

2017 Year in Review and 2018 Preview

Monday 22 January 2018

FEATURE FILM

Today the Motion Picture Distributors Association of Australia (MPDAA) released the finalised 2017 box office figures, confirming Academy Award® Best Picture nominee [Lion](#) was the top earning Australian film at the local box office, taking \$29.5m. The result sees *Lion* go into the history books, becoming the [5th all-time biggest Australian film](#) at the local box office, having propelled Australian films to a 4.1% share in 2017. *Lion* took \$177.94m[^] worldwide across 57 territories including Australia.

The top five Australian films at the local box office were rounded out by [Red Dog: True Blue](#) (\$5.9m in addition to \$1.6m taken in 2016), [Jasper Jones](#) (\$2.7m), [Dance Academy](#) (\$2.1m) and documentary [Mountain](#) (\$2m).

Box Office: 2017 Top Ten Australian Films

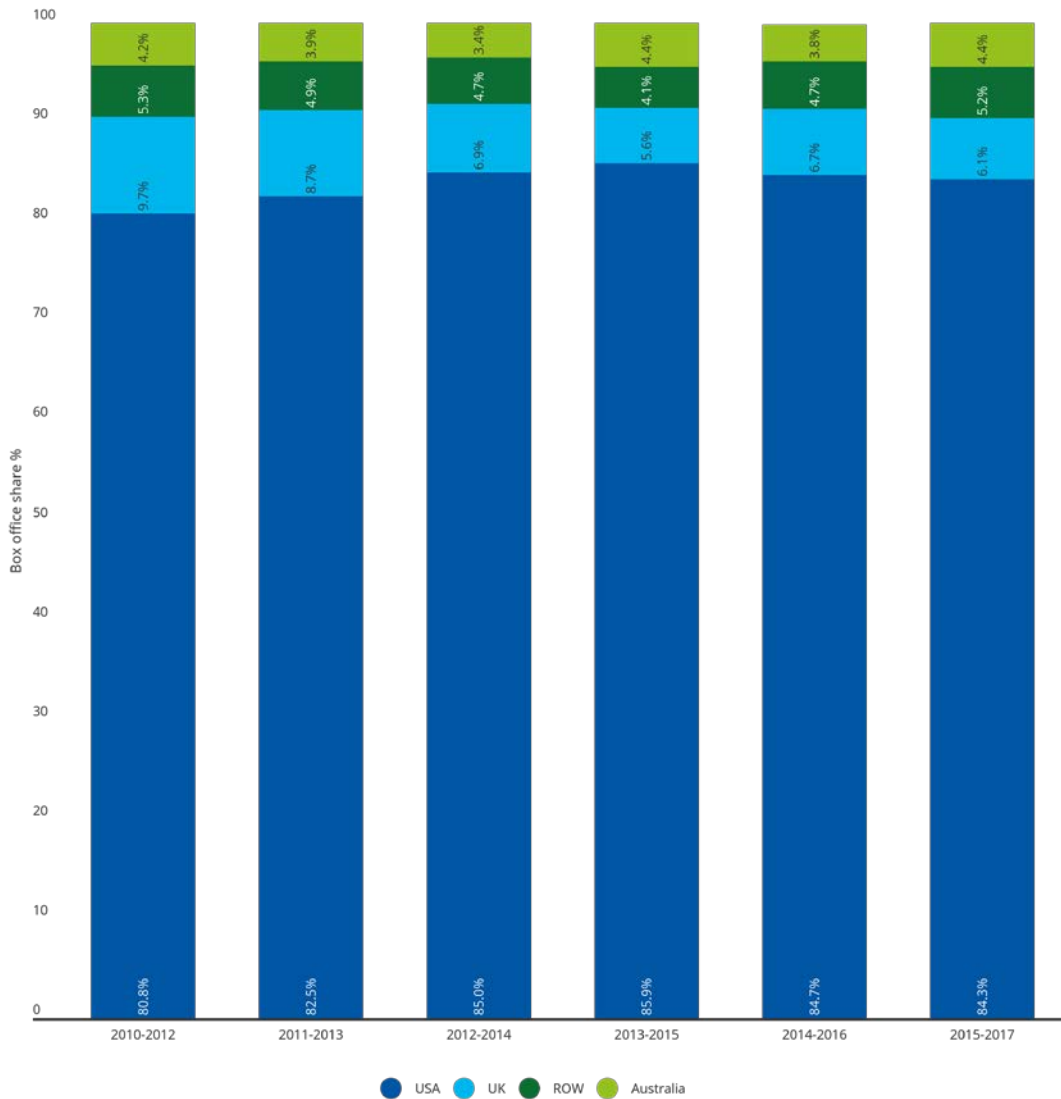
Title	Release Date	2017 Gross	Cum. Gross	Strategy
Lion	19/01/2017	\$29,464,072	\$29,545,626	Wide
Red Dog: True Blue	26/12/2016	\$5,950,186	\$7,542,084	Wide
Jasper Jones	2/03/2017	\$2,703,451	\$2,703,451	Wide
Dance Academy	6/04/2017	\$2,114,801	\$2,114,801	Wide
Mountain	21/09/2017	\$2,023,873	\$2,023,873	Specialty
Ali's Wedding	31/08/2017	\$1,399,897	\$1,402,702	Specialty
Three Summers	2/11/2017	\$792,809	\$796,168	Mainstream
Hacksaw Ridge	3/11/2016	\$689,489	\$8,857,936	Wide
Don't Tell	18/05/2017	\$409,946	\$409,946	Specialty
Rip Tide	14/09/2017	\$358,757	\$358,757	Specialty

Note: Data courtesy of MPDAA. Blockbuster (400+ prints), Wide (200-399 prints), Mainstream (100-199 prints), Specialty (20-99 prints), Limited (0-19 prints).

Collectively Australian films took \$49.4m at the local box office in 2017. Screen Australia uses a stretch target of 4.5% box office share across a [three-year rolling average](#), with 2017's result of 4.4% coming in just below that figure.



BOX OFFICE SHARE: 3-YEAR ROLLING AVERAGE



“2017 was a great year for Australian film and *Lion* in particular deserved not only its critical success, but its commercial success, which was derived from a well-planned, global strategy,” noted Graeme Mason, CEO of Screen Australia.

“However, the decade-long trend of indie films being squeezed into smaller releases continues, resulting in these films earning less at the box office. In 2007, blockbusters took around 23% of the Australian box office, but ten years later [they took over 50%](#).”

“That trend is even more apparent when you look at films playing on less than 200 screens, which in 2007 were jostling for a 33% share of the box office, but in 2017 they [didn't even reach 14%](#). And it's not just Aussie films, but indie films from all countries that are feeling the pressure. For example, looking at the non-Australian Best Picture Oscar® nominees in the period, you had *Manchester by the Sea* do \$3.1m in Australia, *Fences* did \$1.2m and the category winner *Moonlight* on \$2.5m. All critically acclaimed, remarkable films doing significantly less box office than they would have a decade ago.”

Media enquiries: Scott Dawkins
 +61 2 8113 5886 | +61 403 937 074 | scott.dawkins@screenaustralia.gov.au
www.screenaustralia.gov.au



“These are the new rules in which we must compete, so at Screen Australia we’re not only looking for exceptional Australian stories, but stories with a considered path to audience at the cinema, and then beyond the cinema.”

TELEVISION

In terms of television, the combined 28-day consolidated 2017 TV ratings for metropolitan and regional areas reported by OzTAM and RegionalTAM confirm [The Doctor Blake Mysteries telemovie Family Portrait](#) (ABC) was the top rating Australian drama, closely followed by the [Hoges: The Paul Hogan Story](#) (Seven).

Notably Australian film on television remains popular, with [The Dressmaker](#) attracting 1.2 million viewers for its free to air debut.

Ratings: 2017 Top Ten Australian Dramas

	Title	Network	Ave. audience (metro + regional)
1	Doctor Blake Telemovie: Family Portrait	ABC	1,600,000
2	Hoges: The Paul Hogan Story	Seven	1,550,000
3	True Story with Hamish & Andy	Nine	1,500,000
4	Doctor Blake Mysteries series 5	ABC	1,450,000
5	Utopia series 3	ABC	1,407,000
6	Doctor Doctor series 2	Nine	1,300,000
7	Home and Away	Seven	1,230,000*
8	Blue Murder: Killer Cop	Seven	1,210,000
9	House of Bond	Nine	1,128,000
10	House Husbands series 5	Nine	1,127,000

Note: Full source notes at end of release. *28 day figures for episodes screening in Dec are not yet available so subject to change.

Screen Australia funded or has funded previous seasons of seven of the top ten Australian TV dramas.

“It’s encouraging to see Australian TV drama productions being so well received by local audiences,” said **Graeme Mason**. “We’re also noting changes in the way people are consuming Australian stories. For instance the ABC’s strategy of making the critically acclaimed series [Seven Types of Ambiguity](#) available to binge-view on the day of broadcast was rewarded, with over 100,000 views of each episode on iview.”

TV documentary had a strong year with two Screen Australia-funded titles exceeding one million viewers. “Special mention must go to [War on Waste](#), which created a national discussion on the environmental impact of rubbish, and quite literally saw people ditching disposable coffee cups and major businesses phasing out plastic bags,” said Graeme Mason.

Ratings: Top 5 Screen Australia-Funded Documentaries

Due to complexities in the definition of documentary, only Screen Australia titles are reported here.

Title	Network	Ave. audience (metro + regional)
War On Waste (eps 1-4)	ABC	1,275,000
David Stratton's Stories of Australian Cinema	ABC	1,010,000
Stop Laughing... This Is Serious series 2	ABC	904,000
Ice Wars	ABC	739,000
Making Muriel	ABC	665,000

Note: Full source notes at end of release. *War On Waste* episode four was a follow-up to the original series.

Although ratings figures aren't available, the high-profile Netflix global acquisitions of Australian documentaries [Casting Jon Benet](#) and [Barbecue](#) were other notable commercial successes.

ONLINE

Since its inception, Screen Australia has invested over \$25m in 150+ digital originals. The 2017 [top trending YouTube video in Australia](#) was the [Superwog Pilot](#), garnering [over 1m view in four days](#). The 23 minute episode was funded through [Skip Ahead](#), and beat out high profile international competitors such as *Carpool Karaoke*. Adelaide comedy duo and [fellow Skip Ahead alumni](#), The [RackaRacka](#) took home the inaugural AACTA Award for best online video or series.

Queensland-based production company Ludo received its [second International Emmy®](#) for its ABC ME series [Doodles](#).

"Online is at a really interesting juncture, where we are increasingly seeing networks wanting to acquire the rights to digital originals that have already premiered online, or commission additional seasons for TV," said Graeme Mason. "We're working very closely with our creators as they navigate issues around creative control, exclusivity and ensuring their audience stays with them through any platform change."

LOOKING AHEAD FOR 2018

In feature film, 2018 kicks off with high profile titles including all-star comedy [Swinging Safari](#) in cinemas now, and soon period western [Sweet Country](#) (25 January), [The BBQ](#) (22 February), the Spierig's thriller [Winchester](#) starring Helen Mirren (22 February) and Simon Baker's film adaptation of [Breath](#) (3 May). The eagerly anticipated films [Storm Boy](#), [Hotel Mumbai](#) and [Cargo](#) do not have premiere dates as yet.

"Australian film releases are weighted towards the start of the year, and in particular I must make mention of Warwick Thornton's *Sweet Country*," said Graeme Mason. "Aside from garnering critical acclaim and [picking up major festival awards](#) in Venice and Toronto, *Sweet Country* is an incredibly significant story for our nation and for us personally at Screen Australia as we celebrate 25 years of Indigenous screen funding."

Television in 2018 will feature some of the most eagerly awaited Australian titles in years, including Foxtel's [Picnic at Hanging Rock](#) which has already sold to Amazon Prime in the US and the BBC in the UK. The television remake of [Mystery Road](#) starring Aaron Pedersen, Judy Davis and Deborah Mailman will hit the ABC and SBS has two new premium dramas airing this year - [Safe Harbour](#) and [Dead Lucky](#) (starring Rachel Griffiths).

[Romper Stomper](#) premiered on 1 January and became Stan's biggest Australian premiere, whilst crime drama [Bite Club](#) will come to Nine later in the year. FX Australia's first local commission [Mr Inbetween](#) sees Nash Edgerton at the helm of the six-part crime drama, with Underbelly returning to Nine, taking on the life of notorious Mark 'Chopper' Read in [Underbelly Files: Chopper](#).

The popularity of telemovies is set to continue, with the ABC's [Riot](#) tracking the origins of the Australian gay rights movement, set to premiere on 25 February. Seven's [Olivia Newton-John: Hopelessly Devoted To You](#) will star Delta Goodrem in the title role and come later in the year.

There has been an upswing in comedy production, with new titles [Sando](#) (ABC), [Squinters](#) (ABC), [Street Smart](#) (Ten), [Homecoming Queens](#) (SBS), [Back in Very Small Business](#) (ABC) all on the way. Digital original comedies [News Junkies](#) and [Sheilas](#) are both expected to be released this year, after progressing from Gender Matters Brilliant Stories development into production.

There is a swathe of new children's programming as well, including [The New Legends of Monkey](#) (ABC/Netflix), [The Bureau of Magical Things](#) (Ten), [The Strange Chores](#) (ABC), [Spongo, Fuzz and Jalapena](#) (ABC/Disney), [Grace Beside Me](#) (NITV) and documentary [Teenage Boss](#) (ABC).

The documentary renaissance continues with [Hawke: The Larrikin & The Leader](#) (ABC), [Untold Australia series 3](#) (SBS), [Uncharted with Sam Neill](#) (Foxtel), [Black Divaz](#) (NITV), [Making Child Prodigies](#) (ABC), [Nolan - The Man and the Myth](#) (ABC) only a small selection of the true stories set for 2018 air dates.

"It's great to see so many new Australian titles hitting our TV screens this year, and networks investing in big-budget drama that can reach people beyond our shores," said Graeme Mason. "The changing media landscape represents an incredible opportunity for the Australian industry to be bold and take creative risks, with the aim of creating stories that are uniquely ours, but can also travel."

The [Australian and Children's Screen Content Review](#) is expected to report in the first half of 2018, and the next Gender Matters [KPI tracking data](#) will be released in August.

DATA CREDITS

When quoting data from this media release, please credit as below:

- **Box office:** Motion Picture Distributors Association of Australia (Australian) and Rentrak (global). Note box office and ratings figures have been rounded to one decimal place.
- **Television ratings:** OzTAM and RegionalTAM, 5-city-metro, combined markets, total people, average audience, consolidated 28, as at Jan 8 2017. Top 10 TV drama viewers (metro): 1 million, 1 million, 1 million, 990,000, 1 million, 855,000, 750,000, 811,000, 793,000, 768,000; *The Dressmaker* (metro): 775,000. Top 5 Screen Australia funded documentary viewers (metro): 892,000, 721,000, 642,000, 472,000, 459,000.

Metropolitan data is copyright to OzTAM and Regional data is copyright to RegionalTAM and may not be reproduced, published or communicated in whole or part without the prior consent of OzTAM or RegionalTAM.

- **VPM source (used for *Seven Types of Ambiguity* iView figure):** OzTAM Video Player Measurement - 28 day. VPM Rating: total minutes played divided by content length. Top programs are for episodes with a minimum length of 15 minutes. The report includes catch up minutes only and is not restricted to five city metro. Live streaming viewing is not included.
- [^]*Lion* worldwide box office includes USD\$118m international box office, converted to AUD148.44 on 18/01/18.