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MEDIA RELEASE

Five Australian projects selected for Toronto International Film Festival 2022

Thursday 18 August 2022: Screen Australia congratulates the creative teams behind the five extraordinary Australian projects that have been selected for the 47th Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), which will be held from 8 -18 September. Feature films [Blueback](#) and [Carmen](#) will have their world premieres at the festival, while [Sweet As](#), [We Are Still Here](#) and TV series [Mystery Road: Origin](#) will make their international premieres.

Screen Australia's CEO **Graeme Mason** said, "A huge congratulations to the projects selected for this year's program, demonstrating the wealth of talent we have here and the appetite for Australian stories around the world. It's particularly special to have three projects offering First Nations perspectives showcased on a world stage, including the unique anthology *We Are Still Here*. We also know that TIFF has a history launching the careers of many first time Australian directors so we're thrilled to see Jub Clerc's debut feature *Sweet As* along with Dylan River's first long-form series *Mystery Road: Origin* making their international debuts. And to have three such distinct films selected from Arenamedia - *Blueback*, *Emily* and *Sweet As* - is a real coup for the team and the Australian industry."

Written and directed by Robert Connolly, *Blueback* is based on the best-selling novel by Tim Winton. Set on the coast of Western Australia, this timely, family-friendly film centres on Abby, a child who befriends a magnificent wild blue groper while diving and stars a host of Australian acting talent including Mia Wasikowska, Radha Mitchell, Liz Alexander, Clarence Ryan, Pedrea Jackson, Erik Thomson and Eric Bana as well as newcomers Ariel Donoghue and Ilsa Fogg.

Blueback writer/director **Robert Connolly** said, "I'm thrilled to have been invited to premiere *Blueback* in Toronto. The festival has been a special place for me since it hosted the premiere of my first feature *The Bank* over 20 years ago. I can't wait to share *Blueback* with audiences at TIFF - the film's sweeping cinematic scale and message of hope for our oceans are perfectly suited to this prestigious festival."

Sweet As, the debut feature of Nyul Nyul / Yawuru director Jub Clerc, will have its international premiere in the Discovery section, hot on the heels of last week's world premiere at MIFF. The film is also premiering at CinefestOz later this month, where it will compete for the festival's coveted Film Prize. A coming-of-age road movie seen through the eyes of a young Indigenous girl who embarks on a life changing photo safari through Western Australia's stunning outback landscapes, *Sweet As* is inspired by Clerc's own journey to becoming a filmmaker and is an effervescent story of growth, acceptance and the journey towards finding oneself.

Sweet As writer/director **Jub Clerc** said, "It was such an honour to hear that *Sweet As* was selected to have its International Premiere at the 2022 Toronto International Film Festival. We are so grateful to Jason Ryle - International Programmer, Indigenous Cinema, for including us in this year's festival lineup and I look forward to meeting all the deadly Indigenous filmmakers and wonderful guests at this prestigious festival."

After making its world premiere as the opening film at this year's Sydney Film Festival as well as screening at MIFF and Whānau Mārama New Zealand International Film Festival, *We Are Still Here* will make its international debut at TIFF in the Contemporary World Cinema section. An Official Co-production between Australia and New Zealand, *We Are Still Here* is a unique First Nations anthology feature film that interweaves eight powerful tales from 10 directors from Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific to tell a sweeping story of hope and survival.

We Are Still Here producers **Mitchell Stanley**, **Toni Stowers** and **Mia Henry Teirney** said, "The filmmakers are honoured to launch the World Premiere of *We Are Still Here* at the 47th annual Toronto International Film Festival. We are incredibly proud to share our story of survival, love and kinship, and to celebrate the strength and resilience of Indigenous people from Australia, Aotearoa, and the global indigenous community. Filmmaking is an amazing privilege. We feel a responsibility to amplify the voices of indigenous storytellers, and encourage others to do so as well. Thank you to TIFF for this incredible opportunity to represent our people; past, present and future generations to come."

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Making its international premiere in the Primetime section is television series *Mystery Road: Origin*. Directed by Dylan River and filmed in Western Australia, the drama delves into the early years of *Mystery Road* fan favourite Detective Jay Swan with proud Nyikina man Mark Coles Smith cast as Young Jay.

Mystery Road: Origin director **Dylan River** said, “I am proud to be premiering *Mystery Road: Origin* at TIFF, as we prepare for the North American release of our series. My first short film *Nulla Nulla* played at the festival in 2015, it feels fitting that my first attempt at long form series go there too. Australia's first nations peoples and those of Canada share a very similar story of colonisation, today there are direct parallels of intergenerational trauma and the extreme disadvantages faced. Through our shared stories, we hope to bring attention to these issues and continue to heal.”

Also hosting its world premiere as part of the festival's Discovery section, *Carmen* is an Official Co-production between Australia and France and is a modern day retelling of one of history's most famous love stories and operas. Starring Melissa Barrera and Paul Mescal, the film is co-written by world-renowned choreographer and dancer, Benjamin Millepied and marks his debut as a feature director.

A history of Australian titles selected for TIFF is available [here](#).

Australian projects selected for TIFF 2022:

BLUEBACK

World Premiere

Arenamedia Pty Ltd

Director/Writer: Robert Connolly

Producers: Liz Kearney, James Grandison, Robert Connolly

Executive Producers: Andrew Myer, Robert Patterson

Cast: Mia Wasikowska, Radha Mitchell, Ilsa Fogg, Liz Alexander, Ariel Donoghue, Clarence Ryan, Pedrea Jackson, Erik Thomson, Eddie Baroo, Eric Bana

International Sales: HanWay Films

Australian Distributor: Roadshow Films

Synopsis: Written and directed by Robert Connolly, *Blueback* is based on the best-selling novel by Tim Winton, and is a timely tale about the ocean, a beautiful marine creature, and a young girl's power to change the world. Set on the coast of Western Australia, the family-friendly film centres on Abby, a child who befriends a magnificent wild blue groper while diving. When Abby realises that the fish is under threat, she must take on poachers to save her friend.

Media contact: [Asha Holmes](#)

CARMEN

World Premiere

Goalpost Pictures / Chapter 2

Director: Benjamin Millepied

Writers: Alexander Dinelaris, Benjamin Millepied, Loïc Barrera

Cast: Melissa Barrera, Paul Mescal, Rossy de Palma, Benedict Hardie

Producers: Rosemary Blight, Dimitri Rassam, Mimi Valdes

Synopsis: A modern-day retelling of one of history's most famous love stories and operas.

Media contact: [Tracey Mair Publicity](#)

SWEET AS

International Premiere

Arenamedia Pty Ltd

Director: Jub Clerc

Writers: Jub Clerc, Steve Rodgers

Producer: Liz Kearney

Executive Producers: Robert Connolly, Robert Patterson

Cast: Shantae Barnes-Cowan, Mark Coles Smith, Ngaire Pigram, Carlos Sanson Jr, Pedrea Jackson, Mikayla Levy, Andrew Wallace and Tasma Walton

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Australian Distributor: CinemaPlus

International Sales: Sphere Films

Synopsis: The debut feature from writer/director Jub Clerc, inspired by her own experience, *Sweet As*, is a coming of age road movie seen through the eyes of Murra, a 16-year old Indigenous girl from Port Hedland in Western Australia.

Media contact: [Asha Holmes](#)

MYSTERY ROAD: ORIGIN

International Premiere

Bunya Productions

Director: Dylan River

Writers: Blake Ayshford, Steven McGregor, Kodie Bedford, Timothy Lee, Dylan River

Producers: Greer Simpkin, David Jowsey

Cast: Mark Coles Smith, Tuuli Narkle, Dan Henshall, Toby Leonard Moore, Steve Bisley, Salme Geransar, Clarence Ryan, Kelton Pell, Hayley McElhinney, Caroline Brazier

International Sales: All3media international

Australian Distributor: ABC

Synopsis: *Mystery Road: Origin* delves into the early years of fan favourite Detective Jay Swan with proud Nyikina man Mark Coles Smith cast as Young Jay. It's 1999, and Constable Jay Swan, a charismatic young officer arrives at his new station. Fresh from the city and tipped for big things, Jay might be the new copper, but he's not new to this town. His estranged father Jack lives here, as does the woman who will change his life forever, Mary. *Mystery Road: Origin* explores how a tragic death, an epic love, and the brutal reality of life as a police officer straddling two worlds, form the indelible mould out of which will emerge, Detective Jay Swan.

Media contact: [Rachel Glaister](#)

WE ARE STILL HERE

International Premiere

No Coincidence Media / Mārama Production

Directors: Beck Cole, Danielle MacLean, Dena Curtis, Tim Worrall, Richard Curtis, Miki Magasiva, Mario Gaoa, Chantelle Burgoyne, Tracey Rigney, Renae Maihi

Writers: Danielle MacLean, Dena Curtis, Tim Worrall, Richard Curtis, Miki Magasiva, Mario Gaoa, Tiraroa Reweti, Chantelle Burgoyne, Tracey Rigney, Renae Maihi, Samuel Nuggin-Paynter

Producers: Mitchell Stanley, Toni Stowers, Mia Henry Teirney

Cast: Meyne Wyatt, Megan Wilding, Clarence Ryan, Robert Taylor, Sean Mununggurr, Leonie Whyman, Tioreore Ngatai-Melbourne, Villa Lemanu, Lisa Flanagan, Calvin Tuteao, Evander Brown, Willow Rupapera, Bas Te Hira, Deborah Brown, Serene Dubs Yunupingu, Oriini Kaipara

Australian Distributor: Dark Matter

Synopsis: Through the eyes of eight protagonists, *We Are Still Here* traverses 1000 years from past, present, and future to explore stories of kinship, loss, grief, and resilience. But ultimately, it shows the strength of love and hope to overcome shared traumas that Indigenous people from Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific have continued to face. In spite of colonialism, racism, imperialism and the attempted erasure of Indigenous lives, WE ARE STILL HERE.

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