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Film Lab: New Voices opens for development funding applications with new opportunities for diverse filmmakers

South Australia's flagship low-budget feature film development initiative **Film Lab: New Voices** is back for a fourth intake, with applications open now for the development of bold, authentic and original feature film projects from first-time SA filmmakers.

Film Lab: New Voices offers three up-and-coming SA filmmaking teams the chance to develop their first low-budget feature film through a 12-month development program funded by the **South Australian Film Corporation** (SAFC) with financial assistance from **Screen Australia**. At the completion of the Lab one team will be selected to receive \$600,000 in screen production grant funding for their film.

Film Lab: New Voices has proven to be an outstanding career escalator program since its launch in 2020, securing international exposure and recognition at the highest levels for a bevy of first-time SA feature filmmakers.

Inaugural film *Monolith* from writer **Lucy Campbell**, director **Matt Vesely** and producer **Bettina Hamilton** was nominated for Best Indie Film at the 2024 AACTA Awards following its international premiere in official selection at prestigious US film festival SXSW, and enjoyed a successful release in cinemas across Australia and the US.

Its successor, animated comedy *Lesbian Space Princess* by writer/directors **Emma Hough Hobbs** and **Leela Varghese** and producer **Tom Phillips**, is currently in contention for seven AACTA Awards including Best Film and Best Indie Film, following its world premiere at 2024 Berlin International Film Festival (Berlinale) where it won the Teddy Award for Best Feature Film.

Starring rising South Australian talent Shabana Azeez (*The Pitt*) and hit Australian comedy team Aunty Donna, *Lesbian Space Princess* has been in official selection at a raft of prestigious international festivals including SXSW London, Frameline, Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF), New Zealand Film Festival, Annecy International Animation Festival, Adelaide Film Festival and Sydney Film Festival, where it won Audience Awards.

A third Film Lab: New Voices film – First Nations-led horror *The Debt* by co-writers **Pearl Berry** and **Piri Eddy**, director **Johanis Lyons-Reid** and producer **Lilla Berry** – is currently in production in SA and already being cited in national media as one of the most hotly anticipated films of the year.

With a focus on championing diverse South Australian voices and stories, this year Film Lab: New Voices expands the opportunities for Deaf and/or disabled writers, directors and producers by prioritising applications from teams including at least one Deaf and/or disabled key creative.

Arts Minister Andrea Michaels MP said: "The Malinauskas Government is committed to supporting South Australia's growing film industry and this program plays a vital role in supporting up and coming filmmakers. South Australia has been a hotbed of film and television success over the past few years including *Monolith* and *Lesbian Space Princess*, both of which achieved international acclaim as a result of this initiative. I encourage local filmmakers to take advantage of this opportunity and apply now."

SAFC Head of Production Leanne Saunders said: "Film Lab: New Voices is all about discovering and launching the next wave of talented South Australian filmmakers, and we are so proud to continue to provide a platform for original and diverse voices and stories through it.

“With last year’s Film Lab production *Lesbian Space Princess* currently up for an incredible seven AACTA Awards, including Best Film and Best Indie Film, this innovative program has proven its value time and again, giving up-and-coming SA screen storytellers the confidence, skills and industry connections to progress ambitious stories toward production.

“This year we are especially thrilled to be boosting opportunities for Deaf and disabled SA key creatives through Film Lab, with priority consideration given to teams with a Deaf and/or disabled writer, director and/or producer. Supporting talent early, and backing them with meaningful development is essential to the long-term growth of our screen industry and Film Lab: New Voices does exactly that. We can’t wait to see the latest crop of bold ideas from the next generation of talented South Australian filmmakers.”

Screen Australia Director of Narrative Content Louise Gough said: “With a proven track record that includes *Monolith*, *Lesbian Space Princess* and the upcoming First Nations-led horror *The Debt*, Film Lab: New Voices has established itself as a high-impact talent escalation initiative within the Australian screen sector.

“The initiative is testament to the importance of nurturing bold, fresh and diverse voices and providing a springboard for Australian storytelling to continue capturing attention here and around the world. Screen Australia is excited to support new voices shaping Australian stories and the future of our screen industry.”

Film Lab: New Voices – Development is now open for applications as phase one of the program, supported by development funding from SAFC and Screen Australia. The Film Lab: New Voices – Production program will open later in 2026, for eligible projects that have completed the Development program.

To help potential applicants learn more about the program, and the principles of low-budget film methodology, the SAFC is hosting a series of free screenings of Film Lab: New Voices films *Monolith* and *Lesbian Space Princess* in February, featuring filmmaker Q&A sessions. Potential applicants are also invited to view the program webinar video on the SAFC website, and download the guidelines for more information.

For more information go to safilm.com.au/funding-programs#filmlab

FOR POTENTIAL APPLICANTS – RESOURCES BEFORE APPLYING:

- **Watch the online video information session**
SAFC Talent Development Manager Jessica Giacco talks you through the Film Lab: New Voices program, and how to apply. Available to view from Friday 30 January at safilm.com.au/funding-programs#filmlab
- **Attend a free screening of *Monolith* or *Lesbian Space Princess*, with filmmaker Q&A**
Learn more about low budget film methodology, meet other creatives considering applying for the Film Lab: New Voices program and potentially form a creative team.
10 February at The Mercury, Adelaide – *Lesbian Space Princess* screening and Q&A: [Register now](#)
17 February at The Mercury, Adelaide – *Monolith* screening and Q&A [Register now](#)
24 February at The Victa Cinema, Victor Harbor - *Lesbian Space Princess* screening and Q&A: [Register now](#)

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