

## Why Australia's in love with a port-a-potty installer

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FROM FRIDAY'S GLOBE AND MAIL  
APRIL 4, 2008 AT 1:02 AM EDT

### Kenny

**Directed by** Clayton Jacobson

**Written by** Clayton Jacobson and Shane Jacobson

**Starring** Shane Jacobson, Eve Von Bibra, Ronald Jacobson, Jesse Jacobson, Chris Davis and Morihiko Hasebe

**Classification:** 14A



Waste is a terrible thing to mind – unless you are port-a-potty installer Kenny Smyth, the unlikely hero of a hilarious and fresh (figuratively speaking, of course) comedy from Down Under.

*Kenny* began as a short film from director Clayton Jacobson and actor Shane Jacobson. The short turned heads and, after the brothers secured private financing, was expanded to a feature mockumentary that became a box-office hit and major award winner in Australia in 2006.

After screening at the Ozflix festivals in Toronto and Vancouver last year, *Kenny* is finally getting a Canadian theatrical release, and it's well worth catching with an audience to share the many laughs inspired by a very different kind of toilet humour.

Shot in documentary style during real events – including the Australian International Air Show, the Melbourne Cup and the International Pumper and Cleaner Expo – *Kenny* follows the day-to-day life of the titular character, a working-class bloke and divorced dad of one son.

Kenny works as an installer and maintenance guy for Splashdown, a Melbourne company that provides portable toilets for major events. His ex loathes him, his son barely pays attention and his cantankerous father (played by the Jacobsons's real father) needles away at him. But Kenny remains devoted to a job he regards as a calling, despite the humiliating way most “users” treat him – as if he bathes in the stuff.

In the film's third act, Kenny is sent by his boss to attend a major convention in Nashville, Tenn., where he walks the trade show floor marvelling at new port-a-potty technologies as others might admire works of art at the Louvre.

After a crazy encounter with a Japanese businessman, Kenny unwittingly lands a lucrative business offer. Will he finally be able to climb out of the sludge? He also meets a lovely stewardess on the flight over – will there be romance in the air or will the faint but lingering stench of Kenny's job repel her?

Shane Jacobson, a burly redhead, plays Kenny as an endearing, earnest fellow, devoted to his job and given to spinning memorable pearls of wisdom to the camera and to his motley crew of co-workers.

Whether or not you understand the Aussie-specific references and broad accents, you can't help but cheer for this character. The film's humour is mostly rooted in dialogue and character, as opposed to noxious sight gags to which a Hollywood telling of this story would undoubtedly resort.

When Kenny has to rescue a lost wedding ring, for instance, it's the dialogue, not a standard-issue gross-out shot, that gets the biggest laughs.

Kenny has become a beloved character in Australia, with Jacobson doing media interviews in character and possibly starring in a TV show.

Although Kenny may not replace Crocodile Dundee as the quintessential Aussie character in the minds of North Americans, *Kenny* is sure to win hearts.

*Special to The Globe and Mail*

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