

SCREEN AUSTRALIA presents
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SCREEN NSW

a **DIRTY FILMS & SCARLETT PICTURES** production



THE NEW BOY

PRODUCTION NOTES

“If it is possible for one faith to exist, then it’s possible for all faiths to exist.”
- Warwick Thornton

WRITER/DIRECTOR
Warwick Thornton

RELEASE DATE: **TBC**
RUNNING TIME: 116 minutes
RATING: **TBC**

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PRODUCTION CREDITS

Writer/Director/Director of Photography

Warwick Thornton

Produced by

Kath Shelper

Andrew Upton

Cate Blanchett

Lorenzo de Maio

Co-Producer

Georgie Pym

Executive Producers

Gretel Packer

Coco Francini

Cast

Introducing **Aswan Reid**

Deborah Mailman

Wayne Blair

and **Cate Blanchett**

The Boys

Shane McKenzie-Brady, Tyrique Brady, Laiken Beau Woolmington, Kailem Miller, Kyle Miller, Tyzailin Roderick and Tyler Rockman Spencer

Score Composed and Performed by

Nick Cave & Warren Ellis

Production Designer

Amy Baker

Costume Designer

Heather Wallace

Make-Up and Hair Designer

Jennifer Rossiter

Camera Operator

Jules Wurm

Casting

Anousha Zarkesh

Editor

Nick Meyers ASE

Sound Designer

Liam Egan

SYNOPSES

Tagline

A mysterious new arrival disturbs a delicately balanced world in this story of spiritual struggle and the cost of survival.

One line synopsis

When an Aboriginal child arrives in the dead of night at a remote monastery run by a renegade nun, the new boy's presence disturbs a delicately balanced world in this story of spiritual struggle and the cost of survival.

Short synopsis

From Dirty Films and Scarlett Pictures comes writer/director Warwick Thornton's *The New Boy*. In a remote monastery in 1940s Australia, a mission for Aboriginal children is run by a renegade nun, Sister Eileen (Cate Blanchett). A new charge (Aswan Reid) is delivered in the dead of night – a boy who appears to have special powers. When the monastery takes possession of a precious relic, a large carving of Christ on the cross, the new boy encounters Jesus for the first time and is transfixed. However, the boy's Indigenous spiritual life does not gel with the mission's Christianity and his mysterious power becomes a threat. Sister Eileen is faced with a choice between the traditions of her faith and the truth embodied in the boy, in this story of spiritual struggle and the cost of survival.

Long synopsis

From Dirty Films and Scarlett Pictures comes writer/director Warwick Thornton's deeply personal film, *The New Boy*. In 1940's Australia, in the middle of World War II, a solitary Indigenous boy (Aswan Reid) is dramatically captured by a horseback police patrol and delivered to a remote monastery orphanage in the dead of night. The monastery is run by a feisty nun, Sister Eileen (Cate Blanchett), who has worked hard to make it a happy retreat away from the world and its war – and she will do anything to keep it that way. Since the elderly monk who was in charge died, Sister Eileen has been running the place secretly and is very protective of her small group of boys. Wary of too much Church oversight, she is always very careful to keep her head down and make good on the monastery's expected contribution to the war effort. To that end she is helped by two Aboriginal staff – George (Wayne Blair), who runs the monastery's farm with the help of the children, and Sister Mum (Deborah Mailman), who runs the domestic side of things.

The new arrival doesn't speak English, and no-one knows where he came from. He has been living a nomadic tribal life up until now, having no concept of Western norms. Dubbed the New Boy, he is quick to pick up on things and soon understands the pecking order and how to make it work. His survival instincts are sharp, his intelligence dexterous and he seems to have special powers which he uses for healing as well as for his own entertainment. The monastery's orderly Christian ethos is unsettled by his presence, particularly in the case of the head boy, Michael (Shane McKenzie-Brady). And George, an Aboriginal farmhand who believes he's on a good wicket and doesn't want the boat to be rocked, recognises something ancient in the boy that he would sooner forget.

Sister Eileen, herself a bit of a square peg, is acutely aware of the precariousness of the monastery's situation. Faced with her own survival choices when the old monk died, she determined to hold the orphanage together, knowing that any change could put the children in her care in peril. Now the New Boy, with his mysterious and alluring energy, is causing disturbance inside her delicately balanced world. She, George and Sister Mum already have their work cut out just keeping things ticking over.

When a special delivery requires a personal signature from the deceased monk, Sister Eileen has to assume responsibility for it with a bit of careful dodging and some astute white lies. She takes charge of the special cargo – an extraordinary religious treasure; a life-size carving of Christ on the cross – sent to this remote place by the Church to protect it from the ravages of war in France. When New Boy encounters this image of Jesus for the first time he is transfixed. However, the boy's Indigenous spiritual life and mysterious powers do not gel with the mission's orderly Christianity, leading to a series of unsettling encounters. Something must be done.

Sister Eileen is faced with a choice between the traditions of her faith and the truth embodied in the boy. As her foundations are rocked, will the secret she has harboured for a year be discovered, imperiling the orphanage? Or will everything be brought in line, made good and safe and orderly, even at the cost of New Boy's unique Indigenous spiritual power?

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When I was a young boy, my mother sent me away to a remote boarding school – a missionary style place that was run by Spanish monks. I had been getting in trouble back home in Alice Springs and it was what she thought I needed to sort me out. And she was right.

I had never been inside a church before. I walked into the church building for the first time and saw this guy being tortured on a big wooden cross and it freaked me out. But then I grew to embrace it and this thing called 'Christianity' that was so different to the Aboriginal spirituality that I'd grown up with.

What was interesting to me was, despite it seeming like they clashed, I could see how the Aboriginal spirituality I was raised with and Christianity could actually gel together really well.

It's up to the human, not the religion.

A lot of Dreamtime Aboriginal stories run on the same moral basis as Bible stories – if you do this you'll get in trouble, so don't do it. Aboriginal people are generally happy to embrace Christianity alongside their own spiritual beliefs, but it doesn't happen the other way around. Christianity must conquer.

It's from these experiences that the idea for *The New Boy* was born.

The Reason for Being

Just when you have given up on humans and their greedy ways, their selfish drive to conquer all the elements of life, smothering all until there is only darkness, a spark flickers in its innocence. Ironically this spark can only exist because of humanity's biggest fear. Darkness.

We are all taught to fear the dark. It starts with a lack of tone. The idea of no light, then throw in ideology and it quickly becomes the colour of one's skin.

The New Boy is this spark. He challenges our fear. He opens up our minds to what is right and wrong. The challenge is if the New Boy exists, then God exists and if God exists then it must crush all to empower its right to exist.

All this because a little innocent spark flickers in the dark. The New Boy is not evil. The New Boy is not innocent. This film questions all faiths – because if it is possible for one faith to exist then it's possible for all faiths to exist. For me the New Boy is the reality check.

The film is about the extinction of a completely beautiful, sustainable, caring religion by a big bully. A religion that can co-exist with other spiritualities, but Christianity refuses to co-exist with it. It's a small movement in the film, but it's as big as the collision of planets in the universe – the death of a star, the birth of a black hole. If you don't pay attention, you will miss it, which is the sadness of humanity in this day and age.

He's just a kid – a kid with responsibilities that he doesn't necessarily need. Children need to be children, not gods or deities. Children need to be guided, scolded, loved and mothered. He spends the time at the monastery trying to survive by getting to the front of the line, to the top of the pecking order. But all he really needs is to be loved and mothered. To be safe. The absence of his family means survival has its price.

Warwick Thornton - Writer/Director

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The genesis for *The New Boy* can be traced back 18 years, when writer/director WARWICK THORNTON first drafted a script about innocence and survival following a lone Indigenous boy who finds himself in a Christian monastery in 1940s Australia.

Of the long journey for *The New Boy*, Thornton recalls, “For all those people who think that you just sort of whip something up and it happens; it doesn't happen like that, guys. I wrote this 18 years ago. It had a completely different name. It had a completely different protagonist and antagonist, and it was really badly written.”

Thornton revisited the script numerous times over the years – writing and rewriting – and with the assistance of his longtime producer and collaborator KATH SHELPER, the project first received development funding from Screen Australia's First Nations Department in 2005 (formerly Australian Film Commission).

Says Shelper, “It's just been one of those scripts that we both were really connected to. Sometimes you develop things and then you lose a passion for them. They fall by the wayside, or go in the bottom drawer for a bit, but this script was one of those ones that neither of us could let go of.”

“Even though the script has evolved a lot over that time that we've been developing it, the central story of the New Boy character has always been the same. That's what we've held onto through this whole process - the spirit of that child and his journey through the film.”

Recalling the genesis of their collaboration on *The New Boy*, Thornton says he received a call from producer/actor CATE BLANCHETT who told him, “Life is too short, I really want to make a movie with you.”

Blanchett says her impulse was obvious, given Thornton's unique vision and work as director, writer and cinematographer and often, as in the case of *The New Boy*, as all three together: “My world view has been shifted in ways beyond articulation by the films Warwick's made,” she explains. “He's a singular, mercurial filmmaker, yet there is a beguiling universality to the stories he chooses to tell. He is, quite simply, one of Australia's greats.”

Despite having many collaborators in common, the two Australians had not met until the Berlin Film Festival in 2020. Thornton was there with actor WAYNE BLAIR (who would go on to play George in *The New Boy*) for the premiere of *Mystery Road*, while BLANCHETT and ANDREW UPTON were at the festival for Dirty Films' *Stateless*.

Numerous phone calls and zooms would follow throughout the long months of the pandemic where, according to Thornton, the pair “ranted and raved on the phone about ideas, books and all sorts of strange things like photography and architecture” before Thornton mentioned he had a script he had been nurturing for a number of years called *Father and the Son*.”

The plot was centered on an Indigenous child who had come to live at a remote monastery in outback Australia, led by a Benedictine monk. Upton and Blanchett immediately connected to the essence of the story and as conversations evolved, they began to consider what it might mean for the work, how the thrust of the story might evolve, if the monk was instead a nun. “I thought, ‘The script will need a prune, but maybe it'll bloom again,’” says Thornton.

He reworked the script, amongst other things changing the gender of one of the main characters, and *Father and the Son* became *The New Boy*.

Shelper, who produced *The New Boy* under her Scarlett Pictures banner, was excited to collaborate with Upton, Blanchett, co-producer GEORGIE PYM and executive producer COCO FRANCINI at Dirty Films. “I usually work by myself producing, which can be a very lonely sort of place, so I was quite open and keen for us all to produce it together in a really collaborative way.”

The team went about securing financiers for the project, with Screen Australia again backing the project with major production investment from its First Nations Department. Thornton had always planned to shoot *The New Boy* around a small town called Burra in South Australia, so the South Australian Film Commission was a natural partner, and the team would do post-production in New South Wales, so Screen NSW came on board too. Australian distributor Roadshow Films joined the project very early in the process and were “incredibly supportive,” says Shelper.

Investor and philanthropist GRETTEL PACKER, who had a long history with Blanchett and Upton through their years running Sydney Theatre Company, and was a fan of Thornton’s work, came on board as an executive producer via her company Longbridge Nominees. Another fan of Thornton’s work was producer LORENZO DE MAIO, who has a partnership with Fremantle. He met with Upton and Pym during Cannes Film Festival in 2022 to discuss the project, which he had great enthusiasm for, and soon after that Fremantle came on board to finalise the financing. “Warwick has crafted a film with unique beauty and power, anchored by the incredible Cate Blanchett, Deb Mailman and Wayne Blair, alongside a cast of truly talented and inspiring young actors,” says De Maio.

The New Boy is a deeply personal story for Thornton who, as a young boy, was sent by his mother to a remote boarding school run by Spanish monks. “I had been getting in trouble back home in Alice Springs and it was what she thought I needed to sort me out,” says Thornton.

“I had never been inside a church before. I walked into the church building for the first time and saw this guy being tortured on a big wooden cross and it freaked me out. But then I grew to embrace it and this thing called ‘Christianity’ that was so different to the Aboriginal spirituality that I’d grown up with.”

On the character of New Boy, Thornton says, “New Boys are all around us. They’re children who recognise safety and can adapt to survive in different situations. The New Boy is incredibly innocent, he doesn’t understand this different world but is happy to walk into that world and educate himself in that world, to survive in that world.”

“It’s like any Indigenous person through the last 250 years of colonisation,” muses Thornton. “Your lore, your culture and everything has just been completely obliterated to extinction in a strange way. You have to adapt in this new world that is like a plague, like a virus that has completely taken over your life and shut down everything that you’ve believed in. Humans are able to adapt very quickly to survive in any situation, in any environment, in any landscape. In a strange way, that’s what the New Boy is. He’s not judging anybody. He’s just surviving.”

With the film set to move forward, the most important element loomed large for everybody involved. Led by casting director ANOUSHA ZARKESH, an exhaustive search began to find the young actor to take on the titular character, New Boy.

ASWAN REID came to Thornton and the producers’ attention early in the process - he was the first tape they looked at - and became an instant favourite. “Call off the search,” said co-producer Georgie Pym, “we’ve found him”. As the planned scout continued throughout Australia, the filmmakers found

themselves returning again and again to Aswan's audition tape, which simply comprised him dancing in the desert, bathed in light, fully encompassing the spirit of the wild and magical boy of Thornton's script.

"I'm so proud of Aswan," says Thornton. "He is the New Boy. He's a survivalist in his own right as a child and a very special human being. If cinema looks after him, there'll be something magical over the next 50 years."

In speaking about working with Aswan, and his performance in the film, Blanchett said, "What has been asked of Aswan would be almost impossible for any mature actor. For an 11-year-old to be completely displaced from country into a completely new environment, into a *métier* that he's never been in before, with a whole lot of adults and rules and regulations and responsibilities – to have watched him grow and evolve ... I'm just so in awe of him."

Once they found their New Boy, the team's attention turned to the other boys who would make up the supporting cast. With Reid hailing from the Central Desert, Thornton was keen for the other boys to come from areas closer to the saltwater of the south, so Zarkesh began to search in Port Pirie, Port Augusta and Whyalla, all in South Australia. They selected a collection of kids who piqued Thornton's interest and were a variety of different faces and looks, inviting them to a workshop in Adelaide. "They all just got along like a house on fire and were all great," says Shelper, "so that was it. We were done."

Shelper continues, "We were very lucky because when you're working with kids, the parents and the family are just as important as the child that you're working with. All the parents, grandmas, brothers and sisters, aunties and uncles, everyone who came along with the kids were just brilliant. They were so patient, enthusiastic, and supportive of their kids, which was such a blessing for everyone in the production."

On working with the eight children in the cast, Thornton jokes, "You've got eight children who've never been on a film before. Literally, we've taken them out of school, so it's a holiday for them and they proceed to run amok on you! I wondered, 'what the hell did I write?' I was very happy to have cast them, but I didn't realise that I had cast a pack of puppy wolves who just had no rules."

He adds, "The blood would drain every morning when they'd arrive, but then you'd do one little scene with the pack of puppy wolves and all your energy would come back and the blood would rise back up to the top of your head, and you'd start breathing again. All this adrenaline would come because what they gave you was this amazing rawness. They were just amazing. They scared the shit out of me every day, and then every day they empowered me and made this beautiful story come alive."

Right from the start, Thornton always had close friends WAYNE BLAIR and DEBORAH MAILMAN in mind for the roles of Sister Mum and George. The leading Australian actors were very well known to Upton and Blanchett too, through their years at Sydney Theatre Company. "They're so powerful," Thornton says. "They look after me. They ask the right questions. They push me into becoming a better director in all the right ways, as does Cate."

Thornton was excited to shoot the film, alongside camera operator JULES WURM, with only one camera and three lenses as he wanted to "declutter" the film. Says Thornton, "Every time I walk away from a scene that I've done with two to three cameras, I always feel that it's not that I got the scene, I got 'something', I always walk away thinking, 'two cameras, three cameras, there must be something I can use', which is the wrong way to make cinema. You don't focus properly.

"We had one camera, three lenses, and that was it. We had to methodically go through every performance with one camera. I'm just looking at one performance and not dodging between multiple monitors."

The New Boy was shot in South Australia in a location Warwick had visited over the years, just outside the old mining town of Burra. The monastery was constructed as a set in its entirety, with production designer AMY BAKER creating areas that were light and open, juxtaposed with areas of overbearing darkness. In this way she captured perfectly the story's clash between Western and Indigenous spirituality.

It's not often that (almost) the entirety of a film is shot in a single location, with the cast and crew all living and working in the same space throughout the shoot. The experience created a strong bond for all involved and was especially beneficial to the young first-time actors on set.

About working with Thornton, Blanchett says, "Warwick trusts implicitly that "the thing" exists within him. His technical facility is innate and there to be deftly and swiftly deployed to wrench the story into the light. The script that you thought was a given is merely a roadmap or a template of what Warwick and the cast uncover together as you shoot. It's an evolution of sorts. Warwick relies and trusts absolutely on his instinct - being alive to the moment. Therefore, as an actor, you're experiencing your understanding of the situations afresh. You have to untether yourself from any preconception you had about the material. Which is really exciting."

Music plays a central role in *The New Boy* and acclaimed Australian musicians NICK CAVE and WARREN ELLIS were recruited to bring the score to life at the request of Thornton, who has been good friends with Ellis for a long time and credits the pair with being "very special human beings and the most amazing storytellers."

Andrew Upton agrees: "When Warwick wanted to approach them to compose I felt it was a perfect choice. Nick and Warren have a grandeur and a regard for classical form coupled with a probing punky urge and authenticity which sits very well with Warwick's own particular aesthetic. *The New Boy* is at once a meditative poem on spirituality and childhood and a perky fuck you to the oppressive, the overbearing and the dogmatic."

The New Boy will have its world premiere at the 2023 Cannes Film Festival, with Thornton returning to La Croisette once more after receiving the Caméra d'Or for his debut feature *Samson and Delilah* in 2009.

Says Thornton, "I'm very proud of *The New Boy*. It's an amazing film. It took 18 years for a reason. It had to take 18 years. I always say 'this film saved my life', but this one is a really special one and it's got a lot to say."

ABOUT THE BOYS

The Boys

Aswan Reid	Shane McKenzie-Brady
Tyrique Brady	Laiken Beau Woolmington
Kyle Miller	Kailem Miller
Tyzailin Roderick	Tyler Rockman Spencer

The young actors in *The New Boy* are all First Nations boys. They range from ages 9-13, and for all of them, this film was their first acting experience.

The boys were interviewed about their experiences making the film, and below are some of their responses:

Aswan Reid - New Boy

Age 11, Year 6 at school

Lives in Adelaide, South Australia

What Aboriginal nation/s are you from? *I'm from Warakurna (on my dad's side), Mum is from Kiwirrkurra.*

What did you buy with your pay? *"I bought a PS5 and a Nintendo Switch."*

Share a memory of your experience on the film? *"I enjoyed making friends with everyone and getting to go catch yabbies in the Burra creek with the other boys."*

Tyler Rockman Spencer – Johnny

Age: 13, Year 7 at school

Lives in Port Pirie, South Australia

What Aboriginal nation/s are you from? *"Walpiri."*

What did you buy with your pay? *"New clothing, shoes, accessories, also a feed."*

What is your favourite memory from making the film? *"Hanging out with da boiz and making each other laugh."*

What was your LEAST favourite thing about being in the film? *"Messing up my dialogue."*

Laiken Beau Woolmington - David

Age 9, Year 4 at school

Lives in Port Pirie, South Australia

What Aboriginal nation/s are you from? *"Narrung."*

What did you buy with your pay? *"A PC and I saved the rest."*

What was your LEAST favourite thing about being in the film? *"Doing the scenes over and over."*

Anything else you would like to add about your experience on the film? *"That it was wonderful and I want to do it again."*

Kailem Miller - Steven

Age: 10, Year 5 at school

Lives in Whyalla, South Australia

What Aboriginal nation/s are you from? *"Wirangu, Kokatha & Narungga."*

What is your favourite memory from making the film? *"Hanging out in the truck with Patrick and talking to Uncle Wayne and drawing with Vance."*

What was it like when you went home and back to school? *"I didn't like it at all coz I missed the star treatment!"*

Name: Kyle Miller - James

Age: 11, Year 6 at school

Lives in Whyalla, South Australia

What Aboriginal nation/s are you from? *"Wirangu, Kokatha & Narungga."*

What did you buy with your pay? *"Oculus Quest 2, Basketball Shoes, Clothes, Pokemon Cards, Basketball Cards – and everything."*

Did you save any? *"Yes, lots actually."*

What is your favourite memory from making the film? *"Meeting lots of new people, being with my new friends and meeting Aunty Deb, Aunty Cate, Uncle Wayne, Aunty Fancy (Eliza) and Big Fulla (Vance)."*

Anything else you would like to add? *"My favourite sport is basketball and I want to be in the NBA and my favourite college would be Duke College in America. And my favourite basketball player is LaMelo Ball and he played for Illawarra Hawks in the NBL."*

Name: Tyrique Brady - Matthew

Age: 12, Year 7 at school

Lives in Adelaide, South Australia

What Aboriginal nation/s are you from? *"Kokatha"*

What did you buy with your pay? *"Motorbike, Clothes, Playstation and shouted my younger siblings toys and clothes."*

Did you save any? *"No"*

What is your favourite memory from making the film? *"The porridge scene it was funny fun and sickening 🤢"*

What was your LEAST favourite thing about being in the film? *"Waking up early and wasn't allowed to swim in the creek."*

What was it like when you went home and back to school? *"It was weird and scary cause Burra started to feel like home..."*

Anything else you would like to add about yourself and/or your experience on the film? *"It was fun I liked how we all felt like one big family and although I have a reading and writing disorder/disability I'm thankful for everyone boosting my confidence and for Vance being there for me ❤️."*

Tyzailin Roderick - Henry

Age: 11, Year 6 at school

Lives in Port Augusta, South Australia

What Aboriginal nation/s are you from: *"I'm a Mirning/Adnyamathanha/Antakirinja Matu-Yankunytjatjara"*

What did you buy with your pay: *"I bought two PS5s and football gear."*

Did you save any: *"Yes, my mum helped me put some away for when I get older."*

What was it like when you went home and back to school: *"I wasn't very happy going back to school because I missed Aswan and the boys, Kath, Big Fulla, Eliza and everyone."*

Anything else you would like to add about yourself and/or your experience on the film: *"I would do it all again."*

CAST AND CREW BIOS

Aswan Reid (principal cast)

This is Aswan's first role as an actor. He was born in Alice Springs in the centre of Australia and has lived most of his life there. His family is from Warakurna and Kiwirrkurra Aboriginal communities, in Central and Western Australia. Since making the movie, Aswan has been living in Adelaide and going to school there. He likes acrobatics, trampolining and playing video games with his friends. He would love to do more acting.

Cate Blanchett (principal cast/producer)

Cate Blanchett is co-Founder and Principal of film and television production company Dirty Films, alongside Andrew Upton (with whom she was co-CEO and Artistic Director of Sydney Theatre Company from 2008 - 2012). An internationally acclaimed, two-time Academy Award & four-time BAFTA winning actor, producer, artistic director, and humanitarian, she has presided over the festival juries in Cannes (2018) and Venice (2020), and The Venice Film Festival has twice awarded her with The Volpi Cup for Best Performance. Most recently Blanchett played the titular role and Executive Produced Todd Field's multi award winning feature film *Tár* and wrapped production on *Disclaimer*, directed by Alfonso Cuarón in which she stars and executive produces. Blanchett's additional acting credits include *Nightmare Alley*, *Don't Look Up*, *Thor: Ragnarok*, *Carol* (which Dirty Films Executive Produced), *Blue Jasmine*, *Notes on a Scandal*, *The Aviator*, *I'm Not There*, *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, *Truth* and *Little Fish* (both Executive Produced by Dirty Films), *Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*.

Dirty Films most recently Executive Produced Noora Niasari's *Shayda* - which won the Audience Award at Sundance, and has wrapped film production on Christos Nikou's *Fingernails* and is in active development of *Champions*, to be directed by Ben Stiller. The company also produced the acclaimed Audible Original podcast series, *Climate of Change*.

She is a Global Goodwill Ambassador for UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and a lifetime member of the Australian Conservation Foundation. In 2012, Blanchett was awarded the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Minister of Culture. She has received three Honorary Doctorates (University of New South Wales, University of Sydney, and Macquarie University) as well as the Companion of the Order of Australia.

Deborah Mailman (principal cast)

The multi award winning Deborah Mailman AM is one of Australia's most highly respected actors on stage and screen. Her feature credits include *Radiance*, *Rabbit Proof Fence*, *Three Summers*, *Bran Nue Dae*, *Oddball* and the internationally acclaimed *The Sapphires*. On television Deborah has created some of Australia's most enduring characters including the award-winning portrayals in *Mystery Road*, *Redfern Now*, *Mabo* and *The Secret Life of Us* as well as voicing 'Big Cuz' in the successful animation *Little J and Big Cuz*. Deborah has also been seen in the much-loved series *Offspring*, *Cleverman* and *Jack Irish*. Deborah plays the lead 'Alex Irving' in *Total Control* and received generous critical appraisal for her performance. One of Australia's most celebrated theatre actors, and previously a company member of the Sydney Theatre Company, Deborah's stage performances include the Matilda Award winning performances in *Radiance* and *The Seven Stages of Grieving*, the Helpmann Award Best Supporting Actress role in the STC production of *The Lost Echo* and the Helpmann Award nominated role for Best Actress in the theatre production of *The Sapphires*. In 2017 Deborah received the Order of Australia medal for Services to the Arts and as a role model for Indigenous performers. She is currently a Trustee of the Sydney Opera House and was appointed to the board of Screen Australia in 2019.

Wayne Blair (principal cast)

On television Wayne is best known for his AACTA nominated work in two seasons and a telemovie of *Redfern Now* for the ABC, episodes of which he also wrote and directed one episode. Selected TV credits

include Rowan Woods' *The Broken Shore*; *Small Claims*, *Fireflies*, *Water Rats*, *All Saints*, *Wildside*, *Squinters*, *The Letdown*, *Black Comedy* and *Aftertaste*. Wayne has recently appeared in the highly acclaimed television series *Mystery Road* beside Aaron Pederson and Judy Davis, and appeared in the ABC production of *Wakefield*. and Netflix original series *Irreverent*. Wayne's film credits include *Top End Wedding*, *Emu Runner*, *The Turning – Family*, *Wish You Were Here* opposite Joel Edgerton and Teresa Palmer, *X*, *The Last Time I Saw Michael Gregg* directed by Steven Soderbergh, *Blessed* with Miranda Otto, *Mullet* with Ben Mendelsohn, *Rams* with Miranda Richardson and Sam Neill, *Extraction* with Chris Hemsworth and Rose Byrne produced film, *Seriously Red* by Dollhouse Pictures. On stage Wayne has performed in *True West* directed by Phillip Seymour Hoffman and *Tot Mom* directed by Steven Soderbergh both for Sydney Theatre Company. Other theatre credits include *The Sunshine Club*, *Inheritance*, *The Cherry Pickers*, *The long Forgotten Dream* and *Wonnangatta* for Sydney Theatre Company, opposite Hugo Weaving; *Jesus Hopped the A Train*, *Stuff Happens*, *Run Rabbit Run*, *Conversations with the Dead*, *The Sapphires*, *The Dreamers*, *Cloudstreet* (International Tour) for Belvoir; *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* for the Bell Shakespeare Company, and *Skin* with Bangarra Dance Company.

Warwick Thornton (writer/director/DoP)

Warwick Thornton is an Australian film director, screenwriter and cinematographer. His debut feature film *Samson and Delilah* won the Caméra d'Or at the 2009 Cannes Film Festival and the award for Best Film at the Asia Pacific Screen Awards, along with many other awards around the world. He also won the Asia Pacific Screen Award for Best Film in 2017 for *Sweet Country*, along with the Special Jury Prize at Venice Film Festival and the Platform Prize at Toronto International Film Festival the same year. This will be his third feature film. In recent years, Warwick has made the documentary *We Don't Need a Map*, which opened Sydney Film Festival, the slow-TV series *The Beach* for NITV/SBS that sold to A24 in the US and *Firebite*, an AMC TV series he co-created that recently premiered.

Kath Shelper (producer)

Kath is the producer of many celebrated films including *Samson & Delilah*, which won the Camera d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 2009. Most recently she was a producer on *The Royal Hotel*, directed by Kitty Green. Her previous feature film *Ruben Guthrie* opened the 2015 Sydney Film Festival and premiered internationally at London Film Festival. Kath produced *The Darkside*, a hybrid documentary-drama with Warwick Thornton (2014 Berlin Film Festival), ABC TV feature documentary *Tender* by artist Lynette Wallworth (AACTA Award Best TV Documentary 2015) and two chapters of *The Turning* feature film (Tim Winton's short stories project, Berlin Film Festival 2014), with Warwick Thornton and actress Mia Wasikowska in her directing debut. Mia and Kath also made another short film for the *Madly* anthology (Tribeca 2016). Kath produced Beck Cole's debut feature *Here I Am*, which won Best Dramatic Feature at the 2011 Canadian ImagineNATIVE Film Festival. Kath was the President of community organisation *Metro Screen* for five years and she has served as a jury member for several film festivals including the Sydney Film Festival competition prize.

Andrew Upton (producer)

Andrew Upton is a writer, producer and director of film, television and theatre and the co-Founder and Principal of film and television production company, Dirty Films. From 2008 to 2012, he was co-Artistic Director of Sydney Theatre Company (STC), alongside Cate Blanchett, and sole Artistic Director from 2013 to 2015. During this time he programmed and oversaw annual seasons of productions across four Sydney venues, as well as national and international touring in Europe and the USA (including his adaptations of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* and *The Present* on Broadway, co-adaptation and translation of *The Maids*, and as director of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*). Leading Australia's largest performing arts company he also advocated for sustainability and co-led the transformation of the company's home to accommodate Australia's second-largest rooftop solar array, while co-leading the award-winning *Greening the Wharf* sustainability program and pioneering in-school professional learning development

programmes. For the National Theatre (UK), Upton was responsible for adaptations of Maxim Gorky's *Philistines* and *Children of the Sun*, Bulgakov's *The White Guard* and Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*. Upton was an Executive Producer of *Stateless*, a six-part limited Netflix Original series, created and produced by Dirty Films and Matchbox Pictures for the ABC and Netflix, which won 13 AACTA Awards. He also Executive Produced Christos Nikou's *Apples*, which premiered at Venice Film Festival in 2020, and Noora Niasari's debut feature film, *Shayda*, which premiered (and won the Audience Award) at this year's Sundance Film Festival. Under the auspices of Dirty Films Upton Executive Produced *Carol*, *Little Fish*, *The Turning* and *Truth*. Most recently, Upton produced Christos Nikou's *Fingernails*, starring Jesse Buckley and Riz Ahmed, which will be released later this year. He also co-created and Executive Produced the Audible Original podcast series, *Climate of Change with Cate Blanchett and Danny Kennedy*.

Lorenzo De Maio (producer)

Lorenzo De Maio is President of De Maio Entertainment (DME), an independent premium content company specializing in production, sales, and strategic advisory, backed by Fremantle. Lorenzo was previously Partner and EVP at Endeavor Content and was instrumental in the launch and success of the company, working on multiple award-winning shows including *Killing Eve*, *The Night Manager*, and *Normal People*. De Maio has spearheaded several partnerships including deals with Nicky Weinstock (*Severance*, *Escape at Dannemora*), award-winning journalist Afua Hirsch, Element Pictures (*The Favourite*, *Normal People*), and Angelina Jolie. The partnership with Jolie is across film, television, and documentaries and is currently in post-production on the film *Without Blood* starring Salma Hayek and Demián Bichir. Lorenzo also works on projects across Fremantle's US and international eco-system, including the *Ferrari* series at Apple, Luca Guadagnino's film *Bones and All*, which won two major awards at the 2022 Venice Film Festival, *Alice & Jack* starring Andrea Riseborough and Domhnall Gleeson, and *The Lehman Trilogy* to be written and directed by Florian Zeller.

Georgie Pym (co-producer)

Georgie Pym is a film, television and podcast producer and the Vice President of film and television production company, Dirty Films. A long-time collaborator of Cate Blanchett and Andrew Upton, Georgie's film credits include *Thor: Ragnarok*, *The House with a Clock in Its Walls*, *Carol*, *Cinderella*, and *Hanna*. Georgie was an Associate Producer of the award winning six-part limited series *Stateless* which was created and produced by Dirty Films and Matchbox Pictures for the ABC and Netflix, and an Executive Producer of the Audible Original podcast series, *Climate of Change with Cate Blanchett and Danny Kennedy*.

Coco Francini (executive producer)

Coco Francini is an Emmy-nominated producer and a partner at Dirty Films, alongside Cate Blanchett and Andrew Upton. Most recently, Coco produced the upcoming Apple Original film *Fingernails*, directed by Christos Nikou and starring Jessie Buckley, Riz Ahmed, and Jeremy Allen White. She has also executive produced Iranian-Australian filmmaker Noora Niasari's feature debut *Shayda*, starring Cannes Best Actress winner Zar Amir-Ebrahimi. The film premiered in the World Dramatic Competition at Sundance this past year and went on to win the Audience Award. Previous to her work with Dirty Films, Coco executive produced *Mrs. America* for FX Networks, written by *Mad Men* alum Dahvi Waller. The show premiered in April 2020 and received ten Emmy nominations, including Best Limited Series, Outstanding Writing, and acting nominations for Blanchett, Margo Martindale, and Tracey Ullman, as well as an Emmy win for Uzo Aduba. Coco is also a frequent collaborator of Quentin Tarantino. Beginning with *Django Unchained* and then on *The Hateful Eight* where she oversaw the global 70MM roadshow tour and the soundtrack/score that won a long deserved Academy Award for Ennio Morricone. A graduate of the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, Francini earned her masters from the elite Peter Stark Producing Program at USC.

Gretel Packer (executive producer)

Gretel Packer is an Australian businesswoman, philanthropist and arts patron. Her philanthropic interests include a broad range of community activities and charities aligned to the arts, education and environmental science. She is Chair of the Packer Family Foundation which partners with organisations supporting Indigenous education, community welfare, health and arts. Gretel is also a member of the Board of Sydney Theatre Company, is Chair of the Sydney Theatre Company Foundation, is a Founding Patron of the Taronga Conservation Science Initiative and is a member of the Taronga Conservation Science Advisory Council. Gretel has previously served as Vice-President of the Board of Trustees of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, as a Director of Taronga Conservation Society Australia, as a Director of the Royal Hospital for Women Foundation and as a Council Member of the Royal Botanic Gardens Foundation.

Nick Cave and Warren Ellis (score)

Nick Cave and Warren Ellis create film scores that are instrumental sound paintings injecting aching humanity into ghostly frontier towns, parched desert landscapes, post-apocalyptic war zones and extra-terrestrial vistas. While Cave and Ellis have played together in the Bad Seeds and related projects since 1995, their career as score composers only blossomed later on, evolving from the indie movie margins to embrace major, Oscar-nominated Hollywood features. *The Proposition* (2005), documentaries *The Girls of Phnom Penh* (2009), *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* (2007), *The Road* (2009), *Days of Grace* (2011), documentary *West of Memphis* (2012), *Lawless* (2012), *Far From Men* (2014), *Loins Des Hommes* (2015), documentary *Prophet's Prey* (2015), *Hell or High Water* (2016), *Wind River* (2017), *War Machine* (2017), *Kings* (2017), *La Panthere des Neiges* (2021), Netflix series *Dahmer* (2022) and *Blonde* (2022).

Amy Baker (production designer)

The New Boy is the second project Amy Baker has undertaken with director Warwick Thornton after 8-part TV series *Firebite*, which was commissioned by AMC+ and produced by See-Saw Films. Baker designed the feature film *Top End Wedding* for director Wayne Blair with Goalpost Productions producing. She designed the television series *The Hunting* for directors Sophie Hyde and Ana Kokkinos, produced by Closer Productions for SBS TV amongst other work.

Nick Meyers ASE (editor)

This is the second collaboration for Nick Meyers with Warwick Thornton, having cut Warwick's previous film *Sweet Country*, for which he won the Australian AACTA Award for best editing. Nick is one of Australia's most accomplished film editors with credits ranging from the recent *Run, Rabbit, Run* starring Sarah Snook (Sundance Film Festival 2023), to a long history of collaboration with filmmaker Robert Connolly on films including *Blueback* (Sundance, Toronto), *The Dry*, *Balibo* (for which Nick won several editing awards including the Australian 2009 AFI Award) and *The Boys* (Berlin FF competition). Nick's previous film at the Cannes Film Festival was *Sleeping Beauty* (Competition, 2011).

Jules Wurm (camera operator)

A projected viewing of *Battleship Potemkin* in 1986 and helping her camera assistant friend on a GoBetweens video clip opened up the pathway for Jules Wurm's life as a camera operator. Since then, she has loved working in the camera department first as a clapper loader (2nd AC), then as a focus puller (1st AC) and now with the best job of all, as camera operator. Jules loves to be engulfed in the special rectangle and knows that her own screen romance will continue until her end! Jules has worked on most of Warwick's previous short and feature films in different roles in the camera department. She has operated on film and TV productions such as *Firebite*, *A Sunburnt Christmas*, *Mystery Road* and *I Am Mother*, amongst others.

Liam Egan (sound designer)

Liam Egan has been playing with sound for over 30 years and has been the sound designer/sound supervisor on approximately 50 feature films, including Warwick Thornton's *Samson & Delilah*. His recent feature credits include *Danger Close*, *The Drover's Wife: The Legend of Molly Johnson*, *Friends and Strangers* and *Here Out West*. Liam is a multi-award winner and nominee. He has also worked extensively in television drama and documentary and has completed the sound design for scores of short films. In addition, Liam has worked with many artists, and has been the sound designer on many non-film projects, ranging from interactive and full dome, to multimedia and virtual reality. Liam is very happy exploring life through sound.

Heather Wallace (costume designer)

Heather started her career in Melbourne working in theatre and opera before returning to South Australia and transitioning into on-screen mediums. For the past 15 years, she has focused on costume design working on a variety of feature and short film projects including *Samson and Delilah*, *The Babadook*, *Cargo*, *Sweet Country*, *Top End Wedding*, *Firebite* and ABC TV's *Mystery Road* seasons 1 and 2. She has 31 years' experience including as a key stand-by working in both film and television, and has been involved in projects like *The Rover*, *Last Cab to Darwin*, *The Boys Are Back* and many more. Heather has a Bachelor of Visual Art majoring in Sculpture and Art Theory. She Studied at the Centre for the Performing Arts majoring in Costume and Set Design. She grew up in the Southern Flinders Ranges and has a connection to the Australian landscape. Heather is passionate about telling new stories and has a strong interest in inclusive Australian history.

Jennifer Rossiter (hair and makeup designer)

Jen's gentle soul has been guiding hair and makeup departments, mostly based out of South Australia, for many years. Jen collaborated with Warwick Thornton on his previous feature film *Sweet Country* and his recent TV series *Firebite*. Jen's other credits include *The Stranger* (Cannes, Uncertain Regard 2022), Wayne Blair's *Top End Wedding*, Ivan Sen's *Goldstone*.

Anousha Zarkesh (casting director)

Established for over 25 years, Anousha Zarkesh Casting specialises in top end Australian TV and film. Our casting agency has gained a reputation for championing cultural diversity and we take pride in casting for a wide range of genres including political satire, drama, comedy, telemovies, documentary series and film. Titles include: *Shayda* (Sundance 2023), *The Stranger* (Un Certain Regard 2022), *Firebite*, *Class of 07*, *Total Control* TV series, *Mystery Road* TV series, *Rake*, *Redfern Now*, *Cleverman*, *The Principal*, *INXS Never Tear Us Apart*, *Catching Milat*, *Peter Brock Story*, *800 Words*, *Black Comedy*, *Jasper Jones*, *Hounds of Love*, *Manny Lewis* and *Alex and Eve*. Anousha won the 2021 AACTA Casting Award for Best Casting in Feature Film for *High Ground* and in 2022, won four Casting Guild of Australia Awards, including for Best Film – *We Are Still Here*, Best TV Drama – *Bali 2002*, Best Comedy – *Preppers* and Best Achievement in Casting – *The Australian Wars*. She was also nominated in the 2022 AACTA for Best Casting – *The Stranger*. She is Vice President of the Australian Casting Guild and Screen Illawarra.