

## BUNYA PRODUCTIONS' SWEET COUNTRY IN OFFICIAL COMPETITION AT VENICE

With Australian Premiere at the Adelaide Film Festival

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - THURSDAY 27 JULY 2017** – Warwick Thornton's latest feature **SWEET COUNTRY** has been selected in Official Competition at the Venice Film Festival in September and will have its Australian premiere at the Adelaide Film Festival in October, it has been announced.

Inspired by real events and starring **Sam Neill, Bryan Brown, Ewen Leslie, Thomas M. Wright, Natassia Gorey-Furber, Anni Finsterer, Matt Day** and introducing **Hamilton Morris, Tremayne Doolan** and **Trevon Doolan**, **SWEET COUNTRY** is set in the 1920s on the Northern Territory frontier - where justice itself is put on trial.

Directed by **Warwick Thornton**, recipient of the *Camera d'Or* at the *2009 Cannes Film Festival* for his debut feature *Samson and Delilah*, the period western is a stunning cinematic vision and soundscape set in the desert of the magnificent MacDonnell Ranges around Alice Springs in central Australia.

Director **Warwick Thornton** said: "That landscape around Alice Springs is sacred. The MacDonnell Ranges are always in my mind from growing up there with my family. So, **SWEET COUNTRY** is a film about the land and our family and what happened when the missionaries and pastoralists arrived."

Produced by Bunya Productions' **Greer Simpkin** and **David Jowsey**, and written by **Steven McGregor** and co-producer **David Tranter**, **SWEET COUNTRY** received major production investment and development support from Screen Australia's Indigenous Department, in association with the South Australian Film Corporation, Create NSW, Screen Territory and the Adelaide Film Festival, with international sales being handled by Memento and the Australian release by Transmission Films.

**Penny Smallacombe**, Head of Screen Australia's Indigenous Department said "**SWEET COUNTRY** is an outstanding Indigenous collaboration, from the incredibly talented writers Steven McGregor and David Tranter and the extraordinary vision of director Warwick Thornton. This is a vital and rich Indigenous perspective of how Aboriginal people have been treated historically and we're proud the film will premiere at one of the world's most prestigious film festivals," said Ms Smallacombe.

South Australian Film Corporation CEO **Annabelle Sheehan** said "**SWEET COUNTRY** is a visceral and compelling film, and so richly deserves its place premiering on this prestigious international stage. Having Warwick work with our South Australian crews was a fantastic opportunity."

Create NSW CEO **Michael Brealey** said: "Selection at the Venice Film Festival is a stunning achievement for director Warwick Thornton, one of the country's finest filmmakers, and also for NSW-based producers Greer Simpkin and David Jowsey. Create NSW is proud to have supported Warwick, David and Greer on many of their projects over recent years. We look forward to **SWEET COUNTRY** being warmly received at Venice."



**Sally Ingleton**, Director of Screen Territory said: “Screen Territory is thrilled that **SWEET COUNTRY** is going to premiere at the prestigious Venice Film Festival. We are proud to have supported the film and the screening is a chance for the world to witness the amazing creative talent that resides in the Northern Territory.”

Adelaide Film Festival CEO and Artistic Director **Amanda Duthie** said “It is so important that we have visionary filmmakers such as Warwick telling real Australian stories. Adelaide Film Festival is proud to have funded **SWEET COUNTRY** and we look forward to presenting the Australian Premiere in October.”

Bunya Productions’ **Greer Simpkin** and **David Jowsey** said: “We are deeply honoured that **SWEET COUNTRY** has been selected in Official Competition in Venice, and that it will have its Australian premiere at the Adelaide Film Festival in October.

“To represent Australia on the cinematic world stage with such an important story is both humbling and thrilling. To our stellar cast and crew we thank you; to our inspiring director – we salute you, and to our funding partners who believed in this production from the start – we are sincerely grateful.”

#### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND INTERVIEW REQUESTS Catherine Lavelle**

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#### **ABOUT SWEET COUNTRY**

Inspired by real events, **SWEET COUNTRY** is a period western set in 1929 in the outback of the Northern Territory, Australia. When Aboriginal stockman Sam (*Hamilton Morris*) kills white station owner Harry March (*Ewen Leslie*) in self-defence, Sam and his wife Lizzie (*Natassia Gorey-Furber*) go on the run. They are pursued across the outback, through glorious but harsh desert country. Sergeant Fletcher (*Bryan Brown*) leads the posse with the help of Aboriginal tracker Archie (*Gibson John*) and local landowners Fred Smith (*Sam Neill*) and Mick Kennedy (*Thomas M. Wright*). Fletcher is desperate to capture Sam and put him on trial for murder - but Sam is an expert bushman and he has little difficulty outlasting them. Eventually, for the health of his pregnant wife, Sam decides to give himself up. He is put on trial in the courtroom of Judge Taylor (*Matt Day*). But will justice be served?