

## *Mary and Max* makes history

**Thursday 20 November 2008:**

*Mary and Max*, the animated feature by the Oscar-winning team of writer/director **Adam Elliot** and producer **Melanie Coombs** has been selected to open the 2009 Sundance Film Festival. This is the first time in the history of Sundance that an Australian film has been selected to open the festival.

“Screen Australia is delighted for both Adam and Melanie,” said Screen Australia Chief Executive Officer **Ruth Harley**. “As the primary government investor, we heartily congratulate them on this historic selection. This screening at Sundance is the ideal platform to launch the film and we look forward to Australian audiences seeing the film in April 2009.”

*Mary and Max* follows the pen friendship between two very different people – Mary Dinkle, an eight-year-old girl living in the suburbs of Melbourne, and Max Horovitz, a 44-year-old man with Asperger’s Syndrome living in New York. The film is written and directed by Elliot and produced by Coombs. Elliot and Coombs’ short film *Harvie Krumpet* took the festival circuit by storm and won the 2003 Academy Award for Best Animated Short Film.

*Mary and Max* features the voices of internationally acclaimed actors **Toni Collette** as Mary and **Philip Seymour Hoffman** as Max. The ambitious claymated feature was hand crafted in a St Kilda warehouse and shot over 57 weeks. The team produced an average of two and a half minutes of animation a week.

“We are absolutely delighted to be going to Park City and would like to thank not only Screen Australia, but also our Australian family; our amazing crew, SBS Television, Film Victoria, Icon Distribution and our American friends Adirondack Pictures for all their support in making *Mary and Max*. We are so proud that we are taking our Australian story to the heart of independent film, the Sundance Film Festival,” said Melanie Coombs and Adam Elliot.

Sundance is the largest independent cinema festival in the United States and is the premier showcase for new work from American and international independent filmmakers. It is the first major festival that kicks off the calendar year and is attended by more than 50,000 people.

Sundance Film Festival will run 15 – 25 January 2009. The entire 2009 Sundance Film Festival program announcement will be made on Wednesday 3 and Thursday 4 December 2008.

*Mary and Max* is set for release in Australia by Icon Films.

**Mary and Max**

(92 mins)

Production Company: Melodrama Pictures Pty Ltd

Executive Producers: Mark Gooder, Paul Hardart, Tom Hardart, Bryce Menzies and Jonathan Page

Writer/Director: Adam Elliot

Producer: Melanie Coombs

Co-Executive Producers: Iain Canning, Andrew Mackie, Richard Payten,

Associate Producer: Pauline Piechota

Distributor: Icon Films

International Sale: Icon Entertainment International

Australian Broadcaster: SBS Independent

Finance: Screen Australia, Adirondack Pictures, Film Victoria, SBS

Cast: with voices of Toni Collette (Mary), Philip Seymour Hoffman (Max), Eric Bana (Damien) and Barry Humphries (The Narrator)

Synopsis: *Mary and Max* is a claymated feature film from the creators of the Academy Award winning short animation *Harvie Krumpet*. It is a simple tale of pen-friendship between two very different people; Mary Dinkle, a chubby lonely eight year old girl living in the suburbs of Melbourne, and Max Horovitz, a 44 year old, severely obese, Jewish man with Asperger's Syndrome living in the chaos of New York.

Spanning 20 years and 2 continents, Mary and Max's friendship survives much more than the average diet of life's ups and downs. Like *Harvie Krumpet*, *Mary and Max* is innocent but not naïve, as it takes us on a journey that explores friendship, autism, taxidermy, psychiatry, alcoholism, where babies come from, obesity, kleptomania, sexual difference, trust, copulating dogs, religious difference, agoraphobia and much much more.