

Media Day

Australia's daily news source for the media, entertainment and communications industries

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FILM

Stars, execs unite to promote Australian film industry in US

A powerful coalition of Australians including Nicole Kidman, Mel Gibson, Russell Crowe and Naomi Watts are helping promote homegrown films and help new Aussie talent in Hollywood.

The 34 actors and directors have signed up to be ambassadors of the Los Angeles-based non-profit organisation Australians in Film.

Australians in Film holds regular screenings in Los Angeles of Australian-made movies and those involving Australian actors, directors and crew.

Geoffrey Rush, Cate Blanchett, Hugh Jackman, Phillip Noyce, Heath Ledger, Eric Bana and Anthony LaPaglia have also signed up to be ambassadors.

"Everyone knows how tough a struggle it can be to make it in Hollywood and, as an Australian, I'm very appreciative of the fact that Australians in Film not only showcases the work of those of us who have enjoyed some success, but also the work of up-and-coming talent from our country," Kidman said.

Formerly known as the **Los Angeles Australian Film and Television Association (LAAFTA)**, the organisation was revamped and renamed earlier this year. LAAFTA was founded in May 2001.

"The response to various screenings and events organised by LAAFTA during the past three years confirmed that there is overwhelming interest in Australian films and talent in Hollywood, so now we feel it is appropriate to take the next step by restructuring and renaming our group," said LA-based AusFILM commissioner and LAAFTA co-founder David Pratt. *"The response of high-profile Australian talent in support of this move has been tremendous."*

In January, the organisation co-presented the Jurlique Australian Film Festival in Los Angeles and held screenings of Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, Adam Elliot's Oscar-winning animated short film *Harvie Krumpet*, and the world premiere of *Strange Bedfellows*, starring Paul Hogan and Michael Caton.

Also slated are screenings of Ledger's *Ned Kelly*, and Gettin' Square starring David Wenham and the soon to be released feature *Thunderstruck*.

Planning is also underway for a "major event" to be held during the American summer.

Other ambassadors include Gillian Arms trong, Simon Baker, Toni Collette, Deborra Lee Furness, Melissa George, Scott Hicks,

Barry Humphries, Julian McMahon, Jacqueline McKenzie, Kylie Minogue, Radha Mitchell, Poppy Montgomery, Olivia Newton-John, Frances O'Connor, Miranda Otto, Guy Pearce, Fred Schepisi, Hugo Weaving, David Wenham and Sarah Wynter.

The restructured Board of Directors of *Australians In Film* includes Stephen Basil -Jones, Senior Vice-President - Media/Columbia Tri-Star Film Distributors International; Jenny Cooney-Carrillo, member of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association; Susie Dobson, President, Susie Dobson Global PR, Rob Marsala, Manager/Producer The Bauer Co., Lawrie Masterson, Vice President of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, Paula Paizes, Producer/Business Affairs Consultant; David Pratt, Film Commissioner, AusFILM LA; Ian Sutherland, Snr. VP International Theatrical Distribution and Marketing MGM and Megan Worthy, Deputy Film Commissioner, AusFILM LA.

The Board of Advisors consists of: Kym Barrett award winning costume designer, Greg Coote, President, Coote/Hayes Productions; Bruce Davey, President, Icon Productions; Richard Francis-Bruce, multiple Academy Award nominated Editor, Scott Neeson, Senior Executive Vice-President Marketing/Columbia Tri-Star Film Distributors International; and Dean Semler, Academy Award winning Cinematographer. The organization also has the support of the Australian Government, AUSFILM, Austrade, the Australian Film Institute and American Cinematique and sponsors McWilliams Hanwood Estate Wines, and Hahn beer.

Pip Bulbeck and wire services

TELEVISION

Screentime partners with Canadian producer for new formats

The UK division of Australian production and distribution company **Screentime**, has gained distribution rights to two new formats from Canadian producer **Lone Star Entertainment**.

Sales of the format and finished show for *Hooked Up* and *The Call* will be handled direct by Lone Eagle in North America, the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Austria and Australasia where it has existing discussions underway while Screentime Partners will handle the Rest of the World.

Hooked Up is described as a 6 x 60 min primetime series/format that whisks 10 gorgeous women and 10 handsome men off on a journey to find their perfect mate. The show invites viewers to witness the rocky road of love, betrayal and intimate affairs in an unscripted and unpredictably wild series as 20 singles set a course for true love on a multi-week adventure in Canada's Rocky Mountains. *Hooked Up* premiered on primetime in February 2004 on Craig Broadcasting, Canada's largest privately held terrestrial broadcaster.

The Call is a (13 x 30 min) primetime series/format that takes a

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Inside This Issue: Stars, execs unite to promote Aussie film industry in US; Screentime partners with Canadian producer for new formats; Docklands gets 2nd feature with Goodrem feature booked

fly on the wall behind the scenes look at the competitive world of casting. Each episode follows three real life actors as they audition for one role in an actual TV production or movie. The series provides an intimate look at up-and-coming stars as they prepare, audition, and wait to hear if they have landed that breakthrough roll. *The Call* premiered on primetime in February 2004 on Canada's Life Network.

Staff reporter

Docklands gets 2nd local feature with Hating Alison Ashley booked in

Hating Alison Ashley, starring Delta Goodrem in her first film role, will be produced at Melbourne's Docklands studio.

Delta and Diana Glen, who appears in the hit series *The Secret Life of Us*, play two teenagers who become best friends in a coming-of-age story.

Victorian Treasurer John Brumby made the announcement as he joined the cast and crew from *The Extra* on its first day of shooting at the \$110 million Central City Studios complex.

The first film to use the new studios, *The Extra* was written by Aussie comedian Jimeoin and also features model Kristy Hinze in her screen debut.

The Docklands studios project has been plagued by controversy after the state government pumped in \$47 million amid revised production targets.

The state opposition on Tuesday accused the government of ignoring probity checks during the tender process.

The opposition said documents released after a year-long Freedom of Information battle also showed the tender process had been corrupted when bid details were leaked.

The state auditor-general's report in February 2003 found Central City Studios had received preferential treatment in the bidding process, it said.

Brumby again defended the tender process and hailed the new studio's role in the Victorian film and TV industry.

The studio would position Victoria as a "major regional centre for film and TV production" and bring in an extra \$100 million in production annually, Mr Brumby said.

However at least one Victorian production, children's series *Holly's Heroes* has said it did not choose to use the studios as they were too expensive.

Hating Alison Ashley is due to begin production in four weeks.

Staff reporter

the biggest issues facing us today. It will show the real impact of divorce on communities and individuals – not just on couples, but also on their children, family and friends. I know it's a big ask for people to put their private business on show, but we hope to find willing participants. Our assurance to families who consider putting themselves forward is that if they are finally selected for the series, we will tell their story respectfully," she said. Douglas-Henry is directing the series alongside Steve Westh. People interested in being part of *Divorce Stories* should email divorcestories@filmaust.com.au, call 1800 077 471, or write to *Divorce Stories*, C/- Film Australia, PO Box 46, Lindfield, NSW, 2070.

- While the **Nine Network's** news and current affairs powerhouse *60 Minutes* pulls in timeslot winning programs in its twenty fifth year on air Channel V has created some cheeky counter programming, creating its own "music flavoured youth current affairs," *50 Minutes* which airs in the same Sunday 7.30pm slot as its more serious predecessor. "Soft launched" last week, the program aims to focus on the issues that inspire, amuse and intrigue Australia's youth, including celebrity, technology and art stories, with a dose of music think-pieces at its core. The program is anchored by a rotation of Channel [V] reporters featuring Jabba, Yumi Stynes, James Mathison and Andrew G. with each episode featuring an assortment of stories covering issues that matter to [V]'s audience of 16 - 24 year olds.

- Pay TV general entertainment channel **Arena TV** has had so much success screening US import *Six Feet Under* Sunday nights at 8.30pm, its giving that slot over to another audience favourite that the free-to-air network don't air until late night. Political drama *The West Wing* will air in the "politically correct" slot from April 11. Arena TV general manager Cherie Romaro says the channel "has a strong commitment to our drama genre, and always is to give viewers the very best shows around. *Arena TV* was overwhelmed at the positive response to *Six Feet Under* on Sunday nights as 8.30pm. We hope to continue strong audience support in this time slot with *The West Wing* from April."

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BRIEFLY

- It was another ratings win for the **Nine Network** last week as Nine won across the five capital cities with a 30.7 per cent all people share, 6.8 points ahead of Seven's 23.9. Ten had 22.6, the ABC 18.3 and SBS 4.5. A full round up of the weeks ratings will appear in Media Day tomorrow.

- A new three part series to be produced by **Film Australia** for **SBS** aims to shed some light on divorce and how it affects the individuals concerned their families and the community – and it will be told through the eyes of those experiencing it. Individuals and couples going through divorce are being asked to consider telling their stories as part of the series, *Divorce Stories*. "We're looking for people from different backgrounds with interesting stories to tell," said director Jessica Douglas-Henry. "In 2004, one in three marriages in Australia ends in divorce. That poses the question of whether our primary social contract is being redefined. *Divorce Stories* will look at one of