**Media Release**

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**A POST-APOCALYPTIC FILM CONCEPT SET IN BALLARAT TAKES OUT AACTA PITCH: REGIONAL LANDSCAPES 2022**

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**At this year’s Regional To Global Screen Forum, AACTA and Screenworks announce Lou Sanz** **and John Kachoyan as the** **recipients of the 2022 AACTA Pitch Regional Landscapes development grant, which includes further support, travel and accommodation to attend** [**Australian International Screen Forum**](https://www.australianscreenforum.org/) **in New York.**

**AACTA Pitch: Regional Landscapes in Partnership with Screenworks, and with the support of AISF**, is a national feature film development initiative in its third year, that provides an opportunity for regionally based creatives to receive fast-tracked industry support for films geared around stories and settings informed by the diversity and uniqueness of regional Australia.

Five finalists, selected from over 100 applications, received feedback and valuable advice in individual sessions with each of our judges, leading up to their final pitch. The judging panel included **Michael Pontin**, AACTA Award-winning producer and head of Ticket To Ride, a subsidiary of See Pictures (June Again); **Rachel Okine**, the Head of Features and Development Executive at Stan (Stan Original Films Christmas on the Farm, upcoming Transfusion); AACTA Award-winning writer and producer **Tony Briggs** (The Sapphires, The Warriors); **Peter Cron**, VP of Production and Development at US based Likely Story Productions (American Ultra); and creative executive **Hannah Gordon** representing US based **Misher** **Films** (Coming to America 2).

**Lou** and **John’s** winning concept **LAND’S END** is a uniquely set drama about grief, isolation and starting again after catastrophes big and small. Michael Pontin expressed the judges’ strong emotional connection to the characters and story during the final deliberations. The storyline, which explores the “absurdity of grief…isolation, and the restorative nature of connection and community” centres around Lettie, an emergency room Doctor. “*After a devastating loss, an emergency room Doctor isolates herself on a remote property, preparing for an imagined apocalypse. But when global catastrophe actually strikes and survivors start trickling in, she's forced to choose between the solitude of grief or the mess (and even joy) of life amongst the living.”*

**Lou Sanz** and **John Kachoyan** said of the experience, “We’re thrilled to be the recipients of this year’s award. It represents a significant investment of energy and practical support for our careers at a crucial time for us both. We loved all the finalist’s pitches and are thrilled to bring regional Australian stories by regional creatives to life - especially through a film as personal and powerful as we hope Land’s End will be.”

At the 2022 [Australian International Screen Forum](https://www.australianscreenforum.org/) in New York, **Lou** and **John** will have the opportunity to present their project and network in an exclusive setting with US based producers, studio executives and other key decision-makers as part of the multi-day film festival and industry conference at the Lincoln Centre. The pair will also receive ongoing guidance from the judging panel; a three-day pass to all sessions at the upcoming Screenworks [2022 Regional to Global Screen Forum](https://screenworks.glueup.com/event/regional-to-global-screen-forum-2022-49243/agenda.html); AACTA, Screenworks and Australian Writers’ Guild annual memberships; and two tickets to the 2022 AACTA Award Ceremony.

With support from the AWG, LAND’S END will feature as part of their celebrated AWG Pathways Program and receive script editing and consultation from a celebrated screenwriter.

**AACTA Awards and Industry Development Manager Ivan Vukusic** said, “LAND’S END is a unique and compelling survival story that resonates with the influence of Lou and John’s own personal journey. It was great to see them incorporate the advice of our judging panel to flesh out the key hooks and the finer details of their story, which culminated in their fantastic winning pitch. We’re very confident LAND’S END will hit home with audiences here and abroad.”

“AACTA will continue to offer support to all five finalists in the development of their films and advancement of their careers. There is strong potential in every concept, and the dedication, creativity and tenacity of these aspiring filmmakers is something we’ll gladly support”

**Screenworks CEO Ken Crouch** said, “Once again we’ve been incredibly impressed at the range and diversity of the stories submitted for this year’s AACTA Regional Landscapes Pitch. All five finalists’ projects offered very different perspectives on life and landscapes in regional Australia and showed there is a wealth of stories to be told outside of the metropolitan areas. We’re excited to be supporting the LAND’S END project through the next stage of development – and we’re confident that Lou and John will benefit greatly from the opportunity to head to the US to pitch and network with producers, studios and key decision-makers.”

All five finalists will receive ongoing support to take their projects to the next stage of development. The judges noted each concept had strong storylines and great commercial appeal. The remaining 2022 final projects are:

* **THE BANK MANAGER** (set in Cloncurry, QLD) | **Madeleine Chaplain and Luke Chaplain**

Based on true events surrounding the 1932 Cloncurry bank robberies. Amidst drought and recession, a farmer assembles a team of colourful locals to pull off a sophisticated heist. It will take skill, bravery, a few bars of soap and a woman named Peach. But in this small country town, where everyone knows everyone's secrets - will they succeed? Or worse - will they be caught?

* **BLACK MAGIC** (set in Scone, NSW) | **Leonie Kelly and Di Smith**

From the outback to Tarakan, bound together by love, loss and incredible danger, two warriors fight for the recognition of Len Waters, the first Aboriginal fighter pilot, Australia's ‘Missing Man’.

* **RADIO INFREQUENCY** (set in Kangaroo Island, SA) | **Dave Wade**

Volunteers from a community radio station are forced to navigate their way through a merger bid from a multimedia corporation with ulterior motives.

* **THE TRACK** (set on the Birdsville Track, QLD/SA) | **Travis Akbar and Adam Gerard**

Following an abduction, cops and journalists charter a plane to the Birdsville Track to negotiate the safe release of three hostages from dangerous, armed convicts. Based on true events.

AACTA Pitch Regional Landscapes in Partnership with Screenworks judge, **Michael Pontin** said of his experience, “It’s been a privilege to be on the Regional Landscapes judging panel for 2022. The quality of the teams and their entries has been of a very high standard, and it made it difficult to choose just one. It’s been exciting to connect with stories that have been developed with authenticity, and it is a valuable program that AACTA and Screenworks have created to cast the net of Australian feature storytelling wide.”

**– ENDS –**

**About AACTA**

The Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts (AACTA) is a not-for-profit organisation, aimed at promoting, encouraging, and celebrating screen excellence in Australia. For over 60 years, the AACTA Awards (formerly the AFI Awards) have recognised and celebrated Australia's highest achievements in film, television, short form, and digital content. Held annually in Sydney, the AACTA Awards are Australia’s most prestigious screen ceremony, embracing a diverse range of screen productions and recognising some of the biggest and brightest names in the industry. AACTA also remains committed to supporting and encouraging the next generation of industry talent through a variety of development initiatives aimed at providing opportunities and support for up-and-coming creatives.

The AACTA Awards are a continuum of the Australian Film Institute (AFI) Awards, which were first presented 63 years ago in 1958. Past AFI Award recipients include Nicole Kidman (AACTA Vice President), Russell Crowe (AACTA President), Eric Bana, Toni Collette, Dr. George Miller (AACTA Patron) and Cate Blanchett (AACTA Ambassador).

**About Screenworks**

Screenworks is a registered charity that provides support, leadership and vision for the regional screen industries in Australia. Screenworks promotes and advances the screen industry in regional, rural, and remote Australia. Our activities include screen industry and talent development and networking opportunities, programs and initiatives specifically designed to support people living in regional, rural and remote Australia. We are a home-grown not-for-profit, membership-based association managed by a board of volunteer directors that provide industry, management and screen industry knowledge and experience. <https://screenworks.com.au/>

**Other AACTA Development Initiatives**

The AACTA development program aims to nurture Australia’s next wave of talent. This year, AACTA will continue to partner with key industry organisations to deliver a diverse range of educational and development opportunities targeting creative Australians. 2022 will see the return of the AACTA Reg Grundy Award, open to any Australians with a new idea for an unscripted television program, along with the Reg Grundy Youth prize that recognizes and rewards the best unscripted format idea from under 25’s/students. AACTA LMAO is an ongoing, monthly development opportunity which seeks to uncover the funniest short form digital content and offer opportunities for up-and-coming digital creators. Genre filmmakers can keep an eye out for another Monster Pictures feature film development initiative and students remain a focus with additional opportunities to be announced, along with an extended slate of career development opportunities for actors and craft practitioners.

**About the Australian International Screen Forum**

The inaugural Australian International Screen Forum is a multi-day event that includes screenings, industry-focused events, seminars, roundtables, keynote conversations, master classes and educational activities held at Film at Lincoln Center in New York City. This marque event bridges together the US and Australian market by connecting industry professionals and gatekeepers, production companies, broadcasters and distributors. The event is attended by New York, LA and international film, television and digital industry professionals in order to achieve development milestones and elevate their connection to Australian screen professionals. Through activities such as these the Australian International Screen Forum's annual incubator programs also include Writer and Industry focused labs, Women in Screen Workshops and Directors fellowships where participants are a part of an alumni network to access exclusive programming, opportunities and networking.

For more information visit<https://www.australianscreenforum.org/>

**The AACTA Awards are supported by the NSW Government through its tourism and major events agency, Destination NSW.**

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**MEDIA ENQUIRIES**

**AACTA Media Enquiries** | Michelle Small | P: 0415 461 534 | E: msmall@afi.org.au

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