



GAYBY BABY

SAME-SEX FAMILIES TOLD BY THE KIDS



“Essential viewing for all families”

- Benjamin Law

“Honest and moving”

- Indiwire

“Touching, frank and delightfully humorous”

- The Reel World

IN CINEMAS SEPTEMBER 3

SCREEN AUSTRALIA PRESENTS A MARLA HOUSE FILM BY MAYA NEWELL + CHARLOTTE MARS » GAYBY BABY «
IN ASSOCIATION WITH DOCUMENTARY AUSTRALIA FOUNDATION SUPPORTED BY THE SNOW FOUNDATION + ENGLISH FAMILY FOUNDATION
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER BILLY MARSHALL STONEKING EDITED BY ROCHELLE OSHLACK MUSIC BY MAX LYANDVERT



GAYBY BABY

"Essential viewing for all families"
- Benjamin Law, Author & Columnist

PRESS KIT

Marla House Pty Ltd | 14 159 414 703
Sydney: 131 Victoria Street, Dulwich Hill, NSW 2204, AUSTRALIA
Berlin: Skalitzer Strasse 45, 10997 Kreuzberg, GERMANY

Original Title: GAYBY BABY

Year of Production: 2015

Director: MAYA NEWELL

Producer: CHARLOTTE MARS

Duration: 85 MINUTES

Genre: FEATURE, DOCUMENTARY,
OBSERVATIONAL

Key Themes: LGBTI, PARENTING,
FAMILY, YOUTH

Original Language: ENGLISH

Country of Origin: AUSTRALIA

Screening Format: DCP

Original Format: HD

Gauge: 16:9

Picture: COLOUR

Sound: 5.1 Surround

Production Company: MARLA HOUSE

World Sales: TBC

Principal Investor: SCREEN AUSTRALIA

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"Beautifully observed"
- *Inside Film Magazine*

One-Line Synopsis

GAYBY BABY follows the lives of four kids – Gus, Ebony, Matt and Graham – whose parents all happen to be gay. As they each wrestle with personal change, the outside world wrestles with the issue of marriage equality, and whether or not kids of same-sex families are at risk.

One-Paragraph Synopsis

At a time when the world is questioning the politics of same-sex families, GAYBY BABY takes us into the homes and personal dramas of four kids approaching puberty under the guidance of gay parents.

In his all-female household, GUS strives to work out what it means to be a "man"; EBONY struggles to find her voice as a singer and a place where her gay family will be accepted; MATT questions how the God his lesbian mums worship can also damn them to hell; and GRAHAM's desire to read and win the approval of his dads is complicated by a move to Fiji, where homosexuality is frowned upon.

Told from the point of view of the kids, GAYBY BABY is a living, moving portrait of same-sex families that offers a refreshingly honest picture of what really counts in modern life.

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One-Page Synopsis

GAYBY BABY is a portrait of four kids – Gus, Ebony, Matt and Graham – whose parents all happen to be gay. As they each wrestle with the challenges of oncoming adolescence, the outside world wrestles with the issue of marriage equality, and whether or not kids like them are at risk.

10-year-old GUS is passionate about wrestling. At a time when he's discovering his masculinity, he finds its macho world alluring. But the violent wrestlers encapsulate everything Gus's mothers dislike about masculine culture: these men are *not* their idea of good male role models. With a big wrestling show coming to Sydney, Gus must change his mothers' views if he's to attend...

12-year-old EBONY struggles to find her place in the outer suburbs of Sydney. She dreams of being a pop singer and hopes to get into the prestigious Newtown Performing Arts High. But getting into Newtown is not just about singing; the school is located in a bohemian inner-city suburb where Ebony feels she and her family would be accepted and understood. But with the audition looming, Ebony is soon forced to ask what matters most in her life. Maybe getting into Newtown isn't everything...

11-year-old GRAHAM can't read. It bothers and embarrasses him. Having been neglected by his birth parents and never taught to speak, Graham is desperate to become literate. But his quest is complicated when his dads move the family to Fiji, a conservative place where they are not comfortable being "out". Faced with hiding his family and re-establishing himself in a new country, Graham's goal seems ever more distant. When his teacher sets an assignment where he must write and perform "the story of me", all Graham's fears collide...

11-year-old MATT is in the midst of an existential crisis. His family attends Church and his birth mother is strong of faith, yet the pastor says same-sex couples are a sin against God. The disconnect between his mothers' faith and the pastor's admonitions has got Matt questioning everything. In answering life's biggest questions, Matt must stand up to God, the Prime Minister, and perhaps most importantly – his mothers.

Told from the point of view of the kids, GAYBY BABY is a living, moving portrait of same-sex families that offers a refreshingly frank picture of what truly counts in modern life.

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“(Gayby Baby) Brilliantly reminds us that families are defined by love, not politics”
- Malinda Wink, *Good Pitch Australia*

Director’s statement

Over the last five years, debates all around the world about marriage equality and same-sex parenting have risen in volume. Countless public figures and politicians repeat the argument that marriage is about having children and all children need both a mother and father. This fear of motherless or fatherless families and the subsequent army of their damaged, confused offspring seems to be spreading. I hear them whisper: what will happen if we allow gays to marry? What if they have kids? Would that be ok?

Even though gay couples can’t marry (in the majority of countries), they have been having children for a long time already. In fact, the world is in the midst of a “Gayby boom” and those kids are growing up fast, with voices and experiences of their own. I am one of those Gaybies.

A few years ago, I went to the cinema and watched a movie called *The Kids are Alright* – the first fiction feature to tell the story of a lesbian couple raising children.

As I left the cinema and strode down the street, I felt unnerved, unhinged and soon realised I was streaming tears. I had never seen my family reflected on the big screen before. Watching the film, I recognised subtle similarities that occur when two women parent. I felt connected to these teenagers and wondered if this was how people with heterosexual parents felt every time they were immersed in a movie. I felt happy – to finally see a story like mine – but also angry because this was the first one.

Gayby Baby is the first feature documentary told from the perspective of kids in gay and lesbian families, and I hope it is the tipping point in the tide of representations of families like mine. Kids need narratives that reflect their lives and the diversity of their family structures. We need stories that aren’t just there to prove a point claiming, “*We are the same, our families are perfect, our families are just like yours!*” In this way, *Gayby Baby* is not an ad for queer families, but a film where loving families struggle with competing needs and values, where parents overreact and sometimes kids get let down. Same-sex families are not perfect, but they are no less perfect than any other kind of family.

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In 2015, I hope we are moving away from defensiveness to a space where we can ask questions without knowing all the answers, and see that these children are not defined by the sexuality of their parents.

Gayby Baby is a film inspired by a desire to shine a light on the wit, agency and wisdom of four incredible young individuals – Gus, Ebony, Matt and Graham – who are part of the LGBTI community by nurture and birthright.

When my mother Donna came out to her mother, my grandmother's response was that of despair. She was distraught because she so desperately wanted to have grandchildren. Her only daughter being a lesbian seemed like the end of the family line, not to mention a clear indicator of my mother's lonely barren future.

What an exciting era we are living in – for the first time in history, LGBTI people can expect to be parents, to have a family.

The four years I spent making this film, hanging out with these kids and witnessing them grow has been such a joy. I hope that in watching this film audiences will be inspired to interrogate "what is family" and how and by whom it is defined.

Asked what family was, Ebony, one of the kids in the film, once said: "*The people who make you who you are today are your family.*"

These kids get it. We just need the rest of the world to catch on.

Maya Newell, 2015

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Producer statement

It's a special time in the history of documentary. As media outlets around the world become increasingly homogenised, it is the independent documentary that holds us to account for the world we live in. These films divulge the stories the mainstream media cannot, or will not, tell. Audiences trust documentaries. Outside the realm of the 24-hour press cycle, they alone bring longitudinal stories and great secrets into the light; recording and shaping the narratives we tell about our world. In the case of *Gayby Baby*, we are taken into the private homes of four kids who are given authority rarely bestowed upon them, to reflect their views on something every human has in common: the unavoidable experience of family.

In making this film, I felt an immense duty to those four kids, but also to the vast community of LGBTI families past, present and future. If this was to be the first time we took viewers into the deepest and most personal spaces of a burgeoning community – a community who had already faced considerable threat from the outside – we would have to do it with great care.

Hearing the threats against same-sex families and marriage equality has always made me frustrated. Aside from anything else, how on earth can the straight community hold up this ideal of family, when those same family units are breaking down more than ever before? But with *Gayby Baby* we did not want to enter the realm of political rhetoric, of debates about what is "right" and "wrong" – we wanted to transcend all that, touching viewers with stories that might reflect back at their own experiences. A filmmaker I greatly admire, Victoria Midwinter Pitt, once told me that if you want people to listen to an uncomfortable truth, you had better tell them a nice story in the process. I believe the stories of children with same-sex parents have exactly this effect. Skewering the water-cooler issues faced by modern families – gender, sexuality, parenting, youth – with intimacy and charm, rather than the hypocrisy of politics.

As an outsider to the Gayby community – the child of divorced, straight parents – there have been times where I've felt out of place making this film. But gradually, over the years, that feeling has almost entirely disappeared. Through making *Gayby Baby*, it's almost as if, inspired by the love, tolerance and spirit of the families we have met, I have taken on the sensitivities and concerns of being a Gayby, without actually being one. Far from seeing this as a threat, the Gayby world has welcomed me with open arms – if only all communities could be so. In my "Gayby education" I have learnt from Gus, Ebony, Matt and Graham that it is far too easy for someone

like me to take the concept of family for granted. Even though it may be my right to have a family, it is not my right – or anyone else’s – to define it for another.

In 2011, I watched a You Tube video of a teenager, Zach Wahls, who stood in the lowan House of Representatives and spoke about the strength of his family – most particularly his two lesbian mothers. The video went viral. Today it has been viewed more than 3 million times and Zach has become a spokesman for an entire generation of kids raised by same-sex parents. Zach’s speech hit the headlines just two weeks after Maya and I had begun developing *Gayby Baby*. We were so excited by the video – it validated everything we had been feeling about making the film. The stories of kids with gay parents really could demystify the gay family unit, offer a new perspective in the marriage equality debate, and perhaps even help the wider community re-evaluate what really matters when it comes to family. We suddenly knew the film had to be made.

Of course there were a couple of small issues for our two-woman band. Namely: we had no money, and no kids. So we did what any passionate but under-resourced person would do – we looked to friends and families for advice, we borrowed cars, we asked LGBTI community groups for introductions. It was the beginning of what has become the defining feature of the film’s production: the spirit of grassroots people-power.

To find the kids, we approached almost every LGBTI organisation in Australia and invited parents and kids to be interviewed. We did it the old fashioned way: phone calls, flyers and newsletters. Responses started coming in, a trickle at first, then a whole lot. We still had no money, but suddenly we had families and kids – lots of them – willing to help. It struck me then (and has many times since), that the gay community is an incredible mobiliser. When there is a cause that matters to them, they don’t just get behind it, they spring into action and pull everyone around them into the vortex.

In the end there were around 60 kids interviewed from all around Australia. It was a slightly mad time, but also an exciting one. Audiences watching the finished film will have no idea just how much time was spent with various families before we decided on the four kids you see in the film. To those families I extend much gratitude. They were willing to share their lives with us – an incredibly brave act – and like with any documentary, there were more wonderful stories than we could have ever included. It was not easy to choose which kids we would focus on, but choose we did. One of them was Ebony, who we met at an LGBTI family event. Another was Matt, whose

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mothers had just been chosen to have dinner with Prime Minister, Julia Gillard. Finally, there was Gus and Graham who were both introduced to us through family and friends. Once we had decided upon them, Maya sprang into action with a homemade camera rig, spending days, weeks and months, in their homes. She developed an intimacy with the families, which in my mind, is one of the great strengths of the film.

Part way through filming we heard about crowdfunding. As emerging filmmakers it was always going to be difficult to finance the film traditionally, so we decided to give this new model a go. Once again the community around us delivered: we launched the campaign at a friend's gallery space, editing and music for our video was supplied by other filmmakers, we received in-kind publicity support from LGBTI press, and beautiful advertising postcards were designed and printed free of charge; the generosity was incredible. For weeks Maya and I lived and breathed that campaign – it was gruelling. We did crazy things like waiting outside a prominent morning show's background set with huge signs, hoping to be seen, and wearing tee-shirts (hand painted by a friend) in the audience of a TV debate program so that when one of us asked a question, the website URL on our tee-shirts would be broadcast nationwide.

Somehow these antics worked. We raised over 100,000 dollars which, at the time, was the most any single film project had received via crowdfunding in Australia. What astounds me to this day, even more than the amount raised, was that a record number of people backed the project; with almost all of the pledges small contributions made by ordinary people – families – who cared about the film and what it was seeking to achieve. We would not have been able to make the film without these supporters.

After the success of the crowdfunding campaign we were graciously supported by Screen Australia, Documentary Australia Foundation, The Snow Foundation, English Family Foundation and Marrickville Community Fund to fully finance the rest of production. Sam Griffin, our Screen Australia executive, has been a wonderful ally in the making of the film, offering gentle support and advice whenever we needed it, but never pushing us to make the film something it was not. It is thanks to Screen Australia's innovative Signature Documentary Fund (which, sadly, has since been dismantled due to budget cuts) that "smaller" documentaries like *Gayby Baby* are made possible. We are so grateful to Screen Australia for backing this film, and wholeheartedly believe in the government's investment in this agency and its ongoing cultural and economic value to Australia.

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With more than 100 hours of footage, we were soon able to begin the process of editing the film. To begin with, Maya cut key sequences together so we could see what a rough arc for the film might look like. We had incredible advice and feedback throughout this time from Billy Marshall Stoneking, Executive Producer. Billy was always telling it to us straight and asking the tough questions in the best possible way – he inspired us to reach deep. It was also Billy who introduced us to Rochelle Oshlack who would become our Editor. Rochelle brought a wealth of experience to the film, and her lightness of touch in the cutting room gave space for the children to really shine on screen.

From start to finish, the edit took nearly 12 months. In many ways, it was during this time that the film became a film. Even though as a finished work, it appears like the stories flow quite simply, and that there can't really have been much of a challenge in putting it all together, the understated style of the film was actually the hardest thing to achieve and is the result of weeks of our collective efforts.

In the final stages, the Composer Max Lyandvert beautifully interpreted the balance between the adult and child world with the score, while the genius of Soundfirm's Andy Wright as Sound Supervisor and Re-Recording Mixer unified the film elements. The combined efforts of Brooke Trezise and Leah Katz on Effects and Dialogue Editing made light work of sound recordings that had been recorded by numerous people over the years, and finally, the team at FSM, led by the nicest man in post production, Martin Thorne, made the film look beautiful.

About this time, Mitzi Goldman of Documentary Australia Foundation took *Gayby Baby* under her wing and began planting in Maya and I, the seeds of what an outreach campaign for the film could look like. Mitzi encouraged us to think outside the box and be inventive about how the film might reach its audience. She introduced us to the concept of Good Pitch, which the film was later selected for, in the first ever Good Pitch Australia, held in October 2014.

Through the Good Pitch process, guided by Malinda Wink, Ian Darling, Beadie Finzi, Ruth Johnstone and the rest of the Good Pitch team, we came full circle. Right as we were in the midst of finishing the film we were taken back to where it all started: dreaming about what the film could achieve, how it could shake up out-dated systems, and remembering what it felt like to watch the Zach Wahls video for the first time.

This reflection and the partnerships that came from Good Pitch have given rise to our outreach program: *The Gayby Project*. It's an ambitious program that extends the film from a strictly screen experience, to a viable resource for some of the key issue areas we came into contact with in the making of the film. The program targets: discriminatory legislation, awareness-raising, the up-resourcing of schools in the area of family diversity, and the building of an online hub that supports diverse families.

I have big hopes for what this film could do, but at the end of the day, it really belongs to the kids. Along with their families, Gus, Ebony, Matt, and Graham have given the world an incredible gift in sharing their stories. We have been sensitive to their views and careful to ensure they are all happy and comfortable with the finished film and its release, acknowledging too, that this time in their lives is now forever recorded for posterity. I hope that in some way their gift – the film – can echo in the lives of other Gayby kids and in the communities we all share, informing the dialogue around family for the next generation.

Charlotte Mars, 2015

Marla House

The word "marla" translates as "girl" in the language of the Arrernte people of central Australia. It is also (classically) a girl's name.

More than a production company, this "girl house" is an extension of the relationship between Charlotte and Maya, and a hothouse of artistic women-told stories. The company was founded during the making of *Gayby Baby* out of a belief in the transformative power of screen stories and the creative magic that happens when rebellious women gather under one roof.

Bios

Maya Newell, Director

Maya is an Australian filmmaker with a focus on directing for documentary. After winning a scholarship for Sydney Film School and completing a BA Media & Communications, Maya made a mid-length documentary, *Richard: The Most Interesting Person I've Ever Met*. Her award-winning short *TWO* screened at festivals internationally and she was awarded Best New Documentary Talent of Australia at AIDC, Adelaide Film Festival. Her recent film *Growing Up Gayby*, made in collaboration with Charlotte Mars, broadcast on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) in 2013.

Maya has spent the last four years filming in the homes of children being raised by gay and lesbian parents. *Gayby Baby* raised more than \$100,000 via crowdfunding, a record at the time for any Australian documentary, and was selected for Good Pitch Australia. The *Gayby Baby* team is now rolling out the first stages of a social impact campaign to promote family diversity in schools and communities. *Gayby Baby* is Maya's debut feature.

Charlotte Mars, Producer

Charlotte is an emerging producer, writer and director with a passion for female-made content. Previously, she was the development manager for NBCU's Matchbox Pictures, during which time she created and developed many original projects and worked on award-winning film and TV content such as *The Slap* (ABC1), *Devil's Playground* (Foxtel), *Underground: The Julian Assange Story* (Ten), *Leaky Boat* (ABC1), *Maximum Choppage* (ABC2) and the upcoming *Deadline Gallipoli* (Foxtel).

Charlotte produced the ABC documentary *Growing Up Gayby*, the short drama *From Here*, which screened internationally, and she was also an inaugural ArtStart Screenwriting Fund recipient, a 2013 Spirit of Youth Award finalist and recipient of a Metro Screen grant to direct her short drama *Awake*, which premiered at Flickerfest 2014. In 2013 Charlotte founded Marla House with Maya Newell and together they have made the feature documentary *Gayby Baby*, which will make its premiere at Hot Docs in 2015.

Billy Marshall Stoneking, Executive Producer

Billy is a writer/producer, & poet. He has written and produced a number of documentaries, including a feature-length film biography of Jungkarta Tjupurrula and *Nosepeg's Movie* and *Desert Stories* (writer/narrator) for SBS-TV, which chronicles the development of bi-lingual education on Aboriginal settlements and outstations west of Alice Springs in the 70s and 80s, and both of which aired on SBS-TV and internationally. His many film, television and stage credits include the features *Seeing the Elephant* (writer/producer) and *Chopper* (principal script editor), as well as being series writer on *Mission: Impossible* (Paramount Television) and author of the critically acclaimed stage play, *Sixteen Words For Water*. This is Billy's fifth collaboration with Maya Newell.

Rochelle Oshlack, Editor

Rochelle is one of Australia's most experienced film editors. She has edited for some of the country's most renowned directors such as Baz Luhrmann on *Romeo + Juliet* and *Moulin Rouge!* and Philip Noyce on *Catch a Fire*. Her recent credits include documentaries *Growing Up Gayby*, *Black Panther Woman*, *Miss Nikki* and *The Tiger Girls*, *The Tall Man* and *Lani's Story*. Her Drama credits include AACTA award-winning ABC telemovie *Mabo*, feature film *Bran Nue Dae* and 6-part SBS drama series *Ran: Remote Area Nurse*. Rochelle was the Supervising Editor on the landmark SBS documentary series *First Australians*. As First Assistant Editor Rochelle has also worked on Tony Ayres' *Walking On Water*, Ana Kokkinos' *Head On*, Nadia Tass' *Amy* and Rob Sitch's *The Dish*.

Max Lyandvert, Composer

Max is a composer, sound designer and director whose work with theatre companies has garnered him many awards. He also composes for film and television. Max has won two Helpmann Awards and received seven Sydney Theatre Award nominations, another nomination for a Helpmann Award and a Green Room nomination. Max has worked extensively with the STC and also with Company B, State Theatre Co of SA, ICA, QTC, Legs on the Wall, Malthouse, Hothouse and Griffin Theatre Companies. In 2008, Max composed choir arrangements for the feature film *Hey Hey It's Esther Blueburger* starring Toni Collette. In 2012 Max was Composer and Sound Designer for the Australian and European tour of STC's *Gross Und Klein* which starred Cate Blanchett. He was composer on the award-winning miniseries *Devil's Playground* and the feature documentary *Gayby Baby*. He is currently composing on the mini-series *The Kettering Incident* along with STC's production of *Endgame*.

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Full credit list

A heartfelt thank you to all of the families involved in the making of this film,
for their courage, generosity and time.

Speak out for diverse families at:
thegaybybabyproject.com

Gayby Baby features

GUS
EBONY
MATT
GRAHAM

And their families

JEN, JAMIE, RORY
JADE, ANG, SETH, ASHAAN
SANDY, LOUISE, BRIAN, DYLAN
MATT, PETER, MICHAEL

Directed by
MAYA NEWELL

Produced by
CHARLOTTE MARS

Executive Producer
BILLY MARSHALL STONEKING

Editor
ROCHELLE OSHLACK

Original Music Composed by
MAX LYANDVERT

Cinematographer
MAYA NEWELL

Re-recording Mixer and Sound Supervisor
ANDY WRIGHT

Effects Editor
BROOKE TREZISE

GAYBY BABY

Dialogue Editor
LEAH KATZ

additional composers CAITLIN YEO
JONATHAN DOWER

additional cinematography VELINDA WARDELL
BONNIE ELLIOT
KATE DISHER QUILL
BASTIEN CHAPIGNAC

additional sound recording CHARLOTTE MARS
RICHARD TEAGUE
JARAD AVNELL

executive producers HELEN PANCKHURST
THOMAS MAI
JOSH POMERANZ

screen australia investment manager SAM GRIFFIN

production support SEAN JOHNSON
CATHERINE KNIGHT
SAM BUTCHART
LUCAS POZZEY
RICHARD BARON
CAITLIN GIBSON
VANNA SEANG
ZAC DUFFY

lawyer JANINE PEARCE
accountant MONEYPENNY

ADR recordist ANDY WRIGHT
foley artist MARIO VACARRO
foley engineer ALEX FRANCIS

colourist BILLY WYCHGEL

soundfirm post producer JASMIN TURNBULL
soundfirm head of production PAUL WILLEY
FSM longform producer MARTIN THORNE
FSM coordinator GRACE ROUVRAY
editing facility IC FILMS & SOUNDFIRM

GAYBY BABY

title sequence cinematographer VELINDA WARDELL
title sequence editing THE SOLID STATE
title sequence design ADAM FRANCE
THE SOLID STATE

titles and credits designer ADAM FRANCE
web design ELLE WILLIAMS
original illustrations & poster design JULIA KRUSCH
key image photographer AMANDA JAMES

film participants MAX STUART
HUNTER
MS SULU
PASTOR JIM
KATE BLAKE
MEGAN SPINDLER
CORINNE SMITH

participating kids and families KIRBY PATTERSON-FAHY, TAEA
PATTERSON FAHY, ROSE FAHY, SUE
PATTERSON
RUBEN, JASON & ADRIAN TUAZON-
MCCHEYNE
SUNNAI COHEN, LISA GRIDLEY,
LEONE COHEN
GRACE & NELL BRYSON-SMITH,
DEBRA SMITH
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SHARPE
JANELLE & HANNAH BAKER
ASHER & VICKI VAJIRA BENNETT,
KHANNAH
SHANNON & CASEY GALLAGHER-
SILVER, CLARE GALLAGHER, AARHON
SILVER

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WOOD
JESSIE, THEA & CRIS TOWNLEY,
BARBARA TAYLOR
BRYONY & TOBIAS BOWGERALD,
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EMRYS, CARYWN, ANNE-MAREE
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TUOHY, MICHAEL BOYD
NAOMI & SKYE HOLMES
RAJ WAKELING
MEGAN BOLTON
STELLA BATEMAN
MAEVE MARSDEN

crowdfunding production support HATTIE ARCHIBALD
JULIA NI
AMANDA DELUYA
MATT DIBBAYAWAN
AMANDA JAMES

crowdfunding cinematographer KATE DISHER QUILL
crowdfunding editor NICK WATERMAN
crowdfunding composer BENJAMIN SPEED
crowdfunding designer HARUMI TAKGAI

crowdfunding partners FANDEPENDENT
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crowdfunding thanks RODNEY CROOME
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thanks to RAINBOW BABIES AND KIDS
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TALLAY WICKHAM
THE BAXTER BEALE FAMILY
THE SKATTEBOL JAMES FAMILY
THE OVENDEN YOUNG FAMILY
THE BUCKE DA SILVA FAMILY

special thanks ANTHEA DONALDSON
RICK MCLELLAN
MAEVE MARSDEN
MATCHBOX PICTURES

Love and gratitude BLAKE PAUL KENDALL

To the mums who started it all LIZ NEWELL
DONNA ROSS

"Rolling In The Deep"

Written by: Adele Adkins/Paul Epworth

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