



Reneé French  
Charlie French

# Devil Bean

2021, 10 min 36 sec



Stella Morgan



Directed by Jessica Nipperess

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## Logline

After gifting a coffee machine to their father on Christmas, this picture-perfect family is thrown into the jaws of a horror-come-anti-drug flick as their dad's addiction tears the family apart.

*This program is proudly funded by the NSW government through Arts Restart.*



Sam Paine

# Synopsis

After gifting a coffee machine to their father on Christmas, this picture-perfect family is thrown into the jaws of a horror-come-anti-drug flick as the dad's coffee addiction tears apart their family. Playful, melodramatic and impishly entangled with cult classic horror, Devil Bean is a modern fable that plays with storytelling conventions and examines the strength of family bonds and courage in the face of addiction.

This satiric and bittersweet tale is the first funded short from young and emerging director Jessica Nipperess. While the film is in and of its own right a tremendous achievement from this 15 year old director, we can be assured that Jess is just getting started.

# Cast and Crew

## **Jessica Nipperess: Director**

Jessica Nipperess is a 16 year old director based in regional Australia. Her films have swept the screens of Tropfest, ACMI's ScreenIt and Focus on Ability. After finalising in Tropfest Jr (2017) with her film HUED, Jessica was motivated to take her passion seriously. The following year, her film SANE placed third in Tropfest Jr. Maths of the Mind, Introspection, Monsters of the Mind were produced across 2019 - 2020, making the rounds of film festivals including ACMI ScreenIt, Stuffit and Focus on Ability. Off the back of these award-winning shorts, Jess received an arts grant to direct horror-comedy Devil Bean, her first funded film. She plans to propel further into the film industry, directing her first feature within a few years. Though Jessica gains most of her skills and knowledge through self-learning, experience and a mentorship with Cadance Bell, she is also studying at Lights Film School. And while her brain is constantly overloaded with story-matter, life would not be complete without impulse buying house-plants and attempting to read dense classical literature.



## **Kyls Burtland: Composer**

Kyls Burtland is a Canadian-born Australian composer working in film, television, advertising, sound installation and VR. Kyls is a graduate of the Australian Film, Television and Radio School where she studied screen composition and holds a Bmus (Hons) from the University of Sydney where she studied orchestral composition. Her TV credits include Bad Mothers (2019), Here Come the Habibs (2016), Whitlam: The Power and the Passion (2015), music for the Shanghai Pavilion interactive experience at World Expo 2010, music for

the projections on the Sydney Opera House for Vivid Sydney (2013), and the song "Triumph of the One" for the 2006 Asian Games closing ceremony in Doha, sung by Aladdin (2007) star, Lea Salonga. In November 2019, she was awarded a full scholarship by composer and Song Hubs curator Ashley Irwin to attend APRA's Screen Song Hubs in LA and co-write songs for screen with artists including Megan Washington, John D'Alto, Shelley Peikin and Daniel Denholm.

**Sam Paine: Scriptwriter and Actor (Dad)**

Sam Paine is a writer, artist and performer in Mudgee, NSW. He has performed his work as part of the Sydney Festival, Giant Dwarf's Story Club, and City of Sydney's Late Night Library series, and regionally as part of the 2016 Artlands Regional Arts conference and Snapshorts central west theatre tour. Sam was dramaturg on A Little Piece of Heaven, an Indigenous storytelling project dramatising the lives of Narromine elders Ruth and Dick Carney, staged in Dubbo and Narromine in 2018 and Melbourne in 2019. He wrote and directed Biding Time, a play with original music, which began with a staged reading at the Artlands Regional Arts Conference in 2016, then toured to five towns in regional NSW in 2019. Sam is the coordinator of the Cudgegong Youth Theatre and part-owner of The Book Nest Mudgee bookstore.



**Stella Morgan: Actress (Stella)**

Stella Amèlie Morgan has been thoroughly invested in drama for the last few years of her life, both working and volunteering for roles. Stella's community theatre has continuously given her the honour in understanding the craft of staging a show, and allowed Stella to act alongside many talented people. Stella's most notable theatrical pursuits would include Biding Time (2019), Alice in Wonderland (2019), The Addams Family (2021), and As You Like It (2021). Stella Amèlie Morgan and director Jess Nipperess have also previously worked on projects together, such as Jess's film Sane (2019). Working with Jess has progressed Stella's career extensively, and given her many rewarding roles to explore through their acting style. Stella's acting capabilities will only continue upwards from here, as she is presented with more characters to understand.

**Reneé French: Actress (Mum)**

Reneé French was 'bitten by the bug' in her first acting class at age 5 and has maintained this infectious enthusiasm for 30 years. She went on to study towards a Bachelor of Fine Arts (acting) majoring in musical theatre at Queensland University of Technology. French obtained extensive acting experience in Brisbane while working with various drama troupes. Notable shows include A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Crucible, Godspell & Cabaret. She was also a student at Brisbane's The Performing Arts Conservatory. Now residing in Mudgee, French studies and works as a winemaker, but still acts in her spare time. She is a member of the Mudgee Performing Arts Society, taking on various roles across many productions including 'Olive' in the upcoming 'Summer of The Seventeenth Doll'. She has worked with Jess Nipperess on other projects,

including her recent short film 'Sane' and thoroughly enjoyed her time portraying the long-suffering wife in 'The Devil Bean'.

## Director Q&A

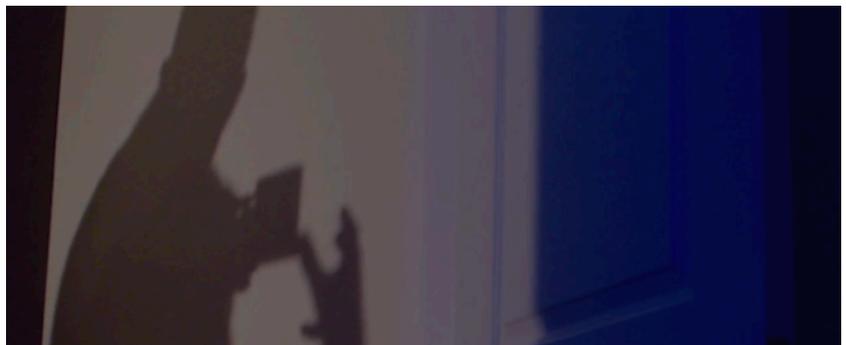
### ***Tell us about this film***

The plot is quite simple: a family gives their dad a coffee machine for Christmas and he becomes dangerously addicted, tearing the family apart. But it's honestly quite hilarious and deceptively complex.



The coffee-will-turn-you-into-a-demon moral is inspired by 30's anti-drug propaganda films like Reefer Madness which, in a modern lens, are hilariously contrived and melodramatic stories about the danger of drugs. When

reading the script for Devil Bean, I particularly enjoyed how the coffee machine was portrayed as an invader, a sort of supernatural force which begins twisting and peeling away the layers of their perfect existence. This idea of infiltration would become my main focus: a collision of the modern, picket-fence family fairytale that the family represents and gaudy cult classic horror conventions that the coffee machine represents.



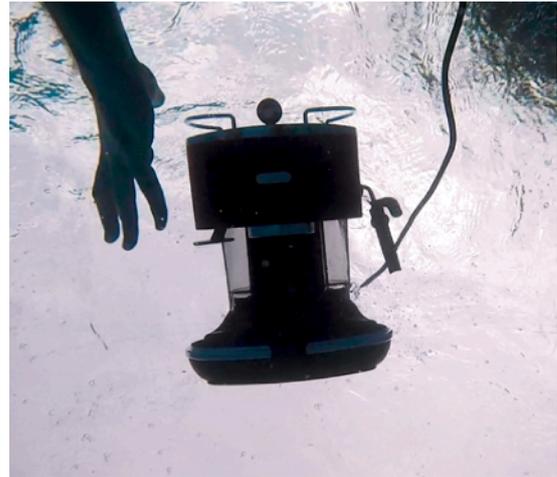
But also, this film surprised me. The father-daughter relationship became more and more prominent as I went along. I began to turn my attention to the pressure that was put onto the daughter as she stepped up into Dad's role when he became addicted, and how that relationship had to be carefully reconstructed once Dad realised how far he'd spiralled, and brought Stella down with him. It's really beautiful to me, but whether or not that's a major concept to the audience, I'm not sure. Either way, it turned out as a hilarious, complex and bittersweet film.

### ***Where did the idea come from?***

Well, my mum had a coffee machine which she wanted to get rid of, and after a brief stint of trying to sell it on Buy-Swap-and-Sell, she put it to the ideas table as a potential movie prop (the key selling point: we could smash it).

So essentially the film was borne out of the desire to smash a coffee machine; a desire innate to us all I'm sure.

I didn't write the script or come up with the idea myself, though I was heavily involved in workshoping the idea. This was the first film I directed that I didn't also write. The script was written by Sam Paine, a local writer, artist and performer who would also go on to play the lead. The script was really clever, but directing someone else's dialogue and scenes was definitely a challenge for me. Learning how to was a great experience, and I'm grateful for the opportunity.



### ***Can you elaborate on how using someone else's script a challenge?***

For me, I'm an incredibly visual thinker. When I'm generating my film ideas, it will be entirely images, scenes and sounds flashing through my head; rarely a concrete or coherent story. This means that when I go to write a script, I'm really just transcribing a film that's already in my head and the script is merely an outer skeleton. To receive a script from someone else, and to then try and film it was reverse engineering for me and something I'd never done before. There were a lot of long walks and storyboarding required for me to form my own personal connections with the script and get an understanding of what I wanted it to look like. And being my first time taking someone else's script, it was a process that I had to fumble through with trial and error.

### ***Let's talk about the production period. What was it like? What was the most memorable moment?***

The film was shot almost entirely at my house which made logistics a lot easier, especially since I was using a huge amount of new tech lent to me by my mentor Cadance Bell and lugging it around would have been a nightmare. As a side note, huge shout out to Cady: she lent me everything from lights to dollies to rigs to the



first Black Magic camera I have ever had the honour to touch, and spent hours with me helping refine the film, significantly elevating the quality of the film. I owe so much to her.

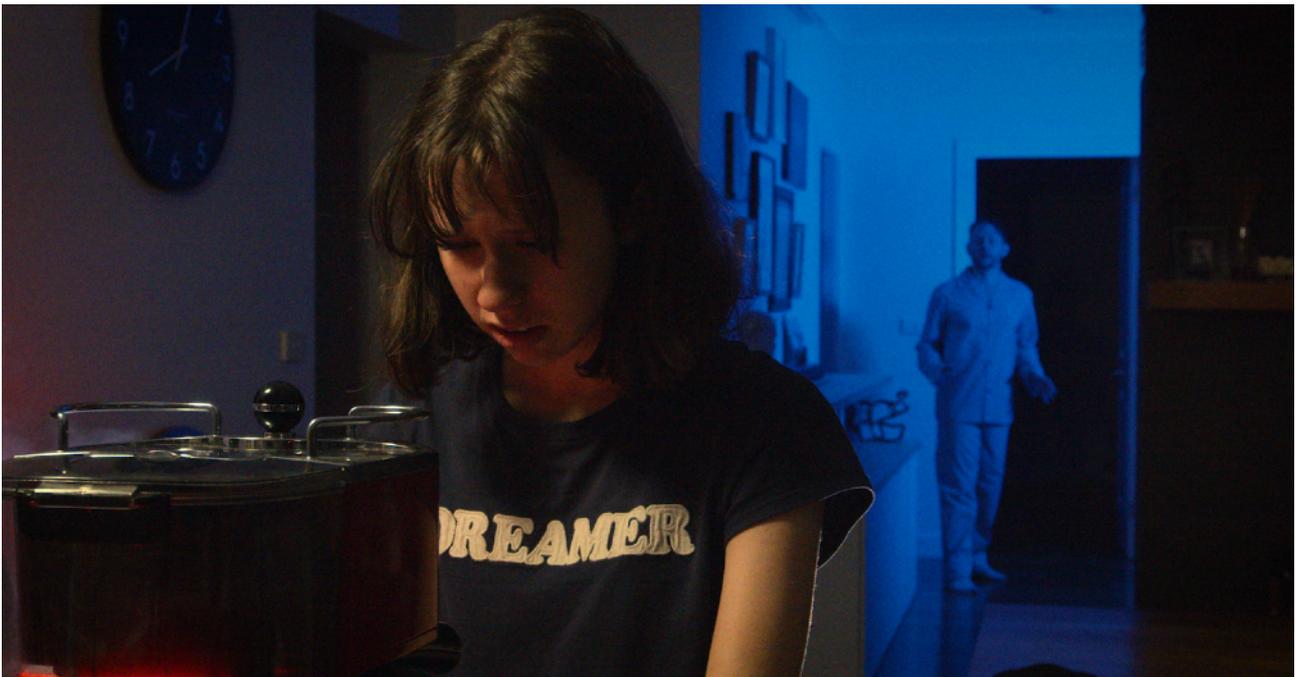
But in terms of my favourite production memory.... the last day of shooting was certainly epic. We filmed the final scene where the coffee machine was smashed (there was also a lot of coffee cup smashing but that didn't



make the cut). It was catharsis to the severest degree, and I think I even got a tiny cut on my forehead from a shard of coffee mug shrapnel (I'm super tough so I was ok), but the most memorable part of the shoot for me was our second night of filming: Stella's scene. This is the part where the daughter,

who had been holding the family together, resisting the destructive black-hole of the

coffee machine and fighting to get Dad back, just surrenders. Just breaks apart. She succumbs to the siren call of the coffee machine and its promises that it will make life a little easier.



What made this so memorable is it was the exact moment that I felt like I witnessed the collision of Stella, the actress, and Stella (very unoriginally named I know) the character. She was sitting in front of the coffee machine, and I was talking around what the character was going through in this moment; that all consuming hopelessness. Stella is an amazing actress, and it's incredible to watch her moulding into a character. She took it, understood it, and made it her own. Soon there were tears. We did two takes but the first was perfect.

It's just raw human emotion, pretense all gone, just a character, at their lowest moment, overflowing with grief and pain.

In the final cut of the film, this moment is really condensed to under 10 seconds which means the audience doesn't get to appreciate it fully. But it's there, sort of resting in the subconscious of the story. Scenes like that are important even if they don't make the final cut.

***This film was particularly funded by the NSW Government. What did you put the money towards?***

Right, yes. I received a \$5000 Arts Restart Grant from the NSW Government to make this project. The majority of this was spent on hiring a composer, Kyls Burtland, to create original songs and soundtracks which elevated the quality of the work. Before this project, I didn't realise the true value of having a composer but Devil Bean has been a lesson in the power of original music to pull together a film, enunciate story and emotion (as well as just make every scene a thousand times better). All my previous films had been scored by myself using an odd patchwork of royalty free music tracks which work fine, but pale in comparison to the coherence and potency of an original score. Working with Kyls was an amazing learning experience, and all-round incredible. I know a lot more now about musical technicalities and the effect of certain sounds in certain scenes, but mostly I know what I don't know: which will really help me moving forward. Learning how to direct a composer and provide an explicit vision for the music was something that I was not prepared to do, yet now feel confident doing. I also enjoyed being able to talk and connect with someone else on the film - usually it's just me, myself and I - and Klys is just a really amazing person. Now that I've collaborated with other people on a film, I don't think I'll ever go back to my old lonely ways.



***You were 15 at the time of making this and now still only 16 years old. That's quite a young age to be forging your path into the industry. What makes you want to pursue this so young?***

For me at least, age has the least to do with it. Filmmaking is something that I'm deeply, instinctually passionate about; it feels like it's hardwired into my mind and soul. Just like everyone has a different way of seeing the world, I do too; it's really heightened, emotional and visual, and I feel like I can only communicate it through film (and poetry sometimes, but that never quite nails it). I honestly can't live without film in my life.

I'm also a motivated person, and since I know what I want to be doing with my life, and where I wanted to be when I'm 30 (with a reasonable margin of variance), so I don't see why I should be waiting to leave school to start living my life. I'm really lucky to have such an amazing family, an incredible mentor, even to be in the right financial and demographic circumstances to allow my talent to grow. I wouldn't want to waste that.

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