

Best Mate

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. MM BEACH - DAWN

SUPER: 1986, MM BEACH, PORT KEMBLA - AUSTRALIA

Scenic view of MM beach with white sands. A surfer past the breakers cuts a lonely figure. The sun is barely above the horizon. Two rusty bulk carriers are a few miles offshore and a small rocky island to the south are the backdrop.

A late sixties model station wagon with roof racks sits alone in the parking lot overlooking the beach. A rusty old sedan of the same vintage with a surfboard on top rolls in.

Mark Henderson - HENDO (30s) sits on his board just past the breakers. Hendo is fit and tanned with surf bleached hair.

JOEL Latham paddles out past the breakers towards Hendo. Behind him, beyond the white sands, are various rusty mills, warehouses, stacks spewing out smog, stockpiles of raw material and overhead rusty pipes. The local steelworks.

Joel paddles up alongside Hendo and sits on his board only yards away. Joel (20s) is fit, handsome with permed surfer dude hair, blue eyes, perfect teeth and a killer smile.

Hendo playfully splashes water at Joel.

HENDO

Shooh! Shooh!

Joel returns the friendly splashes towards Hendo.

JOEL

No way, it's a free country!

HENDO

Whole beach to ourselves and you gotta park it a few feet away.

JOEL

Well you can move if you like.

HENDO

Uh uh. You don't get to boss me around out here. I was here first.

JOEL

Well I'm not moving.

A huge swell heads towards them. It forms into a great wave. The two stare at each other - eye to eye - then back at the wave. They both paddle madly towards the shore.

Hendo and Joel catch the wave. In no time they are on their feet. They're neck and neck. The perfect wave forms into an awesome curl. The two continue their ride inside the curl.

Joel cuts in front of Hendo, forcing him to pull up. Hendo ejects straight up out of the curl and is airborne for a few seconds. He lands hard and well behind the perfect wave.

EXT. MM BEACH PARKING LOT - DAWN

Joel straps his board on the roof racks of his sedan. Hendo arrives with his board under his arm. He looks pissed.

HENDO

You mongrel! You cut me off!

Joel quickly gets into his sedan, winds down the window.

JOEL

You snooze you lose. See yah at work boofhead.

Joel drives out of the parking lot with a huge grin. Hendo shakes his head. A smile slowly breaks out over his face.

INT. ELECTRICIAN'S COMPOUND - DAY

A compound has three workbenches with vices. One wall has several lockers. Another wall has a corkboard with flyers.

The compound has a dozen electricians and apprentices, all dressed in navy blue long sleeve shirt and pants workwear. Everyone wears bright orange earmuffs loose around the neck.

TUBBY(40s) very fat sticks a flyer on the corkboard. KASTIE (50s) bald and BLUEY (40s) redhead with freckles looks on.

INSERT: Flyer reads "ELECTRICIAN'S END OF YEAR SMOKO". On the flyer is a picture of a blonde sleazy stripper.

Hendo, also in navy blue workwear, checks out the flyer.

TUBBY

Comin' to the Smoko Hendo? It's on next week.

HENDO

Not sure. Probably.

TUBBY

You gotta come mate. All the shift sparkies from the Five Stand Mill and Paint line are coming. It'll be a good night. Even got a stripper.

HENDO

Hmmmmmm. She looks a bit long in the tooth mate.

TUBBY

Listen to mister choosy boys. You still goin' out with that hot brunette with legs up to her neck?

HENDO

Jenny? Naah, she wanted to settle down. I think she's a Mum now.

TUBBY

Told yah boys, Hendo's an 'A one' shagger. Still playin' the field ay?

HENDO

Something like that.

Joel enters wearing a white safety helmet, light blue long sleeve shirt and dark blue pants. He holds an A4 sheet.

TUBBY

Look who's here. Boy wonder!

Kastie and Bluey chuckle at this comment.

Joel pins the A4 sheet to the corkboard and stands back.

JOEL

Work roster's up. Read em n weep.

Tubby and his pals and the rest of the crew gather around.

TUBBY

The Pickle lines! Not again! How come me and the boys always have to work in all that grease and shit?

JOEL

Next cable run along MM beach you're on top of my list Tubby.

The crew chuckle. Tubby looks pissed.

JOEL

Remember guys, tag off anything you're working on back at the breaker and always always always--

WHOLE CREW

(some roll their eyes)

BE SAFE!

INT. ON TOP OF A LARGE OVERHEAD CRANE - WAREHOUSE - DAY

A large overhead crane spans the width of a huge warehouse seventy feet above the ground. It has a driver's cabin and a large electro magnet for picking up large steel coils.

Hendo works on a small control panel, positioned near the centre of the crane. He is busy cleaning breaker contacts. The floor far below's covered in shiny coils of sheet steel.

Joel slowly steps aboard the crane from a side walkway. He holds on tight to a hand rail, slowly makes his way to Hendo.

HENDO
Scared of heights?

JOEL
I'm scared of heights, you suck at surfing. Hey we're even.

HENDO
So now you're Tom Carroll.

JOEL
Surf Pro? No way. My big dream was to be a field engineer. Instead they made me a Maintenance Foreman. Where did it all go wrong?

HENDO
You should-a graduated with honors.

JOEL
Anything more than a pass is a waste of effort.

HENDO
Spoken like a true engineer. So you're coming to the pub tonight?

JOEL
Eight right? I'm there.

Joel looks down, feels giddy. He grabs on tight to a railing.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Well I'm off. Bye.

Joel cautiously leaves. Hendo chuckles and resumes his work.

INT. DAYSHIFT ELECTRICIAN'S LUNCHROOM - DAY

A long skinny lunchroom with a dozen tables. Young rowdy apprentices occupy a few tables one end of the room.

A table near the middle sits Tubby, Kastie and Bluey. All three roar with laughter. At the table's far end - away from the three - sits Hendo reading a paper and eating a pie.

TUBBY

Hey fellas. What's a poof's motto?
Never leave your friend's 'behind'.

Tubby and his mate's roar with laughter. Hendo reads the paper unperturbed. Tubby notice's Hendo not laughing.

TUBBY (CONT'D)

What's your problem Hendo? You're
not a poof lover are you?

HENDO

No but my boyfriend is.

Tubby's friends chuckle but Tubby looks pissed.

TUBBY

So are you a fuckin' poof Hendo?

HENDO

Called a joke, just like yours.
Only difference, mine was funny.

TUBBY

That's a relief cause if we found
one of them degenerates in our
midst, well we'd weed him out quick
smart. Right fellas?

Tubby's friends nod and grunt the affirmative. Hendo returns to reading the paper. He's quiet, seems a little sad.

INT. LOCAL PUB - NIGHT

Tubby, Kastie and Bluey sit at a table middle of a semi crowded pub. They all look half drunk drinking schooners of beer. All three have their eyes locked on the bar.

At the bar are Hendo and Joel, both are loud and very drunk. Nearby are two pretty girls (20s) eyeing off the two.

TUBBY

Life ain't fair. Look at them two
wax heads. They're chick magnets.

KASTIE

Ahh to be young and carefree again.

TUBBY

Even when I was young I got nothin'.

Joel staggers over to a jukebox, puts in a coin and selects a song. Dire Strait's 'Money for Nothing' plays. Joel plays air drums, air guitar and dances on his own without a care. One of the pretty girls joins him. They groove to the music.

The other pretty girl drags Hendo from the bar and towards Joel and her friend. The four dance together hamming it up.

Tubby looks upon the two with intense jealousy.

Clock on the wall spins around from ten o'clock to midnight.

The pub is almost empty. Tubby and his friends are still seated. Hendo approaches Tubby's table half drunk.

HENDO

You fellas seen Joel?

TUBBY

Haven't seen him for hours.

HENDO

Just hope he didn't drive home.
Man he was wasted.

Hendo walks off looking for Joel.

EXT. PUB PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Tubby, Kastie and Bluey all stagger towards an old rusty sedan. Tubby unlocks the car and his friends pile in.

INTERCUT INT. TUBBY'S SEDAN AND EXT. PUB PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Tubby checks his pockets.

TUBBY

Now where are those keys?

Walking in the lot arm in arm is a well groomed guy (20s) - blonde hair and a dark mustache and beard - and Joel. The pair stop in front of Tubby's car for a long passionate kiss.

Tubby is in shock. He's speechless and his jaw has dropped.

EXT. FACTORY PARKING LOT - DAY

Hendo's station wagon parks in the lot. Joel's sedan pulls up alongside. They both exit their vehicles at the same time.

HENDO

What happened to you last night?
Must have been wasted cause you
even missed your morning surf.

JOEL
Can't remember. It was all a blur.

The two head towards a walkway in the direction of the mill.

INT. ELECTRICIAN'S COMPOUND - DAY

Tubby has most of the apprentices and tradesmen around him, listening to his every word. Kastie and Bluey stand nearby.

TUBBY
We saw him clear as day. It was him
alright. Made us all sick.

Tradesmen and apprentices shake their heads in disgust.
Hendo walks in and makes a bee line for Tubby's mob.

HENDO
What's goin' on?

TUBBY
Talking about boy wonder.

HENDO
Who? Joel?

HENDO
Yeah, your best mate. He's a
bloody poofter!

HENDO
Bullshit.

INT. STEEL MILL - ADJACENT SHEET STEEL PROCESS LINE - DAY

Joel walks briskly between yellow lines, an A4 sheet in one hand. He walks past a noisy process line, a large coiler coils up a shiny coil of sheet steel.

Joel walks past several coils of sheet steel stored in rows. He sees something written in chalk on the path ahead.

On the path is written "JOEL LATHAM SUCKS DICK". Joel is stunned. He uses his safety boot and rubs out his name.

INT. ELECTRICIAN'S COMPOUND - DAY

Joel enters the compound, he looks upset. The crowd is still around Tubby. Everyone stares hard at Joel. Joel's stunned to find all eyes on him. He posts the A4 sheet.

JOEL
There's the list. So if anyone has
anything they wanna say, speak up.

The mob look on with contempt. Hendo stares at the floor.

JOEL
Get to work.

Joel turns to leave. He is almost out of the compound.

TUBBY
(mumbles)
Cock sucker.

Joel spins around to find all eyes except Hendo still on him. Hendo looks down. The mob look on with contempt. Joel stares at the angry mob and then turns and leaves.

TUBBY (CONT'D)
Okay boys. Here's the plan. We're
gunna make this queer's life hell.
No way I'm workin' for a poofter.

The mob grunt and nod their approval. The mob slowly disperses leaving Hendo alone. He looks close to tears.

EXT. MM BEACH - DAWN

Hendo's station wagon sits alone in the parking lot overlooking MM beach. Joel's old sedan with a surfboard on top rolls into the parking lot.

Hendo sits alone on his board just past the breakers. He looks to be deep in thought.

Joel paddles past the breakers. He gives Hendo a huge wave.

JOEL
Hendo! Wait up!

Hendo awakes from his thoughts and notices Joel approaching. He looks behind him. A reasonable swell is forming into a decent wave. Hendo madly paddles and catches the wave. Joel watches Hendo ride past him. He seems confused.

EXT. MM BEACH PARKING LOT - DAWN

Hendo hurries to strap his board to his roof racks.

Joel races up the beach. He drops his board and sprints.

Hendo is behind the wheel, he's putting on his seatbelt when Joel arrives at his window out of breath.

JOEL
Man, what's goin' on? Why are you
avoiding me?

HENDO
Is it true Joel? Is it true what
they're sayin'?

JOEL
What are you talking about?

HENDO
That you were pashing off some guy
in the car park. Are you gay Joel?

Joel looks stunned.

JOEL
Hey man, I consider you a mate,
actually my best mate. What
difference would it make if I--

HENDO
Just answer the question. Are you?

JOEL
Yeah I am but I don't see how that
makes any difference.

HENDO
I don't know who you are anymore.

Hendo drives out of the parking lot. Tears are in his eyes.
View from the rear view mirror shows Joel a lonely figure.

INT. STEEL MILL - DAY

Joel walks briskly between the yellow lines. He walks past
several shiny steel coils. Ahead on a post is a hand written
sign - "JOEL LATHAM SUCKS DICK". He rips down the sign. He's
stunned to see another dozen signs on the path ahead.

INT. HENDO'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Hendo stares at the mirror, his eyes red from crying. Hendo
splashes water in his face and uses a towel. He stares back
at the mirror and punches it frustrated. The mirror shatters.

EXT. TRAFFIC LIGHTS OUTSIDE STEEL MILL - DAY

Joel's car queues at traffic lights. He waits to turn.

INTERCUT EXT. TRAFFIC LIGHTS AND INT. JOEL'S CAR - DAY

Joel waits at the lights to turn into the mill. He looks up
at an overhead walkway bridge. A banner reads "JOEL LATHAM
SUCKS DICK". Joel pulls his car out from the queue.

Cars and trucks honk as Joel cuts across four lanes of a busy highway. He parks at a bus stop across the road.

INTERCUT EXT. TRAFFIC LIGHTS AND INT. HENDO'S CAR - DAY

Hendo waits at the lights. He looks up to see Joel struggle with the banner's removal. Cars honk as they pass by.

Joel looks emotionally drained as he takes the banner down.

The turn arrow turns green. Hendo looks sad as he drives off.

INT. ON TOP OF A LARGE OVERHEAD CRANE - WAREHOUSE - DAY

Hendo works on the small control panel on the overhead crane. He notices Joel walking alone far below.

Joel cuts a lonely figure as he walks between yellow lines.

Hendo sighs and returns to working on the control panel.

EXT. FACTORY PARKING LOT - DAY

Cars hurry out of the parking lot. Joel looks disheartened as he trudges towards his car. He's stunned at what he sees.

On the hood, drawn with a sharpie, is a huge dick and balls and the words "I suck dick". Standing nearby are three apprentices smoking. They chuckle at Joel's reaction.

JOEL

Did you see who done this?

One of the apprentices shrugs and they all laugh.

Hendo walks to the parking lot as Joel drives past. He notices the graffiti on the hood and Joel wiping away tears. Hendo sighs as he sees Joel drive away.

INT. SMALL RUN DOWN HALL - NIGHT

Three long tables fill an old hall. Two of the three tables are full with drunk rowdy electricians dressed smart casual. Outside table is full of apprentices. Middle table is full with tradesmen such as Tubby. Everyone jeers at the stage.

On stage is TRIXIE (40s) a stripper gone to seed. She's half naked still with a bra top on. Behind her is a banner that reads "END OF YEAR SMOKO". She screams into a mic.

TRIXIE

You're all losers with tiny dicks!
(gestures with pinky)
And I'm not showin' yah me tits!

BLUEY

Tubby's got better tits than you!

Tubby stands, shows all his man tits. Everyone cracks up.

Trixie leaves in a huff. Everyone jeers as she leaves. As Trixie exits, in enters Joel and Hendo. The mob go quiet.

TUBBY

What the fuck is he doin' here?

HENDO

I invited him.

Joel sits down at the empty table. All angry eyes are on him. Hendo proceeds to the stage. He takes hold of the mic.

HENDO

A week ago we all got fired up when we discovered Joel was gay. And no one was more angry than me.

Hendo has the audience's attention, they hang on every word.

HENDO (CONT'D)

Problem was I couldn't work out why. I always thought maybe he was gay so that wasn't the problem. But I finally realized why.

(beat)

I was jealous--

TUBBY

Sit down! Makin' a fool of yerself!

The rest of the crowd shoosh Tubby to be quiet.

HENDO

I was jealous cause I wished he had taken me home that night instead.

(takes a deep breath)

Yeah see. I'm gay too.

Everyone looks stunned. Some mutter amongst themselves.

HENDO (CONT'D)

It's somethin' I've been running away from till now and I want to say - Joel, I'm sorry. I care about you more than life itself. In my heart you're my soul mate. My best mate. And I abandoned you in the worst week of your life. Can you find it in your heart to forgive me?

Joel wipes away tears. He gives a thumbs up and nods.

HENDO (CONT'D)

So if any of you fellas want to
have a beer or two with a couple of
poofs, we're sitting over there.

You can hear a pin drop as Hendo takes a seat near Joel. There's dead silence as the two friends sit and hug. The applause starts off slow and builds to a deafening roar.

Apprentices, tradesmen, even Kastie and Bluey come over to Joel and Hendo's table. Most give the two a hearty backslap or a handshake. Almost everyone is in a jubilant mood.

Tubby is at the doorway. He looks back, shakes his head and exits.

EXT. MM BEACH PARKING LOT - DAWN

Hendo's station wagon with two surfboards on top rolls into the parking lot. The sun is just above the horizon.

EXT. MM BEACH - DAWN

Hendo and Joel sit on their boards just past the breakers. Behind them, near the horizon is a rusty bulk carrier and a rocky island off to their right. They're in good spirits.

JOEL

Whoever nails the next big wave
gets breakfast in bed for a week.

HENDO

If it's a tie?

JOEL

Consolation prize. The big wave.

They face the ocean. A huge swell heads their way. Hendo tips Joel off his board. Joel's head breaks the surface just as Hendo madly paddles past him towards the shore.

HENDO

I like my eggs sunny side up!

Hendo catches a huge wave and nails it.

Joel smirks as he climbs back on his board.

JOEL

You got me!

FADE OUT.