak highly enough about him because he is always thinking and trying to push the boundaries of what he is doing.

BALLARAT IS VERY DIFFERENT TO THE INNER WEST OF SYDNEY. HOW HAVE YOU FITTED IN?

I've lived in Sydney since 2005 so you can almost call me a New South Welshman now. But I try to hold onto those Victorian ties, watching Essendon in the AFL (Australian Football League) and all that sort of stuff, and I get a bit of garbage for it. I went home at Christmas and I love it. I love that is it so much quieter and it slows you down and I'm not stressing out 24/7 thinking about what I have to do. Generally Sydney is pretty damn cool, everything is going on and the inner west is a good area, it's close to everything but it is definitely different to Ballarat, that's for sure.

WHAT PROMPTED THE MOVE NORTH?

I got into Brent Street Studios, which is a performing arts school. They mainly focus on dance but they do singing and acting as well. I got into that straight out of high school and did it full time for two years and then I got an agent in Sydney and stuck around there. Melbourne has just as much going on down there, so either city is worthwhile living in.

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED AS A PERFORMER?

I never had a strong feeling that I wanted to be a performer. I only got into it because of Mum... I was in Year 7 at school, around 13 years of age I guess, and I was super shy, ridiculously shy and Mum got me to go to a speech and drama lady just to get me out of my shell.

I wanted to be an NBA basketball player, that was my goal but Mum conned me into it by saying, "When you are in the NBA you are going to have to do interviews and press conferences, you are going to have to be able to talk to people properly." She got me to go to this lady and I was there for a while, and she got me to do a reading in an Eisteddfod in Ballarat. That was kind of cool but I was freaking out before it.

I remember I was competitor number 7. Number 6's reading seemed to go forever and I was thinking, 'Cool, she might read the whole book and I won't have to get up' (laughs) but I ended up reading a piece from *Tomorrow When the War Began*, and I actually didn't mind it. I didn't think much of it after that and then I was on the way home from a cross country event in Melbourne and Mum said she got me an audition for a local show in Ballarat. I was like, "Why did you do that? I've never done singing, dancing, any of it." She was like, "Well, you have been going to this lady and you did a good reading." I was 15 at the time and freaking out.

The auditioning was for *Oliver!* and I went in and sang the only song I knew, which was the Olympic theme song at the time, I think it was called the *Power of the Dream*. So I sang this Olympic theme song at my audition and they got me



to do some basic movements and I ended up getting into the show somehow.

But once I got up on stage I just loved it, which I didn't expect. They have a really cool theatre in Ballarat, it seats something like 1000 people and it was packed out.

It was that weird age – I was 15 and in Year 9 and I went to a really sporty kind of high school. I didn't tell anyone for six months that I was doing any of this. As people found out about it, some of them didn't mind and some of them acted weird about it, but it was all good.

DEBUTING IN A LIVE STAGE SHOW WAS THROWING YOU IN AT THE DEEP END.

Exactly and when people from school came along they would sit in

the front two rows and I could see them putting it on me. I was thinking, 'Far out' but you just have to jump in and do it – you can't be shy.

YOU DON'T SEEM TOO SHY NOW SO YOUR MUM'S PLAN MUST HAVE WORKED.

Well, hopefully I am getting better but people still give me a bit of grief about it. When I am at a job I generally don't run around and tell everyone and when they find out they say, "What the Hell man, you're doing a film with Sam Worthington, why didn't you tell me?" and I'd be like, "Oh I don't know, I don't want to tell anyone." But it is probably the best thing Mum could have done for me because it has helped me figure out what I want to do.



HOW DID THINGS PROGRESS FROM THERE?

I kept doing musicals in Ballarat until I finished school, I think four all up and then I went to Brent Street Studios which was awesome because I hadn't really done much dancing. There were dancers there who had been doing it since they were three years old and it was like, "Oh man!" I went straight from Ballarat, which is a pretty conservative country town, up to Sydney and the dancers at Brent Street would come up and kiss me on the cheek and I'd be like, "Whoa, can't we just shake hands." It was culture shock to the max (laughs).

But Brent Street was an eye opener. I did that for two years and then I got my first professional gig, which was with Tap Dogs. I did a lot of corporate work for them for probably a good three years and then at the end of Brent Street I got a role in *The Black Balloon*, which starred Toni Collette, Erik Thompson, Rhys Wakefield and Luke Ford. It was my first taste of film.

That was awesome because it was a film set and I'd arrive and there would be trucks everywhere, so that was really cool. I also went to The Actors Pulse in Redfern and while I was studying there I started getting commercial work and guest roles on TV shows; things like *Rescue Special Ops* and *Tricky Business*, and I did a movie with David Wenham last year, which was pretty cool.

IT MUST HAVE BEEN GREAT PERFORMING YOUR FIRST FILM ROLE WITH PEOPLE LIKE TONI COLLETTE.

It was awesome, though my scenes weren't so much with her; they were with Rhys but one day when they were shooting I snuck in and was just watching on the monitor. That was just unreal. Also, the guy who played the autistic kid, Luke Ford, he walked into the audition room in character and you couldn't tell whether he was autistic or an actor. It was just unreal watching guys like that and being inspired by it; thinking 'Okay, cool, that's the kind of actor I want to be'.

SO AS WELL AS GOING TO ACTING



SCHOOL, YOU PICKED UP TIPS FROM WATCHING OTHER ACTORS.

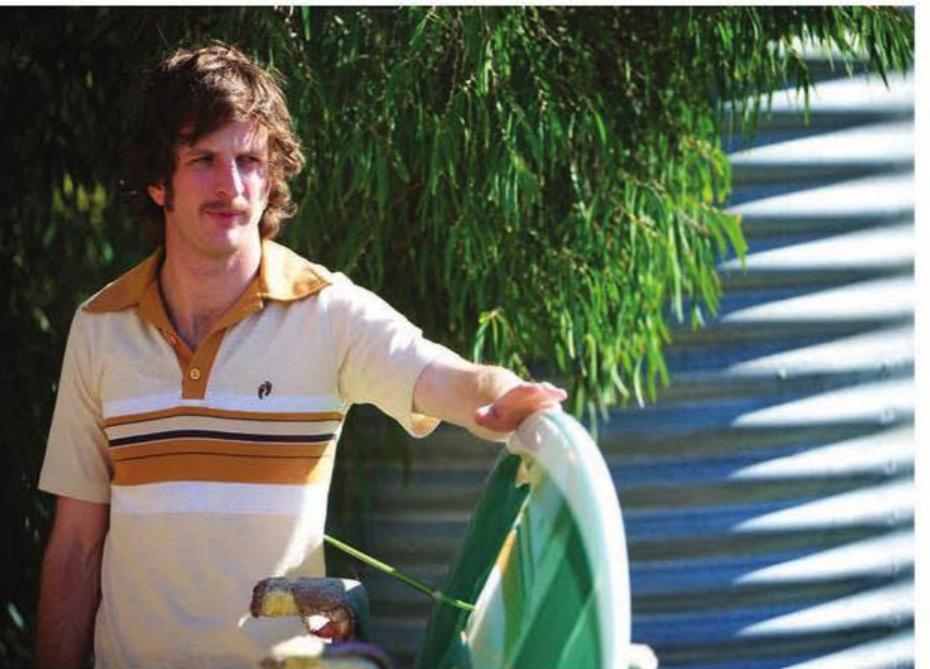
Acting school gives you the foundation and technique, if you want to have one, it really lays all of the groundwork for you but then there are things that you just can't learn at acting school that you learn on set. You spend so much time understanding the character and then when you get on the film set it's kind of like, I am just one little part of this, one grain of salt in this big collaborative group that makes this thing happen and it really puts a perspective on things. It's a really cool perspective because you are doing something creative but everyone else is doing something creative as well, just different – like the lighting guys, the DOP (Director of Photography).

DO YOU GET FREE ACTING ADVICE FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS?

(Laughs) Yeah, when they are being smart-arses I do. They say things like, "Oh, what sort of face were you pulling there?" My sister, Teagan, is quite in tune with this stuff and I like getting her opinion because it doesn't come from an acting point of view, it is the audience's point of view.

HOW DO YOU RELAX OFF SET?

I am pretty sort of low key. I like going to see live bands and I love sports and I play a bit of basketball. I was playing in a team but I had a job on so I had to stop that for a



little while, but hopefully I will get back into it. Other than that I like trying to slow down and get some life balance, I try to find that country vibe in Sydney. So whether that is just going to the water and thinking, or reading about a job that is coming up, or going to hear live music, something that gives me a little outlet. I find in Sydney you can be running around constantly and your head is going a million miles an hour and you can get so caught up in it, even just driving around is stressful. So when I am not working I just try to find somewhere I can level out, relax and hang out with friends.

WHAT WILL WE SEE YOU IN NEXT?

I have just finished a guest role in on a TV show called *Janet King*, which is a spin off from *Crownies* that aired two years ago. That will be on the ABC later in the year. I got to play this weasely bikie, a kind of wannabe bikie who gets himself into trouble. There is also another indie type film that I did that they are finishing up at the moment, and then I will probably go to the States and put the feelers out when *Drift* is released over there, which will be August 2. I will try to make some inroads and work with some really talented people. So hopefully, *Drift* can generate something for me, but if not, I don't plan on stopping anytime soon. I will find a way to get there one way or the other. ★

