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JUDGES FOR NEW ZEALAND'S BEST ANNOUNCED

Three judges have been confirmed for the inaugural *New Zealand's Best* Short Film Competition which screens as part of the NZIFF.

Actress Robyn Malcolm, filmmaker Sima Urale, and Madman Entertainment representative Michael Eldred will judge the six finalist short films at a public screening in Auckland on Saturday 28 July.

The jury will choose the winners of the $5000 Madman Entertainment Jury Prize and the $3000 Friends of the Civic Award. Auckland and Wellington audiences will also vote for the winner of the Audience Vote award (prize value is equal to 25% of the box office takings). The winners will then be announced on Sunday 5 August at the Closing Night of the NZIFF in Auckland.

The first session on Saturday 28 July in Auckland is sold out. Tickets are still available for the screening on Monday 30 July 2pm at SkyCity theatre. Wellington audiences will first view the competition on Wednesday 1 August 7pm at the Paramount theatre. The *New Zealand's Best* will continue to screen around New Zealand as part of the Film Festival programme.

About the Judges:
Michael Eldred, Madman Entertainment, is Madman NZ's Theatrical Sales Manager. Michael is responsible for the New Zealand theatrical release of such successful local films as *Out of the Blue*, *Boy*, and *The Orator*. His career highlights include roles at Dendy Films & Cinemas, Polygram, Hoyts Distribution and Madman Entertainment.

Robyn Malcolm, New Zealand actress and graduate of Toi Whakaari New Zealand Drama School, is known for her role as matriarch Cheryl West in the television series *Outrageous Fortune*. Robyn's career has included a long-running role as Ellen Crozier in *Shortland Street*, and recently a co-starring role in *The Hopes and Dreams of Gazza Snell* which screened at NZIFF (2010). Robyn's upcoming projects include Jane Campion's *Top of the Lake*.

Sima Urale is an accomplished filmmaker and commercials director. She is the only New Zealander to have won the Baby Lion in Venice (for her film *O Tamaiti* 1997*)*, the most prestigious international award won by any New Zealand short filmmaker. Her career began as a stage actor, before moving to writing and directing short films, including *Still Life* and *Coffee & Allah*. Her feature debut, *Apron Strings*, opened the 2008 NZIFF in Auckland. Sima is a graduate of Toi Whakaari New Zealand Drama School.

Selection:
Guest selector and international filmmaker Roger Donaldson selected the six finalists from a shortlist of twelve. Festival programmers Bill Gosden and Michael McDonnell viewed 109 submissions to prepare the shortlist.

The finalists are:
43,000 Feet
NZ 2012. Director: Campbell Hooper Producers: Heather Lee, Amber Easby Screenplay: Matthew Harris. 9 mins
With several minutes before he hits the ground, a falling man reflects on his past and his immediate future.
"Great photography. Very original framing and concept." – Roger Donaldson

Ellen Is Leaving
NZ 2012. Director: Michelle Savill Producers: Michelle Savill, Desray Armstrong Screenplay: Martha Hardy-Ward. 15 mins

Ellen is cool. She is recycling stuff before she heads overseas.
"I love how original it feels. The details of the travel pack put a real smile on my face. " – Roger Donaldson

Home
NZ 2012. Director: Thomas Gleeson Producers: Thomas Gleeson, Pip Walls. 11 mins
We watch a house take a road trip.
"A beautifully photographed minimalist documentary." – Roger Donaldson

Lambs
NZ 2012. Director/Screenplay: Sam Kelly Producer: Tom Hern. 15 mins
"Really captures a tough uncompromising world in a very compelling way. I loved the central character's heroism. It reminded me of Once Were Warriors in the best possible way." – Roger Donaldson

Milk & Honey
NZ 2012. Director/Screenplay: Marina Alofagia McCartney Producers: Angela Hicks, Marina Alofagia McCartney. 14 mins
This brief drama recalls the notorious dawn raids on Pasifika families.
"I lived in Ponsonby in the 70s and remember the events portrayed in this film. Very poignant." – Roger Donaldson

Night Shift
NZ 2012. Director/Screenplay: Zia Mandviwalla Producers: Chelsea Winstanley, Matt Noonan. 14 mins
An airport cleaner has reason to keep to herself.
"I love this story – it feels so real and packs a real wallop." – Roger Donaldson

The Festival is now underway in Auckland (until August 5) and opens simultaneously in Wellington and Dunedin on Friday (27 July – August 12), then in Christchurch (9 - 26 August). Further regional dates are provided on the Festival website. For Festival updates visit www.nzff.co.nz and register to receive e-newsletters.

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For further information about the NZ International Film Festival or to arrange an interview with Director Bill Gosden:

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