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2025



BODY BLOW

Press Kit

JJ Splice Films in association with Breathless Films

Presents

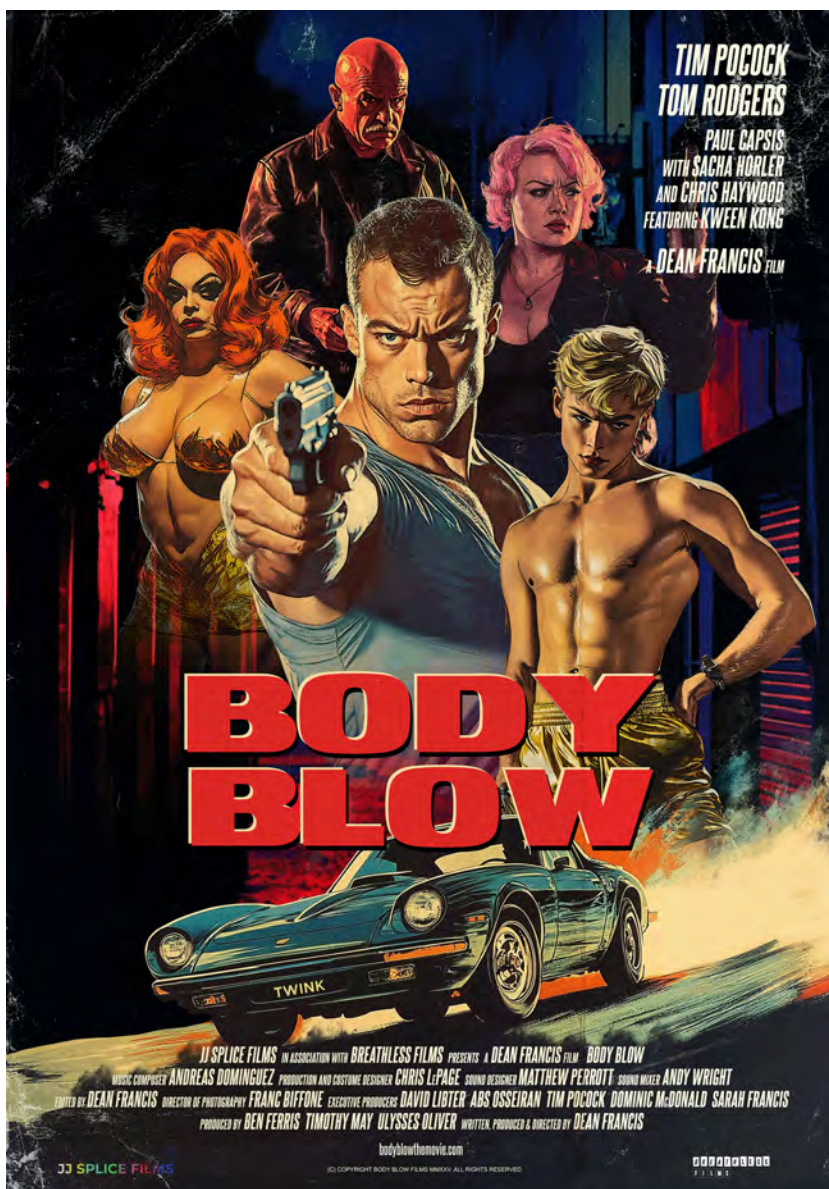
BODY BLOW

Written, Directed and Produced by Dean Francis

Starring Tim Pocock, Tom Rodgers, Paul Capsis with Sacha Horler and Chris Haywood

Producers Timothy May, Ulysses Oliver, Ben Ferris

2025 | Australia | 99 minutes | Format: RED Digital Cinema | Aspect Ratio: 2.39:1
Cinemascope | English



BODY BLOW

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SCREENINGS

Fantastic Fest – Austin, Texas, USA (world premiere, Sep 2025)
Festival do Rio – Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Oct 2025)
Way OUT West Film Fest – Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA (Oct 2025)
Loft Film Fest – Tucson, Arizona, USA (Nov 2025)
Saskatoon Fantastic Film Festival – Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada (Nov 2025)
Roze Filmdagen – Amsterdam, Netherlands (Mar 18-29, 2026)
Fantaspoo – Porto Alegre, Brazil (Apr 2026)
Wicked Queer: Boston's LGBTQ+ Film Festival – Boston, Massachusetts, USA (Apr 3-12, 2026)
Seattle International Film Festival – Seattle, Washington, USA (2026)
OUTshine Film Festival – Fort Lauderdale/Miami, Florida, USA (2026)
Rainbow Reel Tokyo – Tokyo, Japan (2026)
Mix Festival Internazionale di Cinema LGBTQ+ e Cultura Queer – Milan, Italy (Sep 17-20, 2026)
Munich Queer Film Festival – Munich, Germany (2026)
Sydney Film Festival, Sydney, Australia (2026)

AWARDS

Best Director, International Competition, Fantaspoo

BODY BLOW

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Disgraced cop Aiden is thrust into Sydney's neon-soaked gay district, where a chance encounter with Cody—a seductive bartender and sex worker—sparks a dangerous spiral. Blackmailed into working for Fat Frankie, a murderous drag queen mob boss, Aiden is drawn into a deadly heist and a twisted game of survival. As he battles desire, betrayal, and his own demons, Aiden must decide if redemption is worth the price of betrayal.

LONG SYNOPSIS

****SPOILER WARNING****

Aiden, a 27-year-old undercover cop, is spiralling out of control. Reeling from sexual misconduct allegations and battling a crippling sex addiction, he has committed himself to "no-fap," abstaining from masturbation in a desperate attempt to regain control over his life. His personal turmoil is compounded when he is reassigned to an inner-city precinct in Sydney's infamous gay district, Oxford Street. There, he is partnered with Steele, a tough, no-nonsense lesbian cop and the daughter of a disgraced former police chief known for his violent past.

Aiden's resolve quickly begins to unravel when he meets Cody, a drug-addled bartender and sex worker who frequents the gritty nightlife of Oxford Street. Drawn to Cody's chaotic allure, Aiden succumbs to his desires, and they hook up in a dark alleyway. However, the encounter is secretly filmed by Fat Frankie, a notorious drag kingpin and drug lord who runs the local bar. With the incriminating footage in hand, Fat Frankie blackmails Aiden into working as "security," forcing him to follow Cody to high-end sex work engagements and ensure that all payments make their way back to Frankie's pockets.

As Aiden and Cody grow closer, their attempts to steal back the blackmail material from Fat Frankie go disastrously wrong. In the chaos, Fat Frankie is murdered, and Aiden is horrified when Cody seizes the opportunity to steal a large stash of heroin from the dead kingpin's safe. Now, Aiden finds himself a prime suspect in the murder, and Steele reveals that the stolen heroin belongs to a deadly gang, marking Cody as their next target.

Faced with mounting pressure from the homicide squad, Aiden conspires with Steele to frame Cody for the murder and theft. But as his affection for Cody deepens, Aiden is unable to betray him, allowing Cody to escape instead. As the police close in, Cody unexpectedly returns to Aiden's life, and they hook up one last time. Consumed by fear and guilt, Aiden attempts to turn Cody in, but the situation spirals out of control, resulting in the death of a homicide detective.

On the run together, Aiden and Cody are haunted by the unresolved questions surrounding the murder, robbery, and the heroin hidden in their car trunk. Their journey leads them to a shady drug deal on an isolated coastal stretch, where Cody reveals the shocking truth: Steele and her corrupt father blackmailed Cody into manipulating Aiden into the robbery, planning to use him as the fall guy. Now, Cody must deliver the heroin to the Steeles to fulfil his part of the bargain.

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When they arrive at the deal site, the Steeles betray them, planning to execute both Cody and Aiden. A desperate gunfight ensues, and Cody is seriously injured. In a final act of defiance, Aiden drives their car, the Twinkmobile, over Steele's father, escaping with Cody into an uncertain future. For the first time, they are secure in their love for each other, but the dangers they face are far from over.

DIRECTORS STATEMENT

BODY BLOW began when these young, hot plainclothes cops started turning up at my door, asking for CCTV footage from the cameras around my production office to solve street crime.

The CCTV room was tiny, under the stairs. I'd be crouched there with the hot cop standing over me, my eyes level with the Glock tucked into his tight jeans under a baggy T-shirt. Downloading footage would take half an hour, and they never seemed in a hurry. With a view like that, neither was I.

I'd start probing - how they made it invisible that they were cops, what would happen if someone tried to kiss them, whether they'd ever hooked up 'in character'. It was right after another incident in which cops had beaten a someone up at the Mardi Gras Pride Parade, and while gay hate crimes by police in the 80s and 90s were being investigated in the press. I became fascinated with the tension gay cops in Sydney must feel - between their job and their identity. The head versus the cock, the heart versus the Glock. And how that's a neat metaphor for the tension we've all felt between what the world expects of us and our true desires.

I grew up in the '90s, and it felt like movie characters defined how we thought about ourselves and who we wanted to be. In those hyper-masculine film worlds, the rules were the same: the man wins, the woman is the prize, and their kiss is the final stamp of validation. As much as I loved everything about those '90s erotic thrillers, my growing awareness of my gayness meant I always watched them as an outsider.

BODY BLOW was conceived as a way to explore these ideas and reclaim the erotic thriller from a queer perspective. I craved the seductive, dangerous pleasures of Body Heat, Basic Instinct, and Crimes of Passion, but wanted to create gay anti-heroes we could all idolise and lust after.

Today, instead of movie characters setting the standards of masculinity, it's influencers and the manosphere coming at you from a device you take everywhere. I wondered if advice on the male chastity forums was ever shared amongst the repressed gay cops, and this naturally led to the male chastity device - aka the cock cage. Simultaneously a device for self-control and a BDSM fetish item, it occupies the space between gay kink and the straight manosphere, which is exactly where our protagonist Aiden sits.

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And what would be the one force that could bring a cop like that down? A fatalistic twink who doesn't take no for an answer. The femme fatale of the 1950s, pure heroin. It's in their nature to destroy you, just as the scorpion can't help stinging the frog.

Noirs are always cautionary tales, and BODY BLOW is no exception. But we no longer accept gay characters with tragic endings, so I wanted to find some hope in the final chord. Could Aiden and Cody overcome the identity bullshit and recognise something human in each other that could last?

Visually, I wanted to speak in the language of De Palma's moving camera and strong colours, Billy Wilder's noir shadows, John Waters' camp, and Greg Araki's nihilistic danger. I wanted to keep the seams of the film showing - grainy textures, front-projection car scenes, under-lit rooms - like a film forgotten in someone's closet.

BODY BLOW had to be made totally independently, without pressure to tone it down. I want audiences to see it with a crowd - to feel the voyeurism of watching each other react, to be outraged, turned on, **and** unsettled. To step into a dangerous and dirty world**, ** and still find themselves in it.

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PRODUCTION NOTES

In an era when much of mainstream cinema is dominated by formulaic streaming commissions and tentpole blockbusters, BODY BLOW began as a deliberate act of resistance. Writer-director Dean Francis wanted to return to the spirit of the 1990s independent films that had inspired a generation to tell stories on screen – films with bold visual languages, personal stakes, and the freedom to take risks. This was a call to strip away the algorithmic sameness and reclaim cinema as a space for seductive, challenging, and distinctive storytelling.

Early on, Francis locked onto a neon-noir framework – a crime thriller in the tradition of BODY HEAT and DOUBLE INDEMNITY, reimaged with a queer protagonist at its centre. The aim was to create a film that could only be BODY BLOW – as recognisable for its aesthetic as for its themes, and built to be experienced with a cinema audience.

The Shoot

Filming began on 14 August 2023 and ran for six weeks across Sydney. The contrast between worlds was central: Aiden's home sat on the edge of suburbia, between unfinished roads and raw bushland – a liminal zone reflecting his inner cage – while the city sequences plunged into the lived-in grit and neon glow of Darlinghurst and Surry Hills.

Key locations included the iconic Stonewall Hotel, the Burdekin (with its winding staircase and rooftop), the Holiday Inn rooftop with its Dirty Harry-style city panorama, and the Bunker sauna – a landmark of Sydney's queer scene. Fat Frankie's safe room, CCTV room, and parts of his bedroom were the only sets built in studio, offering controlled environments for complex action and performance beats.

Visual Style

Cinematographer Franc Biffone and Francis built the film's language around deep shadows, bold neon colour, and the tactile "seams" of a handmade world. All driving scenes were shot using front-projection sim-travel – a deliberate nod to Hitchcock and James Cameron – to create a slightly heightened, tactile unreality.

The RED Komodo 6K (A camera) was paired with Laowa Nanomorph lenses for sharp, lightweight anamorphic shots, allowing the camera to stay nimble and constantly moving. The RED Gemini 5K (B camera) ensured parallel coverage, keeping the shoot lean and fast without inflating the crew size, which ranged between 20-50 depending on the day.

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Casting

Casting revolved around Tim Pocock as Aiden. Francis had admired his work for years, and this project came at precisely the right time for him to inhabit the role fully. In portraying Aiden, Pocock drew deeply from his own lived experience of repression – having grown up in the strict Opus Dei religious movement, an upbringing he has since chronicled in a memoir. That personal history infused both his performance and his contributions to the score with an authenticity and weight.

Tom Rodgers brought danger and charm to Cody, surpassing already high expectations. Sacha Horler's brutal honesty grounded the ensemble, while screen legend Chris Haywood brought gravitas to Duke Ironheart. A last-minute casting twist brought Paul Capsis aboard as Fat Frankie, committing fully to the role while performing a gruelling two-hander stage play each night during production.

Music

Music was integral from the outset. Francis had been writing Fat Frankie's songs alongside the screenplay, knowing they would be both character moments and atmospheric anchors. Capsis recorded them just before shooting, infusing them with theatrical danger and swagger.

Early in pre-production, Francis discovered that lead actor Tim Pocock was also an accomplished classical pianist and composer. This opened a unique creative door: to score parts of the film from inside Aiden's head. Pocock composed four original cues for the soundtrack, shaped by his precise understanding of the character's psychology and his own personal history.

Both Francis and Pocock drew on the mood and structure of Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* – a piece whose sense of inevitability, restrained melancholy, and quiet menace mirrored Aiden's internal journey. The result is music that doesn't just underscore the film but breathes with the character, creating a subjective sonic world that blurs the line between score and state of mind.

Adding to this, recording artist Greg Gould contributed the torch songs *Who Gave You Permission* and *Running*, both distillations of betrayal, strength, and s– conceived in the tradition of classic Bond themes but reframed for BODY BLOW'S morally tangled world.

Post-Production

Post spanned 71 weeks, allowing space for test screenings and refinement. Sound designer Matthew Perrott and Oscar-winner Andy Wright created a bold, immersive soundscape that could swing from hushed intimacy to explosive impact. VFX came from Mellow Pictures' Damien and Josh whose work kept the heightened world seamless without drawing attention to itself.

When BODY BLOW finally locked, it was unapologetically the film it set out to be: stylised, defiantly queer, and built on the belief that cinema is still at its most potent when it dares to be personal, dangerous, and unforgettable.

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BOOGRAPHIES

Dean Francis (Producer / Director / Writer / Editor)

Dean Francis is a twice-AACTA-nominated filmmaker whose work spans directing, producing, writing, cinematography, and editing. His debut feature *Road Train* (2009) secured worldwide distribution, and *Drown* (2015) became the top-selling film in Mardi Gras Film Festival history, winning seven festival awards. He produced the AACTA-nominated *Lonesome* (2022) and produced / shot Georgina Haig's *ASHES* (2023). His latest, *BODY BLOW*, is a neon-noir exploring sex, power, and queer identity.

Tim Pocock (Aiden)

Tim Pocock is an Australian actor and accomplished pianist, known for playing a young Scott Summers in *X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE*, Ethan Karamakov in the ABC drama *DANCE ACADEMY*, and for his acclaimed role in *GODLESS: THE EASTFIELD EXORCISM*. His television credits include NBC's *CAMP*, *HOME AND AWAY*, and *WANTED*. For *BODY BLOW*, Pocock composed original score cues, drawing on his classical training to create a musical perspective from inside Aiden's head. His performance is informed by his own experiences growing up in the restrictive Opus Dei school system, explored in his forthcoming memoir *THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE*.

Tom Rodgers (Cody)

Tom Rodgers is a National Institute of Dramatic Art graduate whose work spans acting, writing, and directing. He starred in the Screen Australia short *SHRAPNEL* (2019) and wrote and directed *BILLY BLUE EYES* (2021). On television, he played Dillon Passage opposite John Cameron Mitchell and Kate McKinnon in NBCUniversal's *JOE VS. CAROLE* (2022). In *BODY BLOW*, Rodgers delivers a magnetic turn as Cody, the dangerous yet disarmingly sweet homme fatale at the heart of the film's twisted romance.

Sacha Horler (Steele)

Sacha Horler is one of Australia's most acclaimed actors, with a career spanning film, television, and theatre since graduating from NIDA in 1993. She made her film debut in *BILLY'S HOLIDAY* (1995) and broke through with the award-winning *PRAISE* (1998). Her screen credits include *SOFT FRUIT*, *MY YEAR WITHOUT SEX*, *BABE: PIG IN THE CITY*, *LOVE MY WAY*, *OFFSPRING*, and *CROWNIES*. In *BODY BLOW*, Horler brings wit, menace, and depth to Steele, a sharp-tongued operator who knows every angle of Sydney's underworld.

Paul Capsis (Fat Frankie)

Paul Capsis is one of Australia's most celebrated performers, renowned for his electrifying stage presence and extraordinary vocal range. A multi-Helpmann and Green Room Award winner, Capsis has captivated audiences in productions such as *CABARET* (as the Emcee) and *ANGELA'S KITCHEN*. His film and television work includes *HEAD ON*, *THE BOY CASTAWAYS*, and *BARRACUDA*. In *BODY*

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BLOW, Capsis transforms into Fat Frankie, a flamboyant and dangerous nightclub owner whose songs-performed live on set-were recorded just days before filming.

Chris Haywood (Sampson Steele)

Chris Haywood is one of Australia's most prolific actors, with nearly 500 screen credits across film, television, and theatre. His award-winning performances include A STREET TO DIE, EMERALD CITY, and STINGERS, earning him three AFI Awards, multiple Logies, and accolades from the Film Critics Circle of Australia. His recent feature THE WAY, MY WAY was a box office success in Australia, reaffirming his enduring appeal. Haywood's career spans classics like AGAINST THE WIND, KISS OR KILL, and IN SEARCH OF ANNA, through to MCLEOD'S DAUGHTERS, WATER RATS, and THE PACIFIC. In BODY BLOW, he brings gravitas and quiet menace to Sampson Steele, a figure whose power and influence radiate far beyond Sydney's neon-lit streets.

Dominic McDonald (Duke Ironheart)

Dominic McDonald is a veteran of the Australian screen, known for his work on NEIGHBOURS, DROWN (as producer), and now BODY BLOW, where he plays the formidable Duke Ironheart. McDonald has been Dean Francis's collaborator for over 20 years-producing DROWN, acting in Francis's short films, and now anchoring BODY BLOW with quiet intensity. His long-standing creative partnership with Francis reflects a shared dedication to bold, uncompromising cinematic storytelling.

IMAGES

Request high-resolution images:
info@jjsplice.com

BODY BLOW



Tim Pocock as Aiden in BODY BLOW



Tom Rodgers as Cody (left) and Paul Capsis as Fat Frankie (right) in



Tom Rodgers as Cody in BODY BLOW

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Tim Pocock as Aiden in BODY BLOW



Sacha Horler as Steele in BODY BLOW



Tom Rodgers as Cody in BODY BLOW

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Paul Capsis as Fat Frankie in BODY BLOW



Sacha Horler as Steele in BODY BLOW



Tom Rodgers as Cody in BODY BLOW

**BODY
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**THANK YOU FOR
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