

Thursday, 28 February 2019

Diverse NSW storytelling boosted through \$445k investment with ABC

Create NSW has today announced the screen practitioners sharing a near half million-dollar investment to develop and produce a range of diverse screen stories in partnership with the ABC.

Across three initiatives, investment of \$445,000 from Create NSW and the ABC will enable over 530 NSW-based screen production jobs through funding for Western Sydney-based teams to produce narrative comedy shorts for youth audiences and the development of half hour drama and VR projects.

“From vampire slayers in Parramatta, destigmatising mental illness in regional towns and a VR haunting experience, this funding is enabling local employment through the creation and development of a series of intriguing and important stories for NSW and beyond,” said Create NSW Acting Director Screen Investment, Engagement and Attraction Sally Regan.

“We’re extremely proud to be able to encourage such diversity and excited about seeing these stories reach a broad range of Australian audiences through our collaboration with the ABC,” she said.

Through investment of \$225,000 Create NSW, the ABC and the Western Sydney creative hub Information+Cultural Exchange (I.C.E.)’s *Digital First Comedy Initiative* will fund three shorts with \$75,000 each across teams that include a Western Sydney-based key creative (writer, director, producer), with each premiering on ABC iview in 2019.

\$100,000 in *Half Hour Drama Development* initiative funding will deliver \$20,000 each to four NSW-based teams to develop distinctive character driven, 30-minute drama series with heart and humour, and fund a Masterclass workshop for all teams.

Finally, \$120,000 in *360 Vision Virtual Reality Development* investment will allow four teams \$30,000 each to develop content across VR & AR technologies spanning ghost tales, parkour experiences, regional loneliness and mental illness.

Michael Carrington, ABC Acting Director Entertainment & Specialist, said: “As the nation’s largest creative employer the ABC, in collaboration with Create NSW, is proud to support Australian creatives in bringing their bold content to life. The richness and diversity of these projects across comedy, drama and VR technologies will showcase homegrown talent and stories for our audiences across the country.”

I.C.E. Executive Director, John Kirkman added, “I.C.E. is pleased to be partnering with Create NSW and the ABC on the Digital First Comedy Initiative. Stories from Western Sydney-based creatives are universal, unique, funny and well able to resonate with local and global audiences and communities.”

Details of the funded projects are listed on the following pages.

ENDS

Create NSW, ABC and I.C.E. *Digital First Comedy Initiative* – recipient teams

The selected shorts that will premiere on ABC iview cover carpark adventures of three women in Western Sydney, the tales of hijabis enduring culture clash and vampire slayers in Parramatta.

About the projects:

CARPARK CLUBBING

Genre: Comedy

Company: Bistro

Key Creatives:

- **Director:** Sarah Bassiuoni
- **Producers:** Elliot Clifford
- **Writers:** Monica Kumar, Tasnim Hossain and Sophea Op

Synopsis:

With nowhere else to go for fun, three young women from Western Sydney individually try to escape their responsibilities by hanging out in the carpark of a Western Sydney doughnut shop, only to fall into a surprising friendship triangle and a series of outrageous situations.

Key Creative Team Summary:

Co-creators Monica Kumar, Tasnim Hossain and Sophea Op bonded over a shared love of comedy, hot chocolate and the utter despair of having nowhere to go dancing in Western Sydney. Each has enjoyed success on the stage in recent years with Monica recently part of Belvoir Theatre's *Counting and Cracking*, Tasnim's work staged by ATPY in Australia, and aboard at the 24:7 Theatre Festival in the UK, and Sophea creating work for Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre and the Powerhouse Youth Theatre. *Carpark Clubbing* is being directed by Sarah Bassiuoni and produced by Elliot Clifford, who have both worked on previous shorts.

HALAL GURLS

Genre: Comedy/Drama

Company: In-Between Pictures

Key Creatives:

- **Director:** Vonne Patiag, Aanisa Vylet
- **Producer:** Petra Lovrencic, Vonne Patiag
- **Writer:** Hajer Al-Awsi, Frida Deguise, Sara Mansour, Vonne Patiag, Danielle Stamoulos, Aanisa Vylet

Synopsis:

Halal Gurls is a 6 x 6 minute comedy online series offering a candid look into the lives of three 20-something Hijabis living in Bankstown as they endure the unseen everyday culture clash between their faith and desire. These women are strong, smart and sassy - 100% certified.

Key Creative Team Summary:

The series is created and show-run by Vonne Patiag, an award-winning filmmaker based in Western Sydney. Originally developed with the Information + Cultural Exchange (ICE), *Halal Gurls* is co-produced by Petra Lovrencic and includes a writing roster of incredible women including Frida Deguise, Australia's first and only Hijabi stand-up comic, Sara Mansour, founder of The Bankstown Poetry Slam, Danielle Stamoulos, Hajer Al-awsi and Aanisa Vylet (playwright and star of *The Girl/The Woman*, NToP). The creative team are dedicated to writing and honest and nuanced portrayed of Hijabi women, an unseen story told with trademark wit and Western Sydney flair.

NIGHTWALKERS

Genre: Horror/Comedy

Company: Fideo Films Pty. Ltd

Key Creatives:

- **Director:** Adrian Castro

- **Producer:** Bee Cruse, Adrian Castro
- **Writer:** Taylor Davis, Georgina Neville, Adrian Castro

Synopsis:

Sam and Charlie Corey are vampire slaying sisters. With the increase of vampire related activity in Parramatta, the slayers uncover a sinister plot by the Master of the city, an age-old vampire hell bent on creating a vampire army. The slayers race against time to stop a vampire apocalypse

Key Creative Team Summary:

The original concept for *Nightwalkers* was created in 2008 as a feature script by Adrian Castro - *Tiger Cops* (2017) and in 2015 he teamed up with Taylor Davis *Hidden Peaks* (2018) to develop the concept further. Georgina Neville *Silent Agreement* (2017) was brought on board as a writer and actor to further develop the idea for the Digital First Comedy Initiative in 2018. Since then the team has brought on Producer, Bee Cruse *After The Apology* (2017) and two-time AACTA award winner Craig Anderson *Black Comedy* (2017), as development Producer, to strengthen the story and guide the production along.

Create NSW and ABC Half Hour Drama Development Initiative – recipient teams

The funded drama projects span a variety of irreverent, honest and often comedic themes that include the existential crisis of young adulthood, the frank and messy construct of family, dating life with a disability, and the destigmatisation of mental illness in regional towns.

About the projects:

ATTEMPTS

Genre: Dramedy

Company: Brooke Goldfinch and Corrie Chen

Key Creatives:

- **Writer & Director:** Brooke Goldfinch and Corrie Chen

Synopsis:

No longer able to claim youth as an excuse for their personal failings, two strangers - Brie Lark and Jo Lau - come together to confront adulthood head-on after revealing painful truths to their friends and family.

Key Creative Team Summary:

This is the first collaboration between award-winning filmmakers Brooke Goldfinch and Corrie Chen. Corrie is a highly sought-after director of Australian television (*Mustangs FC*, *Five Bedrooms*, *Sisters*) and directed and executive produced the online series *Homecoming Queens* (SBS On-Demand). Her work has won four ADG nominations and she won Best Directing at Melbourne WebFest 2018. Brooke’s narrative short films have played around the globe winning her ADG and AWGIE nominations and Best Director prizes at Sydney Film Festival’s Dendy Awards, at Flickerfest and St Kilda Film Festival. She was a director’s attachment to Ridley Scott on the set of *Alien: Covenant*.

MAELSTROM

Genre: Dramedy

Company: Typing Pool Productions

Key Creatives:

- **Producer:** Jane Allen
- **Writer:** Jane Allen and Stuart Page
- **Director:** Catriona McKenzie

Synopsis:

Christos and Stevie are close friends and business partners. He’s married with three enormous teenagers, and she’s childless and just been thrown out by her long-term girlfriend. Christos offers

Stevie refuge in the backyard studio, while his family camps in the remaining two rooms of his half-renovated house. She moves freely between being one of the boys with him, one of the girls with his wife, and a big kid with the teenagers. There's sex and drugs and rock and roll, Tinder and lesbian porn and football. Love and lovers. Laughter. Girls who like cars, and builder blokes who like singing Cyndi Lauper. Drunken dinner parties and parent/teacher nights. Family life in all its messy, hilarious, confusing glory.

Key Creative Team Summary:

Maelstrom is created by Jane Allen and inspired by her friendship and working relationship with writer Stuart Page, and the very different worlds they inhabit – it may even be a shameless plundering of their own lives. Or not. No one will ever know the truth. Not even the brilliantly subversive Catriona McKenzie, who leapt at the chance to come aboard as director, having worked with both Stuart and Jane on *The Secret Daughter*.

PERFECT

Genre: Buddy Comedy

Company: Endemol Shine Banks

Key Creatives:

- **Producer:** Imogen Banks and Alice Bell
- **Writer:** Alice Bell

Synopsis:

A companion comedy about the growing friendship between an unexpectedly-pregnant-single woman, who discovers her unborn baby has Down Syndrome, and a young man with Down Syndrome she encounters while considering what it would mean to keep the baby.

Key Creative Team Summary:

Perfect is helmed by long-time collaborators; producer Imogen Banks and screenwriter Alice Bell, whose collective credits include; *Offspring*, *The Beautiful Lie* and *Puberty Blues*. The series will be developed and produced by Endemol Shine Banks in collaboration with NSW-based Bus Stop Films; an inclusive production company focused on providing industry experience and opportunities to people with intellectual disabilities. *Perfect* will be co-produced by Banks and Bell with Bell attached to write the series.

THE S WORD

Genre: Drama

Company: Scorpio Media

Key Creatives:

- **Writer & Producer:** Brooke Wilson and Hamilton Budd

Synopsis: A young woman is determined to hang on to her sense of humour and remain 'normal' in the eyes of her small coastal town as she struggles with the unexpected, surreal and nightmarish onset of schizophrenia.

Key Creative Team Summary:

Brooke Wilson and Hamilton Budd are a husband and wife writing and producing team. Brooke has been a producer for over 20 years, with Australian and international credits spanning film, television, advertising and radio. She produced the feature film *15 Amore* as well as numerous award-winning shorts, was the co-script producer of *Home and Away* and has also written for *A Place to Call Home* and *Neighbours*. Hamilton graduated from AFTRS with a MA in Screenwriting. He was series script producer of *Home and Away* until 2017, with other credits including *McLeod's Daughters*, *Packed to the Rafters*, and *A Place to Call Home*.

Create NSW and ABC 360Vision Development Initiative – recipient teams

The proposed 360Vision development projects explore a diverse range of subjects, including mental illness in a high fantasy environment, the exploration of existential loneliness in rural life, the

troublesome ghost of a grandma in a family with secrets, and the leadership of an inspirational Parkour athlete in Sydney's Western suburbs.

ALOFT

Genre: Drama

Company: Last Frame Productions

Key Creatives:

- **Producer:** Taylor Litton-Strain
- **Writer & Director:** Lester Francois
- **Technical Leads:** Supernaut & ALTVFX

Synopsis: *Aloft* is a short meditative film with minimal dialogue. The heart of the story is a teenage girl who herds sheep on her family's farm. The land is lush, green and beautiful but she is alone. The next day her routine continues as she sits in a hill as the sheep graze – but to her surprise a hot air balloon appears over a nearby ridge and lands in the valley below.

Key Creative Team Summary: Lester Francois directed *Game Loading* (2015) a feature documentary about indie video game developers which had a theatrical release in the US, Berlin, Japan, Norway, Australia, Russia, Ireland, UK and Austria and was broadcast on SBS Viceland. Francois recently directed the short immersive VR experience *Rone* (2018), which was included in official selections at SXSW, Cannes NEXT, New York Film Festival, Sydney Film Festival and Busan Film Festival.

Taylor Litton-Strain produced the web series *Jade of Death* (2018) which was released internationally on YouTube (over 2 million views) and received wide acclaim at festival screenings worldwide, including a C21 Drama nomination, Best Series at International Academy of Web TV and Best Series OUTWebfest.

EXILE

Genre: Fantasy Drama

Company: Dreamr Studios

Key Creatives:

- **Producer & Director:** Pete Short
- **Writer:** Garth Nix
- **Technical Leads:** Shalloh James

Synopsis: *Exile* is an abstract look at one man's battle with drug addiction. Simon has fled his home and now lives alone in a frozen wasteland. For Simon, the temptation to delve deeper into the darkness seems more appealing than accepting his addiction and facing judgement from the ones he has left behind. His drug-fuelled hallucinations constantly taunt him, playing tricks on his mind. Unless he can overcome his addiction, he knows that it will eventually consume him. But to conquer it, he must face the monsters in his mind. *Exile* deals with themes of drug abuse, loneliness, vulnerability and redemption.

Key Creative Team Summary:

Pete Short is the director, producer and founder of Dreamr Studios, an Australian-based VR story studio. From Wagga Wagga, now based in Sydney his most recent production, *Lucid* (2018), was selected for the 2018 Venice Film Festival. In 2015 he was appointed as the CTO of UK-based VR story studio, Breaking Fourth. During his time in the UK he also became a spokesperson for VR storytelling, speaking at many events including London Design Week, DevelopVR and Kaleidoscope. Pete is passionate about his work and determined to make Australia the home of VR content.

Garth Nix is a NY Times bestselling author whose work has been translated into 42 languages. His most recent book is *Frogkisser!*, which is now being developed as a film by Twentieth Century Fox/Blue Sky Animation. His books include the *Old Kingdom* fantasy series, comprising *Sabriel*, *Lirael*, *Abhorsen*, *Clariel* and *Goldenhand*; science fiction novels *Shade's Children* and *A Confusion*

of *Princes*; and a regency romance with magic, *Newt's Emerald*. His novels for children include *The Ragwitch*; the six books of *The Seventh Tower* sequence; the *Keys to the Kingdom* series and others.

GRANDMA'S GHOST

Genre: Dramedy

Company: Paper Moose

Key Creatives:

- **Producer:** Maren Smith
- **Writer & Director:** Steve Anthopoulos
- **Technical Leads:** Michael Funnell and Maren Smith

Synopsis: It's one of humanity's oldest fears. Your dead ancestor watching you masturbate. In *Grandma's Ghost* you are a puritanical granny who recently kicked the bucket. Now you're haunting your family and are horrified to discover what they get up to behind closed doors. Marijuana. Masturbation. Non-missionary-position sex. It's an affront to the values you cherish.

Key Creative Team Summary:

Nick Hunter is the creative director at Paper Moose. He has most recently led the team into new territories of VR, having just completed an interactive animated game for CBA with Focus Creative. In his role as one of the in-house directors he has directed everything from VR and commercials to branded content and music videos.

Steve Anthopoulos is the writer/director of award-winning web series *Wingman* (2014), the winner of LA Webfest with over 950,000 hits on YouTube. Other credits include *Farid in the West* (2013) that travelled internationally and has directed a number of TVCs.

Creative producer Maren Smith is an emerging Australian film producer whose work includes the multi-award-winning feature film *One Less God* (2017) directed by Liam Worthington, award-winning short film *Window* (2016) and *Tomgirl* (2017) for Create NSW's *Generator Emerging Film Fund*.

Mike Funnell is a VR producer and post producer. Having worked in the creative industries for the last 15 years, he has worked across live music, podcasts, and public art/graffiti management. He started working with VR four years ago and has worked on approximately 20 VR projects as a producer and post producer. His recent producer credits include *Skillsroad Virtual Tour* (2018), *Inside Tokimba VR Documentary* (2019), and as post producer of the *Navita Virtual Tour* for UWS (2018).

MOVE

Genre: Social Realist Drama

Company: Yaara Bou Melham

Key Creatives:

- **Producer:** Brietta Hague
- **Writer:** Yaara Bou Melham, Ali Khadim
- **Director:** Yaara Bou Melham
- **Technical Leads:** TBC

Synopsis: Every Friday night in the suburbs of Sydney, a team of youths known as 'Team 9 Lives' scale buildings, jump off bridges and leap from buildings in Australia's grittiest streets. They're led by a young Iraqi-Thai Australian-born Parkour instructor Ali Khadim who's developed a way to instil fearlessness and motivation in young people from immigrant backgrounds through a life-changing movement philosophy that mixes parkour, martial arts and mindfulness. Through this immersive VR experience, users will join 'Team 9 Lives' and go through Kadhim's mental and physical training, gaining insight into growing up as an immigrant in Western Sydney in the process.

Key Creative Team Summary:

Brietta Hague and Yaara Bou Melham are experienced freelance journalists and fledgling documentary filmmakers. Hague's past work as a news and current affairs journalist, writer and producer includes multiple ABC News outlets, Al Jazeera and *The Investigative Artist* (2018). Yaara

Bou Melhem's credits include *The Investigative Artist* (2018), *Go Back To Where You Came From Live* (2018) and *Witness* (2015). The VR partner is currently being confirmed.

MEDIA CONTACT Kristoff Clark **E** kristoff.clark@create.nsw.gov.au **P** 02 8289 6408