



Australian Film Institute | Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts Press Release

- Strictly embargoed until Tuesday 8 November 2011 -

Australian screen industry increases international reach with G'Day USA

The Australian film and television industry is set to extend its reach into the USA, following the establishment of a new International Engagement Program announced today by Australia's preeminent screen excellence body, the Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts (AACTA).

As part of its International Engagement Program, AACTA has announced a new collaboration with G'Day USA. G'Day USA is a partnership between the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Austrade, Tourism Australia, Qantas and state governments which seeks to strengthen trade, investment, business, innovation and cultural relations between Australia and the United States.

One of G'Day USA's most recognised events is the G'Day USA Black Tie Gala, held in Los Angeles, which attracts extensive media attention in the United States and draws a prestigious audience of American and Australian celebrities as well as prominent business and government leaders to Hollywood to recognise the achievements of Australians in the entertainment sector.

The Gala therefore provides the perfect opportunity to promote the AACTA Awards and, as part of its new collaboration with G'Day USA, AACTA will name the first nominees for its newly established AACTA International Awards at the LA Gala. The AACTA International Awards will see juries of eminent Australian screen practitioners recognise international excellence within the categories of Best Film, Acting, Writing and Direction.

Damian Trehwella, CEO of the Australian Film Institute | AACTA, said:

"AACTA's new International Engagement Program aims to increase the profile of Australia's screen performers, practitioners and productions internationally, and we believe that our new collaboration with G'Day USA, which has an audience reach of millions in the US and throughout the world, and which celebrates Australian achievement in culture and the arts, is the perfect platform for this.

"Australia's film and television industries play an important role in forming our cultural identity, in influencing tourism and in contributing to our export market, and we look forward to working alongside G'Day USA to raise the profile of our screen industry internationally."

Also part of its international push, AACTA has announced that its inaugural Samsung AACTA Awards season – comprising two major Awards events – will be held in January 2012, seeing Australia's Awards the first to be announced within the international screen awards season ahead of the UK's BAFTA Awards and US Oscars (12 and 26 February respectively).

The first of the inaugural Samsung AACTA Awards events will be the Samsung AACTA Awards Luncheon presented by Digital Pictures, which will be held on 15 January 2012 and timed to incorporate cross-feeds to the G'Day USA LA Black Tie Gala. The Samsung AACTA Awards Luncheon presented by Digital Pictures will recognise excellence across Feature Film, Television, Documentary and Short Film. A highlight of the event will be the special presentation of the AACTA Raymond Longford Award, the highest accolade which AACTA can bestow on an individual.

AACTA's inaugural Awards season will culminate with the Samsung AACTA Awards Ceremony, which will be held at the Sydney Opera House on 31 January 2012. The Ceremony will be broadcast on Channel 9, and will recognise excellence across film and television, including the Samsung AACTA Awards for Best Film, Best Television Drama Series, Best Direction, Best Lead Actor and Best Lead Actress. The Byron



Kennedy Award will also be presented, recognising outstanding creative enterprise and innovation within the film and television industries.

The recipients of the AACTA International Awards will be announced at the Samsung AACTA Awards Ceremony.

The lead-up to the Australian Academy's first Awards is in full-swing, with nominations for the inaugural Samsung AACTA Awards to be announced in Sydney on 30 November 2011 at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA).

According to AFI Chair, Alan Finney, the inaugural Samsung AACTA Awards will highlight an outstanding year of Australian film and television.

"AACTA celebrates Australian stories told on screen and our talented people who tell them. The Australian public has thrown its support behind some great Australian stories this year, with *Red Dog* catapulting its way into the top 10 highest grossing Australian films, and the popular documentary, *Mrs Carey's Concert*, making box office history as just two examples.

"We look forward to seeing which AACTA Award recipients, both within Australia and internationally, may go on to be nominated or win at the BAFTA Awards and Oscars, as there are clear precedents for this. Last year alone Jacki Weaver won an AFI Award for her role in *Animal Kingdom*, and was then nominated for an Oscar, and *The Lost Thing* was awarded both an AFI Award and an Oscar for Best Short Animation.

"In addition to the high caliber of Australian films in competition for an AACTA Award, we are delighted that this marks the 25th anniversary of recognising excellence in television through the AFI Awards and now through AACTA. We look forward to celebrating Australian television productions both longstanding and new to the screen in our inaugural Samsung AACTA Awards."

According to AFI/AACTA CEO, Damian Trehwella, AACTA's new initiatives and collaborations, including that with G'Day USA, are a result of widespread support for the Australian Academy.

"The AFI established AACTA in August in order to raise the profile of our talented screen industry professionals both here and abroad, in particular through the AACTA Awards.

"By hosting our Awards in Sydney, Australia's world-celebrated events capital, by creating an International Engagement Program, and by integrating with the international screen awards season, we are reflecting the truly global nature of Australia's screen industry, and placing our industry in a strong position to create new opportunities, both here and abroad.

"With new major partners, such as Destination NSW, new collaborations, such as that with G'Day USA, with an exceptional broadcast partner, Channel 9, and with the ongoing support of our naming rights sponsor, Samsung Electronics, we are well placed to make the inaugural Samsung AACTA Awards the momentous occasion within Australian history that they deserve to be."

Quotes and Statements of Support

Samsung:

"Samsung is both proud and excited to continue our support of the Australian film and television industry through the Samsung AACTA Awards. The Australian film industry is passionate about producing the best films and so is Samsung in showcasing them with smart technology," said Lambro Skropidis, Head of Marketing, Samsung Electronics Australia.

Destination NSW:



Destination NSW on behalf of the NSW Government is proud to support the Samsung AACTA Awards, Australia's preeminent screen industry awards. The Samsung AACTA Awards are a key creative industries event on the 2012 NSW Events Calendar, playing a leading role in reinforcing Sydney's position as the creative capital of Australia.

Notes to Editors

AACTA (Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts) was established in August 2011, announcing Geoffrey Rush as founding President, creating a dedicated peak peer assembly for the Australian screen industry, and delivering a new style of Awards programs in line with international models. It has adopted a two-step voting model for Australian Feature Film, which sees AACTA members short list nominees based on their area of specialisation, with the short list then voted on by the wider AACTA membership.

The Academy is made up of 15 Chapters drawing from key industry sectors and practitioners including actors, screenwriters, distributors, exhibitors, television networks and screen culture organisations among others. These Chapters are then overseen by the President and an appointed Honorary Council, a group of individuals recognised as leaders and luminaries within their fields, drawn from each Chapter.

The AACTA Awards program includes many new elements that have been specifically designed to raise the profile of Australia's screen performers, practitioners and productions both within Australia and throughout the world. This is an historic moment for the Australian film and television industries, with all eyes focused on Sydney in January 2012 to see who will take home the new golden statuettes of the inaugural **Samsung AACTA Awards**.

For further information, please see the new AACTA website: www.aacta.org

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