

Press Kit

2 Mums and a Dad

TV documentary: Duration 51 minutes 22 seconds



Producer - Sally Ingleton
Director - Miranda Wills

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One Liner

Two's company, three's a crowd.

LOG LINE

When lesbian couple Fiona and Kellie meet Darren he seems like the perfect sperm donor to make their baby. But life gets complicated when he wants to be Dad.

ONE PARA SYNOPSIS

Fiona is 33 and ready to have a baby. But her partner, Kellie, is a woman and sperm isn't part of the equation. Fiona has a solution: a gay friend from work who passionately wants to be a dad. Fiona and Kellie want their child to have a father. It seems perfect...but is it? *2 Mums and a Dad* is the story of the rocky road of 3-way parenting.

WINNER DENDY AWARD BEST DOCUMENTARY 2007 SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

WINNER BEST DOCUMENTARY 2007 AUSTRALIAN TEACHERS OF MEDIA AWARDS

FINALIST BEST DOCUMENTARY HUMAN STORY AUSTRALIAN TEACHERS OF MEDIA AWARDS 2007

OFFICIAL SELECTION SAN FRANCISCO FRAMELINE 31 2007 LGBT FESTIVAL

OFFICIAL SELECTION ONE WORLD FESTIVAL PRAGUE

OFFICIAL SELECTION HONG KONG LGBT

OFFICIAL SELECTION QUEER SCREEN SYDNEY

OFFICIAL SELECTION FEAST FESTIVAL ADELAIDE

OFFICIAL SELECTION CANBERRA FILM FESTIVAL



SYNOPSIS

2 Mums and a Dad is the story of the rocky road of 3-way parenting, a unique exploration of the nature of family in today's complicated society, as well as an insightful resource for everyone concerned with issues regarding the raising of children such as access, parent's rights and family conflict.

Fiona is 33 and wants to have a baby. But her partner, Kellie, is a woman and sperm isn't handy. Fiona has a solution: an English gay guy from work wants to be a dad. Fiona and Kelly want their child to have a father. It seems perfect...but is it?

For Darren, the arrangement seems like a dream come true. With his parents in the UK, Darren will finally be a dad and have family in Australia. Kellie is skeptical. A baby is one thing but a man involved in her relationship – forever? Could he take off with the baby if anything happened to Fiona?

Unsure what being a parent really means - the three draw up a contract outlining how they will raise a child. All they have to do is get pregnant - without sex! Medical advice: a plastic syringe for the sperm, some contrived romance, and the three manage to self-inseminate.

With pregnancy well underway, the cracks in this unusual family begin to show. Arguments over colours of the baby's room are just the start. The "baby contract" unravels in an explosive confrontation. Could the three end up in court before the child even arrives? And will their own parents think of the baby as their grandchild??

They are entering uncharted legal territory as well. Kellie is not legally considered a parent, nor is Darren. In fact, the law does not recognize them as a family at all – what will happen if the whole thing falls apart?

Once baby Marley is born, 3 way parenting shifts up a gear. The baby lives with the girls, and Darren is allowed restricted visits. But without enough bonding time, Darren is heartbroken. Access rights are renegotiated with new Mum Fiona keeping a careful eye on every move Dad makes.

It's Darren's worst nightmare; he's fighting to see his son and feels Fiona has decided he isn't a good father. Did they just want him for his sperm? While the blood parents battle it out, Kellie is so entranced by the baby, now she wants one with Darren too.

Shot from the perspectives of Fiona, Kellie and Darren, *2 Mums and a Dad* will take the audience on a roller coaster ride from pregnancy to parenthood in a most unusual unit, while also tackling universal issues of relevance for anyone with a family, and isn't that all of us?

CHARACTERS

Fiona

Fiona has always wanted children, and has never seen the fact that she is a lesbian as in any way contradictory to this. Her daily life revolves around kids as a youth support worker. Fiona's felt the urge to have a baby before, but never so strongly as now.

Fiona is alternative, artistic and engaging. Her style is a radical combo of op shop bargains and edgy chic. She carries off a beret and facial piercing with flair. Her beliefs are a curious mix of traditional and alternative philosophies.

Fiona speaks candidly about her dreams of having a family. To her family is about warmth and openness. It's about doing things together.

She remembers growing up in conservative far north New South Wales with a mix of emotions. While she loves her mum deeply, the communication isn't easy. She has felt that being lesbian has marginalised her within her family, that the important events in her life are not celebrated as they would be if she were straight.

Could having a baby bring them around? Fiona feels the universe has provided a solution: a gay friend who also desperately wants a child. Together they are now pregnant.



Darren

Darren is 39 years old and a natural comedian. Originally from a small village in England, he met Fiona when they were both working as social workers with people with disabilities.

Flamboyant and flirtatious, Darren invariably takes the spotlight, but despite his ego has a heart of gold and an immense social conscience.

Darren has always wanted to be a father. But being gay has made this difficult. Despite years of trauma trying to have a baby with women who let him down or shut him out, he now feels he's hit the jackpot. Fiona and Kellie not only want to have a baby, they want him to be a dad and help raise the child. Highly emotional and sensitive, Darren tends to be over-enthusiastic and has already had his feelings hurt more than once as the girls attempt to set boundaries. Darren helped set up Gay Dads Victoria to support other gay men having families - now he feels he's the one that needs the support. The stage is set to see what happens once the baby arrives.

Kellie

Fiona met Kellie when they were both studying social work at university.

Kellie is practical and a born organiser. With her short hair and outrageous earrings, she's warm, down to earth and quick to laugh. She's candid about the challenges that a baby will bring.

For Kellie, having a family brings up a different set of issues: while she loves Fiona and is committed to having a family with her, Kellie is still studying and is concerned about balancing school, work and being able to financially support a new family. Unlike Fiona, she has only recently met Darren, and feels insecure about not being the birth mother. Since Australian law doesn't recognize her as a parent, she is worried about her rights if anything ever happened to Fiona. And now she also has to deal with a third person in her relationship – forever.

While the other two seem to be racing ahead, Kellie still has a lot of questions.

CHARACTER QUOTES

*We're redefining what a family unit is and it is foreign, even for us because we grew up in conventional families, but it's exciting to know that change can happen and is happening and it's about to happen for us. **Kellie***

*I've always loved children. I realised I was gay when I was 13. Probably three years ago, maybe four, I started thinking maybe I could have a baby with a couple. I want them to be mum and mum and for me to go in as dad, but for us to work as a team. **Darren***

*The thing that attracted me most to Darren was his passion for being a father, and it's funny, that could be what comes to bite you on the bum. **Fiona***

TALKING POINTS

Models for families in Australia

Is the Australian family in a state of profound flux? Evidence would certainly suggest so. What does this mean for our cultural identity and social mores? What happens when parents who don't live together have to share parenting and access? Does this affect how we bond with our children and vice versa?

Legal questions

What is the legal situation for same sex families with regard to custody, visiting rights etc? Many gay and lesbian parents would argue that they are being denied their basic human rights by the current family law system. Should the changes in modern families necessitate a rethink of our laws?

Religion

What are the religious implications of an increase in same sex and alternative families? How will people vehemently opposed to such unions on spiritual grounds react to their dramatic increase?

Alternative vs. mainstream

Is the notion of alternative families a black and white, 'wedge' issue? Are people either in favour or opposition?

Designer families

Many lesbians who use fertility clinics for insemination choose sperm based on the donor's profile. Kellie and Fiona chose their 'donor' carefully. Does this raise issues of social engineering and designer babies?

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



My initial film training came as a co-director/writer of natural history documentaries with the ABC Natural History Unit and Sydney-based independent producers. After working in this genre for several years, I became interested in making social documentaries. I am passionate about telling stories that rarely reach a wider audience, particularly concerning minority groups

and cultures. *2 Mums and a Dad* is my first film as sole director.

I have wanted to make a documentary about gay and lesbian culture for at least 10 years. For one thing, it is a part of Australian society that is underrepresented on television. Also because the current gay and lesbian baby boom is transforming the very nature of what an Australian family is, especially where the family unit involves three or more adults from conception.

I believe *2 Mums and a Dad* is the first Australian film to document two lesbians and a gay man having and raising a baby. It tells the story from both lesbian and gay perspectives and includes their extended families.

The idea for the film came from increasing mainstream interest in gay and lesbian families via newspaper articles and TV news. Gay and lesbian parenting arrangements can be extraordinarily complicated, especially without social and legal safety nets afforded more conventional families. I wanted to make a film that would investigate the issues, raise awareness and spark debate.

I completed this film over 2 years, with Sally Ingleton as my committed producer. I found the experience to be an incredible learning process as a first time director, enhancing my skills in working with talent and film crews. For much of the early stages of the project I was unable to afford a professional crew, so I bought my own camera and sound equipment and learnt to film with my partner doing sound. With the SBS presale in hand, the Australian Film Commission provided some Time Critical Funding just before the baby was born which enabled us to employ a professional

crew. The film was fully financed in late July 2006 by the Film Finance Corporation Australian and SBS.

With social and legal implications of these new family structures being debated by society, politicians and the courts, I hope this film will offer a timely insight into a unique aspect of contemporary Australian society.



Production Story

Jean Lizza in Conversation with director Miranda Wills

The main question of the film seems to be, what is family? Was that something that is important for you to achieve?

Definitely. In this era, family can mean so many different things. I wanted the film to raise that issue and get people thinking. It's important to realise that less than half of Australian families consist of mum, dad and the kids. Today we have single parent families, blended families, stepfamilies, and children born through surrogacy. The advent of modern technology, including IVF, allows people who would have never had children to have them. We also have increasing numbers of lesbians and gay men having babies via sperm donors or surrogacy. In a few cases, as shown in the film, lesbians and gay men are choosing to parent together and forming new, alternative forms of family that can include two mums, a dad, and three sets of grandparents. Families like Fiona, Kellie and Darren's are entering uncharted territory without the legal and social safety nets that conventional families automatically receive, but they do so because they desperately want to be parents, just like anyone else.

The film shows how the law isn't up to date with these kinds of families. How are Darren and Kellie more at risk than other parents?

Kellie is not legally considered a parent. As Leanne Kelly, the family lawyer featured in the film, puts it - the law is still struggling to come to terms with these new types of family. So the risks for people creating unconventional families are huge. Kellie

voices her fears in the film, like if anything ever happened to Fiona, would Darren get access and raise the baby on his own? It's frightening to think that you could be doing the primary parenting for a child, but because it's legally not yours, the child could be taken away.

The same concerns are true for Darren. Like Kellie, he's not legally considered to be a parent because Marley was conceived through artificial insemination. In the film you can really feel Darren's vulnerability and fears about Marley being taken away. Fortunately, Darren, Fiona and Kellie realise they must work through their issues for Marley's sake. Sadly, not everyone can and some cases have gone to court.

The highly constructed nature of the situation is fascinating, because it isn't how most people imagine having a family.

The fact that people will put themselves through such complicated arrangements to have a family shows how wanted and desired these children are. For lesbians and gay men the amount of preplanning is enormous. But the advantages for the children can also be huge, because the child can have 3 or 4 parents who adore them, plus 3 or 4 sets of grandparents.

This story could be happening anywhere, perhaps just next door. I wanted the film to normalise what may seem alien to some people, when in fact, it's just a part of life. There may be people out there who have never known a gay or a lesbian person. Hopefully, this film will allow people to understand that it's not an 'us' versus 'them' situation, and that having a baby is a universal story that can bring people together. If the film can do that, then I think that is a powerful thing to have achieved.

How did you go about finding these characters?

I was aware that people were creating families in this way, especially in the gay and lesbian communities. While most lesbians want their child to know the sperm donor, few want the donor to be an active dad. I was interested in a three or four-way parenting scenario because it really revolutionises the traditional 2 parent model. I started frequenting gay and lesbian parenting groups and met Darren. I knew immediately he'd be fabulous for the film because he is so engaging and a natural storyteller. But the lesbian couple he was trying to have a baby with weren't interested in being filmed. I met Darren again one year later when he was trying with a new couple who might be interested in being in the film. He was the convener of Gay Dads Victoria and keen to get the message out there. I met Fiona and she said yes straight away. I don't think any of us realised what a rollercoaster ride the journey would be!

Were there a lot of trust issues involved? Did you have to build a rapport with them or where they very forth giving from the beginning?

Establishing trust is critical to making a documentary; you have to be able to strike a chord with the people you're filming. Darren was always very keen to be involved, and my partner and I had a natural rapport with Fiona and Kellie. However, as filming progressed and tensions started to rise between the three of them, maintaining trust became more challenging. Access is one of the key issues in the film, simply because it symbolizes how much they all want this child. I had to work

very hard to make sure that I was as neutral as I could be within that complicated triangle. One of the things I said from the beginning was that I wouldn't disclose information from interviews so they could feel safe to confide in me. Fortunately, they ended up being so open with each other that by the time they saw the finished film they had already discussed those issues.

The biological urge to have a child really united Fiona and Darren at the start of the film, but it was those same passions that kept them apart later on. It was a surprise twist when Kellie became the mediator and held the whole thing together. If she hadn't, I don't know where they would've ended up. Now they're all working together and it's not always easy, but they want to make it work for Marley's sake.

Opponents of these sorts of families such as religious groups talk about the lack of a father figure and how that is going to be detrimental for the child, yet studies of lesbian parent couples show that at least 80% are in favour of the child having some sort of relationship with the father, which is contrary to what most people think.

One of the reasons I wanted to make this film was to represent these sorts of families and how they work to a wider audience. Most people can relate to the joys and challenges of parenting, and I hope that allows an audience to transcend what some would see as a heterosexual/ homosexual divide. And as for the idea that children raised in these families are disadvantaged, international studies show that kids in lesbian parented families are just as well adjusted as any other kids. I think a film like this is really important for generating awareness, especially in a time of very conservative government in which only conventional nuclear families are recognised.

BACKGROUND NOTES



What is a family?

This film will make us question what an Australian family is in the 21st Century and our notions of what constitutes a mum and a dad. It gives an insight into the complexities of modern parenting in a society where less than half of all Australian families consist of mum, dad and the kids; and increasing numbers of women and men, including gays and

lesbians, are seeking alternate routes to parenthood, such as surrogacy, sperm donors and IVF.

In Australia today, families are made up of blended families, co-parents, shared households and sole parents, and ever-increasing variations. Gay and lesbian families are no less diverse.

Some gay men and lesbians choose to have families together. In a few cases, the known donor is an active parent and the family can end up with two mums and a dad (as in the film) or even have four parents.

The Australian Gay and Lesbian Community

It is difficult to ascertain the exact size of the gay and lesbian community in Australia because the national census is only just beginning to include same-sex couples in its data collection and not all gays and lesbians wish to reveal their sexual orientation. All figures must therefore be viewed as estimates that are likely to be lower than real numbers.

The 2001 ABS census states that there were 9840 gay couples and 8312 lesbian couples living together. Of these 20% of the lesbian couples had a dependant child/children. Less than 5% of gay couples had a dependant child/children.

How many gay and lesbian families are there?

There are now a significant number of lesbian parented families in North America, Western Europe and Australia. Estimates in the US range between one to five million lesbian mothers (Gartrell et al 1996) parenting more than six million children (Patterson 1992).

McNair (2000) reports that of an estimated 400,000 women who are lesbian, more than 88,000 currently have children.

The most common family structure is for a lesbian couple to be the primary parents having conceived via a known or unknown sperm donor. The donor does not usually take on parental responsibility but may be involved in some way in the child's life.

The type of family structure featured in the documentary where the donor becomes an active dad is less common. The exact number of families involving two mums and a dad who parent together is not known.

Are there adverse affects for children raised in lesbian families?

Over the last two decades, international studies of lesbian families have not found that children are disadvantaged compared with traditional families. In fact, the studies find that children from lesbian families are as emotionally and socially well adjusted as their peers, regardless of whether or not an active male parent was involved.

For example:

- There are no differences in terms of their sexual identity
- Personality, intelligence, self-esteem and moral judgment are the same as their peers
- Relationships with peers and adults of either sex are the same
- Relationships with parents are the same

It has been found that children's psychological development is influenced more by family process (such as conflict between parents) than by family structure (such as the number of parents or their sexual orientation).

How do gays and lesbians have children?

Throughout history there have always been gay and lesbian parents, many of whom conceived their children from previous heterosexual relationships or marriages.

Today, greater acceptance of gay and lesbian lifestyles and increasing access to advances in reproductive technology mean that more gays and lesbians are choosing to have their babies within their same-sex relationship. Across the western world there is a gay and lesbian baby boom.

Insemination is usually achieved via a sperm clinic, IVF, or done at home where the man ejaculates into a jar. The woman then draws up the sperm using a needle-less syringe and inseminates herself when she is ovulating.

For lesbians wanting sperm there are three options:

1. Known sperm donor.

Many lesbians want their child to know who their father is. The known donor can be a friend, acquaintance or relative of the woman's partner. While most lesbians prefer to be the primary parents, many want the donor to play some part in their child's life. This can take forms such as an uncle role, or having some kind of access arrangement. It is less common for lesbians to agree to the donor being an active dad and committing to a three-way parenting arrangement (as in the case of Darren, Kellie and Fiona).

2. Anonymous sperm donor.

Available at sperm clinics. Some lesbians prefer this option to clearly establish their parenting rights (men who donate sperm at a fertility clinic do not have any rights or parenting responsibilities).

3. Sex with a man.

Few lesbians choose this option because of their sexual identity as well as possible health risks (i.e., in the case of a one night stand).

For gay men wanting to become fathers there are two options:

1. Surrogacy

Australian gay men who choose to use a surrogate mostly use clinics in the USA that are specifically set up for these types of arrangements. The gay man donates his sperm, and chooses an egg donor and a surrogate from profiles provided by the company. He then travels to the US to pick up his baby once it is born. This option ensures the gay man or couple are the parent(s) of the child (egg donors and surrogates do not have legal parenting responsibilities). However, this option is expensive, costing up to \$30,000.

2. Make an arrangement with a woman who wants to be a mother.

This can be a single woman, often a lesbian or a lesbian couple. It may be someone the man knows well, an acquaintance, or someone he has met through advertising or a gay and lesbian-parenting group. The gay man must then negotiate the amount of involvement he hopes to have.

What is a parenting agreement?

A parenting agreement is a document drawn up by prospective parents (in the film, Fiona, Kellie and Darren) that outlines their intentions as to how they will conceive

and raise a child. It is not a legal contract (although it may be referred to as such) and is not legally binding in the Family Court, although it can be used as evidence of intention. Its main purpose is to promote discussion and help alleviate disputes.

What is a primary parent/carer?

In the film, Fiona and Kellie are the primary parents or carers of the baby, meaning that the child lives with them and they take on the day-to-day parenting responsibilities. Darren is an active parent in the sense that he has regular access, contributes emotionally and is involved in major decisions.

What is the birth mother called?

In the film, Fiona is the birth mother, meaning that she gave birth to the child. Other terms include mother, biological mother or blood parent.

What is the non-birth mother called?

In the film, Kellie is the non-birth mother, meaning that she did not give birth to the child. Other terms include non-biological mother, non-birth mother, and co-mother or non-blood parent.

What is the known donor called?

Although names do not necessarily imply a legal definition, they can vary depending on the role and relationship within the family, and often change over time. Examples include dad, donor, sperm donor, uncle, father, and co-parent.

What are the legal and social implications for gay and lesbian families?

Lesbian and gay families are not recognised by Commonwealth legislation. Without the legal and social safety nets that other families automatically receive, lesbian and gay families are at greater risk in a variety of ways. For example:

Members of a same sex couple cannot both be legally recognised as parents. This means the non-biological parent (such as Kellie in the film) is not recognised by Australian law as a parent even though she/he may be the main carer of the child.

A man who becomes a father via donor insemination (e.g. Darren) is also not legally considered to be a parent.

To help combat these problems, non-birth mothers and donor fathers can take out Parenting Orders as 'persons having an interest in the care, welfare and development of the child' after the baby is born.

Furthermore, parenting agreements (as featured in the film) are not legally binding. Disputes between gay men and lesbians over access to children they have created has seen several families in court setting precedents. As Leanne Kelly (the lawyer featured in the film) puts it, the law is not up-to-date with modern concepts of family.

Should the law recognize gay families?

There are numerous examples of social, legal and financial discrimination against same sex families. Changing the law would go some way towards alleviating this. For further information, the following websites are useful:

About the Production Company

Australian company **Singing Nomads Productions** has produced award-winning programs for ABCTV, SBSTV, BBC, Channel 4, NHK Japan, and Discovery Channel.

Producer, Sally Ingleton

Sally Ingleton has a proven track record in Australia and internationally selling programs to all major territories. She specialises in intimate stories about people from other cultures. Recent titles have ventured into science, archaeology, history and environment storytelling. Her credits include *Welcome 2 My Deaf World* (SBS 2005) about two deaf teenagers on the verge of leaving school. It was nominated for Best Documentary AFI and ATOM Awards 2006. In 2002 Sally produced and directed *Muddy Waters: Life and Death on the Great Barrier Reef* 2002 (SBS/Film Australia) about how land based pollution is killing the world's largest coral reef. This won several international awards including Best Conservation and Environment Film 2003 Japanese Wildlife Film Festival, Winner Jury Prize Earth Vision Festival Tokyo 2004. Other titles have included *Painting Country* 2000 HDTV (NHK/SBS) about a desert journey for senior Aboriginal artists; *Mao's New Suit* 1997 (Channel 4/SBS) about two fashion designers in China (nominated Best Doco Dendy Awards & winner of several international awards) and *The Tenth Dancer* 1993 (ABC/BBC) about rebuilding the Cambodian Ballet after Pol Pot. This film sold all over the world and won several international awards.

In 2001 she line produced a feature film *The Land has Eyes* on the remote Fijian Island of Rotuma, for US Te Maka Productions, which premiered at Sundance 2004.

Director / Writer, Miranda Wills

Miranda Wills is an upcoming director who initially gained her experience writing and directing wildlife documentaries. Her films have received numerous international awards including a Finalist Newcomer Award at the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival. Her move into social documentaries reflects her passion to tell stories about unusual subcultures and minority groups. Miranda directed *Little Killers* in 1999 for Discovery and Canal Plus; *Animal Weapons* in 1998 for Discovery, Telcast, Channel 7, TV-3 NZ, TV2 Denmark and *King Koala* in 1996 for NHK, National Geographic, ABCTV, Canal Plus. This told the unexpected story of wild koalas and the threats to their survival. It won the Environmental Prize 1997 Albert Wildlife Film Festival, Winner Gold Camera Award 1997 USA Film and Video Awards, Merit Award for Compelling Story 1998 International Wildlife Film Festival, Finalist Newcomer Award 1997 Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival.

Cinematographer, Jenni Meaney

Jenni Meaney is one of Melbourne's most experienced documentary cinematographers. Her credits include *two men and a Baby* (SBS), *Lonely Boy Richard* (ABC), *Grey Nomads* (ABC), *Aeroplane Dance* (ABC) and Ingleton's *The Tenth Dancer* (ABC). Prior to going freelance Jenni worked at the ABC on such programs as *4 Corners* for many years. Jenni has also worked extensively in drama including shooting the ABC comedy series *The Games*. She was nominated for best Achievement in Cinematography at the 2005 AFI Awards.

Cinematographer, Peter Zakharov

Peter Zakharov began his working career as a news cameraman in the News Dept. at Channel Seven Melbourne. Since going freelance in 1983, he has been involved in innumerable productions both documentary and drama, from low budget video to 35mm feature films. In 1987 Peter shared a Gold Award for Cinematography from the Australian Cinematographer's Society for his work on the feature *In Too Deep* directed by John Tatoulis. His recent projects include cinematography on the feature *Takeaway* and the documentary series *The Shearers* for the ABC.

Editor, Mark Atkin

Mark Atkin has edited several documentary projects over the past few years. His credits include: *Just Punishment (ABC)*, *Do Not Resuscitate (SBS)*, *Passport to Parenthood (SBS)*, *John Safran Vs God* 8 part series, *Sudden Death*, *Echoland*, *Island Life* series and *Mirror to the People* about the Governor General William Deane.

Composer, Burkhard Dallwitz

Burkhard is one of Australia's most respected composers who has worked across all genres. He is most noted for his Golden Globe for Best Original Score for Peter Weir's *The Truman Show*. In 2001 he won the APRA Award for Best Television Theme for Sydney Olympics 2000. Music for other titles includes *The Caterpillar Wish* and *Crashburn*.

Credit List

Director-Miranda Wills

Producer-Sally Ingleton

Camera-Jenni Meaney, Peter Zakharov

Editor-Mark Atkin ASE

Original Music- Burkhard Dallwitz

Post Production Sound-Soundwaves

Sound editor -Erin McKimm

Sound mixer -Andrew Mc Grath

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