



Star in waiting

“The aim of the game is to stay consistent and to just do projects that I believe in.”

Actor Ryan Corr — acclaimed in *Packed to the Rafters* and now *Cleverman* — loves working in Australia but **won't rule out Hollywood** in the future

Hollywood can wait. Ryan Corr is in no rush to conquer the bright lights of Tinseltown just yet despite becoming one of Australia's most in-demand and well-known young actors, thanks to his bulging resume of hit TV shows and iconic films.

The 27-year-old remains focused on telling good quality stories regardless of where they're made, rather than simply making a name for himself in the US or Europe.

This year alone, the *Packed to the Rafters* star has appeared in TV mini-series *Wanted*, on stage at the Sydney Opera House as a 19th century tutor in *Arcadia* and is currently filming a biopic about an Australian icon.

Last year he filmed a part in Mel Gibson's locally shot World War II film *Hacksaw Ridge* and dazzled cinema-goers with his emotional performance in the critically acclaimed movie *Holding the Man*.

He says, “The aim of the game is to stay consistent and to just do projects that I believe in and I'd like to be a part of, so it's all been going pretty well so far.” It certainly has, which brings us to his latest work to hit the small screen, *Cleverman*, a genre-bending drama about two estranged Indigenous brothers and a species' struggle for survival in a dangerous world.

Corr says signing on to play Blair, the best friend of main character Koen (Hunter Page-Lochard), was a “no-brainer”. It's exactly the kind of original, groundbreaking project keeping the NIDA graduate content to remain down under, at least for now.

“It was the first time I'd come across a script that had been pushing the envelope in terms of Australian drama and that was straight off the page,” he explains. “You could

really see from the get-go in pre-production and from the scripts, this was unlike anything we've done here before and I think being a part of that movement in this country really excites me.”

Cleverman manages to blend stories from the Dreaming with action and fantasy while subtly hinting at some of Australia's most heated political issues such as refugees and the treatment of Indigenous people. But the series also explores more personal topics such as family, friendship and moral values.

Such is the case with Corr's character, whose girlfriend Ash (Stef Dawson) is also Koen's lover. According to Corr, this messy love triangle is a product of the high-stakes world the characters live in and the tiny family unit they formed while living on the streets. The trio now run a bar and live together. Corr found the dynamic between the friends fascinating to play, describing the relationship as human and imperfect.

“There is no one track for love and things can happen and blindside people,” he says. “I think this is a representation of that and also a representation of the world they're in and how

there's something lurking behind the corner you might not know about. When there's these sort of pressures and things going on around you it can force people into behaviours they might not normally do.”

Apart from his relationship issues, Blair is also dealing with Koen becoming the Cleverman and getting powers such as self-healing and visions. Blair finds the powers exciting, even going to the extent of cutting Koen's arm with a knife to watch it heal but he also sticks right by Koen's side when Koen's Cleverman role requires him to do something dangerous.

“When he starts realising that something really incredible, mystical even, is happening to his mate, he's reacting how anyone would and possibly a little less scared and a little more excited about what this potentially means — and

I think that speaks volumes about both Blair and Koen's

relationship, that it wouldn't matter if his head turned into a beach ball he'd follow him.”

As *Cleverman* makes its mark both in Australia and overseas, where it's airing in the US and the UK, it will soon come time for Corr to choose his next project and that's not a decision he takes lightly. There's only so much time in a year, he says, meaning that an actor is limited to a handful of productions depending on the size of the role, and Corr wants to make sure he does the best work possible in quality projects. And then one day he'll be offered that career-defining role in Hollywood and know it was worth the wait.

“I have heard Cate Blanchett launched her career by what she said ‘no’ to ... and it's become much more a priority of mine to become selective about what those projects are as I get older and the sort of things I want to give my work over to ... in line with my belief system and in line with what I think needs to be told.

“It may be laughter that draws me to a piece; it may be the opportunity to work with an actor or a director or the script itself. It's definitely a conscious decision, one that comes a bit later as people get to know my work. I've had a lot of help and stepping stones to get me to a stage where I can be a bit more picky about what I choose to do but I think that's what makes a career.” **TVS**

GROUNDBREAKING
Ryan Corr as Blair (centre)
with Stef Dawson (Ash)
and Hunter Page-Lochard
(Koen) in *Cleverman*.

INTERVIEW



‘HIGH-STAKES WORLD’
Characters Blair (left)
and best friend Koen.

Words by Rachael Gavin