

MEDIA RELEASE

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Australian Academy shines spotlight on Australian short film talent as #SocialShorts 2017 launches

The Australian Film Institute and Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts (AFI | AACTA) today launched their national online short film competition **#SocialShorts**, which showcases Australia's top short filmmaking talent.

Now in its fourth year, **#SocialShorts** provides a platform for short filmmakers to have their films seen, shared and acknowledged by film enthusiasts and the Australian film industry. The competition will run for three weeks across three categories – Comedy, Drama and Open – with each category owning the spotlight for one week exclusively.

The winning filmmakers in each category will receive industry recognition, a cash prize, an AFTRS short course voucher and tickets to the 7th AACTA Awards presented by Foxtel | Industry Luncheon in Sydney, where they will have the opportunity to network with industry leaders, as well as a mentorship with our **#SocialShorts** ambassadors.

2017 marks a record breaking year for **#SocialShorts** with 65 films competing. Many of these films are already national and international film festival favourites, including **FOUND** and **DEEPEST SYMPATHY** which both screened as part of Festival de Cannes' Short Film Corner.

Among the student films competing are the 2017 Tropfest Junior winning short film **PUPILS**, the 2017 Australian Directors' Guild Award winning **DISABUSED** and **TO THE TOP!**, which swept the 2015 Sydney Film School Festival Awards.

The competing films also see a number of big names in Australian film starring, including **Guy Pearce** in **LORNE**, **Shane Jacobson** in **ALL YOU CAN BE**, **David Gulpilil** and **Mark Coles Smith** in **MESSIAH**, **Abby Earl** in **KILL OFF**, and **John Jarratt** in **HERO**.

AFI | AACTA CEO Damian Trehwella said the exceptional growth in the short film space highlights the importance of competitions such as **#SocialShorts**, which provide opportunities for filmmakers to have their work seen.

"Our film industry is full of talented filmmakers producing great short films, and with a record breaking 65 short films participating in **#SocialShorts** this year it's great to see this space growing," said Trehwella. "Short films so often serve as calling cards and stepping stones for our brightest emerging filmmakers, and **#SocialShorts** plays an important role in promoting and nurturing this emerging film talent by providing a platform for filmmakers to have their work seen, shared and acknowledged by the industry, and the wider audience."

AFI | AACTA also welcomes back returning **#SocialShorts** ambassadors **Matilda Brown** and members of the **Blue Tongue Films** group – **Joel** and **Nash Edgerton**, **David Michôd**, **Kieran Darcy-Smith**, **Luke Doolan**, **Mirrah Foulkes** and **Spencer Susser**.

Audiences can vote for their favourite short films in each category on www.socialshorts.com.au and are then encouraged to share their favourite short films across social media. The winning film for each category will be announced at the start of the following week.

The voting audience also has the chance to win a double pass to the 7th AACTA Awards presented by Foxtel | Ceremony & Official After Party held at The Star Event Centre in Sydney on Wednesday 6 December, including flights and overnight accommodation.

For further information on #SocialShorts and to vote, visit www.socialshorts.com.au. To keep abreast of the competition, follow AACTA on Facebook: www.facebook.com/AACTAawards.

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

– ENDS –

#SOCIALSHORTS ENTRANTS

#SocialShorts entrants comprise some of the short films which entered but were not nominated for the 7th AACTA Awards presented by Foxtel, as well as some of the short films which entered but were not nominated for last year's Awards.

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For further information about AFI | AACTA visit: www.aacta.org

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– COMEDY CATEGORY SHORT FILM SYNOPSES –

THE BARD

After a night of heavy drinking Jane wakes up to find a Bard sitting on the end of her bed. This Medieval minstrel turns her quiet life into musical chaos.

Director: Michael Knott

Starring: Xenia Goodwin

DEEP STORAGE

Deep Storage is an affecting romantic comedy about a loner who finds love in a most unexpected place.

Director: Susan Earl

DEEPEST SYMPATHY

Today is the biggest day of Ben's career! As Ben prepares for his promotion, an innocuous birthday card sets off a comic chain of events leaving Ben's dreams in tatters.

Director: Rahul Prasad

DYING FOR A LAUGH

Comic legend Marty Moore is riding high on a national tour when a heckler sends his career into disarray. What will it take to come back from the dead?

Director: Stig Wemyss

FACE

James must get to the pharmacy by midnight, or face devastating consequences. Unfortunately the only person who can drive him, is his weird neighbour Steve.

Director: Luke Tierney

FINDING SANTA

When Santa Claus mysteriously disappears and the rest of the world gives up the search, a lone elf scours the globe trying to find him.

Director: Dean Ginsburg

GOING VEGO

In a trendy Sydney suburb populated by vegetables, one awkward Onion struggles to blend in at a party of much cooler, younger veggies.

Director: Hannah Bath, Christopher Burke, Mikey Owens

I'M RAYMOND

Raymond Banks, an 8 year old global warming alarmist, brings civil action against his parents, claiming loss of future income due to the world's impending total demise.

Director: Eddy Bell

KILL OFF

A woman with an intellectual disability forms an unlikely friendship with a Sudanese refugee through their mutual love of the street dance, KRUMP.

Director: Genevieve Clay-Smith

Starring: Abby Earl, Jamie Brewer

MESSIAH

In a playful collision of cultures, a plump, hapless Irishman and his Parisian girlfriend get more than they bargained for when they encounter a particularly mischievous stranger in the spectacular Australian wilderness.

Director: Damian Walshe Howling

Starring: David Gulpilil, Mark Coles Smith

MOONMAN

Moonman's career is his excuse to stay out late and party but can this typical Aussie bloke keep his promise to his long-suffering and now pregnant girlfriend, to be responsible?

Director: Clayton Jacobson

Starring: Lawrence Mooney

SARAH CHONG IS GOING TO KILL HERSELF

A surreal workplace fantasy in which a mal-treated receptionist decides to take matters into her own hands...hands which may well contain grenades!

Director: Ella Jones

SO THIS IS IT THEN!

David arrives at his parents' house for the biggest day of his life, and is about to marry his fiancé Jenny. However, things don't go to plan.

Director: David Raynor

SPICE SISTERS

Determined to break the monotony of her life in suburbia, a former Bollywood star sets her sights on winning a place on a popular reality cooking show.

Director: Sheila Jayadev

SPILL

Maxy has earned himself a decent marble collection and has become a force in the sandpit. Plugga, the school bully, devises a plan to stop Maxy and the games begin.

Director: Aaron Ellis

THE SUITOR

When a nervous suitor arrives at the country estate of a local matriarch, his hopes of a suitable match are quickly dashed by the story of their great family tragedy.

Director: Kate Riedl

Starring: Tilda Cobham-Harvey, Eamon Farron, Sacha Horler

TO THE TOP!

The Broadway smash musical 'To The Top!' is finally coming to Australia, and the auditions for the lead role of Desiree Starr are going to be fierce.

Director: Fiona Gillman

THE UNCOMFORTABLY SEXY RULES OF TRUCO

Amy shares everything she has learnt about the Argentinian culture since dating her girlfriend, Eugenia: the interesting, the odd and the uncomfortably sexy.

Director: Marina Bonofiglio

YOUNG LABOR

Kate Stinger, is the first female leader of a failing youth division of the Labor Party; and is taking it upon herself to win back the nation's love.

Director: Leon Ford

– DRAMA CATEGORY SHORT FILM SYNOPSES –

ALL YOU CAN BE

Malcolm is living a dull existence in country Australia. He joins the Army knowing he can do more with his life. We follow along with Malcolm on his journey.

Director: Bradley Hall, Michael Tyrikos

Starring: Shane Jacobson

ANGELFISH

The definition of acceptable behavior is examined when a drunk student comes back to Patrick's house after a night out.

Director: Dane McCusker

THE AQUARIUM

A young girl, ignored by her volatile, separated parents, does increasingly desperate things to earn money for a school trip to the aquarium.

Director: Jacobie Gray

BABA

A day of traumatic events leads a family to make a difficult decision.

Director: John Fink

BANANA BOY

Following Cyclone Larry, Omid, a young refugee, sets out alone and on foot, headed for the promise of a banana utopia, the Big Banana.

Director: Steven Woodburn

Starring: Steve Le Marquand

BEAST

An immigrant woman is marginalised by a small coastal community for a fatal drunk driving accident caused by her daughter. She is then confronted by a dark family secret.

Director: Christopher Sferrazza

Starring: Geraldine James

BEATS

Gil makes an unplanned trip home to see his fading Pa; lost in the blur between past and present. What happens next is mystical- something bigger than us.

Director: Jenna Sutch

BIG CITY

A lonely taxi driver picks up a stray drunk. What starts out as a single fare soon becomes an all night odyssey as these two men befriend one another.

Director: Jordan Bond, Lachlan Ryan

CRESWICK

While a young woman helps her father pack up his house, they are both increasingly aware of the presence that they always knew was there.

Director: Natalie Erika James

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF WILLIE BINGHAM

Willie Bingham is the first man to undergo a radical new justice program under the State's revised stance on capital crime.

Director: Matthew Richards

EMILY

When the recently widowed Gwen discovers that there was another woman in her husband's life, she sets out to find the truth about the mysterious Emily...

Director: Eddie Diamandi

FENCED

Kate Myers drives through the gates of Portsmouth Immigration Detention Centre at the end of each day. But can she leave behind what she's seen? Or what she's done?

Director: Sophie Hawkshaw

FOUND

Ten years on, a father's relentless search for his daughter leads him to a remote farmhouse, three states away from where she went missing.

Director: Richard Hughes

IN A CANE FIELD

In a beachside town, a girl's body is found in a cane field. Her murder envelops the community as they grapple with death, in all its senselessness.

Director: Emily Avila

THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS

Stranded in the night, a young woman is approached by a man offering to help. Should she trust him, or take her chances with whatever is lurking in the darkness?

Director: Ben Dickinson

Starring: Miranda Tapsell, Ben O'Toole

LAST DRINKS AT FRIDA'S

Sydney, 1944. A lonely married jazz singer and a troubled Indigenous soldier find solace in an underground speak easy, where the rules of the outside world don't apply.

Director: Bjorn Stewart

LORNE

Lorne, a wasteland traveller dealing with the oppressing boundaries of isolation, is confronted by a mysterious stranger who helps him realise his existential fears.

Director: Jesse Leaman

Starring: Guy Pearce

PASSENGER

70,000 thoughts run through our minds each day. What happens if you act on just one of them? A woman hiking through a deserted forest finds out.

Director: Catherine Mack

THE SHADOW BOXER

Unable to overcome her sister's death or compete with her legacy, Lyssa risks sabotaging her personal life and boxing career.

Director: Phoebe Nell Williams

STYE

BJ is desperate to win the attention of his father. Tacco is desperate to win the admiration of his son. Together, their attempts will bring devastating consequences.

Director: Matthew Jenkin

TENDER

Tortured, beaten and alone, a broken soldier is tragically reminded that only he can find the strength to survive.

Director: Rebecca Greensill

THIRD WORLD MAN

A man goes to Sudan to investigate the theft of food and medical aid. In a world of moral uncertainty, can the actions of one affect the lives of many?

Director: Brad Sayers

UNTOLD

Ava; a Persian lesbian girl couldn't have been more different from Roxy; the Australian woman diagnosed with MS. Despite their differences Ava finds her true self getting closer to Roxy.

Director: Azita Damandan

THE VEILED

Cassandra is a professional photographer and when she meets a young woman caught up in the world of human sex trafficking, she understands she can no longer be the bystander.

Director: Glenn Fraser

WOLF

Wolf, a strong young woman, sells drugs to survive. One day in the squat, she finds an abandoned baby and is faced with a decision that changes both their lives.

Director: Liz Cooper

– OPEN CATEGORY SHORT FILM SYNOPSES –

A TERRIBLE BEAUTY

Olivia is creator of the lifelike Shinjoi (Soulmate) robots, but after the destruction of a prototype she begins to question the nature of love and loss.

Director: Sarah-Jane Woulahan

ABANDONED – GROWING UP

Accompanied by her father and loyal comrade, teenager Madison must exert her extraordinary fighting abilities to overcome a one World Army who have kidnapped her mother for ransom.

Director: Nathan Colquhoun

THE CLOUD FACTORY

A young girl sets out on a journey to The Cloud Factory, upon entering, she must seek out her mother and save her from the grips of the Cloud Conductor!

Director: Matt Barron

DIARY OF A YOUTUBER

We follow a year in the life of popular Youtuber Charlotte, from her quick rise to tragic fall.

Director: Holly Hargreaves

DISABUSED

Vince, a troubled man on a dangerous downward spiral, returns to the orphanage he grew up in, looking to confront those responsible for his troubled life.

Director: Morgan Healy

EVERY BIT COUNTS

When Billy - an unemployed Gardener with a heart of gold – loses his Father's dog, he must attempt the unthinkable and steal from his favourite charity to secure the dog's freedom.

Director: Jay Adshead

GARY & GABE

A young girl, Gabe, takes her unusual friend, Gary, who lives under her bed, out under the guise of Halloween.

Director: Darcy Predergast

GIMPSEY

Gemma has a gimp leg. Her best friend calls her Gimpsey - a crippling in-joke wearing thin.

Director: Sofya Gollan

HERO

On patrol in the picturesque countryside of the Yarramalong Valley, Officers' Henry and Brooks happen across a distraught woman. They soon discover a hero is needed.

Director: Kerryn Williams

Starring: John Jarratt, Charlie Jarratt

HOMeward BOUND

Based on the true story of a young soldier trapped in treacherous mud in WWI sinking to his death, the soldier relives his past and attempts to reforge the choices that brought him there.

Director: Miles Gibson

HOW HISTORY MAY COME

HOW HISTORY MAY COME is a poetic and nostalgia-filled journey through filmmaker's childhood memories to tell the story of Maria and Efim and their sacrifice during the USSR's Great Famine of 1932–1933.

Director: Olesya Mazur

JOURNEY

An astronaut drifts alone in space. Finding another in the same predicament, they team up, going on an epic journey across the universe to "Find Home".

Director: Radheya Jegatheva

LIMITED TIME ONLY

In this moving, witty and truthful exploration of depression and its damaging stigma, infomercial enthusiast Karen is roped into the bizarre and intimidating world of self-help therapy.

Director: Marcus Doherty

Starring: Michaela Banas

LITTLE BOY BLUE

On a rural farm, a lonely girl must face a dark secret when she discovers a boy held captive in a neighbouring farm's barn.

Director: Nathan Keene

LOSS

A young boy must come to terms with the loss of a loved one.

Director: Alice Markham

NEUROPLASTIC

A cavalier hacker and his jaded companion delve into London's desperate underworld and pitch three criminals a weapon too good to be true: a device that could restore their ability to lie.

Director: Scott Mooney

PUPILS

A troubled boy goes to school, surrounded by the blinded, and must decide whether to be a victim or a hero.

Director: Nick Ward

SIX STEPS TO ETERNAL DEATH

A strange-fantasy about a woman forced by her seemingly estranged family to undergo a six step program to eternal death.

Director: Peter T. Nathan

THE JEZABELS 'COME ALIVE'

A witch flees from the peril that surrounds her. A tale about a bleak witch hunt in colonial Tasmania.

Director: Darcy Prendergast, Xin Li

UPSIDE DOWN FEELING

A young boy develops a preoccupation with death and disease and begins to explore it through the images he sees in the movies and his wild imagination.

Director: Eddie White

WOOF!

A humiliating sexual experience causes a 16 year old girl to start an unusual revolution.

Director: Nina Buxton