

Sweet Road

By Debra Oswald

Directed by Vanessa Jensen

May 2024



As our show opens on **Do It For Dolly Day '24**, and because it is set in rural Australia, we thought it would be the perfect opportunity to raise money and awareness for this worthy cause; for Dolly's dream of a safer Australia.

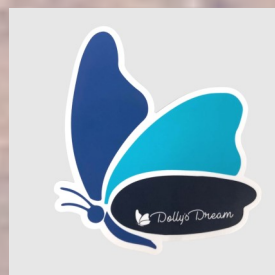
Cast, crew and committee have contributed to a hamper. Buy tickets any night of the season and be in the draw to win.

Prize drawn on 26th May.

Winner notified by phone.

Tickets \$3 each or 4 for \$10.

Donations at the collection tins, or online at MTC's Sweet Road Doing It For Dolly fundraising page are also very welcome.



This program is generously sponsored by

Melville Mazda
385 Canning Highway, Palmyra
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Director

Vanessa Jensen

As a drama student in the late eighties and early nineties and then becoming a Drama teacher, I was well acquainted with the teenage coming of age play *DAGS* by Debra Oswald. Twenty something years later I read, instantly fell in love with, and directed Oswald's *Mr Bailey's Minder*. The production won Best play at the Finley Awards that year, as well as Alan Kennedy taking home Best Actor for his portrayal of Leo Bailey and me taking home Best Director.

It holds a very special place in my heart.

So, during COVID lockdowns when I was challenged by a theatre friend to read five Australian plays in five days I instinctively turned to Debra Oswald. And I found *Sweet Road*.

And I am so glad I did.

I like Debra's writing because it is evocatively Australian. Her characters are flawed, but loveable and redeemable. I like it because it is unashamedly honest, frequently funny and at times heartbreakingly devastating. And it is natural.

Growing up I went on numerous caravan, campervan and camping trips. Now owning a van with my husband, we have been on several extended and numerous shorter trips alone or with family. We have seen, heard and experienced many stories, met interesting and varied people and been privy to the unique journeys others are on.

People, who like Jo, Andy, Carla, Michael, Frank and Yasmin in this play, are all on the road for different reasons.

Some running from something they would rather forget.
Some heading towards something better they envision.
Some unsure, still finding their way.

But all on the road.
The Sweet Road.



Vanessa has been directing in Perth community theatre since 2006, predominantly at Melville but also at the Old Mill Theatre. At the annual Robert Finley Awards she has been nominated for Best Director seven times, taking home the award twice, and feels honoured to have had four of her productions named Best Play; *Rabbit Hole*, 2013, *Twelve Angry Men*, 2014, *Mr Bailey's Minder*, 2018, *Things I Know To Be True*, 2022.

After being the liaison between the City of Melville and Melville Theatre Company regarding the relocation of MTC from Roy Edinger Hall in Stock Rd for more than 10 years, Vanessa is thrilled to see her production up on the company's new home stage.

The thrill of the ride is what keeps Vanessa producing theatre. She loves the journey; from happening upon the script to first read through, all the rehearsals, and set building sessions and finally the reaction of an audience. This cast has been incredible to work with and made the journey as wonderful as the destination.

Cast

Jo	Madelaine Page
Carla	Jackie Oates
Andy	Brian O'Donovan
Michael	Christopher Hill
Frank	Gino Cataldo
Yasmin	Jessica Palokangas
Curtis	Charlie Young
Policewoman	Laura Mercer
Mechanic	Clare Talbot
Receptionist	Michelle Sharp

Setting

Sydney traffic, the outback roads, service stations, a salt lake, a motel, a caravan park, riverbanks and a country town.

Australia, 1999

Special thanks to those who contributed to our story but are not seen on stage.

Campground Guitarist

Alan Gill

Radio Announcers, Radio Advertisers, Talkback Show Hosts and Guests

Ruhama Rowe, Phil Barnett, Alan Gill, Nikki Di Camillo, Paul Treasure, Benjamin Small, Murray Jackson, Melissa Merchant, Jason Dohle and Carmen Dohle.

Crew

Stage Manager

Laura Mercer

DSM

Clare Talbot

ASM

Michelle Sharp

Set Design

Vanessa Jensen

Set Construction

Lars Jensen and Jacob Jensen

assisted by

Peter Bloor, Ross Bertinshaw, Dario Vallini

Revolves built by

Lars Jensen, Ryan Sedgwick, Jacob Jensen,
Joshua Sedgwick, Mark Sedgwick

Painting

Barbara Lovell, Shaeyla Oosthuizen, Clare
Talbot, Vanessa and Lars Jensen

Lighting Design

Lars Jensen

Sound Design

Alan Gill

Bio Box Operator

Vanessa Jensen

Costumes

Michelle Sharp

Poster, Program and Photos

Vanessa Jensen

Publicity

Curtain Call Creatives

Front of House and Bar

MTC volunteers coordinated by Julia Calvert

*And thank you to all the MTC members, past and present, who helped
pack up Roy Edinger Hall and set up the Scene and Main Hall.*

Who moved, cleaned, sorted and delivered.

*Your contribution meant not only this show got on in time, but that MTC
has a new home, and a future.*

A community effort.

Thank you.

Meet the Cast

Madelaine Page



Madelaine's pronouns are she/her and she was born in Whadjuk Noongar Boodjar. She is an established performer represented by Loxton Management and dabbles in a range of creative pursuits including directing, writing and teaching. Madelaine studied at the Actors Centre London and completed an Advanced Acting Residency at the National Institute of Dramatic Arts, after graduating with an Honours in Performing Arts at Curtin University. Her most recent credits include *Female of the Species* at Melville Theatre, *Where Water Once Was* at the Blue Room Theatre and Grad's *Richard III* at The New Fortune Theatre.

When reading *Sweet Road* the first time, Madelaine was instantly taken back to memories from her childhood, driving around Australia in a Volkswagen Kombi van. Aged seven, Madelaine recalls her older sister learning the recorder at the time and playing it all the way along the Nullarbor. She feels there is something very special about the Australian road trip and has loved working with this amazing team to bring these stories to life.

Jackie Oates



Jackie first discovered her love of acting when she was 11 years old, performing in a number of school plays. After a ten year hiatus from theatre, she moved to London in 2012 and performed in two shows for London-based Beaufort Players theatre group, including *The Memory of Water* and an original, who-dunnit murder mystery. Upon returning to Perth, Jackie promised herself she would explore Perth's community theatre scene and has since been involved in *The Unexpected Guest*, *Hay Fever*, *August: Osage County*, *The Children's Hour* and *And Then There Were None* productions, in which she won the award for Best Actress at Roxy Lane Theatre's annual awards.

This is Jackie's first play with Melville Theatre Company, playing the role of the often frustrated and blunt Carla in *Sweet Road*. She has thoroughly enjoyed working with a great group of people who have been focused on making this show a success from the first rehearsal.

Brian O'Donovan



Brian got involved in Perth community theatre back in 2015 with the Irish Theatre Players and was a semi-permanent fixture at the ITP performing in diverse plays such as *The Plough and the Stars*, *The Trappe Family* and *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*. The latter two plays both earning him a Finley nomination for Best Actor in a Play.

Brian began his association with Melville Theatre Company in 2023, performing in *Plaza Suite*, followed immediately by *Quiz* directed by Vanessa Jensen. His performances as Paddy Spooner, Paul Smith and ensemble earned him a Finley nomination for Best Supporting Actor. Brian enjoyed this experience so much that he jumped at the chance to audition for Vanessa again for *Sweet Road*. He is delighted to take on the role of Andy and finally perform in an accent resembling his own!

Christopher Hill



Christopher grew up in Fremantle and has been performing on stage since the ripe age of 12. He studied at John Curtin College of the Arts and then pursued a Bachelor of Arts in Performance at Curtin University. Christopher has performed in multiple productions across Western Australia and Victoria, including Essendon Theatre's dark comedy *A Good Man* and Mordialloc Theatre's Pulitzer prize-winning drama *Proof* as Hal. In 2023, he co-directed and starred in Old Mill Theatre's queer adaptation of David Lindsay Abair's *Rabbit Hole* for Perth Fringe Festival. His film appearances include Screen Australia's "Holding the Man", "Gallipoli's Deep Secrets" for National Geographic and "Restare Uniti", which went on to be screened in festivals worldwide and in competition at Cannes Film Festival. His TV appearances include "Neighbours", Channel Nine's "The Great Mint Swindle" and Channel Seven's "First Dates".

Christopher makes his debut at Melville Theatre this season, playing Michael in *Sweet Road*.

Gino Cataldo



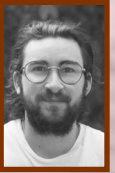
Gino's journey in the performing arts began in 1973 at Patch Theatre, leading him to study acting and voice-over in Sydney while also DJing for Purvisonic Sound Perth. Co-founding Chimera Acting School in 1980, he took a hiatus before resuming his acting career, captivating Perth audiences for over a decade. He honed his craft at PAC Screen Workshops and Fox Studios Sydney under Yure Covich. Gino's repertoire boasts acclaimed roles like Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman* and Juror 8 in *Twelve Angry Men*, and earning accolades such as Best Actor for *A Conversation* and *The 39 Steps*. His directorial debut, *'night, Mother*, garnered Best Production in 2018, followed by further acclaim for *A Ticket to Paradise* in 2019. Gino's versatility extends to the Fringe circuit and beyond, recently earning runner-up for Best Director at Short and Sweet 2022. In 2023, his direction of *Ladies Who Wait* resulted in a sold-out show, affirming his passion for collaborative and innovative theatre.

Jessica Palokangas



Jessica is balancing a busy schedule studying Theatre Arts at Curtin University whilst performing in *Sweet Road*. Her most recent major production was *The Crucible* (2023) in a high school production. Jessica's community theatre debut was late last year playing a small role in Stirling Theatre's *Lizzie's A Darlin'*. Jessica has also been involved in backstage work, including being a props designer at Hayman Theatre's lunchtime show *Kill the Director*. Jess is looking forward to involving herself in more acting opportunities, and *Sweet Road* has been a great learning experience.

Charlie Young



Charlie has been acting for the past nine years, in which time he's won multiple awards for his efforts (*The Jungle Book*, *The Man Who Was Peter Pan* and *Let the Right One In*). He's also had the pleasure of studying at Atlantic Acting School in New York, for which he received a partial scholarship.

This will be his second show for Melville Theatre and his first full length show with the company after he appeared in the one act show *Choking* for the theatre's Summer Shorts. Telling this bittersweet Australian story, under Vanessa's guidance, has been a unique challenge for Charlie – trying to make an impact in three scenes without stealing the show! He's enjoyed the work & hopes you all enjoy the show.

Laura Mercer



Laura has enjoyed being involved in Community Theatre since she studied Drama at high school. She has been connected to Melville Theatre in one way or another since 2001 when she played Bubba in *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*. More recently in 2017, she enjoyed sinking her teeth into her biggest and most challenging role as Francis in *Jumpy* at Melville Theatre in which she even had to perform a Burlesque dance. Laura also enjoys backstage roles and recently stage managed for *Female of the Species* at the end of last year.

In *Sweet Road* she has the best of both worlds being able to be a part of cast and crew. She has enjoyed working with the revolving platforms that assist with efficient scene changes. Laura jumped at the chance to work again with Vanessa Jensen after such a fun and rewarding experience on *Quiz* in 2023.

Clare Talbot



Clare started in the industry with high school productions. She then studied at WAAPA to complete an Advanced Diploma in Lighting for Production, then completed a Bachelor of Education (Secondary) and Bachelor of Arts with First Class Honours (Theatre and Drama) to become a Drama Teacher to teach the future of the industry. Her main focus over the last few years has been in directing and stage management roles. *Sweet Road*, has been the perfect opportunity to develop her acting skills further.

Michelle Sharp



Michelle studied acting and creative writing at Curtin's Hayman Theatre. She has acted in numerous productions in Perth at Blak Yak and Old Mill Theatre & also in London with the Balham Players. At Melville she has appeared onstage in *One Man Two Guvnors*, *Stop Kiss*, *Quiz* and as Mrs Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility*. She became Wardrobe Mistress at Melville Theatre Company in 2011 and has tried her hand at directing on *Plaza Suite* last year and *The Heist* (Summer Shorts, 2021).

Michelle has thoroughly enjoyed working on *Sweet Road*, never missing an opportunity to work with Vanessa. Having become President of MTC this year, she hopes you enjoy the first full length show in our wonderful new home and that we see you back for many more!

Coming next to Melville Theatre

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