

## COAST DUO BACK TO FILM ON HOME TURF

CRYSTAL FOX

A MOTHER and daughter duo who now call Hollywood home returned to their roots on the Gold Coast to shoot a new feature film.

Similar to *The Kissing Booth* and *Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants*, director Chrys Phillips and producer Mikaela Phillips said Madison and the Happiness Jar followed a young girl on her self-empowerment journey.

The local pair packed up their life in 2012 and moved to Los Angeles when Mikaela was 16 so mother Chrys could chase her dreams in the film industry.

While they originally intended to film *Madison and the Happiness Jar* in the US, Covid-19 prompted them to create the feel-good flick on home turf.

"As a storyteller, I felt it was important to create a film that isn't always focused on addiction, depression or darker issues, but on happier, lighter and motivating themes where the characters can achieve self-fulfilment and enlightened life choices," Chrys said.

"With the industry shut down overseas and still thriving on home soil with international productions such as *Elvis* filming, it became clear this film could quite easily and beautifully be shot on home soil."

The romantic drama for young adults consists of four lead characters played by a majority Gold Coast cast.

Mikaela said it was shot and post-production finished within six months.

"We're not only proud of the cast and crew coming together to make this, but the chance to showcase to women of any industry, that if you can't find the opportunity, you can go out there and create it for yourself," she said.



Madison and the Happiness Jar team (from left) producer Mikaela Phillips, writer/director Chrys Phillips and actors Jacob Turner and James Mana. Picture Glenn Hampson

Gold Coaster and ex-Army veteran Jacob Turner, 31, landed one of the leads, following roles in *Reef Break*, *Black Site* and *In Like Flynn*.

He said he threw caution to the wind five years ago when he turned to acting.

"It was something I always wanted to pursue but I saw it like winning the lottery," Mr Turner said.

"Then after my experiences in the army domestically and in Afghanistan I came to the realisation that life is too short to not go after what you want."

Brisbane actor Isabella Hayes, 21, scored another of the lead roles - her first in a feature film.

"When I found out I got the role of Kenna I was in the

audition room," she said.

"I remember squealing once I sat back in the car and no one could hear me.

"It was easy for me to jump in as her because I didn't feel like I was straying too far away from my own personality."

*Madison and the Happiness Jar* will be available on Amazon Prime and Apple TV later this month.