

# The **PRESS KIT** CARNIVAL

THERE'S NO BUSINESS LIKE FAMILY BUSINESS

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY ISABEL DARLING PRODUCED BY TOM ZUBRYCKI & ISABEL DARLING ORIGINAL MUSIC BY LUNA PAN

Screen Australia NSW SHARK ISLAND FOUNDATION SBS



## **A FEATURE DOCUMENTARY**

Written and Directed by Isabel Darling

Produced by Tom Zubrycki & Isabel Darling

### **LOGLINE**

The Bells have been hauling their convoy of carnival rides and workers across Australia for six generations. Now, facing shutdowns and bushfires, and a dwindling economy – the family battles to keep their show, and ultimately their legacy, alive.

### **SYNOPSIS**

The Bells and their workers have a mission: to keep their carnival alive and thriving, and to keep it in the family. This sixth-generation traveling show family have been touring Australia for a hundred years, and now, facing some of the toughest times they've ever seen are preparing to hand over the reins to the next generation, with the empire expected to be handed down to the next boy in line. Filmed over 7 years, this epic road-trip unveils not only the mystery of the traveling show-people, but also reveals a family grappling with traditional life in a modern world.



## **TOM ZUBRYCKI**

PRODUCER

Tom Zubrycki has been making documentaries for over 45 years. He has won many awards for his directing work and also for his mentorship on behalf of the industry. As producer and executive producer he has worked with both experienced and new and emerging directors. Recent films include FAIR GAME (2017), UNDERMINED – TALES OF THE KIMBERLEY (2018), ABLAZE (2021), KINDRED (2023) MEMORY FILM – a filmmaker’s diary (2023). His latest film as director SENSES OF CINEMA (2022) is a collaboration with Melbourne filmmaker John Hughes.

Tom is a recipient of the prestigious Stanley Hawes Award, and has actively championed the cause of the documentary sector over a number of years. More information on his website. [www.tomzubrycki.com](http://www.tomzubrycki.com)

## **ISABEL DARLING**

WRITER / DIRECTOR

Isabel Darling is known for her quintessentially Australian observational documentaries. Part of the Director Pathways Program in 2020, Isabel also achieved recognition as a finalist at the AIDC Viceland 'Australiana' pitch in 2018. Her 2015 film, Being Frank, which tells the story of a Czech immigrant and Australia's oldest living Olympian, was screened internationally and her 2017 film, Corey the Warrior, was a finalist at both the Melbourne Documentary Film Festival and the Cannes International Film Festival on Disability.

Between 2005 and 2014, Isabel honed her skills as an editor/shooter, collaborating with various production companies across Sydney and Melbourne. She went on to establish Torchlight Media, a production company specialising in documentary and high-level tourism content. Isabel was recently shortlisted for a Walkley Award alongside her producer Tom Zubrycki.

Currently based on the South Coast of NSW, Isabel is currently in the process of writing a feature screenplay and is in post-production on the short film Little Gifts.



## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

In late 2015, I ventured into the Bell family's camp and was immediately struck by their unique lifestyle. Their existence is a subculture marked by ceaseless journeys across the country; skimming through various towns and cities, with the rare exception of a stay in Batemans Bay NSW for six weeks every Christmas. It was here that I first encountered the Bell family, and over the next seven years I had the privilege of documenting this family's traditional show life continuously.

My fascination with people living in different worlds is deeply rooted in my personal background. Raised by separate parents who introduced me to contrasting socio-economic realities, I developed a keen interest in exploring the dynamics of Australian families, class systems, and subcultures. I enjoy exploring the elements of people that make us all the same: our faults, our dreams and our challenges.

The concept of family is universally significant, defined by generational pressures, expectations, and the unspoken desires shaped by our parents. Yet, what happens when we want to chart an unconventional path? During my initial interactions with fifty-year-old Elwin Bell Jnr, he candidly confessed, "I wake up wanting to please my father." I realised this desire to make our parents proud remains a constant theme, even as we advance into our middle and older years.

And so I embarked on the extensive journey of capturing the lives of a sixth-generation carnival family as they traversed Australia with their convoy of trucks and workers. Filming interviews, drama, rides, and dagwood dogs became second nature to me. When bushfires struck, followed closely by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and my own pregnancy, I persevered in documenting their story.

At this juncture, I was fortunate to have my producer, Tom Zubrycki, by my side. Together, we strategised our next steps and pursued funding for the film. We enlisted the skills of talented cinematographers and editors to shape the hundreds of hours of raw footage into a coherent portrayal of this special family dynamic.

On a personal level, this film has been a transformative journey for me. I am overjoyed that audiences now have the opportunity to embark on the same adventure and gain insight into the real lives of the 'showies.' My children and I have traveled the country chasing after trucks and sharing campfires beneath the starry desert skies. Most importantly, we have extended our family to include the Bells. Their unwavering support for my vision and their trust in me has imbued me with new confidence in my own identity. But of course, I still carry the hopes and dreams of my own parents, which we all know can be a perpetual source of motivation.

Isabel Darling - Director of The Carnival

# THE FAMILY

## **ELWIN JNR, proud son of Elwin Bell Snr.**

At 52 he shares a similar love of the past like his Dad, but we can see he's stuck between the past and the present. For Elwin Jnr running a good carnival is important, as he says "You gotta thrill 'em not kill 'em". What's more important it seems, is having bigger, better and brighter when it comes to his world of thrills, but it seems it's not making him happy - in fact it's making him stressed and dysfunctional.

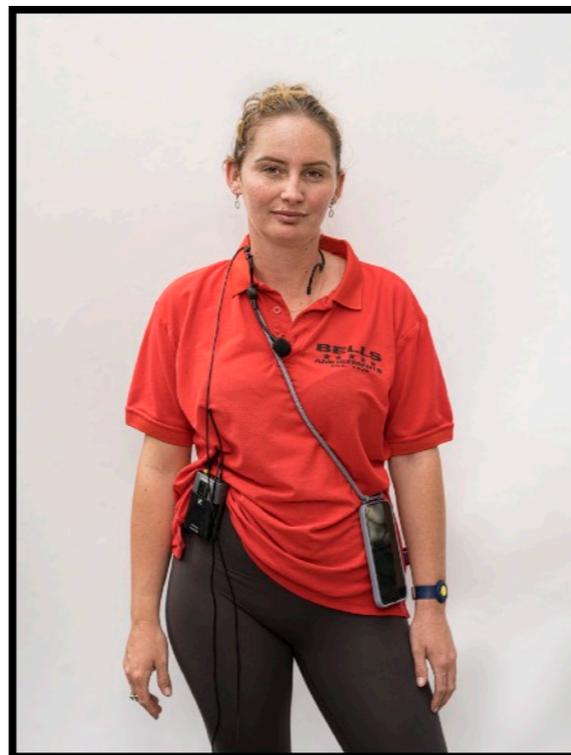


## **SELINA, Elwin Jnr's wife:**

6th generation show person from a carnival family that does the 'Northern run' up in Far North Queensland. Elwin and Selina got together when they were both 17, Selina having had a baby a year earlier. Known for taking kids under her wing and helping the lost find their way. We'll find through Selina and daughter Ellie's interviews over the years that the women are more often the ones that leave their families to join their partner's family and their business, and with this a lot can be left behind.

## **ELLE, Roy's older sister:**

Just dropped out of Uni, 19 year old Elle is quiet and seems shy, even towards her own family. Ellie also has intense pressure from her family to find a partner and settle down, but with dwindling prospects amongst the showmen, Elle finds herself looking outward and knows that potentially she'll have to leave the family if she wants to find a man. Determined even at this age to 'make something of herself', we see the first glimpses of what may be a powerful woman rising from the patriarchy.



## **ROY is Elwin Jnr's son:**

Pimply and obnoxious teenager grows into a charming young man who despises his father's nature and insistence on endlessly dragging every ride they own across the country. Roy feels huge pressure on him and strangely over the course of time, we'll see Roy develop into the one thing he never wanted to be: his Dad.

## PRODUCTION CREDITS

Written and Directed by  
**Isabel Darling**

Producers  
**Tom Zubrycki**  
**Isabel Darling**

Editors  
**Hilary Balmond**  
**Lindi Harrison**

Cinematography by  
**Isabel Darling**

Additional Cinematography by  
**Daniel Hartley-Allen**  
**Simon Morris**  
**Edgard Ferreira**

Original Music  
**Luna Pan**

Sound Design & Mix  
**David Mcarthy**  
**Derek Allan**



## The Carnival | CONTACT INFORMATION



For more information about The Carnival, please visit our website:

[www.thecarnivalfilm.com](http://www.thecarnivalfilm.com)

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Follow us on Instagram at:

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