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BREAKTHROUGH FILMMAKERS TAKE CENTRESTAGE AT SCREEN PRODUCERS' CONFERENCE

MPA and AFACT partners with Australian film community to support four more upcoming filmmakers

Sydney: Four talented Australian filmmakers have been funded to attend the Screen Producers Association of Australia (SPAA) Conference today, under a joint initiative developed by the Motion Picture Association (MPA), the Australian Federation Against Copyright Theft (AFACT), the Screen Producers Association of Australia (SPAA) and Screen NSW, Screen Queensland and Film Victoria.

Monique de Groot and Zyra McAuliffe from NSW, Della Churchill from Queensland and Rita Walsh from Victoria were acknowledged by their local state screen agencies as being filmmakers who would substantially benefit from attending the Conference, which is regarded as the premiere business convention for film, television and new media producers in Australia.

The filmmakers will make the most of the three day SPAA Conference to meet with delegates, attend seminars and further a range of projects that are currently in development, production and distribution.

The inaugural 2009 Breakthrough Filmmaker initiative assisted NSW filmmakers Angie Fielder, Jamie Hilton and Nathan Anderson, Kelly Chapman from Queensland and Polly Staniford from Victoria.

Transmedia filmmaker Nathan Anderson said: "Attending SPAA 2009 as part of the MPA Breakthrough Filmmaker program was a great honour and has been tremendously beneficial to elevating my profile in the industry. The major project that I took to the conference has now attracted strong interest from one of Australia's largest scripted drama production companies. The contacts, insights and learnings I gathered from the Conference have also been integral to the continued growth of my company, Envelop Entertainment."

"The Conference gave Polly and I direct access to a particular broadcaster we are targeting for a TV dramedy series we are developing," said NSW Producer Angie Fielder. "Based on their feedback, we have refined our pitch, attached a high profile head writer, attached Matchbox Pictures as EPs, and obtained some development funding to get the ball rolling. It really was off the back of those initial discussions at SPAA that we were able to see clearly how best to move the project forward."

Attending the Conference, Neil Gane, Executive Director AFACT, said: "The SPAA Conference is a tremendous place to do business, and is the ultimate networking event for filmmakers looking to advance their careers. I've been delighted to see how far our 2009 filmmakers have progressed with their projects, many of which have already charmed audiences on screens here and around the world.

"This year's filmmakers look set to make just as vivid an impression on the screen landscape: they are energetic, professional and committed to bringing to life some tremendous new ideas. I wish them well at the Conference and will eagerly await their projects coming to fruition."

Geoff Brown, Executive Director of SPAA, said: "The Screen Producers Association of Australia is proud to welcome the four recipients of this year's MPA/AFACT Breakthrough Filmmaker program to

the conference. The future of the screen industry is at a critical time in our development in terms of the new digital landscape, and SPAA is happy to be able to provide, by way of this group partnership, an opportunity for a new generation of filmmakers to attend the conference and engage with inspirational practitioners from around the world.”

Maureen Barron, CEO Screen Queensland, said: "Della Churchill is an exciting talent – creative and astute – and I know she'll make the most of the networking and creative exchange opportunities at the SPAA Conference. We congratulate Della on her MPA Breakthrough Filmmaker selection, and look forward to hearing her feedback after the conference."

Tania Chambers, CEO of Screen NSW, said: “Screen NSW congratulates the MPA for their foresight and generosity in supporting emerging filmmakers to attend SPAA Conference in 2010. SPAA Conference provides producers with invaluable market intelligence and the opportunity to learn from the world’s leading screen industry experts. We are delighted that Monique and Zyra have been selected from NSW and have no doubt that attending SPAA Conference in 2010 will enable them to develop creative and business partnerships that will assist them throughout their career.”

Sandra Sdraulig, CEO of Film Victoria, said: “Film Victoria supports our talented screen practitioners by providing professional development opportunities which enable them to further develop their creative and business skills. We’re thrilled that Rita has been supported by MPA and AFACT to attend SPAA this year. As a VCA graduate, producer of the short film Hugo and a recipient of a Film Victoria producer attachment with Jan Chapman Films, where she worked on the film Bright Star, it’s clear to us that Rita is a producer on the rise and we look forward to seeing her develop and produce her own slate of projects.”

The Motion Picture Association runs filmmaking initiatives and film workshops across the Asia Pacific region, including the MPA Breakthrough Filmmaker program at SPAA in Australia in 2009, and film workshops in Singapore (2008), Beijing (2007) and Hong Kong (2006).

In 2010, the MPA partnered with the Asia Pacific Film Awards (APSA) to create the MPA APSA Academy Film Fund. The Film Fund will be granted to four members of the APSA Academy, an influential body of filmmakers comprised of past APSA nominees, winners, Jury and Nominations Council members - many of the region’s most respected names in film. The inaugural recipients will be selected by a panel of industry experts and announced at the fourth annual APSA Ceremony scheduled to take place in Australia on Queensland’s Gold Coast on December 2, 2010. The fund is intended to stimulate production in the region, particularly at the development phase, among the 70 countries embraced by APSA.

About AFACT

AFACT works closely with industry, government, police and educational institutions to address copyright theft and protect the interests of the film and television industry as well as the interests of Australian movie fans. In 2009, State and Federal Police conducted 69 raids involving movie piracy and seized 194,233 pirated DVDs. They also seized 749 burners capable of producing over 18 million pirated DVDs a year with a potential street value of over \$94 million.

Australia’s copyright industries are the 3rd largest contributors as a percentage of GDP in the world, second only to the US and UK. In 2006/07 they contributed 10.3% GDP to Australia’s economy [up 66% since 1996], represented 8% of our employment and generated 4.1% of total exports. The film and TV industry in Australia alone contributed \$4.4 billion to GDP and supports 50,000 jobs, including small businesses under threat from movie and TV piracy, and independent cinemas, video rental stores and film and television producers across the country. In 2007, the film and TV sector contributed an estimated \$1.8 billion in tax to the Australian Government.

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