

## Holliday Grainger and Alia Shawkat star in Sophie Hyde's *Animals*

Thursday 22 March 2018: Award-winning director Sophie Hyde ([52 Tuesdays](#), [Life in Movement](#)) is helming a feature adaptation of author-turned-screenwriter Emma Jane Unsworth's best-selling novel *Animals*, an unconventional female driven comedy starring Holliday Grainger (*Tulip Fever*, *My Cousin Rachel*) and Alia Shawkat (*Arrested Development*, *Search Party*).

The official Irish/Australian co-production from Vico Films and Closer Productions is currently shooting in Dublin, having secured production investment from Screen Australia and the Irish Film Board (IFB) in association with the Adelaide Film Festival and the South Australian Film Corporation (SAFC).

Grainger and Shawkat star as Laura and Tyler respectively, best friends and drinking buddies whose hedonistic existence falls under the creeping horror of adulthood when Laura gets engaged to Jim - an ambitious pianist who decides, unfathomably, to go teetotal.

Sophie Hyde is also producing alongside Rebecca Summerton for Closer Productions, BAFTA-nominated Sarah Brocklehurst (*Black Pond*), and Cormac Fox for Vico Films. Emma Jane Unsworth wrote the screenplay based on her novel which was first published in 2014 in the UK, followed by editions in the USA, Canada, Germany, France and Spain.

"Emma's novel (and screenplay) is a celebration of a female friendship and an examination of being a modern woman, a woman with faults and longings, aspirations and competing desires," said director Sophie Hyde. "I couldn't be more thrilled to be working with both Holliday and Alia to bring two characters to the screen who are funny, disturbing, charming and nuanced, and I am delighted to bring this *Animals* world to life with an exceptional team from both Ireland and Australia."

Sophie Hyde made her debut in 2014 with the ground-breaking film [52 Tuesdays](#), which she produced, directed and co-wrote. The breakout hit went on to win several awards including Best Director at Sundance and the Crystal Bear at Berlin Film Festival in 2014. Hyde and Summerton are both owners and directors of Closer Productions and recipients of [Gender Matters Brilliant Careers](#) funding in 2016 for a proposal to identify and support exceptional female voices.

"Sophie Hyde is a hugely promising talent who has demonstrated both her distinctive style and directorial agility with projects like her captivating feature debut [52 Tuesdays](#) and comedy series [F\\*\\*\\*ing Adelaide](#)," said Sally Caplan, Head of Production at Screen Australia. "With *Animals*, Sophie and Rebecca will have the chance to collaborate with their Irish production partners and capitalise on the immense opportunities presented by the official co-production program - a proven pathway to reaching international audiences."

"The IFB, alongside Screen Australia, is delighted to support Sophie Hyde's *Animals*, which is set in and will film in Ireland," said James Hickey, CEO of IFB. "Led by unique and distinctive female creative filmmaking talent, we are also proud to help bring this complex and nuanced portrait of contemporary womanhood to screens around the world."

Post production will be handled by Kojo in Adelaide, Bonsai Films are on board to distribute in Australia and New Zealand, and Cornerstone Films are handling international sales.

"The Adelaide Film Festival FUND has supported Sophie Hyde's extraordinary work to date," said Artistic Director and CEO of Adelaide Film Festival Amanda Duthie. "Adelaide Film Festival champions the work of bold and distinctive directors and we are thrilled to be involved in this venture with Closer Productions and Sophie Hyde's vision for this international co-production with all female key creatives."

Acting CEO of the South Australian Film Corporation Adam Smith said, "The SAFC is thrilled to continue the journey with the now renowned South Australian production company Closer Productions, and the unique creative voice of Sophie Hyde, as they take this exciting next step into international co-production with *Animals*. It is an amazing opportunity for the South Australian team to work on an international production, which has roots in South Australia."

British actress Holliday Grainger's credits include *My Cousin Rachel*, Disney's live action film *Cinderella*, and Emmy® Award-winning drama series *The Borgias*. Alia Shawkat is an award-winning actress best known for her work on cult TV series *Arrested Development* as well as roles in *Search Party* and Amazon's Emmy® award-winning series *Transparent*.

[Australia's co-production treaty with Ireland](#) was signed in 1998 and to date has produced five official co-productions - one TV miniseries, two children's drama series, one feature-length documentary and one documentary series. *Animals* will be the first drama feature film made under the treaty. The Competent Authorities tasked with administering the Co-production Program in Australia and Ireland are Screen Australia and the Irish Film Board respectively.

**Production credit:** *Animals* is a Closer Productions and Vico Films co-production with major production investment from Screen Australia and the Irish Film Board, in association with the Adelaide Film Festival and the South Australian Film Corporation. Developed by Sarah Brocklehurst Productions and Closer Productions, with the assistance of Creative England and Screen Australia.

#### About Closer Productions

Closer Productions is a multi-award winning Adelaide-based production company with a focus on, and reputation for, producing distinctive high quality work that resonates across international boundaries. Closer is responsible for some of the most exciting and challenging Australian films of recent years. These include feature documentaries - [Shut Up Little Man!](#) (Sundance 2011), [Sam Klemke's Time Machine](#) (Sundance 2015), [Life in Movement](#) (Australian Documentary Prize - Sydney Film Festival 2011), and unique breakout feature drama [52 Tuesdays](#) (Winner of Best Director at Sundance and the Crystal Bear, Berlin Film Festival in 2014).

#### About Vico Films

Vico Films was established in 2003 by Cormac Fox, Peter Foott and Michael Doherty. The company's films have screened at over 100 film festivals, premiering in competition at Rotterdam, Venice and Tribeca, picking up over two dozen international awards. The company's most recent feature film *The Young Offenders* became a major critical and box office hit in 2016, winning nine international awards and earning eight Irish Film & Television Award nominations. Projects for 2018 projects include the spin-off TV series of *The Young Offenders* commissioned by BBC, the London-based crime thriller series *Cold Courage* based on the award-winning books by Finnish author Pekka Hiltunen, and RTE's hit hidden-camera show, *Senior Moments*.