

The Australian Film Finance Corporation  
presents

an Australian Children's Television Foundation  
and Burrundi Pictures Production  
in association with Yothu Yindi Foundation

# YOLNGU BOY

starring

SEAN MUNUNGGURR  
JOHN SEBASTIAN PILAKUI  
NATHAN DANIELS

Director	STEPHEN JOHNSON
Producers	PATRICIA EDGAR GORDON GLENN
Screenplay by	CHRIS ANASTASSIADES
Executive Producers	PATRICIA EDGAR STEPHEN JOHNSON
Associate Producers	GALARRWUY YUNUPI NGU MANDAWUY YUNUPI NGU
Director of Photography	BRAD SHIELD
Editor	KEN SALLOWS
Original Music by	MARK OVENDEN
Production Designer	SARAH STOLLMAN
Costume Design	JILL JOHANSON
Casting	MAGGIE MILES

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# YOLNGU BOY

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# YOLNGU BOY

## LOGLINE

Three lives...two laws...one country. Caught in the collision of the oldest living culture on Earth and the realities of a modern world, three boys defy the law and embark on an epic journey to chase their dream and save their futures.

## SHORT SYNOPSIS

Three boys. Two laws. One country...

Caught in a collision between the brave new world of rap, football and street cred and the oldest living culture on earth, Lorrpu, Botj and Milika are three Yolngu teenagers who once shared a childhood dream of becoming great hunters together.

However, things change, dreams become harder to attain. Botj is "walking on the wild side" a lost soul in search of a place. Milika is more interested in football, chicks and hot tracks than any of the traditional knowledge he is being taught. And only Lorrpu seems to care about the dream any more. Their paths are diverging, and he is the only one who can see it.

When Botj goes too far and finds himself on the wrong side of black and white law, Lorrpu must weigh up his own future against saving the future of his friend.

He persuades the boys to trek to Darwin to argue Botj's case with Dawu, a tribal leader. Leaving behind their kinship and community, the boys journey through the unforgiving wilderness of North East Arnhem Land to Darwin.

To survive, Lorrpu, Milika and Botj must draw on a combination of the ancient bush knowledge they were taught as boys, Botj's unique street instinct, and most importantly, on the bonds of their friendship.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

When Lorrpu dreams, he can see them again. Lorrpu, Milika and Botj as children, wading through the water at low tide, the sun warming their skin, great hunters in the making. It is an idyllic vision of the past in which every thing is just right.

Lorrpu with his spear, ever alert, moving in the way of his Yolngu ancestors, the traditionalist.

Milika, with his ever-present football, obsessed even then, with the idea of a glorious sporting future.

And Botj, always a few steps ahead, fearless, capable, with the sharpest eyes, the keenest sense of their surroundings, a born leader.

Then Lorrpu wakes and is once again confronted with reality...

At fourteen, Lorrpu and his friends are on the verge of manhood. Dawu, a powerful tribal elder, has chosen him and Milika to further their traditional education, but Botj has been left behind. Botj's recklessness in the community, due to an addiction to petrol sniffing, has landed him a stint in jail and left him feeling like an outsider in two worlds.

Confused, angry and defiant, he returns to a community in which the prevailing attitude towards him is that he will one day end up a hopeless drunk like his father living amongst the "long grass people", a collection of lost souls in Darwin. With no connections and no access to his family, apart from his Uncle Matjala, the local corrections officer, he immediately seeks refuge in the friendships of childhood. But with his friends moving on to their ceremonial education and forced to work to earn the trust of his elders, Botj soon finds himself falling into old habits. And despite Lorrpu's assurances that their friendship will never be affected by anything, Botj becomes determined to ruin things for the other boys, especially when he witnesses a secret men's ceremony to which he is not privy.

An initially harmless prank becomes a major catastrophe when one night Botj convinces the other two boys to raid the local community store for cigarettes. For Lorrpu and Milika, jubilation swiftly becomes remorse when the situation escalates and Botj rampages through the store. Lorrpu tries to stop him, to make his friend see sense, but to no avail. A fight ensues and Botj is left there, beaten, feeling hopeless and abandoned, and he succumbs to his addiction – petrol.

Alone, high on petrol fumes, he breaks into the Community Centre and continues his violent rampage, inadvertently setting the building alight and burning his arm badly in the process. Botj awakens the next morning in hospital, knowing he has sealed his fate by breaking the law once again.

Lorrpu is by his side and becomes determined to save Botj from the law and himself. Lorrpu knows that the only way to do this is to take Botj's case to Dawu, the elder, who is away on tribal business in Darwin, 300 miles away. But there are problems. Lorrpu is unsure whether his gamble will pay off. He has no money, no transport, and Milika steadfastly refuses to risk his own future for a "no hoper".

Yet Lorrpu is determined to carry out his course of action, and he helps Botj escape from hospital, providing him with clothes. The boys steal away to an abandoned shelter – their secret spot – in preparation for their journey. Once there, they are joined by a reluctant Milika, who is drawn by the bonds of friendship that still exist between the three of them (and a secret desire to purchase a new pair of football boots).

They embark on their journey through the dense and dangerous north-eastern wilderness, toward an uncertain future, each with their own agenda. For Lorrpu it is an opportunity to live out his dream of being a great hunter, to test his skills and his cultural knowledge against the harsh reality of the Arnhem Land wilderness and to see Botj well again before they plead his case to the elder. For Milika it is a test of loyalty to his friends, a last act of boyhood and a chance to get a glimpse of the outside world, the white world, for which he is destined. And for Botj, it is a chance at life again...

With Matjala hot on their trail, and despite hardship, conflict and Botj's deteriorating physical condition, the boys begin to blossom on their journey. Watched over by Baru, the spirit of the crocodile that they all share, they come to understand the ways of the land through which they travel and to once again trust and rely upon each other. Botj's condition, both physical and spiritual, improves to such an extent that finally Lorrpu passes the mantle of leadership back to him. And by the time they hitch a ride with a group of tourists for the final leg of their journey into the city, all three boys have grown in stature.

But their arrival in Darwin fails to secure an immediate answer to the problems that precipitated their flight. Dawu is not immediately convinced that Botj has fully overcome his problems. Botj becomes determined that Dawu will turn him over to the police by morning. He takes flight once again. He seeks out his estranged father amongst the "long grass people" only to find that his father does not even recognise him any more.

As the boys awaken and find him gone, Botj's spiral downward recommences, and this time, nothing can save him...

# A History of Yolngu

Yolngu culture in north-east Arnhem Land – a heartland of Aboriginal culture and land rights – is among the oldest living cultures on earth, stretching back over 40,000 years. It is only since 1935 that the Yolngu people have had sustained contact with the Balanda (Europeans), firstly through Methodist missions, then through contact with service personnel during World War Two and, more recently, with the imposition of multi-national mines on their tribal lands.

Yolngu people speak a dozen dialects of a language group known as Yolngu matha. English is very much a second (or thirteenth) language. Since the 1960's Yolngu leaders have been conspicuous in the struggle for Aboriginal land rights. In 1963, provoked by a unilateral government decision to excise a part of their land for a bauxite mine, Yolngu people at Yirrkala in north east Arnhem land sent to the House of Representatives a petition on bark (the traditional medium for visual art representation). The bark petition attracted national and international attention and now hangs in the national parliament as a testament to the Yolngu role in the birth of the land rights movement.

## GLOSSARY Note: (The Aboriginal words featured are from the Gumatj language)

<b>Balanda</b>	Person of non-Aboriginal origin.
<b>Banyan Tree</b>	A tree with spectacular aerial roots that grow from its branches to take root in the soil.
<b>Baru</b>	Refers to the crocodile and is represented by a diamond pattern. 'Baru' is the venerated totem of the Gumatj people.
<b>Bilma</b>	Ironwood clap sticks.
<b>Gappan</b>	Comes from the soil and must be mixed with water to obtain the right consistency. Varies from community to community and has the ability to repel insects. In times of war a tribe would paint themselves with Gappan before confronting their enemy. Each tribe could be identified by the way in which they applied it.
<b>Gulka</b>	Bad spirit. Also refers to an evil person such as an assassin.
<b>Gumatj</b>	One of the sixteen tribes that live in and around north-east Arnhem Land.
<b>Maralitja Man</b>	A magic spirit guide.
<b>Naga</b>	Ceremonial loin cloth worn by men.
<b>Rowu</b>	A vine-like leaf, found along coastal areas with healing properties. Once heated, it can be applied to flesh burns.
<b>Songlines</b>	The belief of the Aboriginal people is that when you sing, you sing about whatever is in the land or on the land, including the trees and animals. It's like navigating your way through the land by singing about it. If you know the words to a particular song, that song can, in turn, connect to another song that will help you find your way. Each clan has their own songs that connect from clan to clan and so forth.
<b>Totem</b>	Every tribe or clan group has their own ancestral totem, generally represented by an animal and greatly revered.
<b>Yidaki</b>	Didgeridu or hollow log.
<b>Yolngu</b>	Essentially means Aboriginal human being and in particular refers to people who belong to the 16 or so clans that live in and around north-east Arnhem Land.

# PRODUCTION INFORMATION

## HOW IT ALL STARTED

A boyhood spent in Darwin had instilled Director Stephen Johnson with a deep love of the Northern Territory and its people. Following several years abroad where he honed the skills that would help him in realizing his dream, he came home to Darwin in 1990 and established Burrundi Pictures, arguably the Northern Territory's first film production company. "I returned with the intention of making a film," explained Johnson, "but at that time there was really no movie industry in the Northern Territory so I just started my own business and freelanced. I wanted to explore different types of work that would reunite me with Aboriginal culture, people and the landscape, because that's what I wished to draw upon in order to tell this story. I always knew that one day I'd return to shoot a film, but before I could meet the challenge I had to go away and learn a great many things."

Around the time that Johnson established Burrundi Pictures, Dr. Patricia Edgar, Director of the Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF), was in need of someone to shoot documentary footage for the ACTF's program, Lift Off. She commissioned Johnson over the phone and was subsequently supplied with spectacular footage that revealed an unconventional style and a rare talent for showcasing the subject at hand. Intrigued by the flair of this maverick filmmaker, Edgar decided to visit Darwin to observe him at work. "I asked him whether he'd thought of doing a feature and he said, 'Absolutely!' so I decided there and then that we needed to establish a team that would fully support what he wanted to achieve," said Edgar. So began the ACTF's journey in making its first feature film.

Edgar commissioned Chris Anastassiades, a talented and insightful writer who had previously worked with the ACTF, to develop a screenplay. To aid the project's creative evolution, Gordon Glenn eventually joined her in the role of producer. Thus the team behind YOLNGU BOY was formed.

"We went through a very long process," recalled Edgar. "Stephen had grown-up with these people and possessed a great sympathy and insight which he was able to transfer to film. It's not a project that just any director could take on. Unless you knew how to operate in the Northern Territory and had extremely good connections, you would never be able to get things done." Glenn concurred. "The remarkable thing about Stephen was his ability to work with kids in north-east Arnhem Land in such a way that they completely accepted his presence and his camera. You weren't just observing another race from the outside, you were actually there with them. He possesses a very warm personality that communicates itself to people, which kids particularly respond to. When Stephen hit town, things happened. He'd use his energy to create an enjoyable event that would alleviate the boredom that can be prevalent around here. Many people come to north-east Arnhem Land, shoot film and disappear never to be heard from again. Stephen doesn't do that. He returns with the footage, shows them and they like what they see. In turn, this creates a circle of work and completion that is satisfying for both parties."

Despite the project's obvious potential, its commercial viability was an unknown factor. In a period spanning 40 years only two Australian films featuring an Aboriginal theme had come close to enjoying some degree of success - *Jedda* and *Walkabout* - but neither had featured a full Aboriginal cast nor had been totally shot in the Northern Territory. Indeed, *Walkabout* was directed by Nicolas Roeg and starred two English children alongside an Aboriginal actor. Finally the ACTF, in a great show of faith, cash-flowed the project's full development, never certain that outside finance would ultimately be

secured. "The brief of the ACTF," noted Edgar, "is to develop quality, innovative Australian programs that in some way break new ground. YOLNGU BOY does so in just about every way."

With this in mind, Edgar, Glenn, Anastassiades and Johnson determined that one of the burning issues for the film was the particular dilemma of adolescents in the Aboriginal community. Adolescence is rarely easy. For most Aboriginal teenagers it represents not only the transition from child to adult but entrapment between the dominance of western society and a culture recognized as the oldest on the planet. For many kids juxtaposed between the old and the new, the future is uncertain and the path they must tread, fraught with contradiction.

Anastassiades commenced work on the script. He visited the Northern Territory several times over a period of five years and with the help of Stephen Johnson spent time with Aboriginal kids from Gove and Yirrkala who would eventually inspire the screenplay. During that time, he gained the confidence of the children and observed many little incidents that eventually found their way into the script. The challenge was to craft a contemporary story that would connect with an audience worldwide and yet reflect the concerns of Yolngu teenagers. "Chris has a great understanding of how to structure a piece so that the audience is quickly taken into a set of circumstances," observed Gordon Glenn. "He establishes the elements that will drive the narrative, yet does so in a way that's imperceptible but very powerful. This is a story about vibrant kids who have a dramatic issue in their life which everyone can understand, not just a worthy film about disadvantaged youth."

The final script was a reflection of Anastassiades' ability to identify the story that needed to be told, combined with Johnson's unique knowledge of the land and the Yolngu people and Edgar's ongoing input and unswerving support and encouragement.

Perhaps the final significant ingredient in the realisation of the script (and throughout the film's development) was the input of Mandawuy Yunupingu, singer of renowned band, Yothu Yindi, who, along with his brother, Galarrwuy Yunupingu, Chairman of the Northern Land Council, became Associate Producers of the film. Mandawuy and Galarrwuy's openness and willingness helped to tell the Yolngu's stories and helped provide an insight into the difficulties faced by teenagers in Arnhem Land.

"We have really attempted to tell an authentic story about what is happening in the lives of these kids," explained Edgar, "to examine what is happening in Australia at this time. It's also about the multiple choices that all teenagers must confront - should you simply 'opt out' or accept the responsibilities of adulthood?"

Ultimately, it was the script that convinced the investors to come on-board. The final draft elicited an excellent reaction to what initially had been perceived as a commercially questionable project. The general response from outside parties was overwhelmingly positive, due to a screenplay that not only had heart and integrity, but was insightful, original and intensely compelling.

The eventual funding represented the combined support of SBS Independent, Cinemedia, the Australian Film Finance Corporation, the Australian Children's Television Foundation, Palace Films, Beyond Films and private investment.



# CASTING

Botj, Lorrpu and Milika are three teenage boys, friends since childhood, who have reached the point where they must make a fundamental decision about the path each will follow.

YOLNGU BOY is about the journey that leads to that final choice.

"Such a story has been in my mind since my first contact with Aboriginal people," said Johnson.

"The situation that's occurring out there is incredibly tragic. As much as I derive a great deal of energy and inspiration from these people, I believe that in some ways indirect genocide is still taking place. Alcohol abuse and petrol sniffing continue to be problematic. There are also instances where the current generation is perhaps not as effective with their kids as they could be, although this is hardly surprising when you consider the level of external interference parents have to negotiate. Consequently, there are many youngsters out there who are totally lost and confused and find themselves juxtaposed between two contradictory lifestyles."

The character of Botj personifies the promise, intelligence and ultimate tragedy of being trapped between two cultures that engulf too many Aboriginal teenagers. When first we meet Botj, he's returning home after serving time for past misdemeanours. Practically everyone within his community has dismissed him as 'trouble' with the exception of his childhood friends, Lorrpu and Milika. Lorrpu, in particular, is very loyal towards Botj and believes he can help him redefine his attitude to life and their cultural heritage. In the flashback sequences that depict the boys at age nine, it's apparent that Botj is the one who's the best hunter, the most accomplished, and a natural leader. But the following years have wrought a disturbing transition that has led him to the brink of self-destruction. The flashbacks also enable the audience to see Botj through Lorrpu's eyes and invite an emotional empathy with his character.

"Botj is essentially the lost boy, the rebel without a cause, but in a sense he's far more complicated because again you're talking about someone who's torn between the old and the new," reflected Johnson. "He's a kid who's matured without a father figure -- having witnessed his father drunkenly abuse his mother. He's seen all the shit and couldn't give a shit. He's taken to petrol sniffing, stealing, anything, completely rebelling against his own heritage as well as that of the white man. He's a boy on the edge but incredibly intelligent and fantastically grounded within Yolngu culture despite his apparent rejection of it. Botj basically encapsulates the kind of kid that hasn't been given the attention or love that everyone needs in their life. He's a total rebel, a loose cannon and plays upon that fact -- especially to his mates. But he's been to jail and jail is the ultimate initiation for any young Aboriginal man."

Conversely, Lorrpu believes his future lies through the traditional ways of his people. He wants to gain knowledge, status and a path to leadership in his community via that route. He's intensely loyal to Botj but doesn't wish to acknowledge the existence of a modern world. Glenn explains, "He's a person who tends to see the old ways as the only course to follow, which brings him into conflict with his friends because that path is not right for them."

Completing the trio is Milika, who alongside Botj and Lorrpu is disarmingly straightforward. Unlike Lorrpu, Milika isn't overly interested in traditional Yolngu life, preferring to dream of a future as a professional football player. For him, the outside world beckons seductively and accordingly he relishes the trappings that material success can provide, such as his mobile phone, Discman and CD collection. Indeed, the first thing Milika does on arriving in Darwin is to purchase a new pair of football boots!

Thus began a casting search of marathon proportions. Edgar recalled their quest. "Finding three young boys who could speak English was extremely difficult. The lack of English skills relates to the system of bilingual education that applies to children in the Northern Territory. There is no actual requirement for them to attend school. One of our boys hadn't been for three years. There's really little incentive for them to learn English and you have to appreciate that it's not their first language. We did discuss whether the film should be in English and decided that if we were going to reach an audience we had no alternative."

Of the adults cast, Makuma Yunupingu, a member of the hit band, Yothu Yindi plays Matjala, Botj's uncle, who also serves as the local corrections officer; a scenario that doesn't make for the warmest relationship with his nephew. "We tested many men," recalled Johnson, "but as soon as we saw Makuma we knew he was right. Initially I envisaged Matjala as a slightly older character but Makuma was perfect because his youth gave him a far greater connection to the boys than an older man would have had."

As the project had its genesis in north-east Arnhem Land, they had initially hoped to find three Yolngu boys for the roles ('Yolngu' referring to the 16 or so clans that live in and around north-east Arnhem Land) but soon realized they would have to look farther afield. Stephen Johnson, Gordon Glenn and casting director Maggie Miles embarked upon a tour of virtually every community across north-east Arnhem Land from Elcho Island, Ramingining and Gapuwiyak to Bathurst Island, Melville Island as well as all the boarding schools in Darwin. They travelled over 5,000 kilometres by light aircraft, car and foot, even searching with binoculars as they realized that the kids they were seeking would not necessarily be found behind school desks. "We must have tested close to 1,000 boys," recalled Glenn. "Stephen would conduct the interviews, I'd operate the video camera and Maggie would document whom we were seeing."

"The casting studio was the Aussie bush", says Miles. Through a vast network of contacts, news of casting for the film spread by word of mouth, patience and persistence talking with shop owners, council members, health workers, friends, businesses, friends of friends and newly found contacts.

In Gapuwiyak, Maggie and Stephen heard stories about a boy called Sean. "The school was putting on a play about petrol sniffing and Sean had an important role but was absent on the day of the auditions," recounts Miles. "We learnt that Sean was the son of the Principal of the school and when asked about her son, Shirley Nirrurranydji promptly hooked up the loud speaker which bellows throughout the entire community appealing to Sean to come out of hiding."

"I learnt that Shirley and her husband Wilson had been involved with the film Women of the Sun and wondered (and hoped) Sean had acting in his blood too."

By the end of the afternoon, there was still no sign of Sean. Johnson, Miles and Glenn were due to leave via the airstrip at 5.30pm when a Tiwi teenager (staying with Sean at the time) sidled over and asked them a few more questions about the movie. They twigged that Sean may have sent out a spy.

Miles recalls, "We had seen just about every other young person in the community when Johnson went for a final lap around the community. The next time I saw the land rover, in the back, was this dangerously cool teenager, a live wire, and Stephen was grinning from ear to ear. Here was Botj."

Finally, eighteen possible candidates were selected and invited to Darwin for a week-long series of workshops with Johnson and dramaturg Nico Louthouris. From there they decided upon a shortlist of five boys who were invited to Darwin -- this time for a serious rehearsal process.

Sean Mununggurr, eventually cast in the pivotal role of Botj, is a Yolngu boy from Gapuwiyak in east Arnhem Land. "He's the classic Botj" reflected Johnson. "I knew he wouldn't be easy to find. I always said, 'I bet Botj won't come forward -- he'll be standing under a tree or just avoid me,' and that's exactly what happened, he was avoiding us!"

John Sebastian Pilakui (Sebbie) and Nathan Daniels who play Lorrpu and Milika respectively, both hail from the Tiwi Islands.

One of the questions Stephen asked the kids to gauge their emotional range was, "Tell me about a good day in your life and a bad day." To describe a good day Sebbie replied, "Today, because you've asked me to be in this movie."

## SEAN, SEBBIE AND NATHAN

How would three Aboriginal teenagers who had little, if any, concept of filmmaking, cope with a head-on collision with white man's culture? As it happened, surprisingly well.

For a start, there was a script to be learnt -- and for all three, English was a second language. "It was never a matter of 'read the script boys and memorize it,' smiled Johnson, "but rather a case of understanding the action within the scene and their character's motivation. So I'd say, 'Hey, we're doing the scene in the cave today. What does Lorrpu want? What does Botj want? How are they feeling?' It was certainly the perfect method for them. I think it's fair to say that they have evolved to the point where they're very good at what they're doing -- although I believe they've been just incredible throughout. After all, they're only fifteen!"

Despite the tendency of many Westerners to assume that all Aboriginals speak the same language, this is not the case. There are hundreds of languages and dialects and numerous clans. Nathan and Sebbie, both from the Tiwi Islands, conversed in Tiwi, whereas Sean, a Yolngu boy, spoke Gumatj. Virtually no similarity exists between the two languages -- it's akin to comparing Chinese to English - - however by the shoot's end, all had mastered an impressive command of each other's native tongue.

Johnson and his team realized that whether or not their three leads were Yolngu was largely irrelevant, as casting the 'right' boys was more important than stubbornly adhering to a restrictive ideal. "The fact that we have two Tiwi boys and one Yolngu boy doesn't matter," Johnson observed. "Tiwi and Yolngu have married and after all, they're playing a part for a film."

Overcoming the ingrained sense of 'shame' the three teens felt at suddenly being in the spotlight, required patience, empathy and perseverance. "For them 'shame' has a much broader context than it does within our culture," explained their on-set tutor, Mark Monaghan. "Many Aboriginal people don't want to attract attention, particularly the kids. It can even be difficult to bestow praise in a school environment. Often it's not appropriate to say, 'well done,' because they feel shame at having been singled out. When the boys returned home for a visit, initially they wouldn't leave the car. They know that everyone is aware that they've been off making a movie and subsequently they'll be the centre of attention. I took Sean to a football game in Yirrkala at the start of the shoot and he said, 'drive on Mark, drive on. Can't get out of the car, big shame job.' The people there might not have realised that he's in a movie but he does."

To overcome the boys' inherent shyness, Johnson had to go where no director has gone before. "The only way I was able to coax them into swimming totally naked at Twin Falls was to spend several days naked with them myself, hunting," he chuckled. "It was like, 'come on boys, we're going hunting,' and off with the gear and away we would go. I've done some unbelievable things to get these kids across the line!"

Devising a re-introduction program to assist Sean, Nathan and Sebbie return to their communities at the end of filming was paramount. "It's been a long haul," conceded Johnson. "Particularly as they've been away from their families and you have to appreciate that there is a very big family connection with all the Yolngu and Tiwi people. Their tutor will be on-hand throughout that period to help them readjust plus we've instigated safeguards within their communities to ensure that they cope with the change. To say, 'Right boys, for the next fifteen weeks we're going to disappear and make a movie,' called for a major adjustment, so we've always been mindful of our responsibilities once the time came for them to return home."

## THE SHOOT

Featuring some of the most spectacular scenery ever filmed in Australia, the visual beauty of YOLNGU BOY belies the logistical difficulties that Stephen Johnson and his crew faced throughout the seven weeks shoot which began on September 20, 1999.

A Territorian, Johnson had envisaged many of the film's locations, and informed the screenplay's evolution, by making sure these locations were reflected in the final script. In turn, the Yothu Yindi Foundation were closely associated with the production from the outset.

Galarrwuy Yunupingu and his brother Mandawuy Yunupingu, lead singer and songwriter of Yothu Yindi, are associate producers of YOLNGU BOY. Both were on-set throughout production to ensure that cultural issues were handled with equanimity, resulting in a total collaboration between the crew and the families of the region.

The locale chosen to represent the boys' community was Yirrkala, a coastal town on the Gove Peninsula in Nhulunbuy and home to the Yunupingu family. With a population of 800 Yolngu people, Yirrkala also serves as a resource centre for a further 800 people who live in small family-oriented out-stations in the region.

Initially, the mechanics of filming in Nhulunbuy proved awkward. The unit trucks had to be brought into Gove Harbor by barge, staggered over a two-week period to accommodate the level of equipment required. Even travelling overland through Gove was tricky with delicate lighting equipment shattering as it rattled over the corrugated roads.

Involving the local community throughout the shoot was a top priority, as production designer Sarah Stollman explained, "Wherever feasible props were crafted by the people of Yirrkala - partly for authenticity but also to ensure their happiness with the project. There were many instances where we had to call upon their knowledge, particularly as there were no reference points for the items we required. Most of our research was in the field."

Even so, finding a person with the knowledge didn't always mean the problem was solved, as there was film time and Yolngu time. Despite the best efforts of the crew it wasn't always possible to convey the urgency of keeping to schedule -- especially crucial for a shoot on a stringent budget. "They have no concept of time," laughed Johnson. "They just don't care about it. I suppose our tendency to agonize over deadlines must seem strange to a culture that's been in existence for more than fifty thousand years. You must also appreciate that the concept of what's involved in making a movie is totally alien to them, but I have to say that the women are just amazing. They just get things done and the local ladies helped the art department produce many of the items we needed." The large paintings required for the scene where an out-of-control Botj stumbles through the church before setting the community centre ablaze, were a prime example, being executed by two local artists, Gaymala and Bundaman. Props such as Lorrpu's Banyan rope would also have been virtually impossible to create without local help. It's one thing knowing that such a rope is made from the vines of the Banyan tree but attempting to craft one without the right technique would have been futile. Likewise with 'Gappan,' worn at times by Lorrpu throughout the boys' trek. Derived from the soil and mixed with water to obtain the right consistency, Gappan is a clay-like substance that varies from community to community but in the hands of a novice could resemble a mud pie.

Aside from the challenge of reconciling the two cultures in terms of time, the relative isolation of many of the shoot's key locations necessitated careful planning. "From my point of view," said

Stollman, "it's a matter of being ultra prepared as once you're here it's very difficult to pop over to the hardware store for the various things that you need."

Costume designer Jill Johanson was intrigued to discover how strong an influence American culture was amongst Yolngu teenagers. "They really favor a 'homeboy' look. They're no different in that respect to teenage kids in Melbourne or Sydney. We dressed Lorrpu in that style but not Botj, whose clothes tended to be worn and not at all stylish. Milika, on the other hand, is very much the 'footy' fan so we just dressed him in football shorts." Johanson was also mindful of maintaining visual continuity between the teenage Botj, Lorrpu and Milika and their nine year old selves, whom the crew fondly nicknamed 'Baby Botj', 'Little Lorrpu' and 'Mini Milika.' It was important that each child was easily identifiable as the younger version of the older boy, so the same style was kept for all three.

One of Johanson's greatest challenges was authentically recreating the traditional garb donned by Lorrpu during the boys' journey to Darwin. "We had to make what was originally scripted as a paperbark loincloth but it was quite a process discovering that the correct term for the garment was a 'dhirrithirri'. Just prior to my first attempt at making it, somebody suggested that I speak with Gaymala (one of the artists who executed the paintings). So, I asked her whether she could help us find paperbark for the waistband and her response was, 'No, no, no! You don't use paperbark, oh my God no,' and she took charge of the matter from there. The waistband must be made from the inner bark of a tree with red flowers that needs to be broken down into string so that it can then be braided into a rope. The pieces that form the actual loincloth come from the middle section of the bark of the Banyan tree. Gaymala showed us how to remove the bark so that it could be beaten, soaked and then formed into something that you can actually make clothes from, which was just fantastic. But the first day that Sebbie wore the dhirrithirri, it had completely dried by the next morning and resembled a piece of petrified wood. We were aghast, as we had no idea how to restore the moisture. Fortunately, another lady who had helped to craft it happened by, and told us to keep it in a bucket of water, which solved the problem."

Painting the body of Mangatjay Yunupingu who played the 'Maralitja Man' also posed a dilemma. For the Gumatj people, Maralitja Man is the spirit person who guides one through life, until upon death that person becomes a Maralitja Man in turn. There are certain patterns that are not to be filmed as they are only intended for the people whose dreaming they belong to. Therefore designs were needed that would appear similar to an unpracticed eye. Galarrwuy Yunupingu's nieces took charge. A diamond design representing 'Baru' (the crocodile and the boys' totem) was adopted. However, replication was forbidden by the crew's make-up artist.

At times, it appeared that the spirits were casting a benign eye over the production. At the start of the boys' journey, the anchor of the canoe is grabbed by a huge manta ray, causing them to be towed across the sea; an episode based on an actual event. In preparation for the scene, Johnson conducted an aerial survey of the designated location. "We were in the air all day and I'd been wishing for a manta ray to appear," he recounted. "We couldn't afford to build an elaborate replica, so I was hoping for a quick shot of one to insert in the sequence. Suddenly, our camera assistant shouts, 'manta ray', and I said, 'bullshit!' Then I looked out of the window and screamed, 'manta ray!' Then the pilot yells, 'manta ray!' We're all seeing manta rays – left, right – and before we knew it there were seven, each about fifteen feet across, heading for the bay where we were filming. It was as though they had come to say goodbye. The manta ray is a very powerful spirit – they even have their own dance – so we manoeuvred the helicopter and filmed them cavorting. It was a very cathartic moment."

Having just completed a stint on Mission Impossible II, YOLNGU BOY provided director of photography Brad Shield with a 360 degree turnaround. "I've worked on a lot of big budget American movies," he mused, "but this has been an entirely different experience. People have been totally committed to this feature for six years and have taken enormous personal risks to see it made. That alone makes you appreciate that every day of the shoot is unique as we're not going to live that day again. We don't have the luxury of being able to film endlessly which is actually very exciting. Plus we have three fantastic boys who have taken to acting unbelievably quickly. From a professional viewpoint it's also great to work with such magnificent terrain. The look of the film has been on Stephen's mind from day one. His chief directive was to 'treat the country as a character' as he wanted a Yolngu perspective on everything to instill the sense that the country is watching the boys."

"I've always wanted to photograph YOLNGU BOY to reflect what the human eye would see," added Johnson. "I'm not into still shots because life is neither still nor straight. I also wanted to assault the audience with some very powerful imagery which just comes out of left field."

With this in mind, Shield and Johnson opted for wide-angle lenses in preference to long lenses for much of the boys' journey, even for close ups. The scenes depicting the mens' camp were predominantly lit with a big fire, exaggerated by the use of heat bars and deflected Tungsten lights. Kodak Vision 500 was the favored stock for the night time shots, whereas Kodak 5248 was generally utilised during the day.

Johnson's desire to represent the land as a vibrant entity extended to the film's soundtrack. "It too serves to heighten one's sense of the land," he enthused. "I want the audience to feel that the land lives and breathes like we do. We come from the land and eventually return, which is the Yolngu way of thinking and a philosophy that I share. Musically, we've tried to create a situation that suggests a struggle between the old and the new in much the same way that most Aboriginal kids are being pulled in two different directions."

Every time the production ventured near water -- which constituted much of the shoot -- a crocodile marksman was on standby. "One immediate problem," explained Glenn, "was working alongside crocodiles. They're very difficult creatures to deal with, as nobody knows a hell of a lot about them." Luckily, there were no major incidents although everyone was very mindful of their presence, particularly during the recreation of the turtle hunt.

As children, Lorrpu, Botj and Milika fantasize about emulating their ancestral hunters by harpooning a turtle. For Lorrpu, the dream is still alive but Botj and Milika have long relegated it to the past or so they think. Stumbling across a crocodile poacher's camp -- an abhorrent sight as the crocodile (Baru) is their totem they release all the imprisoned baby crocs and help themselves to the poacher's boat. Out at sea they sight an enormous turtle and for one glorious moment their problems dissolve as they successfully relive their childhood quest.

To recreate this adventure, turtle specialist Professor Rod Kennett manifested a program whereby eight members of the crew were dispatched to a remote beach to gather turtles. Under his supervision, they captured the creatures at night and carefully transported them to the intended location to be penned in readiness for their big moment. The turtles were then tethered in the water and filmed as they were released. As only nesting turtles venture onto the beach, all participants were female, aged between fifty and eighty years old.

Renowned underwater cinematographer George Greenough shot the scene. Over four days Greenough and underwater cameraman Scott Welsh filmed the turtles using Greenough's specially designed cameras; half the size of those generally employed for underwater shoots. Thanks to the diminutive equipment, the team was able to take intimate shots of the turtles, which would have been impossible with bulkier cameras. As with most of the shoot, Kodak 5248 was the favored stock.

Near the end of their journey, the boys reach an imposing cliff overlooking a beach, which they clamber down to indulge in a jubilant swim. Lightning Dreaming on the edge of the Arnhem Land escarpment at Twin Falls was the location selected.

"We had Sean, Sebbie and Nathan dropped off on Lightning Dreaming which took months of negotiations with all the elders before it could even be considered," recollected Johnson. "There were choppers and safety officers landing the boys on the ridge and mountaineers taking them into location on the edge of the cliff and all of these sorts of things. That's big stuff for a low budget film and if not for the fabulous crew, the good pilots and the people I've worked with here for years, it would have been impossible, particularly as it was three hours in and three out with the final access by water." Not that the crew were fussed. "It's the first time I've had to swim to work," joked Brad Shield. "As everything was transported via canoe, we reduced our numbers. Even so there wasn't room onboard for everyone so some of us swam, but those of us that did were very happy to be on-set that day!"

Filming was completed on November 5, 1999. Despite obstacles that many would have considered insurmountable, Johnson was philosophical about the marathon effort involved. "Creatively realizing our objective given the budget and inaccessibility of most of the locations has been bloody hard," he admitted, "but we've managed. Both Patricia and Gordon have been terribly supportive and Chris Anastasiades was always there, ready to discuss ideas for the script, even if it was 1.00am. But it's Patricia Edgar who has made my vision a reality. She's just an incredible woman who has not only backed me every step of the way, but has shared my dream from the outset. Unfortunately the majority of Australians live in cities and subsequently their exposure to Aboriginal culture is practically non-existent. I want audiences to be entertained but I also want them to leave the cinema feeling that these people are not that unlike themselves. The fact that they're black and live here and adhere to certain cultural beliefs is no big deal. They listen to the same music, wear the same clothes and have dreams like anybody else. These guys have something extra special in their lives that occasionally they have problems dealing with because of all the other pressures laid upon them. I'm hoping that YOLNGU BOY will break down a barrier and just make people think before they assume."



## THE MUSIC

Composer Mark Ovenden worked closely with indigenous musicians in Arnhem land and with the natural rhythms of the Australian bush itself to create a unique soundscape for *Yolngu Boy*. He has created a backdrop that is both true to the indigenous Australian spirit and thoroughly contemporary. Mark uses the most modern techniques of electronic music to harness the beauty and power of indigenous Australian instruments and voices.

Mark was responsible for bringing together the film's music including the commissioning of the bands *Yothu Yindi* and *Nokturnl* as well as playing most of the instruments for the scores that he composed himself.

All of the film's music, except for the didgeridoo played by Ganga Giri in Melbourne, was recorded in the small Yothu Yindi studio just outside Gove in Arnhem Land.

Mark had assistance in sourcing singers and didj players for the film from Mandawuy Yunipingu (lead singer and Associate Producer) and Stu Kellaway (bass player) from *Yothu Yindi*. The first musician that Mark, Stu and Mandawuy found was an old man they had worked with before. At the time he was walking in the bay, in his underpants with his spear ready to hunt a stingray. Reflecting on the time, Mark said, "When we nabbed him, I guess he figured it was a better deal to get payed by us than to spear a stringray."

Mark and Stu brought together traditional musicians and recorded traditional songs for each of the animals identified in the film hence they got songs for Manata Ray, Baru (crocodile) songs, hunting songs, Goanna songs and turtle hunt songs.

A normal working day was probably only about 2 or 3 hours of actual recording with most of the time spent actually finding people, getting them back to the studio and getting all the technicals done.

Mark approached *Regurgitator* to use their song *Black Bugs*. It was a song that Mark really wanted to use but didn't think he would be able to get permission. When Mark was nearing the end of scoring the music he decided to go for it and an approach was made to the band. They gave Mark permission to use their song. He says that *Regurgitator* really wanted to contribute in some way to this landmark film and "this was a great gesture from the band."

The *Yothu Yindi* studio is located about 30 metres from the beach at the edge of the bay which meant that on dinner breaks, Mark and Stu could catch, cook and eat fish (and dodge snakes!) before returning to work for the night. At one point in Mark's life he lived "just down the road" from the recording studio (a mere 450km away!) and thoroughly loved living in one of the most beautiful parts of the world.

Mark is now based in Germany and over the years has toured and recorded extensively. He has worked with some of Australia's hottest talent including *Midnight Oil*, *Yothu Yindi*, Neil Finn and *You Am I*.

# THE PRODUCERS

## **THE AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S TELEVISION FOUNDATION**

The Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF) was established in 1982 to help improve the production environment and to make a significant difference to children's programming in Australia. For nearly two decades the ACTF has demonstrated just how much can be achieved, proving that entertainment and education can go hand in hand.

The ACTF has produced over 150 hours worth of programs that have won 77 national and international awards (including an Emmy Award, the Prix Jeunesse and a Japan Prize) and have been sold to over 100 countries. In Australia alone their shows have received 14 Australian Film Institute (AFI) nominations which have resulted in 5 awards.

Their production slate includes the following series; *Winners*, *Kaboodle (series 1 & 2)*, *Touch The Sun*, *Round The Twist (4 series)*, *The Greatest Tune On Earth*, *More Winners*, *Seen But Not Heard*, *Sky Trackers (series and tele-movie)*, *Lift Off (series 1 & 2)*, *The Genie From Down Under (series 1 & 2)*, *Li'l Elvis Jones and the Truckstoppers* and *Crash Zone (series 1 & 2)* plus the documentaries, *Songs Of Innocence* and *First Day*.

## **YOTHU YINDI and THE YOTHU YINDI FOUNDATION**

The main kinship term *Yolngu* people use to describe the glue that binds their society is *Yothu Yindi*, literally meaning 'child and mother'. The term describing a relationship system is understood and practised by people in an area stretching over 90,000 square kilometres of north-east Arnhem Land. The system involves people from Manangrida in the west, to Yirrkala in the east, to the Roper River in the south and includes people on Groote Island and the Wessels group of islands. Those people who are part of this kinship system refer to themselves as 'Yolngu.'

Yothu Yindi is also the name of a well-known Australian rock band. They are a contemporary cultural voice of the Yolngu community, and a band with a philosophy, which is to promote balance and mutual respect between the inhabitants of Australia. They combined the ancient song cycles of north-east Arnhem Land featuring such traditional instruments as the 'bilma' and 'yidaki' and juxtaposed them with western pop sounds to present a true musical meeting of two diverse cultures. They also took traditional Yolngu dances -- describing the behavior of crocodiles, wallabies and the fauna of their homelands -- and worked them into the context of contemporary performance.

In association with the band, the Yothu Yindi Foundation Aboriginal Corporation was established by Yolngu community leaders and persons of authority from five of the clan groups in the region - the Gumatj, Rirratjingu, Djapu, Galpu and Wanguri. Broadly, its aims are to support and further the maintenance, development, teachings and enterprise potential of Yolngu cultural life and to actively seek the resources and facilities for these to be realized. It aims to provide such cultural services for the communities at Yirrkala, Gunyangara and the surrounding homeland centres.

## ABOUT THE CAST

### **SEAN MUNUNGGURR (Botj)**

With an air that invites comparisons to a young Marlon Brando, Sean comes from the small community of Gapuwiyak in the Northern Territory where his mother is principal of the local school. A true Yolngu boy, Sean is not the first member of his family to face the cameras. Both his parents have appeared in several movies, including the acclaimed SBS Television series, *Women of the Sun*.

At just fifteen, Sean possesses an incredible knowledge of Yolngu culture and has taken part in many of the ceremonies and songs that have been upheld through countless generations. Indeed, his fine singing voice was put to good use throughout filming as he sang the 'songlines' - an ancient belief which can, in its broadest sense, be interpreted as 'finding your way through the land by singing about it.' However, like most teenage boys he loves movies, girls and music, citing rap artist Tupac as one of his favorite singers.

Sean would like to keep acting, but after the months of study, work and separation from his family necessitated by the making of YOLNGU BOY, he was longing for his home and rest!

### **JOHN SEBASTIAN (SEBBIE) PILAKUI (Lorrpu)**

Home for Sebbie is the town of Nguiiu on Bathurst Island, which boasts a population of approximately 1,200 people and is the Tiwi Islands' largest community. He currently attends St Johns College in Darwin and in his spare time enjoys all the trappings of Western culture, but like most Tiwi kids regularly goes bush with his family.

For a boy who had always yearned to be an actor, portraying 'Lorrpu' was the fulfillment of a lifelong aspiration. Indeed, the ability to follow a dream was something that Sebbie shared with his on-screen character.

As with Sean and Nathan's parents, Sebbie's mother and father were proud that their son had been chosen to star in a 'Balanda' movie -- despite initial concerns that his education might suffer; a notion that was appeased with the appointment of a full-time tutor for the duration of the shoot.

Coincidentally, Sebbie shares a kinship with Nathan Daniels who portrays Milika although both had met only once before. Sebbie would like to keep acting, but like Sean, was looking forward to home and a well-deserved break.

### **NATHAN DANIELS (Milika)**

"When it comes to women, he's thinks he's the greatest," joked director Stephen Johnson of Nathan Daniels who plays 'Milika.' Blessed with a dazzling smile and charm to spare, fifteen-year old Nathan nearly missed the final auditions, opting instead to go hunting with his father.

Nathan comes from the small village of Milikapiti situated on the north-western tip of Melville Island, one of the two islands that constitute the Tiwi Islands. Although his immediate family live in Milikapiti, he also has many relatives throughout the Tiwi Islands, including the larger town of Nguiiu where he attends boarding school.

In common with 'Milika,' his movie alter-ego, Nathan is a gifted football player and plays for one of Northern Territory's league teams. And also like Milika, Nathan loves music, Bon Jovi and girls - but not necessarily in that order. He enjoyed making YOLNGU BOY but like any normal teenager hopes that his friends won't laugh too much when they see him on the big screen.

## **SHANDI LIRRINA MUNUNGGURR (LIRRINA) – (YUWAN)**

Lirrina, a year 10 student, lives with her family in Yirrkala, a community in North East Arnhem Land. She attends Yirrkala's Community Education Centre and speaks a number of languages but most fluently Yolngu Matha and English.

Lirrina loved working on Yolnga Boy and hopes to become a professional actor or model when she graduates from school. Lirrina is a sports fanatic. She particularly likes basketball and loves AFL nearly as much as Milika but supports North Melbourne.

Like any teenage girl, Lirrina loves music and her favourite bands are being MaryMary, N'Sync, Sisqo and Alliyah and her favourite movies are Romeo Must Die and Drive Me Crazy.

Lirrina also loves eating the food that she has hunted. She frequently goes hunting in her grandmother's homeland of Bawaka for oysters, fish and crab.

## ABOUT THE CREW

### **STEPHEN JOHNSON (Director/Executive Producer)**

A seasoned traveller by the time he took his first steps, Johnson was born in England but spent his early years in the Bahamas before his family moved to Africa. From Africa, the Johnsons travelled the globe, eventually landing in Australia where they based themselves in the Northern Territory.

Johnson's formative years were spent in Darwin, where his father was a senior teacher at Kormilda College, a secondary school for Aboriginal students. Given his culturally eclectic childhood, he relished the chance to mix with the local Yolngu people and in the process made many life-long friends.

Following a stint in London where he studied acting and trained as a cameraman, he returned to Darwin in 1990, intent on one day making a movie that would encourage people to appreciate the cultural wealth of the Aboriginal race and the untamed beauty of the Northern Territory terrain.

Establishing the Darwin-based production company, Burrundi Pictures, Johnson's cinematic ability and close relationships within the Yolngu community led him to direct most of Yothu Yindi's music clips. He also directed the acclaimed special *Tribal Voice*, on the life of his good friend, and Yothu Yindi lead singer/songwriter, Mandawuy Yunupingu.

In addition to an extensive portfolio of corporate documentaries, commercials and music videos, Johnson has enjoyed a six-year relationship with the Australian Children's Television Foundation that commenced when he directed documentaries for their series, *Lift Off*. In recent times he has directed episodes of *The Genie From Down Under* and *Crash Zone* for the ACTF. His association with the ACTF ultimately led to the making of YOLNGU BOY.

### **PATRICIA EDGAR (Executive Producer/Producer)**

Dr. Edgar has long been at the forefront in the development of children's television in Australia. Her exceptional contribution to children's education via the medium of television is nothing short of inspirational.

She holds a BA and a BEd from the University of Melbourne, a Master of Arts from Stanford University and a Ph.D. from La Trobe University where she was appointed in 1970 as the first Chairperson of the Centre for the Study of Educational Communication and Media. She is also the author of seven books.

The Victorian Task Force Director for the establishment of the Australian Children's Television Foundation in the early eighties, Dr. Edgar became the ACTF's director upon its incorporation in 1982. Prior to accepting that position, she was the first chairperson of the Children's Program Committee, an advisory committee to the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal on children's television. Her expertise has also seen her serve on a number of film/media related government committees and from 1988 until 1995 she was deputy chairman of the Australian Film Finance Corporation Limited.

As director of the ACTF, Dr. Edgar has been the responsible producer for the ACTF's award-winning \$85 million production slate that has seen its programs sold to 101 countries. In 1995 she also conceived and hosted the first World Summit on Television and Children; a seminal event

involving 637 delegates from 71 countries that led to like international forums. The 3rd World Summit on Television for Children will take place in Athens in 2001.

In 1986 Dr. Edgar was made a Member of the General Division of the Order of Australia for services to children's television and the media, and in 1992 received the Award of the Archbishop of Sydney Citation on World Communications. Additional local and international honors have followed, including the Australian College of Education Medal in 1998 for her outstanding contribution to education through the medium of television.

### **GORDON GLENN (Producer)**

Glenn has been active on the local film scene since the early seventies. His long-term association with the ACTF, extensive experience as a producer, writer and director and 'hands-on' approach, made him a valuable member of the team behind YOLNGU BOY.

Glenn first met Stephen Johnson whilst directing the ACTF's documentary, *First Day*, which he also wrote and co-produced. The program presented children across Australia as they experienced their initial taste of school and won several awards both locally and abroad. *First Day* was one of two projects undertaken by Glenn for the ACTF that presented events through a child's perspective, as was *Songs Of Innocence - A Child's View of Family Life*, which he co-produced with Dr. Patricia Edgar in addition to writing and directing. *Celia*, the internationally acclaimed 1988 feature co-produced by Glenn, also explored a dramatic issue through the eyes of a child and received two AFI nominations.

For television, Glenn has directed the tele-movie, *Just Us*, and the award-winning drama *Anna*, which he wrote and co-produced. He has also directed a slew of award-winning commercials and has served as an AFI Judge on two occasions. Recently he produced and directed *The Never Too Late Show* for SBS Television and Artist Services; a ten-part adult literacy series.

Glenn currently has several feature projects in development.

### **GALARRWUY YUNUPINGU (Associate Producer)**

Galarrwuy Yunupingu, AM, is an elder of the Gumatj clan at Yirrkala on the Gove Peninsula and a prominent leader in the Northern Territory. He is the Chairman of the Northern Land Council and has served on many government and community committees and industry boards. In 1978 he was honored as 'Australian of the Year' and in 1985 was made a Member of the Order of Australia for his services to the Aboriginal community.

### **MANDAWUY YUNUPINGU (Associate Producer)**

Mandawuy Yunupingu is the lead singer, songwriter and founder of Yothu Yindi and a member of the Gumatj people.

In 1992, Mandawuy followed in his brother's footsteps by being named 'Australian of the Year' in recognition of his commitment to forge greater understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians and because of his burgeoning role as an ambassador for all Australians.

He was also the principal of the Yirrkala Community School and in 1989 implemented a radical both-ways curriculum that combined Balanda (European) and Yolngu (Aboriginal) educational processes, designed to present students with the best aspects of both cultures.

## **CHRIS ANASTASSIADES (Writer)**

Anastassiades has often been content to work behind the scenes, but his outstanding ability as a writer has been responsible for many an industry success.

For television he has penned scripts for *GP*, *Acropolis Now*, *Lift Off 2*, *Li'l Elvis Jones and the Truckstoppers*, *Shark Bay*, *Round The Twist 3*, *Halfway Across the Galaxy* and *Turn Left* and *The Col'n Carpenter Show*. He has also served as script/story editor on many other programs from the popular TV series' *Flying Doctors*, *Acropolis Now (Series 3,4, & 5)* and *Shark Bay* to the short feature, *Five Easy Pizzas*.

Theatrically, he has co-written *Legends*, *Acropolis Now*, *Lift Off Live* and *Effie Exposed*, the hilarious one-woman show for comedienne Mary Coustas.

In marked contrast to the dramatic issues explored in *YOLNGU BOY*, Anastassiades' comedic flair was recently showcased in the big-screen feature *Wog Boy*, which he co-wrote with actor/comedian, Nick Giannopoulos.

## **BRAD SHIELD (Director of Photography)**

With over twenty years behind the camera, Shield brings a wealth of experience and a keen eye to *YOLNGU BOY*. Trained in the USA, Shield has worked both locally and abroad and first met director Stephen Johnson some five years earlier when both filmed a series of Northern Territory commercials that focused on domestic violence.

Shield has more than 1,000 commercials to his credit and has lent his expertise to numerous features from *The Crossing*, *Beyond Rangoon*, *Street Fighter*, *Dumbo Drop*, *The Island of Dr. Moreau* and *The Phantom* to *The Thin Red Line*. His assignment prior to *YOLNGU BOY* was the action blockbuster, *Mission Impossible II*, for which he took charge of second unit photography.

*YOLNGU BOY* marks his debut feature as director of photography.

## **KEN SALLOWS (Editor)**

With a resume replete with innumerable screen highlights and awards from Australia's film industry, Sallows commenced as a script assistant with Crawford Productions; the first step in a career that has seen him emerge as one of the country's finest editors.

Over the past decade, Sallows has edited *Malcolm*, *Rikky And Pete*, *Celia*, *Return Home*, *Isabelle Eberhardt*, *Proof*, *That Eye The Sky*, *Love And Other Catastrophes*, *True Love And Chaos*, *Doing Time For Patsy Cline*, *Crackers*, *The Missing*, *Strange Planet*, *Strange Fits of Passion* and the recently released *Chopper*, based on the life of notorious underworld figure, Mark 'Chopper' Read. His credits also include a broad range of documentaries, television series and shorts.

## **SARAH STOLLMAN (Production Designer)**

Raised in Chicago, Stollman was born in Columbus, Ohio, USA. After graduating from Washington University with a BA in Architecture, she relocated to New York. An early career in architecture and design preceded her involvement in the film industry. After switching vocations Stollman worked on features such as John Hughes' *Serial Mom*, Todd Haynes' *Poison*, Alan J. Pakula's *The Pelican Brief* and *The Unbelievable Truth*, directed by indie filmmaker Hal Hartley. She also took charge of art direction on the Moscow-based production of *Mad Dog Coll*.

Since moving to Australia, Stollman has continued to work extensively in film and television and is a sought-after guest lecturer at industry forums and colleges. Recent movie credits include *The Nice Guy*, *What I Have Written*, *Life*, *Radiance* and *Soft Fruit*.

## **JILL JOHANSON (Costume Designer)**

Johanson enjoys a career that spans film, television, theatre and opera. Born in Melbourne, she studied at the Melbourne College of Textiles and was named 'Apprentice of the Year' within her chosen field. Upon graduating she moved to London to complete her training, returning to Australia in the early nineties.

A versatile artist, Johanson has created imaginative costumes for many theatrical productions ranging from period to contemporary and has applied her skills to the following television programs; *The Man From Snowy River*, *Kangaroo Palace*, *Good Guys*, *Bad Guys*, *Queen Kat*, *Carmel & St. Jude*, *High Flyers* and *The Never Too Late Show*.

Her cinematic experience includes *Road to Nhill*, *Crackers* and *Muggers*. *YOLNGU BOY* is her first major feature as costume designer.

## **MARK OVENDEN (Composer)**

Yolngu Boy's composer, Mark Owenden, has been heavily involved in the music industry for over two decades and is regarded as one of Australia's leading composers and producers.

As composer of the soundtrack for Yolngu Boy, Mark was responsible for bringing the film's music together including the commissioning of the bands *Yothu Yindi* and *Nokturnl* as well as approaching *Regurgitator* for the inclusion of their song *Black Bugs* on the soundtrack. A musician himself, Mark is also responsible for playing a number of the instruments for the scores that you can hear on the soundtrack of Yolngu Boy.

Mark is now based in Germany and over the years has toured and recorded extensively. He has worked with some of Australia's hottest talent including *Midnight Oil*, *Yothu Yindi*, *Neil Finn* and *You Am I*.



# CAST

<b>Lorrpu</b>	JOHN SEBASTIAN (Sebbie) PILAKUI
<b>Botj</b>	SEAN MUNUNGGURR
<b>Milika</b>	NATHAN DANIELS
<b>Yuwan</b>	LIRRI NA MUNUNGGURR
<b>Matjala</b>	MAKUMA YUNUPI NGU
<b>Dawu</b>	NUNGKI YUNUPI NGU
<b>Maralitja Man</b>	MANGATJAY YUNUPI NGU
<b>Policeman</b>	GURKULA ( Jack Thompson)
<b>Lunginy</b>	GERARD BUYAN GARRAWURRA
<b>Botj (9 years)</b>	GARRI TJPI GARAWI RRTJA
<b>Lorrpu(9 Years)</b>	BUYWARRI MUNUNGGURR
<b>Milika (9 years)</b>	BUWATA MUNUNGGURR
<b>Ruwu</b>	YI THANGARRA WUNUNG MURRA
<b>Lorrpu's Father</b>	LALAMBARRI YUNUPI NGU
<b>Milika's Father</b>	BALUPALU YUNUPI NGU
<b>Botj's Dad</b>	MALATI YUNUPI NGU
<b>Botj's Mother</b>	MERRKI GANAMBARR
<b>Umpire</b>	GARRY DHURRKAY
<b>Football Coach</b>	VERNON KENNETH LESLEY PATULLO
<b>Dhunthun</b>	ANDREW GALI TJU BURARRWANGA
<b>Crying Woman</b>	ALLYSON MILLS
<b>Ngarli Woman at Hospital</b>	MARY YUNUPI NGU
<b>Djarrak Player</b>	GRANT GAMBLEY
<b>Crowd #1</b>	GURUMIN MARIKA
<b>Policeman at Wharf</b>	JOE CLEMENTS

## TECHNICAL CREDITS

Director	STEPHEN JOHNSON
Producers	PATRICIA EDGAR GORDON GLENN
Writer	CHRIS ANASTASSIADES
Executive Producers	PATRICIA EDGAR STEPHEN JOHNSON
Associate Producers	GALARRWUY YUNUPI NGU MANDAWUY YUNUPI NGU
Director of Photography	BRAD SHIELD
Editor	KEN SALLOWS
Original Music by	MARK OVENDEN
Production Designer	SARAH STOLLMAN
Costume Design	JILL JOHANSON
Casting	MAGGIE MILES
Line Producer	ELISA ARGENZIO
1st Assistant Director	JOHN MARTIN
Script Editors	GORDON GLENN STEPHEN JOHNSON
Sound Recordist	ANDREW BELLETTY
Continuity	CHRISSE O'CONNELL
Costume Designer	JILL JOHANSON
Make Up and Hair Designer	TRISH GLOVER
Dramaturg	NICO LATHOURIS
Location Manager	PETER MUSTON
Production Accountant	JANINE MARTOREJO Moneypenny Services
Post Production Supervisor	ELISA ARGENZIO
Focus Puller	BRETT MATTHEWS
Clapper Loader	JASMINE YUEN CARRUCAN
Underwater Director Of Photography	GEORGE GREENOUGH
Underwater Camera Operator/Assistant	SCOTT WELSH
Video Split Operator	HUGH GLENN JACK TINAPPLE
Camera Attachment	PHIL SUMMERS
Gaffer	MILES JONES
Best Boy	MATT BOLIN
3rd Electrics	MARK NEWNHAM
Key Grip	WARREN (WAZZA) GRIEF
Grip	JASON WEEKES
3rd Grip	ADAM KUIPER
2nd Assistant Director	CLARE SHERVINGTON
3rd Assistant Director	GORDON WESTMAN
Production Co-Ordinator	ANNA MOLYNEAUX
Unit Manager	PAUL MALANE

Additional Continuity	JOANNE MCLENNAN
Assistant Production Co-Ordinator	JANE HAMILTON
Production Assistants	SANDI AUSTIN, KERRY ALEXANDER, KATE MORNANE, SARAH PRICE
Production Runners	BEN WILLIAMS, ANTHONY MARTIN SHANE O'MAHOONEY
Post Production Accountant	WINSTON WADE
Boom Operator	NICOLE LAZAROFF
Assistant Editor	MARIA KALTENTHALER
Conformers	ALAN WOODRUFF, HENRY KARJALAINEN MARK ELLIS
Editing Attachment	DAVID WILSON
Editor's Attachment	supported by Film Victoria, A Division of Cinemedia
Stills Photographers	PENNY TWEEDIE, HEIDRUN LHOR
Art Department Co-Ordinator	JENNIFER DESCHAMPS
Buyer/Set Dresser	COLIN HOLT
Standby Props	LEROY PLUMMER
Buyer/Dresser	MARTIN JACOBS
Special Effects	FILMTRIX - PETER STUBBS, JEFF LITTLE
Creature Effects	LEROY PLUMMER
Turtle Care/Wranglers	DR ROD KENNET, MATT PAUZE, JOHN BELL, DAMIAN FORDHAM
Church Paintings	GAYMALA YUNUPI NGU, DHUWARRWARR MARIKA
Women's Centre Paintings	JUNE MILLS
Costume Supervisor/Standby Wardrobe	CAPPI IRELAND
Make Up and Hair Assistant	ANDREA CAMPBELL
Ceremonial Make Up Artists	GALARRWUY YUNUPI NGU, BRONWYN WUYUWA, BETSY MURRUPU, JANET YAMINY, THELMA WUNNGALA, LOIS DHAMBIT, LUCILLE DHAWINYILNYIL
Safety Supervisor	RICK ANDERSON
Stunt Co-Ordinator	CHRIS ANDERSON
Assistant Stunt Co-Ordinator	KIER BECK
Unit Nurse	TANYA O'CONNOR, BELINDA DAVIS, ANDREW CHANDLER
Driving Doubles	GEORGE ROBERTSON, TREVOR MUNUNGGURR BANUL GUMBULA, HAMISH WAKURATJPI GONDARRA
Crocodile Safety/Spotter	JOHN EDWARDS
Extras Casting	MAGGIE MILES
Ceremony Co-ordinator/Advisor	GALARRWUY YUNUPI NGU
Cast Co-Ordinator	PHIL O'BRIEN
Tutor	MARK MONAGHAN
Chaperones	MARIA KANARIS, ANDRE THOMAS, BEN WILLIAMS

Caterer	PACIFIC FILM CATERING - MITCH CARTER, MATT ATTARD, NICOLE MATTHEWS
Unit Assistant	GREG FREEMAN
Additional Unit Assistants	GREG WALLIS, CHRIS McSHERRY, KARL FISCHER
Lightworks Equipment	THE JOINERY
Travel Agents	SHOWFILM
Grip Equipment	BIG TOYS
Lighting Equipment	MILES JONES FILM LIGHTING
Unit Truck	MALANE UNIT MANAGEMENT
Camera Truck	NIC WATT
Motorola Hire	MULTICOM
Arri III Camera	DAVID CURL
Wardrobe/Make up Facilities	STARWAGONS AUSTRALIA
Helicopter Mounts	CONTINENTAL MOUNTS
Title Design	DANIEL HARTNEY
Laboratory	CINEVEX FILM LABORATORIES
Laboratory Liaison	IAN ANDERSON
Optical Effects	ROSS MITCHELL, PAUL CROSS
Grading	IAN LETCHER
Negative Matching	MICHELLE LALOR, JULIA MACLEOD
Video Post Production	AAV DIGITAL PICTURES AUSTRALIA
Senior Telecine Colourist	NOEL McWHIRTER
Telecine Colourist	JUSTIN HEITMAN
Digital Transfer to Film	TONY PORIAZIS, DAVID COLE
Head of Post Production AAV	PAMELA HAMMOND
Post Production Co-ordinators	MEAGAN ATHERTON, SARAH HARRINGTON
Flame Artist	DANIEL MAY
End Titles and Supers	OPTICAL & GRAPHIC
Sound Post Production	SOUNDFIRM, AUSTRALIA
Supervising Sound Editor	ANDREW BELLETTY
Special Effects Editor	PAUL PIROLA
Sound Editors	CRAIG CARTER, FRANCIS LINDSAY
Foley Recordist	STEVE BURGESS
Foley Artist	FRANCIS LINDSAY
Sound Mixer	PAUL PIROLA
Mix Assistant	ROB MACKENZIE
Soundfirm Liaison	HELEN FIELD
Dolby Consultant	BRUCE EMERY
Legals	EMMA FITZSIMONS, Australian Children's Television Foundation
Insurance	CHRIS LOVELL, Holding Redlich
Completion Guarantor	H.W. WOOD AUSTRALIA, Tony Gibb
SBSI Commissioning Editor	FILM FINANCES INC, Anni Browning
Unit Publicist	BARBARA MASEL
Post Production Script	BEYOND FILMS
Cultural Music Co-Ordinator	JO STEWART STEWART KELLAWAY

Film footage courtesy of Timelapse Cinematography, Simon Carroll  
Dolphin Glide Outtakes © George Greenough  
Crocodile Fight © Channel Eight, Territory Television Darwin  
TV Film Footage Courtesy of "Body Melt" © Body Melt Pty Ltd

## **MUSIC**

Featuring score and songs, composed and performed by Mark Ovenden including

### **"KAKADU"**

Written by M Ovenden / Mandawuy Yunupingu,

Featuring vocals by Mandawuy

### **"NEVA MEND"**

(Nokturnl/Kram & Whit)

Performed by Nokturnl, Published by Sony/ATV Music Publishing Australia

Licensed from The Festival Mushroom Group

### **"BLACK BUGS"**

(Ben Ely), Performed by Regurgitator

Taken from the album "Unit" 1998 Warner Music Australia

Licensed from Warner Music Australia Pty Ltd, © 1997 EMI Music Publishing Australia Pty Ltd

Licensed by EMI Music Publishing Australia Pty Limited

### **"GAPU"**

Written by G. Yunupingu, (Yothu Yindi Music/Mushroom Music)

Performed by Yothu Yindi, Licensed from The Festival Mushroom Group

### **"POISONOUS LOVE/GHOST SPIRIT"**

Written by M. Yunupingu/L. Lowders/S. Kellaway/M. Yunupingu, (Mushroom Music)

Performed by Yothu Yindi, Licensed from The Festival Mushroom Group

### **"TREATY"**

Written by M. Yunupingu/M. Mununggurr/G.Yunupingu/S. Kellaway/C. Williams/W. Marika/P. Kelly/P. Garrett

(Yothu Yindi Music/Mushroom Music)

Performed by Yothu Yindi, Licensed from The Festival Mushroom Group

### **"SURRENDER"**

Written and Performed by Kelly Howell

From "Making Tracks" by Songlines Music Aboriginal Corporation

### **"FAREWELL"**

From the album Manmoyi,

Written and Performed by the Garmadi Community, Co-Ordinated by Laura Naborhiborhl

## **Cultural Singers**

Mandawuy Yunupingu, Djanga Yunupingu (Ronnie), Gurrutjiri Gurruwiwi (Alfred)

Gambujdjiki Yunupingu, Daneminu Yunupingu (Nicky), Rrawun Maymura

## **Yidaki Players**

Naikuma Burarrwanga, Daneminu Yunupingu (Nicky), Gavin Yomunu Yunupingu,

Gapanbulu Yunupingu, Minbakurri Gurruwiwi, Gauwuma Yunupingu

## **Ganga giri**

Guitars - CLIVE YOUNG

Keyboards supplied by ROLAND CORPORATION AUSTRALIA