

Media Release

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First Nominees Announced for the 5th AACTA Awards

The countdown to Australia's top screen Awards has officially commenced, with the first nominees for the 5th Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts (AACTA) Awards announced today.

Nominees were announced in three categories – Best Feature Length Documentary, Best Short Animation and Best Short Fiction Film – for the 5th AACTA Awards, which will also see Australia's best in film and television awarded in Sydney across two major events late in 2015.

NOMINEES FOR BEST FEATURE LENGTH DOCUMENTARY

- ***Gayby Baby***. Charlotte Mars
- ***Only the Dead***. Patrick McDonald, Michael Ware
- ***Sherpa***. Bridget Ikin, John Smithson
- ***That Sugar Film***. Nick Batzias, Damon Gameau
- ***Women He's Undressed***. Damien Parer, Gillian Armstrong

In yet another exceptional year for Australian documentaries, this year AACTA has announced five nominees for Best Feature Length Documentary, with emerging filmmakers vying for an AACTA Award alongside industry icons.

Gayby Baby (directed by Maya Newell) follows the lives of four children growing up with same-sex parents, and approaches issues faced in modern social politics. The film screened recently at the Sydney Film Festival, where it was voted the runner-up for the Audience Award.

Confronting war documentary ***Only the Dead*** was also acknowledged at the Sydney Film Festival, taking out the Documentary Australia Foundation Award for Australian Documentary. ***Only the Dead*** features a compilation of footage recorded by Australian war correspondent Michael Ware throughout his assignment in Iraq, and was co-directed by Ware and Oscar-winner Bill Guttentag.

Sherpa captures the 2014 Everest climbing season tragedy from the Sherpa point of view, and was shot by renowned high-altitude cinematographer Renan Ozturk. ***Sherpa*** comprises an AFI and AACTA Award-winning team with director Jennifer Peedom (***Solo***), producer Bridget Ikin (***Look Both Ways***), sound designer Sam Petty (***The Rover***) and composer Antony Partos (***Redfern Now***).

Damon Gameau's ***That Sugar Film*** marks an impressive directorial debut, and has become the second-highest-grossing Australian feature length documentary in local cinemas (excluding IMAX). ***That Sugar Film*** explores the effects of a diet comprising only sugary food that is commonly perceived as 'healthy',

and features guest appearances from Hugh Jackman, Brenton Thwaites, Isabel Lucas, Jessica Marais, Zoe Tuckwell-Smith and British comedian-actor Stephen Fry.

AFI Award winner Gillian Armstrong returns with ***Women He's Undressed*** - capturing the life of Australian costume designer and three-time Oscar winner Orry-Kelly, whose body of work includes *Some Like It Hot*, *Les Girls* and *An American In Paris*. The documentary includes interviews with AACTA Award-winning costumer designer Catherine Martin and actresses Jane Fonda and Angela Lansbury.

NOMINEES FOR THE AACTA AWARD FOR BEST SHORT ANIMATION

- ***Ernie Biscuit***. Adam Elliot
- ***The Meek***. Laura DiMaio, Joe Brumm
- ***The Orchestra***. Mikey Hill, Melanie Brunt
- ***The Story of Percival Pilts***. John Lewis, Janette Goodey

This year's Best Short Animation nominees have screened at a host of short film festivals, in Australia and abroad.

Ernie Biscuit, Adam Elliot's short film follow up to his Oscar-winning claymation *Harvie Krumpet*, screened as part of this year's Sydney Film Festival. Actor John Flaus narrates the animation, following his previous voice work on Elliot's *Mary & Max* and *Harvie Krumpet*. Elliot has 35 award wins to his name, including two AFI Awards for Best Short Animation, which he won in 2000 and 2003.

The Meek and ***The Orchestra*** are both currently screening as part of Anima Mundi - the International Animation Festival of Brazil. Narrated by television personality Myf Warhurst, *The Meek* explores feelings of hope, loneliness, devotion and strength alongside a beautiful score by The Cat Empire's Ollie McGill. Fresh from taking out the audience-voted Best Australian Animation Award at the Melbourne International Animation Festival, *The Orchestra* paints a picture of a world where a band of tiny musicians play a soundtrack for your life.

Narrated by New Zealand actor Mark Hadlow (*The Hobbit* trilogy), ***The Story of Percival Pilts*** is a whimsical adventure about living an impractical life based on a childhood promise. The animated short was the winner of Best Animation at this year's St Kilda Film Festival and a Sydney Film Festival Dendy Awards for Australian Short Films Finalist.

NOMINEES FOR THE AACTA AWARD FOR BEST SHORT FICTION FILM

- ***Flat Daddy***. Annie Kinnane, Matt Holcomb
- ***Karroyul***. Kelrick Martin, Jaclyn Hower, Melissa Kelly
- ***Nulla Nulla***. Dylan River, Tanith Glynn-Maloney
- ***Reg Makes Contact***. Corrie Chen, Jiao Chen, Raquelle David

In a true reflection of a strong year in Australian short film, three of the nominated short fiction films feature past AACTA Award winners.

AACTA Award winner Kat Stewart (*Offspring*) stars in ***Flat Daddy***, which explores the emotional upheaval experienced by a mother and daughter living with a cardboard cut-out of her husband, an Australian military officer. The film is based on a short story written by Louise D'Arcy, which won The

Age Short Story Award in 2010. *Flat Daddy* was nominated for Best Director and Best Original Score at this year's St Kilda Film Festival.

The darkly funny ***Reg Makes Contact*** explores the mysteries of space when alien-obsessed Reg discovers a strange object fallen from the sky. The short film stars Helmut Bakaitis (*Howzat! Kerry Packer's War, The Matrix Revolutions*), AACTA Award winner Susan Prior (*Puberty Blues, The Rover*) and Alan Dukes (*Devil's Playground, Anzac Girls*).

Themes of Indigenous culture are explored in two of the nominated short films, ***Karroyul*** and ***Nulla Nulla***. Winner of Best Achievement in Indigenous Film at St Kilda Film Festival earlier this year, *Karroyul* follows a young girl's journey of connecting to her ancestral home after the death of her mother. Filmmakers include AACTA Award-winning editor Lawrie Silvestrin ASE, composer Ash Gibson Greig, and sound mixers Ric Curtin and Glenn Martin.

Nulla Nulla portrays a white policeman's first day on the job in an Aboriginal community. The playful comedy stars AACTA Award winner Wayne Blair (*Redfern Now*) and AFI Award nominee Khan Chittenden. A short film directorial debut for filmmaker Dylan River, *Nulla Nulla* was nominated for Best Short Film in the Generation 14plus category at the Berlin International Film Festival earlier this year.

Nominees in all categories announced today will screen during the 5th AACTA Awards Screenings in Sydney at Event Cinemas, Bondi Junction, and at Cinema Nova in Melbourne throughout September and October, and online via AACTA TV, exclusively for AFI and AACTA members. Also screening will be a number of the Feature Films In Competition, which will be announced in late August.

AFI | AACTA CEO Damian Trehwella congratulated today's nominees and encouraged screen fans to unite with the Australian screen industry in attending the 5th AACTA Awards Screenings.

"Each year it's a pleasure to see emerging talent on the rise via our short film nominations, and this year is no exception, with a number of nominees already making their mark on the festival circuit.

"Audiences at home and abroad continue to show high demand for Australian and global stories as told via documentaries, and this year's nominees acknowledge this with *Sherpa, Women He's Undressed, That Sugar Film, Gayby Baby* and *Only the Dead*.

"AACTA takes pride in making these outstanding productions accessible to the public and industry during our dedicated 5th AACTA Awards Screenings program, which complements our year-round Members' Events program. Already this year more than 3,400 people have seen great Australian film, television premieres and documentaries via our screen culture and industry development program, and more are signing up to hear first-hand from our talented industry as part of our exclusive cast and crew Q&As.

"On behalf of AACTA, I congratulate all nominees and look forward to a robust competition as the countdown to the 5th AACTA Awards in Sydney officially begins."

The AACTA Awards are proudly supported by the New South Wales Government through its tourism and major events agency, Destination NSW.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

Juries of respected industry professionals, representing a diverse selection of Australian screen crafts, decided the nominees in the three categories announced today. Members of the AFI and AACTA will vote to decide the winners following the 5th AACTA Awards Screenings (see notes below for more information regarding Screenings).

COUNTDOWN TO COMPETITION AND NOMINEE ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR THE 5TH AACTA AWARDS

Feature Films In Competition will be announced in late August 2015. The program for the 5th AACTA Awards Screenings will also be announced at that time. All remaining Documentary nominees and all Feature Film and Television nominees will be announced later in 2015.

BECOME A MEMBER TODAY AND ACCESS EXCLUSIVE AACTA AWARDS SCREENINGS

The nominated short films and feature length documentaries will be shown for AFI and AACTA members at the 5th AACTA Awards Screenings in Sydney and Melbourne in September/October, and will be hosted online via AACTA TV, accessible to all AFI and AACTA members. AFI membership is open to and encouraged for all. AACTA membership is granted to screen professionals only through an accreditation process. Best Feature Length Documentary winners will be determined by AACTA members via voting, while the winners of the Best Short Animation and Best Short Fiction Film Awards will be voted for by both AACTA and AFI members.

COUNTDOWN TO THE AACTA AWARDS | SYDNEY

The Australian Academy celebrates screen excellence throughout the year culminating in three major events each year. They are proudly supported by the NSW Government through its tourism and major events agency Destination NSW and are a key creative industries event on the NSW Events Calendar. The 5th AACTA Awards follow four highly successful Awards seasons since the launch of AACTA by the Australian Film Institute (AFI) in 2011.

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