



MEDIA RELEASE

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Australian Academy launches Festival of Australian Film, announces the feature films in competition and Best Feature Length Documentary nominees

The Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts (AACTA) today announced the nominees for **Best Feature Length Documentary** as well as the **feature films in competition** for this year's AACTA Awards – Australia's highest screen accolade.

Reinforcing a strong year for Australian documentary and following changes to the nominations process to introduce a Documentary Branch, AACTA has announced five nominees for Best Feature Length Documentary: **CASTING JONBENÉT**, **DAVID STRATTON: A CINEMATIC LIFE**, **DEEP WATER: THE REAL STORY**, **WHITELEY** and **ZACH'S CEREMONY**.

The nominees represent a fascinating collection of stories, including an exploration into one of the world's most infamous child murder mysteries, a national treasure's deep dive into Australia's cinematic legacy, a gripping account of Sydney's gay hate crime epidemic in the 1980s and 1990s, a visual journey into the private life and creative legacy of one of Australia's most acclaimed artists, and a look at the challenges of becoming a man in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia.

"Through the establishment of our Documentary Branch, we've been pleased to open up the nominations process to all of our AACTA members with documentary credits," said **AFI | AACTA CEO Damian Trehwella**. "By engaging with the larger documentary community, we've seen overwhelming engagement and an increase in votes, which showed five clear nominees from our thriving documentary industry."

In addition, a record breaking 35 feature films will compete for nominations at this year's AACTA Awards.

The full list of feature films in competition are: **2:22**, **A FEW LESS MEN**, **ALI'S WEDDING**, **AUSTRALIA DAY**, **BAD BLOOD**, **BAD GIRL**, **BERLIN SYNDROME**, **BETTER WATCH OUT**, **BLUE WORLD ORDER**, **THE BUTTERFLY TREE**, **THE COLOUR OF DARKNESS**, **DANCE ACADEMY: THE MOVIE**, **THE DEATH AND LIFE OF OTTO BLOOM**, **DON'T TELL**, **DRAMA**, **ELLIPSIS**, **EMO: THE MUSICAL**, **EVENT ZERO**, **HOUNDS OF LOVE**, **JASPER JONES**, **JUNGLE**, **KILLING GROUND**, **THE LEGEND OF BEN HALL**, **THE LEGO® BATMAN MOVIE**, **LION**, **ONE LESS GOD**, **THE OSIRIS CHILD: SCIENCE FICTION VOLUME ONE**, **RED DOG: TRUE BLUE**, **RIP TIDE**, **SKIN DEEP**, **THE SPACE BETWEEN**, **THAT'S NOT ME**, **THREE SUMMERS**, **WHAT IF IT WORKS?**, and **ZELOS**.

This year, AACTA introduced a new feature film eligibility policy to pave the way to a more inclusive approach. The Academy is pleased to report that the policy change saw an increase in the number of films and filmmakers competing, a 74% increase in the number of female filmmakers and a marked increase in the number of emerging filmmakers competing alongside industry luminaries.

AFI Award-winning actor **David Wenham** competes with his feature film directorial debut **ELLIPSIS**, alongside exciting new talent including **Ben Young** with **HOUNDS OF LOVE** and **Garth Davis**, whose debut feature film **LION** received six Oscar® nominations. Past AFI and AACTA Award-winning and nominated directors competing include: **Cate Shortland** (**BERLIN SYNDROME**), **Jeffrey Walker** (**ALI'S WEDDING**, **DANCE ACADEMY: THE MOVIE**), **Kriv Stenders** (**RED DOG: TRUE BLUE**, **AUSTRALIA DAY**) and **Rachel Perkins** (**JASPER JONES**).

This year's mix of feature films in competition also sees an exciting showcase of Australia's young actors, including **Levi Miller, Aaron McGrath, Angourie Rice, Olivia DeJonge, Ed Oxenbould, Xenia Goodwin**, and Indian actor **Sunny Pawar**, who won the hearts of audiences worldwide as the young Saroo in **LION**.

These young actors compete alongside top Australian and international talent, including: **Nicole Kidman, Dev Patel, Daniel Radcliffe, Hugo Weaving, Toni Collette, Magda Szubanski, Michael Caton, Emma Booth, Stephen Curry, Aaron Pedersen, Teresa Palmer** and **Melissa George**.

AACTA also today launched the **Festival of Australian Film – For Your Consideration** (formerly the Official Screenings Program), which will see members experience the best of Australian cinema this year alongside peers and cinema lovers. The full program will screen again in Sydney and Melbourne, with the full program to be extended to Brisbane for the first time in nine years.

The Festival will also return to Perth, screening the nominees for Best Feature Length Documentary, Best Short Fiction Film and Best Short Animation.

AACTA's **Festival of Australian Film – For Your Consideration** will open in Sydney and Melbourne in late August with special preview screenings of **ALI'S WEDDING**, the winner of Sydney Film Festival's Foxtel Movies Audience Award for Best Feature.

The full program will launch in Brisbane with a special preview screening of **THE BUTTERFLY TREE**. Filmed in Tamborine Mountain in Queensland, the film is Queensland-based writer-director **Priscilla Cameron's** feature film directorial debut and stars **Ewen Leslie** and **Melissa George**.

"We're thrilled to return to the growing screen community in Queensland, bringing our full Festival of Australian Film program to our Brisbane members," said **AFI | AACTA CEO Damian Trehwella**. "It's also great to see a strong representation of Queensland film in the feature films in competition this year, including **DON'T TELL, AUSTRALIA DAY, JUNGLE** and **THE BUTTERFLY TREE**."

Screen Queensland CEO Tracey Vieira said support for AACTA's Festival of Australian Film in Queensland was through Screen Queensland's new multi-year Screen Culture funding for major events.

"It's great to welcome these screenings back to Brisbane by providing funding over two years," Ms Vieira said. "The Festival of Australian Film is just one of 23 festivals and events Screen Queensland is supporting in 2017 and 2018, ensuring Queenslanders across the state have access to a range of innovative content from traditional cinema to new platforms."

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

– ENDS –

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Please see the following pages for additional information on the Best Feature Length Documentary nominees, feature films in competition and the Festival of Australian Film – For Your Consideration.

– ADDITIONAL INFORMATION –

AACTA AWARD FOR BEST FEATURE LENGTH DOCUMENTARY NOMINEES

Please find a selection of publicity stills of the nominated Feature Length Documentary productions at <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/kszua7ktmi23fp8/AABuKxNegV6rVoffNzXI-dhPa?dl=0>.

- **CASTING JONBENÉT** Kitty Green, Scott Macaulay, James Schamus
- **DAVID STRATTON: A CINEMATIC LIFE** Jo-anne McGowan
- **DEEP WATER: THE REAL STORY** Darren Dale
- **WHITELEY** Sue Clothier, James Bogle, Peta Ayers
- **ZACH'S CEREMONY** Sarah Linton, Alec Doomadgee

A stylised exploration of the unsolved death of six-year-old JonBenét Ramsay, **CASTING JONBENÉT** marks a second Best Feature Length Documentary nomination for producer and director **Kitty Green**, who previously won the category at the 4th AACTA Awards for **UKRAINE IS NOT A BROTHEL**. Kitty is nominated alongside Oscar® nominee and past AFI Award-winner **James Schamus** and first-time AACTA nominee **Scott Macaulay**.

Marking a second AACTA nomination for producer **Jo-anne McGowan**, **DAVID STRATTON: A CINEMATIC LIFE** sees legendary Australian film critic David Stratton guide audiences from his boyhood cinema experiences to his present day reflections on Australia's cinematic legacy. Directed by **Sally Aitken**, the documentary premiered earlier this year at Cannes Film Festival where it was nominated for the prestigious Golden Eye Award.

AACTA Award-winning producer **Darren Dale** earns his second nomination for Best Feature Length Documentary for **DEEP WATER: THE REAL STORY**. Directed by BAFTA TV Award nominated director **Amanda Blue**, **DEEP WATER: THE REAL STORY** presents the full account of Sydney's gay hate crime epidemic in the 1980's and 1990's.

WHITELEY, a visual journey into the private life and creative legacy of one of Australia's most acclaimed artists, Brett Whiteley, sees first-time AACTA nominations for producers **Sue Clothier**, **Peta Ayers** and director **James Bogle**.

Aaron Petersen's debut feature length documentary **ZACH'S CEREMONY** has already received a number of film festival awards, including Most Popular Documentary at Melbourne International Film Festival 2016, the Audience Award for Best Documentary at Sydney Film Festival 2016, and Best Documentary and Best Film at Byron Bay International Film Festival 2016. Marking first-time AACTA nominations for **Sarah Linton** and **Alec Doomadgee**, **ZACH'S CEREMONY** follows Zach Doomadgee as he faces the challenges of becoming a man in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia.

NOTES ON FEATURE FILMS IN COMPETITION

The feature films in competition mark the long list of feature films deemed eligible to compete for the AACTA Awards as per AACTA's [Feature Film Eligibility Policy](#). These feature films will be narrowed down to a list of nominees via a two-step voting process.

AACTA notes that **THE LEGO® BATMAN MOVIE's** eligibility is limited to the Best Sound, Best Production Design and Best Editing categories. The film has been deemed eligible as it received the Department of Communications and the Art's PDV Offset and is unique in that all of the production design, editing and sound (key elements of the film's distinctive look) were completed in Australia by Australians, or majority Australian teams.

FESTIVAL OF AUSTRALIAN FILM – FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

ACTA's Festival of Australian Film, which is complimentary to members, provides the opportunity to watch, discuss and judge the feature films in competition and the nominees in the Best Short Fiction Film, Best Short Animation and Best Feature Length Documentary categories for the 7th AACTA Awards presented by Foxtel.

The four week Festival Program will run from late August through September in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, with the nominated feature length documentaries and short films screening in Perth from 4-11 September.

In addition to screening in cinemas, the majority of feature films in competition, plus the nominated feature length documentaries and short films will be available on AACTA's online viewing platform AACTA TV – accessible to AFI | AACTA members anytime, anywhere and on any device.

Festival of Australian Film screenings and AACTA TV are exclusive and complimentary to AFI | AACTA members. To become a member visit www.aacta.org/membership or call 1300 139 697.

VOTING AND NOMINATIONS ANNOUNCEMENT

Round One voting will take place following the Festival of Australian Film, with the remaining nominees for the **7th AACTA Awards presented by Foxtel** to be announced in October 2017. More information on voting can be found at www.aacta.org/the-awards/voting.

7TH AACTA AWARDS PRESENTED BY FOXTEL

ACTA's two major Awards events will both be held this December at The Star Event Centre in Sydney – the home of the AACTA Awards.

- The **7th AACTA Awards presented by Foxtel | Industry Luncheon** will be held on Monday 4 December; and
- The **7th AACTA Awards presented by Foxtel | Ceremony & Official After Party** will be held on Wednesday 6 December, televised on Channel Seven with encore screenings on Foxtel.

Tickets for both events will go on sale in early October 2017.

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