

A FILM BY
**SOPHIE
SOMERVILLE**

Fwends



EXCELLENT FRIENDS & FUTURE SUCCESS PTY LTD 2024©

SYNOPSIS

When Jessie's estranged friend from Sydney spontaneously arrives in Melbourne, they spend a weekend together to distract themselves from their many problems and their existential dread.



Em is a junior lawyer who lives to work to pay her ludicrously high rent in Sydney while navigating an abusive workplace that she has worked so hard to get into.

Jessie is a former stripper and world traveller who has recently ended her long term relationship and is now living a life of existential loneliness. What starts as a simple reunion quickly transforms into a whirlwind weekend filled with adventure,

As they explore the city and share stories, their conversation dives deep into the complexities of modern life, exposing the layers of their personal journeys and the weight of their existential dread. This film captures a lonely, worried generation seeking meaning in a fast paced, ever-changing landscape. It's a celebration of the power of friendship and an ode to the splendiferous messiness of real life, raw emotion, and poignant revelations.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Hi, I'm Sophie.
I've been making films for most of my life.

I am really proud of my first feature film. It came about out of pure determination and sheer will. We made this film using what we had, the people we could find, the free locations we could shoot at, and the favours we could pull.

Throughout my career, I've been imagining inventive solutions to limiting situations. My short film PEEPS was shot guerrilla-style in a shopping centre on a budget of \$4,000AUD, and ended up being selected by Gregory Nava for Telluride Film Festival, as well as many other film festivals worldwide. For a long time now, I've been developing a formula for funny, original, inventive and heartfelt storytelling that embraces the real world as part of the aesthetic.

Fwends elucidates the complexity of modern female friendships in a way I haven't seen before.

It comes from a unique perspective, from my little corner of Australia, and speaks authentically about our pathological inability to admit that we so badly need each other. We're always hearing about how loneliness is an epidemic these days, especially among young people, and I feel that the constant pressure to make money and succeed smothers and obfuscates our ability to listen to our human needs. It's easy to feel like the world is crushing you and that you have to make it on your own. It's much harder to admit that you just need to see your friends.

I see actors as so much more than talking puppets. They are my co-collaborators who challenge me to give my characters the depth and humanity they deserve. One of the reasons I keep going back to making films is my obsession with the craft of acting, and how I keep wanting to go deeper and deeper into my study of humans. Actors humble me. They are some of the bravest people in the world.

The stylistic choices in the film came about as a result of my interest in creating situations for people to be as honest and as human as they could be within the confines of the story. It was a terrifying thing to commit to such long takes, but it was such a humbling experience to watch Emmanuelle Mattana and Melissa Gan rise to the challenge with such finesse and courage. I am still in awe of them both.

I believe that it's essential that we tell stories that allow us to see super ordinary people who look a lot like us. It's a way to interrogate ourselves with an unflinching, playful, and sceptical eye. There is so much healing and catharsis to be found in just being honest about how scared, wounded, chaotic and funny we are.

My main intention in making Fwends was to find a way to show two real people, and the very real world, in all its splendiferous messiness.

I think the mess is sort of beautiful.



I think the beautiful thing about Sophie's films is that no matter what she's thinking, it'll be cute, it'll be funny, it'll be poignant, original and deceptively considered.

When Sophie goes to make a film, she has thought about the film for a very long time by herself to find what she's looking for. She's mulled it over in her mind, constantly sculpting and tinkering on it right up until the point where we shoot. Then in the edit the film gets wrapped in a Sophie cocoon, evolving into something else again entirely. Something unexpectedly vulnerable and respectfully human.

As a producer of Sophie's work, what I can always trust is that when we collaborate there's a persistent love for humanity in each film we've made together. A hopeful reminder of human love

and connection with the question placed back on us the viewer, a question about why we often forget this aspect of life. All it takes is a good friend to remind us. Thanks to Sophie's love and trust of actors, this sensation is always baked into the performances. It's baked into who these people that we are watching are. Not farcical characters, but real people that exist in the world now allowing the bold naturalism and spontaneity of the work to shine.

The purpose of *Fwends* from the outset was to capture this feeling through the relationship of Em and Jessie. To make just watching them hang out the story. While the film is only a weekend, it's a slice of youthful history that many have experienced. A showcase of the transitional period we all experience as we move further away from our existential selves as young adults and bloom into flawed but grounded human beings who will never quite figure it out, but accept that that's all part of the process.



As the person behind the camera, it was an extreme joy to see these two characters develop as the story itself was developing. We shot without an ending written with minimal crew and a tight budget. We filmed everywhere, using the entire city of Melbourne as the third protagonist in the film. We shot in chronological order (mostly) to capture the growth of these two characters' friendships. We almost got sprayed to death by garden sprinklers at six in the morning and towed our equipment around in beach camping carts. But it was all worth it to see *Fwends* come to life and an absolute privilege to watch such amazing performances grace our monitors.

We sincerely hope you love this film and feel its healing powers working on you.



Sophie Somerville

DIRECTOR / WRITER

Sophie Somerville is a writer and director based in Melbourne, Australia. She graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts in 2019. Her short PEEPS (2019) premiered at Telluride Film Festival and has had a successful run at various festivals including Portland Film Festival, Sydney Film Festival, Pittsburgh Shorts and The National Film Festival for Talented Youth. Her latest short LINDA 4 EVA (2023) was selected at Sydney FF where it won Best Director and was also selected for the Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) as part of the Accelerator Shorts 2023 Program.

Carter Looker

D.O.P / PRODUCER

Carter Looker is a Producer and Director of Photography based in Melbourne, Australia. He is the Co-founder of Excellent Friends & Future Success PTY LTD. Graduating from the Victorian College of Arts in 2019, Carter has gone on to shoot & produce independent short and feature films. He actively works as an independent producer in the film and television industry.



Sarah Hegge-Taylor

PRODUCER

Sarah Hegge-Taylor is a director/writer based in Naarm/Melbourne, Australia.

Sarah is a graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts Film and Television School and likes making films that feel like mythological poems about the experiences of internal and external decay.



Em

EMMANUELLE MATTANA

Emmanuelle Mattana (she/they) is an Australian actor, writer and maker passionate about telling stories that blend the playful with the political and connect with young, queer audiences. Her debut play Trophy Boys toured Australia to sold-out audiences, critical acclaim and award recognition. It will return to tour nationally once again in 2025 and debut off-Broadway in New York under the direction of 2024 Tony Award winner Danya Taymor.

As a performer she is best known for leading three seasons of the International Emmy Kids® nominated tween series Mustangs FC (ABCMe x NBCUniversal) and Videoland (Netflix) which was awarded Best Comedy at Series Mania. She is a member of Sydney Theatre Company's Watershed: Writers group, Malthouse Theatre's Emerging Writers Group and is in development for a new show at Red Stitch Actors Theatre. As a filmmaker, her work has been commissioned by the Melbourne Queer Film Festival, RSPCA and Victoria Together and recognised at festivals internationally, including queer kids-comedy short The Odyssey, which was awarded Best Youth Film at the St Kilda Film Festival.

Jessie

MELISSA GAN

Melissa is an Actor & Dancer.

She has appeared in many theatre productions and short film appearances. Mel has worked with Sydney Theatre Company in a production of White Pearl, and most recently in Boom by Slanted Theatre. Mel is also a dancer and has a large TikTok following of over 300k followers.





Fwends

CREDITS

DIRECTED BY
Sophie Somerville

STARRING
Melissa Gan
Emmanuelle Mattana

WRITTEN BY
Sophie Somerville
Emmanuelle Mattana
Melissa Gan

CINEMATOGRAPHY
Carter Looker

PRODUCED BY
Sophie Somerville,
Carter Looker
Sarah Hegge-Taylor

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Brendan Donoghue,
Amanda Maple-Brown
Adrian Holmes

TECHNICAL DATA

Run time: 92 Minutes
Shooting Format: Digital, Film 8mm, Camcorder
Aspect Ratio: 16:9
Screening Copy: DCP
Sound: 5.1

Completion: 2024
Country of Production: Australia, Melbourne
Language: English
Premiere: Berlinale Forum 2025



Excellent Friends & Future Success PTY LTD

CONTACT

xlntfrnds@gmail.com
excellent-friends.com

Carter Looker – Producer
carterlooker@gmail.com
+61 450 511 995

Sophie Somerville – Director
sophiesomerville5@gmail.com
+61 421 369 454

We would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples of the Kulin Nation, and pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging.