



Media Release

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Simon Baker announced as recipient of 2017 AACTA Trailblazer Award



Simon Baker as Sando, Ben Spence as Loonie and Samson Coulter as Pikelet in BREATH. Photo credit: Nic Duncan.

The Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts (AACTA) has today announced Australian actor and director **Simon Baker** as this year's recipient of the **AACTA Trailblazer Award**.

The Trailblazer Award will be presented to Simon at the 7th AACTA Awards Ceremony presented by Foxtel on Wednesday 6 December at The Star Event Centre in Sydney, telecast at 8:30pm on Channel 7.

Previously awarded to Rose Byrne and Isla Fisher, the AACTA Trailblazer Award recognises the achievements of an Australian screen practitioner whose body of work has served as an inspiration to others. The discretionary award, which is determined by the AFI | AACTA Board, acknowledges the recipient's valuable contribution to promoting Australian screen culture and excellence at home and abroad.

Throughout his career, **Simon Baker** has consistently showcased his diversity as a screen practitioner; masterfully transitioning from actor to director across film and television. First garnering international attention when he starred in the Academy Award®-winning film **L.A. CONFIDENTIAL**, Simon has developed a varied oeuvre throughout his career. Notable films he has starred in include **Michael Winterbottom's** thriller noir **THE KILLER INSIDE ME**; **Ang Lee's** critically acclaimed **RIDE WITH THE DEVIL**; lauded box office success **THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA**, opposite **Meryl Streep** and **Anne Hathaway**; and the Academy Award®-nominated and multiple independent award-winning feature **MARGIN CALL**.

From 2001-2004, Simon starred in the TV series **THE GUARDIAN**, for which he received a Golden Globe nomination for Best Actor in a Drama Series. In 2008, he began his role as the lead in the critically successful international hit **THE MENTALIST**, where he was nominated for a Primetime Emmy Award, a Golden Globe, a Screen Actors Guild Award and two People's Choice Awards. Simon was previously nominated for an AFI Award for his performance in **SECRET MEN'S BUSINESS**.

Simon makes his feature film directorial debut with **BREATH**, an adaptation of **Tim Winton**'s bestselling novel, which he also co-wrote and produced. Simon stars in the West Australian-shot drama alongside **Elizabeth Debicki** and **Richard Roxburgh**. **BREATH** had its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival and will release theatrically in Australia next year on May 3.

Simon Baker said, "It's an honour to be acknowledged at all, but to be acknowledged at home, in Australia, resonates so profoundly for me."

"Simon Baker's stellar reputation with audiences and industry worldwide has made him an incredible ambassador for the Australian screen industry and the outstanding screen talent it produces," said **AFI | AACTA CEO Damian Trehwella**. "From his success on US television to his return to Australia for his feature film directorial debut, Simon's career trajectory stands as an inspiration to future generations in the industry."

The AACTA Awards are proudly supported by the New South Wales Government through its tourism and major events agency, Destination NSW.

– ENDS –

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