



Media Release

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Australian Academy reveals record-breaking number of feature films in competition for the 8th AACTA Awards presented by Foxtel

38 Australian feature films to screen in AACTA's stand-alone Film Fest



Anticipation for the 8th AACTA Awards presented by Foxtel is growing, with the Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts (AACTA) announcing a record-breaking 38 feature films in competition for Australia's highest screen accolades.

The full list of feature films in competition are: **1%, THE BBQ, BIRTHDAY ADJUSTMENT DISORDER, BOY ERASED, BREATH, BROTHERS' NEST, CARGO, DAD, THE FIVE PROVOCATIONS, THE FLIP SIDE, THE GATEWAY, GRINGO, IN LIKE FLYNN, INDIGO LAKE, INNOCENT KILLER, JIRGA, JUST BETWEEN US, LADIES IN BLACK, THE LEGO® NINJAGO MOVIE, LOST GULLY ROAD, MARY MAGDALENE, ME AND MY LEFT BRAIN, THE MERGER, OCCUPATION, PETER RABBIT™, THE PRETEND ONE, PULSE, RABBIT, THE SECOND, STRANGE COLOURS, SURVIVE OR DIE, SWEET COUNTRY, SWINGING SAFARI, UNDERTOW, UPGRADE, WATCH THE SUNSET, WEST OF SUNSHINE,** and **WINCHESTER.**

AACTA also today announced the programs for **AACTA Film Fest** in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. The Film Fest program is an all-inclusive look at Australian film, providing the opportunity to view the outstanding Australian films from the past 12 months – some of which you can't see anywhere else – competing for this year's AACTA Awards.

AACTA Film Fest will launch in Sydney (on 3 September) and Brisbane (on 5 September) with Wagga-filmed AFL comedy **THE MERGER**, which recently screened as the 2018 Melbourne International Film Festival Centrepiece Gala. Following a five-minute standing ovation at Venice Film Festival last year, the Melbourne-filmed **WEST OF SUNSHINE** will open the Film Fest in Melbourne on 4 September.

The full Film Fest Program will screen in Sydney at **Event Cinemas Bondi Junction** for the sixth consecutive year and in Brisbane at **Event Cinemas Brisbane City Myer Centre** for the second consecutive year. **Event Cinemas** are a key supporting partner of AACTA's year-round Member Events Program and continue to spotlight Australian films and their filmmakers, bringing them to the attention of Australian audiences. AACTA Film Fest will screen in Melbourne at **Cinema Nova** for the fourth consecutive year.

A LOOK AT THIS YEAR'S FEATURE FILMS IN COMPETITION

This year's slate of feature films in competition features a breadth of genres and locations, highlighting our industry's achievement in telling diverse stories from all corners of Australia. From thrillers, sci-fi and dramas to comedies, action and family films, the 38 competing films offer something for everyone.

The locations of the competing films also showcase Australia's richly diverse landscapes up on the big screen. In addition to the film hubs of New South Wales and Victoria, this year's feature films in competition have been shot all across Australia, including Western Australia (**BREATH, 1%**), South Australia (**CARGO, THE FLIP SIDE**), the Northern Territory (**SWEET COUNTRY**) and Queensland (**SWINGING SAFARI, THE SECOND**).

Testament to the energy, creativity and resourcefulness of Australia's low-budget and emerging filmmakers, this year sees 18 diverse films competing for the inaugural **AACTA Award for Best Indie Film** (which honours the finest Australian films with a budget under \$2 million): **BIRTHDAY ADJUSTMENT DISORDER, BROTHERS' NEST, DAD, THE FIVE PROVOCATIONS, THE GATEWAY, INDIGO LAKE, INNOCENT KILLER, JIRGA, JUST BETWEEN US, LOST GULLY ROAD, ME AND MY LEFT BRAIN, THE PRETEND ONE, PULSE, THE SECOND, STRANGE COLOURS, SURVIVE OR DIE, WATCH THE SUNSET** and **WEST OF SUNSHINE**.

The independent filmmakers behind these films are making waves and garnering attention both at home and abroad through their innovative use of low-budgets and unique voices. The ever-changing film industry landscape has also seen filmmakers embracing new pathways to audiences, with 50% of competing films opting for non-traditional releases.

Reflecting the increasing prominence and popularity of on-demand streaming services as a distribution pathway, this year also marks the first two SVOD 'original' films to compete for the AACTA Awards: Netflix's **CARGO** and Stan's **THE SECOND**.

Forty-five percent of this year's films were made by first-time directors, who vie for a nomination alongside leading Australian directors such as **Bruce Beresford, Warwick Thornton, Stephan Elliott, Garth Davis, Leigh Whannell** and competing brothers **Nash** and **Joel Edgerton**.

The feature films in competition also star some of Australia and Hollywood's biggest names, including **Nicole Kidman, Russell Crowe, Helen Mirren, Joel Edgerton, Kylie Minogue, Guy Pearce, Rose Byrne, Lucas Hedges, Rooney Mara, Martin Freeman** and **Simon Baker**.

Fast facts about the AACTA Film Fest feature films in competition:

- Nine films have female directors (22.5% versus Screen Australia's reported industry average of 15%).
- 29 films were made by writer-directors (a 34% increase from the 2017 Festival of Australian Film).
- 35% of all award candidates are female (a 6% increase from the 7th AACTA Awards).
- Over half the competing films feature prominent female leads or female-centric storylines.
- Females make up over half the award candidates in seven films.
- 60% of competing films have screened at an AACTA-qualifying Australian film festival in the past twelve months.

"In another record-breaking year for feature film entries, AACTA Film Fest is an unparalleled opportunity to view, support and discuss Australian film," said **AFI | AACTA CEO Damian Trehwella**. "These 38 films showcase a dynamic mix of genres and themes; feature a variety of unique stories that audiences often can't find on traditional screens; highlight our increasingly diverse industry and filmmakers; and shines a spotlight on the incredible work many emerging Australian filmmakers are doing in the low-budget independent sector. I encourage people to embrace this opportunity to see these films in cinema or on AACTA TV and join us in the largest conversation of Australian film."

AACTA Film Fest is exclusive and complimentary to AFI | AACTA members, with guests permitted to attend selected events. The full Program is available on www.aacta.org. In addition to Film Fest screenings, 36 of the feature films in competition will be available to view online via [AACTA TV](#) from 3 September – available to AFI and AACTA members anytime, anywhere and on any device.

This year, AACTA will be shining a spotlight on Australian film by transforming the AACTA website into a conversation hub, encouraging and supporting broad online discussion around the 38 competing films. Guest writers from the Australian screen industry will share articles exploring the feature films in competition, the performers and practitioners behind them as well as sharing their favourite films of the AACTA Film Fest. New articles will be posted each week at www.aacta.org/aacta-awards/news/.

– ENDS –

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

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NOTES ON FEATURE FILMS IN COMPETITION

The feature films in competition mark the long list of feature films deemed eligible to compete for the AACTA Awards as per AACTA's Feature Film Eligibility Policy. These feature films will be narrowed down to a list of nominees via a two-step voting process.

In recent years and in recognition of the highly sought after skills of Australia's technical craft practitioners, films that have received the Department of Communications and the Arts' PDV (Post, Digital and Visual Effects) Offset have been deemed eligible to compete for the categories under which the PDV applies. This year AACTA extends the categories to which these films are eligible to compete to include all other categories under which an Australian is the key head of department or is undertaking a key creative role.

Films qualifying via the PDV Offset eligibility criteria in 2018 are:

- **THE LEGO® NINJAGO MOVIE**, which is eligible for PDV specific categories Best Sound and Best Production Design; and
- **GRINGO**, which is eligible for PDV specific categories Best Editing and Best Sound as well as, via the extension of the PDV Offset eligibility criteria, Best Film (Australian producers Rebecca Yeldham and Nash Edgerton), Best Direction (Australian director Nash Edgerton) and Best Support Actor (Australian actor Joel Edgerton).

NOTES ON AACTA FILM FEST

AACTA's Film Fest (complimentary and exclusive to members) provides the opportunity to watch, discuss and judge the feature films in competition for the 8th AACTA Awards presented by Foxtel. **To become a member, visit www.aacta.org/membership/ or call 1300 139 697.**

For further information on AACTA Shorts Fest and AACTA Docs Fest (AACTA's two other stand-alone festivals) please visit www.aacta.org.

VOTING, NOMINATIONS AND THE 8TH AACTA AWARDS PRESENTED BY FOXTEL

Round One voting will take place following AACTA Film Fest, with the remaining nominees for the 8th AACTA Awards presented by Foxtel to be announced in October 2018. More information on voting can be found at <https://www.aacta.org/aacta-awards/voting/>.

Winners will be announced during the two major 8th AACTA Awards events in Sydney, home of the AACTA Awards: The **Industry Luncheon** on Monday 3 December, followed by the **AACTA Awards Ceremony & Official After Party** on Wednesday 5 December, televised on Channel Seven with encore screenings on Foxtel. **Tickets for both events will go on sale in early October 2018.**

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