

# The popular Australian web series you're not watching

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The cast of *Starting From... Now!*

In this age of binge-watching, who isn't keen to discover another series that prompts the Pavlovian 'just one more episode' reaction at the mere sight of the closing credits? For those on the hunt for a little diversity in their TV-watching habits, the Aussie web series *Starting From... Now!* is well worth a peek.

The show centres on a lesbian love quadrangle that kicks off when protagonist Steph (played by Sarah de Possesse) moves to Sydney for a job, but ends up developing a fierce crush on her friend's girlfriend. With boundaries soon being overstepped and hearts broken, the mini episodes make for addictive viewing.

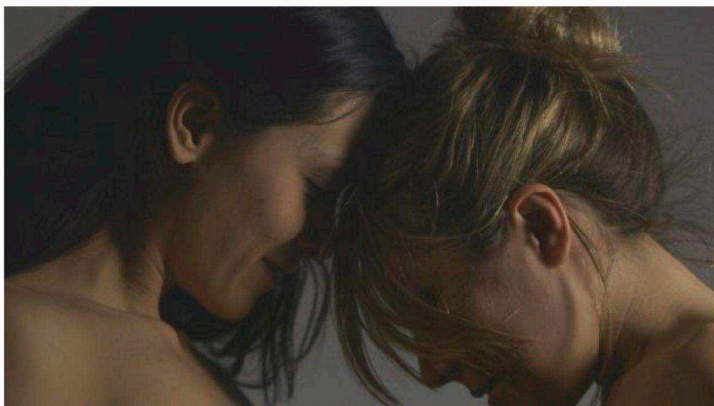


The show's fans might get drawn in by the delightfully sudsy storylines, but creator Julie Kalceff crafted the online drama with the admirable goal of portraying more diverse same-sex attracted characters on screen.

the representations of women in the mainstream media were defined by their relationship to a man. Everyone was heterosexual," says Kalceff. "So it's really important to me that people who are struggling with their sexuality have access to representations where they can see that they're not the other, that there's not something wrong with them."

She's clearly pleased to share that she's received much heart-warming feedback, particularly from gay viewers in smaller towns, that the series has made them feel more comfortable in their sexuality.

The show is proudly made for women, by women, with an all-female cast and efforts made to use female crew members whenever possible. While audiences are used to seeing male characters given the vast majority of attention in pop culture, *Starting From... Now!* bucks that trend so strongly that it performs the rare feat of failing a reverse Bechdel test. A speaking male character doesn't even appear in the series until Episode Five of Season Three. Instead the focus is on more equitably redistributing the spotlight to tell the stories of women.



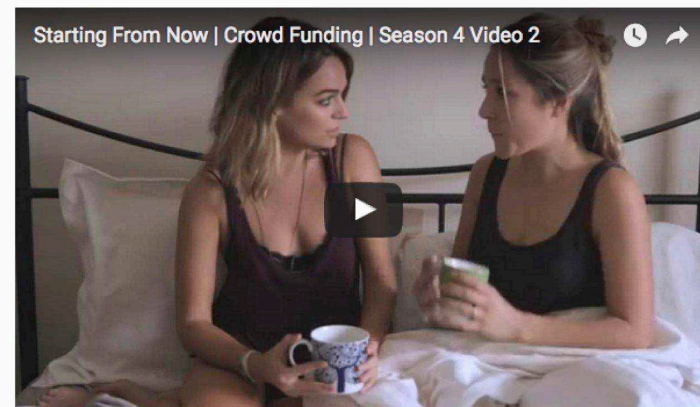
Darcy (Rosie Lourde) and Steph (Sarah de Possesse) in *Starting From... Now!*

The show has also proven something of an under-the-radar success story, with the series racking up a reported almost 15 million views since launching in March last year. "When I first put it out I was thinking, 'Wouldn't it be great if each episode got 10,000 views...'. But it's completely surpassed that," says Kalceff.

Much of that audience comes from the show's overseas fan base. "Our biggest audience is in the US. That's the beauty of doing a web series, there's no limit to the audience you can reach." French viewers have also welcomed the series after a devoted watcher over there offered to translate subtitles to the episodes.

Kalceff is somewhat surprised that the series hasn't garnered quite as much notice in Australia. So why the lack of attention to the homegrown hit? Kalceff believes it's partly attributable to cultural cringe, but also to the challenges in promoting a female-focused series.

"While we've been really big overseas, it's been difficult for us to get publicity in Australia. And I think it's because we're women and it's a show about women. I feel like if I was a man and this show was about men and we'd had this level of success, people would be falling over each other to know more about it." She later adds, "We're still stuck in that situation where women's stories are devalued. It is frustrating, because doing a web series you have really clear numbers of who is watching. The evidence is there that there is a big audience that wants alternative viewing, that doesn't want to just see white, middle-class men doing things."



Fans of the show will be pleased to hear that Season Four and Five are on the cards, despite some difficulties in securing funding. The first two seasons were self-funded, while a crowdfunding campaign helped put some money towards Season Three. Kalceff, alongside cast member and co-producer Rosie Lourde, has been applying for funding grants and also looking into corporate sponsorship to continue on with the series.

"Ideally, we want to raise enough money now to shoot Season Four and Five together. Our plan is to release Season Four at the end of the year and Season Five next year around Mardi Gras," says Kalceff. "It's important for me to keep it free and for people to have access to it. I don't want to go, 'It's only for people who can afford it.' But there's also the point where you want to make the industry sustainable."

Watch *'Starting From... Now!'* [here](#).