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LIFESTYLE + CAREER

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in retail

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Livinia Nixon

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Matthew Reilly

Author of 7 best sellers
tells "The Secrets to
My success"

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PATHWAYS

ON THE BEAT

SHOW ME THE MONEY

GET OUT OF TOWN

STYLIN

CRUISING

GIZMOS

*Natalie
Bassingthwaite*

Ten years to become an Australian
Overnight sensation

JOB FOLLOW YOUR

For rising star Natalie Bassingthwaite, success comes when you follow your joy, even if it does mean washing dishes until four in the morning...

Growing up in Wollongong, Natalie graduated from the Wollongong High School of the Performing Arts in 1994. Although performing brought her incredible joy, she never believed she could make a career out of it. "The whole idea felt out of reach...I lived in Wollongong only an hour away from Sydney...but it seemed so far away!"

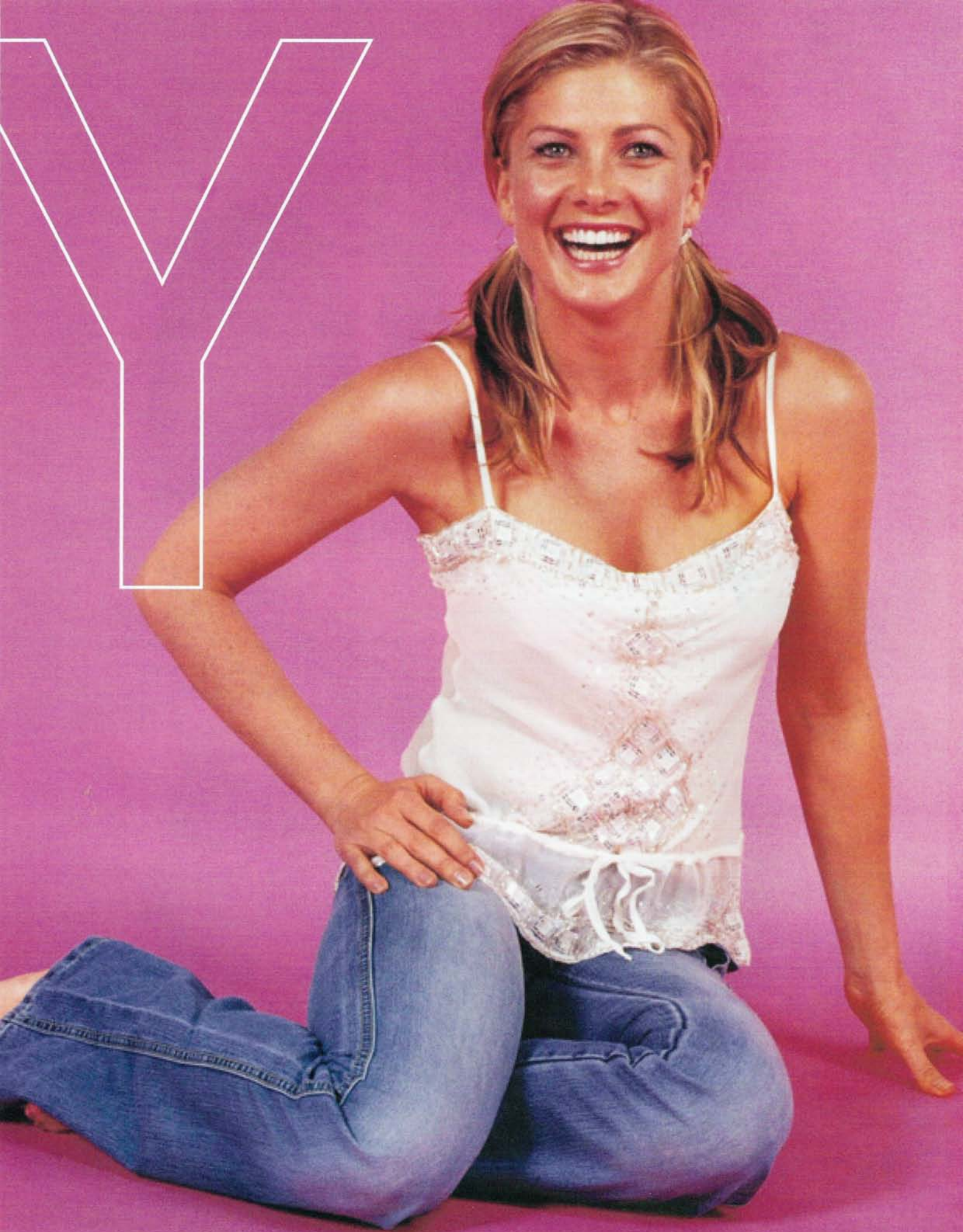
When time came to apply for tertiary studies, as if by chance, a brochure landed in Natalie's letterbox advertising auditions for the prestigious Australian College of Entertainment in Sydney. Although success meant moving to the big smoke - Natalie did her best, scored a place and made the move, fears and all.

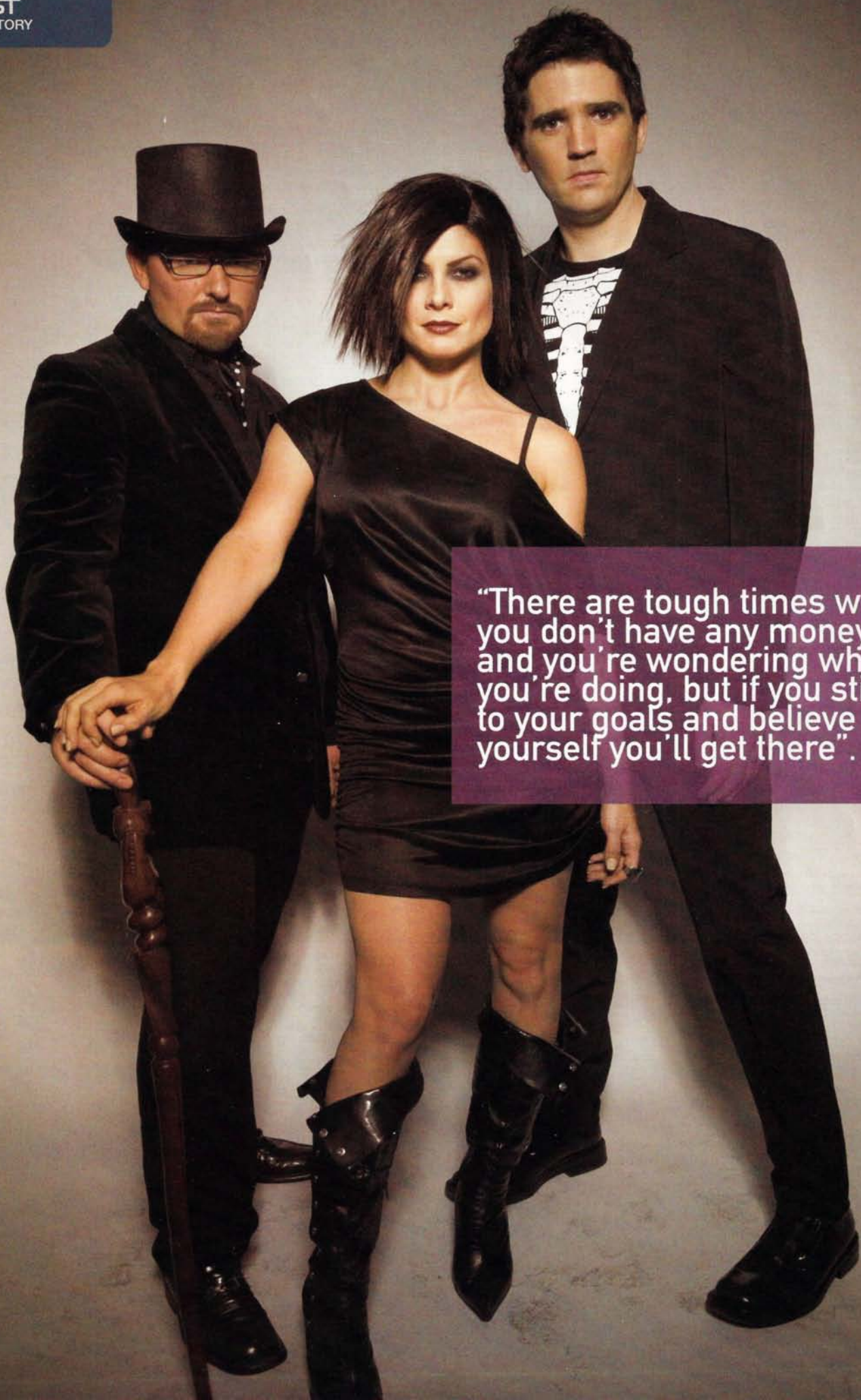
Supporting her studies through some wacky jobs, Natalie's CV included loads of café work and a job hemming pants at a formal hire shop. Her boss scoffed when she told him what she was studying, but this didn't weaken her resolve. "For some reason having him laugh at my ambitions to be a performer only made me more determined. I was driven to show him!"

With incredibly varied performance skills and passions, Natalie majored in dance, then won her first audition singing the National Anthem at the football. The taste of musical success drove her forward, applying for musicals and auditioning for any performance gig she could find. Keeping her ear to the ground and sticking at it despite constant rejections paid off when she was able to ditch the café work and perform in front of diners at Kaos Comedy Theatre Restaurant, a job she kept for two years as lead singer and dancer. "I was just so thrilled to be earning a living from performing, it was wild!"

While working at Kaos, Natalie heard word that auditions were coming up for the Nationwide musical *Rent*, a role she was determined to get. Hard work is just one reason a relatively unknown actress beat six thousand others vying for roles. "Six months before the auditions I made sure I knew the show inside out and back to front."

Natalie landed her dream job and along the way met the most inspiring bunch of people who encouraged her to write music and never be afraid of taking a chance. Her new found confidence and experience led to further success with a major role in *Chicago* understudying Roxy and playing the role of June, touring Asia and Australia. Riding high on the thrill of two fantastic roles, all of a sudden performers were given two weeks notice - the show was coming to an end.





“There are tough times when you don’t have any money and you’re wondering what you’re doing, but if you stick to your goals and believe in yourself you’ll get there”.

Natalie had to make a choice, head back to the theatre restaurant, work on music or spread her wings to trying acting – an area in which she had zip technical experience, but felt she had loads of life experience.

‘I had to make a decision. In many ways it was like starting at the bottom again as people knew me as a musical performer. The hardest part was getting a part-time job where I would be free to go to auditions but still pay the rent!’ Needing a job to fit around her goal, Natalie headed back to Kaos and said she’d do anything, if it fitted around her auditions. “Well here you go, the next week I was scrubbing dishes! I was kind of at a low point thinking what am I doing? But at the same time I knew it was for a purpose. I knew that if I worked there Friday and Saturday nights I’d have enough money to survive and still have the whole week free for auditions.”

Many would-be actors juggle full-time work with auditions, but not Natalie. In many ways this single-minded ability to endure a bit of hardship is why she got there quicker than most. “I wanted to give it a proper go. I wanted to have every day free to think of auditions and my new found excitement for music.. My friends would laugh at me cause I’d go to so much trouble for every audition, head to an op shop to get clothes similar to the character, blow dry my hair and stuff. I just wanted to present myself really well at every opportunity”.

Like many actors, little bits and pieces came up, with plenty of knock backs to test her resolve. “Lots of times when you get knocked back you

think I don’t want to do this anymore...but it’s the people who get back up there who get the work.” In between all of this Natalie was using her hard earned cash to pay for any good short course she could find, to maintain her contacts and keep learning.

“It was quite expensive, generally a six week course would cost around \$400. Which is a lot when you only have enough money to pay the rent, but I thought I needed to put the work in to see something back.”

Fate stepped in and Natalie landed a role in an American film based on her namesake – Natalie Wood. Working on an American movie set (filmed in Australia) opened Natalie’s eyes to some of the perks of the movie world, like getting your own trailer. “While I was there I pretended it was all cool and I knew what I was doing, but when I got home I’d laugh and ring my family and tell them how bizarre it was!”

Soon came other little trickles – the role of Sandy in Grease, a US production called Attack on the Queen, the lead role in Footloose, more music...more auditions, more knock backs, little roles and big – Natalie took them all. She was never too proud to gain as much experience as possible, knowing that something could lead to anything and absorbing as much as she could along the way.

Through being available and opening herself up to every possibility, soon Neighbours came calling, and ironically Natalie was pipped an ‘overnight sensation’ playing the role of scheming Izzy. Within two weeks of landing Neighbours, Natalie moved to Melbourne, free at last to ditch the washing gloves and head off to a job she loves every day.

Acting, singing in the chart topping band The Rogue Traders, working with The Variety Club and the Breast Cancer Foundation keeps Natalie pretty busy. Natalie reveals how much you can actually accomplish when you’re enjoying yourself: “I don’t take days off but I like it that way. I get to play dress-ups every day. What could be better than that?!”

Written By: Louisa Deasey

Natalie’s Tips for Success

FOCUS ON THE IMPORTANT THINGS: FAMILY, FRIENDS AND HAPPINESS

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

DEVELOP A THICK SKIN FOR REJECTION “IT’S THE ONES WHO TAKE IT ON THE CHIN AND GET BACK UP WHO EVENTUALLY GET THE WORK”

MAKE THE MOST OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY BY LISTENING AND LEARNING

SET GOALS AND STAY ADAPTABLE TO HOW OPPORTUNITIES PRESENT THEMSELVES

SAVE YOUR MONEY AS YOU WORK – IT’S AN UNPREDICTABLE BUSINESS

September 1st, 1975: A star is born

1994: Graduated from Wollongong High School of the Performing Arts

1995: Moved to Sydney to study at The Australian College of Entertainment

Singer/Dancer at Australia’s Wonderland

1996: Lead singer/dancer at Kaos Comedy Theatre Restaurant – Sydney

1997 - 2002: Cast member – national tour – Rent

Cast Member - Chicago - Australia and Asia

The Lost World – US Series

Chang and Eng – lead role – Singapore and Bangkok

Attack on the Queens – first major feature film – US production

Grease – Sandy – national tour

Footloose – Ariel

Natalie Wood – US telemovie

2003: Landed “Izzy”, Isabelle Holland in Neighbours

2004: Produced the Rocky Horror Picture Show in Melbourne – helping to raise \$200 000 for the Variety Club in Melbourne

2005: Released top 5 hit single “Voodoo Child” with The Rogue Traders