

WHO'S that GIRL?

NICOLE DA SILVA HAS A CUTS FOLLOWING OVERSEAS, NOW RUSSE FANS ARE CATCHING ON



SEEK THE INSPIRATIONAL PILOT WHO REACHED FOR THE SKY (GENERATION NEXT)

DRAMA QUEENS



MEGAN MILLER writes



It's the pioneering spirit that has made these women so successful in the industry. From their early days in the UK to their current success in the US, they have shown a determination to succeed in a male-dominated industry. Their stories are a testament to the power of passion and hard work.

DRAMA QUEENS

Meet the pioneering sisters thumbing their noses at traditional filmmaking channels in the hope of paving the way for others, MEGAN MILLER writes



It's like pleading with people to come to the biggest party you've ever had

SOPHIE and Dominique Mathison are sisters who want drama to follow them. Drama is the name of their debut feature film, an indie chamber made via a crowd-funding campaign and out of their own pockets. It's not in theaters yet, but it's a day-and-date model that means it's released online the same day it shows in cinemas.

The duo has self-distributed the film on Facebook, a platform that books film screenings with cinema and if enough people buy tickets the screening goes ahead. There are six confirmed screenings, including one in Melbourne at Taboo Kino in Collins St (for which tickets are still available). Dominique will host that screening, while Sophie will host one in Sydney.

"It's a way of getting indie film out there without having a huge cost to pay," Dominique, 28, says. "Usually a distributor would buy the film and take with the cinema and pay the screening runs, but as an independent filmmaker, there's not enough money in the coffers to do that."

"It's so exciting. It's like pleading with people to come to the biggest party you've ever had. Please RSVP. Please RSVP. It's exciting but nerve-racking."

Drama has been four years in the making for the London born, Newcastle-raised sisters. Sophie wrote, directed and starred in it, while Dominique produced it. It's the first feature for their production company Little Stars Shots and was filmed in Paris and London over six weeks in 2013 with a crew of 30. Because we're doing the job of an entire production company and juggling other work, it takes time to complete," says Dominique, a Brunelwick hair and make-up artist of 12 years, who's recently worked on TV shows including *Winters & Letters*, *Jack Jack*, *Winemart* and *The Doctor Blake Mysteries*.

Sophie, 28, who moved to Emmer in Sydney this year, graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts in 2008, worked in theatre for a few years, then dropped to London for an MA in acting for screen at London's Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. She started pursuing Drama as her masters thesis, inspired by her own heartbreak and strong friendship with a gay friend. She says acting, an aspiring actor in London down on her luck and reeling from a breakup who goes to stay with her friend, Alan (Dominique Mathison, Sophie's real life bestie) at the Paris apartment he shares with his partner, Philippe (François Visconti). When Alan's train goes, things get messy.

It's engaging, warm and witty, with plenty of poignant moments about relationships and careers. Dominique says the film celebrates "gay husbands", the savour of many an inner-city single girl. "It's a love letter to all our girls. Sophie's in a relationship now. For me single and it's a thing we always talk about. There's no stereotypes for women who are single, who are happy being single," she says. "It's about like you're looking for love, all the right places and sometimes you don't find it but often you've got a second you can rely on." It's a powerful love. "Without (my gay male friends) I wouldn't be the person that I am."

The cast also includes two long-time friends of the sisters, Nicole da Silva (*Wentworth*, *Doctor Doctor*) and Tom Wren (*Doctors* & *Lawson*), who donated their



acting skills to the project. A friend's parent's apartment in Paris was used as the setting for a variety of locations. "We cut the lowest bank for this," Dominique says. "There's a definite fixed economy." Drama cost \$700,000 to make, with only about \$50,000 raised through crowd-funding and Indiegogo.

The movie was self-funded. The sisters did not apply for government assistance. "It was difficult because we're first-time film makers," Dominique says. "You can't just give you the chance. We did it every application. There was no point. "Projects still in development for years. We needed it done. We wanted it as our calling card (for more work). "It's hard for the little guy to get. The arts are really struggling, but when someone puts their hand up and puts their hand in their pocket and goes, 'Let's do it,' that kind of entrepreneurial drive needs to be supported and encouraged."

It's worth other people to see that we've made a film and there's success and they go, 'Let's do it as well', rather than fall flat and have the industry go, 'You've got to do it our way.' It's important to say there's lots



Sister act: Sophie Mathison (top right) penned *Drama* as her master's thesis, teaming up with sister Dominique (bottom top) to get the film, set in Paris and London (bottom), to the big screen

MEAN PICTURE: CHRIS PHILLIPS

of different ways of making films and having their own and supported. Drama, which runs for 106 minutes, has screened at several film festivals, premiering in July last year at the East End Film Festival in London. It made its US debut in Portland before showing in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago and making its Aussie premiere at the Gold Coast Film Festival in March. It was also made with a quota of a minimum of 90 per cent females. Little Stars Shots' next project is a docudrama about the dating world of sugar daddies, other rich men who date much younger women. Dominique says it's "amazing working with her sister. Any girls? All the time" the laughs, "but there's no one else who knows my brain better than she does." "Sophie's the creative brain and in the sensible backbone. She's this ball of amazing, which I need to feel her sometimes."

Every day there's a fire you need to put out. I love what Sophie does. I love her brain and I think we've done something pretty great. Drama will be released at cinema and online on Thursday (5.50 download, via iTunes and Google Play), alltimecandor.com