Australian film talent making waves at the 2017 Berlinale

Wednesday 18 January 2017: Screen Australia congratulates the filmmakers who have been selected to take part in the 67th Berlin International Film Festival in 2017.

Eight Australian films - Casting JonBenet, RED DOG: True Blue, EMO the Musical, Monsieur Mayonnaise, After the Smoke, Wolfe, Smashed and Wutharr, Saltwater Dreams - have so far been announced for inclusion in the festival, affectionately known as Berlinale.

In addition, three Australians - producer Lee Matthews (EMO the Musical), director Tony Radevski and editor Anthony Cox - have been chosen to participate in the concurrent Berlinale Talents professional development program for emerging filmmakers.

“The fact that two feature films will be making their European debuts at Berlinale hot on the heels of screenings at Sundance Film Festival, and another two features will be celebrating their international premieres in Berlin, is testament to the strength of our home-grown filmmaking talent and the universal appeal of Australian storytelling,” said Screen Australia CEO, Graeme Mason.

“If this weren’t impressive enough, Kitty Green’s documentary Casting JonBenet has been picked up by Netflix prior to having even screened. This is surely a dream run for any contemporary filmmaker.”

Casting JonBenet, from Australian director Kitty Green, will make its European screen debut in Berlinale’s prestigious Panorama independent cinema program. Green’s 2013 film Ukraine is Not a Brothel was invited to appear at the Venice Film Festival that year and screened at over 50 festivals internationally. Her latest documentary offering shines a light on the unsolved death of six-year-old American beauty queen JonBenet Ramsey which remains one of the world’s most sensational child murder cases. Casting JonBenet has recently been acquired by Netflix and will also screen at Sundance Film Festival this month where Green is currently undertaking a Sundance Institute fellowship. Casting JonBenet received support from Screen Australia through the Documentary Development and Producer programs.

“I’m both surprised and excited to see a film as unique as ours getting global attention and can’t wait for it to be available on Netflix for everyone to see,” said Kitty Green. “I am so grateful to our Australian crew for their dedication to this project. Their support and the support from Screen Australia has been invaluable in pulling this project together.”

RED DOG: True Blue - the prequel to 2011’s global hit Red Dog, from director Kriv Stenders (Kill Me Three Times, Boxing Day) and screenwriter Daniel Taplitz - will also have its European premiere at Berlinale, opening the Generation Kplus kids’ film program. The quintessentially Australian film tells the story of 11-year-old Mick who, growing up on his grandfather’s lonely cattle station in the remote Pilbara, finds myth, adventure and friendship in a dusty kelpie pup that would go on to become legendary. RED DOG: True Blue is currently in local cinemas nationally and will soon screen at Sundance. It received Feature Production funding from Screen Australia.

AACTA-nominated feature-length documentary Monsieur Mayonnaise, from director Trevor Graham, follows Australian artist and filmmaker Philippe Mora as he investigates the intriguing past of his parents - Parisian-born Melbourne artist Mirka Mora, and his late father Georges Mora whose code-name while serving in the French Resistance inspired the title of the film. Featuring mad artists, legendary mimes, real life heroes, Nazi villains and baguettes, Monsieur Mayonnaise will have its international premiere as part of Berlinale’s Culinary Cinema program. It was supported through Screen Australia’s Documentary Development and Production funding programs.

EMO the Musical - from Australian writer, director and composer Neil Triffett - is a tale of forbidden high school love between a shy suicidal Emo kid and a chipper Christian activist. Since appearing at Berlinale as a short film in 2014 where it won a Special Mention in the festival’s Generation 14plus program for young audiences, the story has been reincarnated as a feature which will have its international premiere in the same section at Berlinale again this year. First playing to audiences at Melbourne International Film Festival in 2016, EMO the Musical received Feature Development and Production funding from Screen Australia.

“It’s wonderful to come full circle,” said Neil Triffett. “We received such a terrific response to the short from Berlinale and its audiences in 2014, now to be able to return with the feature film is very exciting.”

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Also selected for Generation 14plus are three Australian shorts - *After the Smoke*, *Wolfe* and *Smashed*.

**After the Smoke** - from writer/director Nick Waterman and co-writer/composer Bertie Blackman - puts ritualised masculinity under the spotlight, as a drama unfolds during a gathering of locals at a rodeo in a remote outback mining town. Exploring Australian identity through personal narratives, Waterman’s films have appeared at Palm Springs International ShortFest and Flickerfest International Film Festival, and have been part of special screenings for Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week.

**Wolfe** is a short documentary from producer/director Claire Randall, a recent graduate of Griffith University’s Film and Screen Media course. Motivated by her own encounter with mental illness as a teenager, Randall’s film explores a young man’s rocky journey through adolescence with undiagnosed schizophrenia, and the relationship with his imaginary friend and ally, Mister Wolfe, that sustained him.

Adelaide writer/director Sean Lahiff’s coming-of-age thriller *Smashed* is a cautionary tale of male antics veering horribly out of control at an end-of-high school party. His previous short film *Too Dark* was nominated for a Grand Jury prize at Seattle Shorts Film Festival. Lahiff has worked as an editor on major feature titles including *Wolf Creek 2* and *Jungle*, and as a visual effects editor on a number of blockbusters for Rising Sun Pictures. *Smashed* will have its world premiere at Berlinale.

The Karrabing Film Collective’s work *Wutharr, Saltwater Dreams* recounts an Indigenous family’s journey down the remote far north coast of Australia, during which their boat breaks down and they are left stranded in the bush to reflect on the demands and conflicts of contemporary Indigenous life. Comprising five 10-minute films shot by members of the grassroots collective on iPhones, the work has been selected to screen in Forum Expanded which brings together films dealing with abstract realities. Another of Karrabing’s works, *Wutharr*, featured in the Biennale of Sydney in 2016.

The strong presence of Australian filmmakers at Berlinale coincides with the beginning of a year of official celebrations focusing on Australia’s relationship with Germany. The Australian Government’s *Australia Now Germany 2017* program is a cultural partnership designed to promote creative excellence, diversity and innovation through international collaboration.

More Australian Berlinale selections are expected to be announced soon, following staggered news of line-up inclusions over recent weeks.

Germany’s 67th Berlin International Film Festival will screen at venues across Berlin from 9-19 February 2017.

For more information visit [www.berlinale.de](http://www.berlinale.de).