

David Michôd to direct first feature film

Wednesday 22 October 2008: The Screen Australia Board yesterday approved funding for *Animal Kingdom*, the first feature film by internationally acclaimed short film writer/director **David Michôd**.

Michôd will team with one of Australia's leading producers, **Liz Watts**, to make *Animal Kingdom*, the story of 17-year-old Joshua 'J' Cody who navigates his survival between an explosive criminal family and a cop who thinks he can save him.

Guy Pearce has committed to playing Leckie, the troubled cop. **Ben Mendelsohn**, **Joel Edgerton** and **Jackie Weaver** are also attached. **Greig Fraser ACS** will shoot the picture.

Michôd rose to international prominence when his short film *Crossbow* was selected for the 2007 Venice Film Festival and the 2008 Sundance Film Festival. The film was applauded at both the Melbourne and Sydney Film Festivals. It won the coveted Best Australian Short at MIFF as well as the AFI Award for Best Short Screenplay. Award-winning producer Liz Watts was named one of the 'Top Ten Producers to Watch' by *Variety*. Her credits include *Little Fish*, *The Home Song Stories*, *Walking on Water*, *Jewboy* and *Martha's New Coat*.

The Screen Australia Board approved Letters of Intent for four feature films including Ray Lawrence's adaptation of Jim Crace's *Being Dead*, a poetic thriller that focuses on a married couple who are savagely murdered. These films will receive a Letter of Intent containing the terms and conditions of proposed Screen Australia funding. The Board makes a formal commitment to fund evaluation projects only when the producers have satisfied the terms and conditions set out in the Letter.

The Board also approved investment in *Underbelly 2*. This second series is once again based on true events and this time around focuses on the murderous drug syndicate headed by Terry (Mr Asia) Clark and Robert (Aussie Bob) Trimbole.

Numerous documentary projects were approved for investment including *Kokoda*, a two-hour documentary series that provides a new perspective on Australia's second most important military campaign after Gallipoli. *Kokoda* is the first project commissioned under the second scheme of Screen Australia's Making History Initiative.

Letters of Intent

Feature Films

LOU

Big and Little Films Pty Ltd

Producers Helen Bowden, Michael McMahon, Tony Ayres

Producer/Writer/Director Belinda Chayko

Synopsis A young girl finds love through a dangerous game with her Alzheimic grandfather.

BEING DEAD

See-Saw Films and Greenpoint Films

Executive Producer Iain Canning

Producers Emile Sherman, Patrick Cassavetti

Director Ray Lawrence

Writer Beatrix Christian. Based on the book by Jim Crace

Synopsis *Being Dead* is a poetic thriller. A married couple is savagely murdered; their bodies left to decay in the dunes. When their estranged daughter returns home to find them, she uncovers a dark secret history...

I LOVE YOU TOO

I Love You Too Pty Ltd

Executive Producer Greg Sitch

Producers Yael Bergman, Laura Waters

Writer/Co Producer Peter Hellier

Director Daina Reid

Synopsis When emotionally-stunted, commitment phobic Jim, doesn't have the words to tell his girlfriend Alice that he loves her, they break up when she mentions the word 'marriage'. Depressed, Jim meets Charlie, a dwarf, who is wise, funny, emotionally mature and an incredible love letter writer, and asks him to help him get Alice back. *I Love You Too* is a comedy with heart – a romantic buddy movie about the meaning of relationships, the importance of male friendship, and having the courage to pursue the one you love.

PANGS

BlueSeas Films

Producer Robert Raymond

Writer/Director Greg Woodland

Synopsis For Bob, a suburban vampire working as a Nightline crisis counsellor for the weak and sick, humans equal food. Compassion is just one of a vampire's tools. Bob doesn't get involved until he meets Bella, the 8-year-old daughter of dangerous new neighbours, and then Miriam, the beautiful blind counsellor who's just started at Nightline...these two awaken in him a capacity for unselfish love so strong it threatens his whole way of life.

Production Approvals

Feature Films

ANIMAL KINGDOM

Porchlight Films Pty Ltd

Producer Liz Watts

Writer/Director David Michôd

Sales and Distribution Madman, Maximum Sales, Showtime

Synopsis *Animal Kingdom* tells the story of 17-year-old Joshua 'J' Cody as he navigates his survival between an explosive criminal family and a cop who thinks he can save him.

TV Drama

UNDERBELLY 2

Screentime Pty Ltd

Executive Producers Jo Hosburgh, Des Monaghan

Writer/Producer Greg Haddrick

Producer Brenda Pam

Writers Peter Gawler, Felicity Packard, Kris Mrksa

Directors Ken Cameron, Shawn Seet, Tony Tilse, Grant Brown

Sales and Distribution Portman

Synopsis The action takes place between Melbourne and Sydney. Once again, it is based on true events; in this case events that happened in both cities between 1977 and 1987. In essence, the action and events of this series are all connected to the rise and fall of the murderous drug syndicate headed by Terry (Mr Asia) Clark and Robert (Aussie Bob) Trimbole.

Documentary Features

GOING VERTICAL

BlueSeas Films

Producer Robert Raymond

Director David Bradbury

Synopsis For the last 40 years, surfers young and old the world over have been fed the one unwavering story about the birth of the shortboard: that it was the Americans who really were behind this revolution in design. But, was it, in fact, the brainchild of Australian surfing legend and surfboard designer Bob McTavish? Now, for the first time, a major new documentary feature film shot in Australia, Hawaii and California will tell both sides of this compelling story, transporting our audience to the world's legendary surfing hangouts – from the famous beaches, bars and surf shops to the shaping rooms and workshops of those now-celebrated boardmakers.

Documentaries

THE GREAT ESCAPE – THE RECKONING

Electric Pictures Pty Ltd

Executive Producer/Producer Andrew Ogilvie

Executive Producer /Co-Writer Phil Craig

Producer Andrea Quesnelle

Director/Co-Writer Steve Westh

Sales and Distribution ABC Television, BBC, BBC Worldwide and DV1

Synopsis The story of a heroic Australian pilot murdered by the Nazis and of the post-War manhunt to not only find his killer, but those responsible for executing 50 Allied airmen in the aftermath of the Great Escape of WWII.

Documentary Series

ARE YOU MY MOTHER?

Becker Group

Executive Producer Allison Black

Producer Sally Regan

Directors Ili Bare, Ivan Mahoney, Daniella Ortega

Sales and Distribution SBS TV, SBS Content Sales

Synopsis *Are You My Mother?* follows three Australians who are determined to get to the bottom of their trans-racial identity. They will share their emotional journey with us as they make their way through red tape, run-down orphanages and foster homes in Romania, Sri Lanka and the Philippines.

THE MAKING OF MODERN AUSTRALIA

Essential Media and Entertainment

Executive Producer Chris Hilton

Series Producer Ian Collie

Producer Nial Fulton

Directors Steve Westh, Susan Lambert

Sales and Distribution ABC Television

Synopsis *The Making of Modern Australia* is a landmark cross-platform social history series that tells the big stories of post-war Australia through the family histories and personal archives of those that lived it – the people of Australia

THE MISSION

Roar Film

Producers Kath Symmons, Stephen Thomas

Director Varcha Sidwell

Sales and Distribution ABC Television

Synopsis *The Mission* is a four-part documentary series about three young Nigerian priests who journey from equatorial Africa to Australia's island state, Tasmania, as modern day missionaries.

CHOPPER RESCUE SERIES 2

Becker Group

Executive Producer Sue Clothier

Producer Andrew Saw

Director Jan Cattoni

Sales and Distribution ABC Television, Discovery UK, ABC Commercial

Synopsis *Chopper Rescue* is an observational documentary series that follows the lives of the EMQ helicopter rescue crews in Far North Queensland as they rescue people in remote locations over land and sea.

Commissioned Production

KOKODA

Screen Australia in association with Pericles Productions Pty Ltd

Executive Producer Mark Hamlyn

Producer and Co-Writer Andrew Wiseman

Director/Writer Don Featherstone

Sales and Distribution Screen Australia Promotions and Distribution

Synopsis This two-part series offers the first major re-evaluation of Australia's most important military campaign after Gallipoli – the brutal battle for the Kokoda Track and the desperate campaign to keep New Guinea from falling to the Japanese during the darkest days of World War II.

NATIONAL TREASURES 3: HERITAGE

Screen Australia

Executive Producer Penny Robins

Series Producer Hugh Piper

Series Director Matthew Thomason

Writers Hugh Piper, Matthew Thomason

Sales and Distribution Screen Australia Promotions and Distribution

Synopsis History buff, commentator and member of ABC-TV's *Chaser* team, Chris Taylor

takes a revealing and upbeat look at some of the building blocks of the Australian identity as he works his way through the treasures on the Federal Government's National Heritage List. Canvassing objects and sites as varied as the Sydney Opera House through to Ned Kelly's armour, Chris shows how our environment and history have shaped today's Australia.

Indigenous Branch

The projects approved from Screen Australia's Indigenous Branch are part of the New Black initiative, which is developing and producing 10-minute dramas with emerging directors and producers.

THE FARM

Brown Cab Productions

Producer John Harvey

Writer/Director Romaine Moreton

Synopsis A young girl named Olivia longs to know the people who came before and the stories they left, uncovering a landscape imbued with history and wonder.

THE PARTY SHOES

Producers Helen Panckhurst and Sarah Bond

Writer/Director Michelle Blanchard

Synopsis A little girl devises a logical plan to rid the world of sadness ... well her own world at least.

JACOB

Blackfella Films

Producers Darren Dale and Rhea Stephenson

Writer/Director Dena Curtis

Synopsis When George witnesses the deterioration of Gina and Max's relationship, he must choose the right time to intervene.

AUNTIE MAGGIE AND THE WOMBA WAKGUN

Bungabura Productions

Producer Bain Stewart

Director Leah Purcell

Writer Angelina Hurley

Synopsis Aunty Maggie struggles to feed her three boys, and what she finds as an easy solution becomes a major problem – a problem that makes her famous.

BOURKE BOY

Scarlett Pictures

Producers Kath Shelper and Anusha Duray

Writer/Director Adrian Wills

Synopsis A true story about a father and son trying to find the words to say to each other before it's too late.

Producer Offset

Since the Producer Offset's inception, 161 projects have been issued with provisional certificates: 63 features, 64 non-feature documentaries and 34 other projects (e.g. TV series, telemovies, direct-DVD/online, short-form animation). Nine final certificates have been issued (one feature, seven non-feature documentaries and one other project) with a total determined QAPE of A\$7.29m. Six further applications for final certificates are under consideration.