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Gorokan NDIS participant, Nathan Parker said he was blown away to learn music legend, Peter Gabriel watched his latest performance – a short film, titled Remote, capturing people with disability’s thoughts and feelings around the 2020-21 bushfires, COVID and subsequent lockdowns – and he loved what he saw.

The music legend wrote an email congratulating the 33 year-old, who has Sotos syndrome, and the entire Options Theatre Company ensemble (an Options Disability Support initiative), after he provided exclusive rights to the company to use his song “Don’t Give Up” as a feature track to Remote.

“Peter also said he really enjoyed watching Remote; it was full of cool ideas and he thought we all did such a great job,” Nathan said. “We were all blown away.

“To have someone as talented and as famous as Peter Gabriel provide such great feedback really makes all the hard work we all put in rewarding and worthwhile, and it goes to show actors with disability can hold their own and produce high-quality work.”

Wanting to appear on stage and in movies since he was a small boy, fascinated at how it all transpired, Nathan used his NDIS funding for support to attend Options Theatre Company, as he works towards his main goal, to become a professional actor.

Nathan and the Options ensemble were also excited Remote also featured in the Australian National Museum’s MOMENTOUS Exhibition, where it was highly commended.

Artistic Director, Stuart Smith said Nathan has been an ensemble member for 10 years, and the talented singer and performer has several shows under his belt and even takes the time to mentor new students.

“Everyone loves Nathan,” he said. “He’s a much loved personality and group mentor. He’s had heaps of experience with us. He’s really skilled so everyone always wants him to take the lead, but Nathan always wants everybody else to have a go.

“While others do get a go, when it comes to work we’re commissioned to do, you need skilled people; you’ve got to be good; you’ve got to show you can do it, and that’s why the entire company voted for Nathan to take the lead in Remote, but we do work collaboratively on everything we do, and the entire ensemble was involved in writing, producing, acting and filming it.

“Remote is a thought provoking piece and we’re all very proud of it,” Stuart said. Not only is Nathan well on the way to a professional acting career, he’s also used his NDIS Supported

Independent Living (SIL) funding to move out of home.

“Life’s pretty good. I moved out of home, and now I’m living with a housemate, and we’ve got a team of support workers who help us with daily living tasks, like shopping, cooking, preparing meals and cleaning,” he said.

“Mum and dad were a bit sad when I moved out, but they’ve adjusted and they’re really happy for me.”

Asked where he sees himself in five years, Nathan said, “I just want to get my skills up as much as I can and get my face out there. I’d love to be on TV or in a movie.

“A few ensemble members appeared on the ABC show, Love On The Spectrum, and we’re going to start filming a pilot soon so I hope it will lead to some bigger opportunities.”

Nathan and Stuart are strong advocates for people with disability, saying the entertainment industry worldwide needs to be more inclusive and take actors with disability seriously.

“Actors with disability rarely get a chance to become established actors. They’re often overlooked. People seem to have low expectations around their abilities,” Stuart said.

“That attitude is wrong. There are so many great actors with disability, and it deprives audiences of a realistic portrayal of how people with disability really are.

“Listening and including people with disabilities voices, and casting actors with disability, is the first step to creating an inclusive society.

“We need to normalise disability and change the prehistoric way many people think about it, and I’m sure Nathan will be one to watch, helping to lead the way,” he said.

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