

# Starring role on the big screen

DANIEL SHANDLER

TEENAGE actor Harrison Feldman has followed up his success role in the ABC TV series *Upper Middle Bogan*, which earned him a 2014 Logie nomination for Most Popular New Talent, with a major role in the film *Girl Asleep*, which screens at the Melbourne International Film Festival on the weekend.

And 16-year-old Feldman, a year 11 student at Bialik College, says he is thrilled about starring in his first feature film, noting that the experience was completely different to the TV series.

"It was the first time I've flown somewhere to film something; it was absolutely amazing," says Feldman, noting that location filming was carried out over five weeks in Adelaide in early 2015.

"It was a whole different mindset."

*Girl Asleep* is a coming-of-age comic drama set in Australia in the 1970s, and based on the acclaimed production by Adelaide's Windmill Theatre, which premiered last year at the Adelaide Film Festival.

On the cusp of turning 15, Greta Driscoll (Bethany Whitmore) can't bear to leave her childhood behind. Her only friend at her new school is 14-year-old Elliott (Feldman), but when her parents throw a 15th birthday party, she is flung into a strange new world filled with surprises.



Harrison Feldman and Bethany Whitmore prepare to party in *Girl Asleep*.

"My character is a bit of a caricature of myself who likes to talk a lot and comes across very optimistic," says Feldman.

Whitmore found it easy to work with Feldman although they had one awkward moment during filming.

"One challenge was kissing Harrison, because that was my first kiss ever. I was really nervous for that, it was an interesting experience," she said in a recent interview.

Feldman was the utmost

professional when quizzed about the scene in the movie.

"It happened to be my first kiss as well," he said. "I was a bit out of it because it was 4am, but I did it for the career and for the job. In my eyes, it was between two characters, not two actors, so it was fine."

With many of the cast and crew having worked together in the stage version in 2014, Feldman entered as an outsider.

"I was very happy to be in this

film. I was so excited when I found out. I didn't know what I got into until we started filming and it blew me away."

This year *Girl Asleep* has screened at film festivals in cities including Berlin, Stockholm, Buenos Aires, Bogota, New York and Seattle.

Feldman was thrilled to be invited to travel with Whitmore to Germany for the Berlin Film Festival in February, where *Girl Asleep* screened as part of the youth program.

"We both went with one of our parents – I went with my mum and we were there for a week," he says.

"I absolutely loved the festival. It only hit me when I got home to Melbourne how amazing the trip had really been and having the opportunity to go to photo shoots, interviews and of course the screening of our very own film."

Feldman works hard at finding a balance between his education and his acting career.

"Acting is my plan A career, but I'm still going through school just in case. I'll just take whatever comes up and hopefully it leads me places."

*Girl Asleep* screens at the Melbourne International Film Festival on August 7 and 9. Bookings: [www.miff.com.au](http://www.miff.com.au). It will open in cinemas on September 8.



Watch the trailer

Available on the iPad app and e-paper edition