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Screen Australia, SBS and NITV announce Digital Originals shortlist for 2023

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 10 November 2023: Screen Australia, SBS and National Indigenous Television (NITV) have selected 10 projects to progress in the first round of this year's Digital Originals initiative. Now in its fourth year, the initiative is aimed at developing exciting and innovative short-form drama projects to premiere as a single hour-long episode program on SBS On Demand, SBS VICELAND and NITV, from screen creatives historically under-represented in the sector.

The 10 teams selected are currently attending a workshop in Melbourne hosted by Screen Australia, SBS and NITV, to provide them with an opportunity to work on narrative writing skills and develop their projects to align with the SBS Charter, SBS Commissioning Equity and Inclusion Guidelines, and SBS and NITV platforms - ultimately culminating in a pitch to Screen Australia, SBS and NITV. Up to five projects will then be selected to take their projects into further development, and from these up to three will later be chosen for production funding and commissioning with SBS, NITV and Screen Australia.

Screen Australia Head of Online and Games, **Lee Naimo** said, "Digital Originals is a genuine talent escalator for emerging and under-represented creative talent in Australia. This initiative offers participants a truly unique opportunity to not only create a premium online series, but to also learn from the best in the business and develop their projects in a nurturing environment. We're absolutely thrilled to continue our partnership with SBS and NITV to deliver Digital Originals and most importantly, continue to help elevate the careers of all the creators we'll have in the room over the next couple of days."

SBS Scripted Commissioning Editor, **Loani Arman** said, "We're thrilled to be back for another round of Digital Originals and warmly welcome the next crop of teams. The Digital Originals initiative is an unbeatable career pathway for creative talent from excluded or under-represented backgrounds who are burning to tell stories that are rich in culture, courageous in their points of view, and delivered with a level of excellence that sees their stories connect with audiences here in Australia and around the world. We can't wait to work closely with the teams to support them in developing their projects, along with our initiative partners, Screen Australia and NITV."

NITV's Head of Commissions, **Marissa McDowell**, added, "The Digital Originals initiative assists in creating career pathways and elevating First Nations creatives, by providing meaningful support for emerging talent, and a platform to share contemporary stories from fresh perspectives. I'm once again looking forward to seeing all that's ahead for this year's cohort."

The selected Digital Originals projects and teams for the workshop, are:

- **Blak Coffee:** Dynamic Aunty Lauren and her headstrong but wayward niece Alysha strive for success in their mobile coffee van in a competitive industry, enticing caffeinators with their special bush blend. But the inconvenient arrival of a space alien who looks just like a Hollywood celebrity makes it ultra-challenging for them. Team: Edoardo Crismani, Colleen Raven Strangways, Josh Trevorrow.
- **Boundary's End:** Two Blak Queens living on Boundary St, are thrust into the unknown when their onsite landlord dabbles in spellcasting, accidentally blurring the boundary between reality and fantasy. Now at the centre of a fairy-tale with a confused prince and his esquire, they'll need to complete wacky quests in order to find normality again. Team: Kisha Broome, Miriam Dynevor.
- **Jennifer Eric is Cancelled:** When trans comedian Jennifer Eric suddenly becomes a viral sensation, she must navigate fame, success and true love at a breakneck pace - begging the question of who will be there for her when it all comes to a crashing halt. Team: Chloe Black, Olivia Bilic, Claudia Holmes.
- **Fish Boi:** Kiko 'Fish Boi' Dela Cruz takes audiences on a wild ride through clan, crew and culture - delivering fish for his family's Filipino mini-mart, while scheming his way to 'escape the West'. Team: Robertino Zambrano, Dulce Aguilar.

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- **Dismissable:** When their local beauty pageant becomes disability-only, disabled Alana and her able-bodied sister Nicky clash over whether to make it a success or take it down. As the disabled community competes for the crown, sometimes true equality is getting to be as shallow and backstabbing as everyone else. Team: Rhian Wilson Ruge, Artemis Munoz, Alistair Baldwin.
- **Influenced:** Eric, a charismatic paraplegic motivational speaker, is on the cusp of his biggest national tour yet. But when mysterious messages from his deceased ex-girlfriend begin to surface, they threaten to shatter the carefully constructed facade of Eric's inspirational empire. Over six pivotal days, as the pressure mounts and his empire teeters on the edge of collapse, Eric must take drastic measures to take back control of his narrative. Team: Isaac Elliott, Lucy Knox.
- **Lingered:** When outsider Darcy returns to their regional hometown after transitioning gender, they reunite with their semi-estranged mother Nora to help sell the family home. But after stepping inside, Darcy discovers that Nora's actually been hiding someone Darcy thought they'd never have to meet again. Team: AP Pobjoy, Cyna Strachan, Kirsty Fisher, Jean Tong, Liam Heyen.
- **Little Korea:** A film crew follows a naïve Korean migrant single mother who embarks on a journey to conquer the food industry in the brutally competitive Korean restaurant community. Team: Lark Lee, David Gim, Katrina Irawati Graham.
- **Scrubbers:** A Black-owned roadhouse based in the Nullabor plains is run by two Islander families. The Nullabor road connects East and West and it attracts tourists, wild animals, truckies and a whole lot of misfits - a verified recipe for strange things to happen. Team: Iya Ware, Emele Ugavule, Tommy Misa.
- **Six Suspects:** A prized Indonesian ruby brooch, entrusted by the city's mayor to the Melbourne Fashion Gala Festival for its grand finale runway, vanishes just before its unveiling by local hijabi model and showstopper, Inayah Muhammad. Suspect 1# Inayah Muhammad. Team: Kauthar Abdulalim, Nazli Sevinc, Santilla Chingaibe.

The Digital Originals initiative continues to prove itself as an effective stepping-stone for creators to advance their skills, and as a launch-pad for their projects to attract local interest and break into international markets. Recent recipients include [Night Bloomers](#), which premiered on SBS On Demand and SBS VICELAND last month; [Appetite](#), which was selected as one of 10 series' in the Short Form Competition at [Canneseries 2023](#); and [Latecomers](#), which was among six series featured in the Short Forms Competition at [Series Mania](#) in Lille, France this year - with both [Appetite](#) and [Latecomers](#) being the only Australian productions selected for each of the prestigious festivals and this week were both announced as finalists in C21's [International Drama Awards](#) for Newform Drama Series. [Appetite](#) has also been nominated for a [Rose d'Or](#) this week. Alumni of Digital Originals have also gone on to take on key creative roles across SBS original series and elsewhere in the industry, including, producer Liam Heyen ([Latecomers](#), [Erotic Stories](#)), director Madeleine Gottlieb ([Erotic Stories](#)), Mohini Herse ([Appetite](#)) who will soon direct [Four Years](#) for SBS, Stevie Cruz-Martin ([The Tailings](#), [Safe Home](#)), as well as Corrie Chen and Michelle Law ([Homecoming Queens](#)), and Dylan River ([Robbie Hood](#)).

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