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The Legend of Monkey comes to life for ABC, TVNZ and Netflix

New TV series produced by See-Saw Films and Jump Film & TV

Production is underway in New Zealand on the major new live action television series *The Legend of Monkey*, which will premiere on ABC, TVNZ and on Netflix around the world in 2018.

Inspired by the 16th Century Chinese fable *Journey to the West*, the 10-part half hour series follows a teenage girl and a trio of fallen gods on a perilous journey as they attempt to bring an end to a demonic reign of chaos and restore balance to their world.

The talented and diverse young cast includes Chai Hansen (*Mako Mermaids, The 100*) as Monkey, with Luciane Buchanan (*Filthy Rich, Blue Rose*) playing Tripitaka, Josh Thomson (*Terry Teo, 7 Days, The Project*) playing Pigsy and Emilie Cocquerel (*Lion, An Accidental Soldier*) playing Sandy.

The series is being filmed at stunning locations in and around Auckland, New Zealand, as well as on spectacular purpose-built sets that bring to life the magical fantasy world our characters inhabit.

The Legend of Monkey is being produced for ABC, TVNZ and Netflix by the Oscar and Emmy-winning production company See-Saw Films together with Jump Film & TV. The series is an official New Zealand/Australian co-production with principal investment from Screen Australia in association with Screen NSW, Fulcrum Media Finance and the New Zealand Screen Production Grant.

Head writer is the acclaimed Jacquelin Perske (*Seven Types of Ambiguity, Spirited, Will*) with both Craig Irvin (*Nowhere Boys*) and Samantha Strauss (*Dance Academy*) providing additional writing services. Gerard Johnstone (*Housebound, The Jaquie Brown Diaries*) is the lead director and has worked closely with Jacquelin to realise this unique story. Additional episodes are being directed by Craig Irvin.

“The mythical tale of the Monkey King is a story that continues to captivate global audiences,” said Michael Carrington, Head of Children’s at ABC Television. “Our production partner See-Saw Films is bringing *The Legend of Monkey* to life through incredible locations and sets, an acclaimed production team and an exciting diverse young cast. We can’t wait for fans to see this new series that features the heroes they love and we are just as excited to introduce this reimagined magical and exciting world to a whole new generation of viewers.”

Rachel Gardner, for See-Saw Films said: “Jacquelin has adapted this classic literary work in such a way as to create an original fantasy world that is occupied by charismatic and interesting characters that will entertain all ages. Brought to life by the vision of Gerard, the story and setting will not be like anything we’ve seen before.”

Robin Scholes, for Jump Film & TV, said: “Gerard has the best people working at every level beside him so the production values on screen for cinematography, design, costume, and make up, are breathtaking as are the performances of a largely New Zealand cast. We’re also thrilled that Australian and New Zealand audiences will see it first on ABC and TVNZ.”

Andrew Shaw, TVNZ’s GM of Acquisitions, Commissioning and Production, said: “This is an extraordinary project to be involved with and we can’t wait to be the first to bring it to New Zealand audiences. Shot in New Zealand, with a team of Kiwis taking key roles in front and behind the cameras, *The Legend of Monkey* is big budget fantasy drama series that will surprise and delight family viewers globally and locally. We’re a business built on highly original content and this ticks all the boxes: it’s a tremendous tale, visually imaginative and made by talented people. Kids are going to love it.”

Andy Yeatman, director of global kids content at Netflix said: “We’re thrilled to distribute this world-class local production to young audiences around the world. The legendary Monkey King and his epic journey have mesmerised fans for ages. We’re delighted the creative team at See-Saw Films and Jump Film & TV are bringing this reimagining to life for ABC and Netflix.”

Jamie Laurenson and Hakan Kousetta of See-Saw Films said “A wonderful team of creatives and a crew of master craftsman are bringing an astonishing fantasy world to life. With ABC, Netflix and TVNZ we hope to bring an international audience of all ages to Jacquelin and Gerard's reimagining of an amazing story.”

The Legend of Monkey will air on ABC, TVNZ and on Netflix around the world in 2018.

ABOUT ABC

ABC is the home of Australian conversations, culture and stories, delivering commercial-free, free-to-air screen content via a multiplatform multi-channel network. ABC is the destination of choice for viewers and users seeking quality and diversity in screen content; in particular engaging audiences in distinctly Australian content across a wide variety of genres.

ABC services include ABC, ABC2, ABC ME, ABC KIDS, ABC NEWS, ABC iview and ABC KIDS iview.

ABOUT SEE-SAW FILMS

Academy Award® winning producers Iain Canning and Emile Sherman founded SEE-SAW FILMS in 2008. SEE-SAW is a UK and Australian company specialising in international Film and Television.

The television division formally started in 2012 and kicked off with the multi-award winning first season of *Top of the Lake* – the same year Jamie Laurenson joined from BBC Films. Hakan Kousetta joined in 2014 as COO and the first production under their joint stewardship, the mini-series *Love*,

Nina, aired on BBC1 in 2016. Written by 2016 Academy Award nominee Nick Hornby the comedy-drama starred Helena Bonham Carter and is based on the best-selling novel by Nina Stibbe. It was selected for the Berlinale Special Series program at the 2016 Berlin Film Festival. Production of the next installment of Jane Campion's acclaimed drama *Top of the Lake – China Girl* is nearly complete and stars Elisabeth Moss, Gwendoline Christie, Alice Englert and Nicole Kidman and will be aired later this year. Rachel Gardner heads the television slate in Australia.

ABOUT JUMP FILM & TV

Robin Scholes began Jump Film in 2013 after she produced Andrew Adamson's *Mr Pip* and then went on to produce a 6-part mini-series *When We Go To War* about New Zealand's experience of Gallipoli and Lee Tamahori's *Mahana* adapted from Witi Ihimaera's *Bulibasha*.

ABOUT NETFLIX:

Netflix is the world's leading streaming network with over 93 million members in over 190 countries enjoying more than 125 million hours of movies and TV shows per day, including original films, series and documentaries. Members can watch as much as they want, anytime, anywhere, on nearly any Internet-connected screen. Members can play, pause and resume watching, all without commercials or commitments.

ABOUT TVNZ

With 45% audience share, TVNZ is the dominant free to air broadcaster in New Zealand. It broadcasts the two highest watched channels in the country, TVNZ 1 and 2, a male-skewed channel DUKE, and the country's favourite local on-demand destination, TVNZ OnDemand, in addition to the news website 1 NEWS NOW.

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