

THE NEW LEGENDS OF
MONKEY

SUNDAY 28 JANUARY 6.00PM



Inspired by the 16th Century Chinese fable *Journey to the West*, ABC ME's *The Legend of Monkey* is 10-part half-hour series that follows a teenage girl and a trio of fallen gods on a perilous journey to bring an end to a demonic reign of chaos and restore balance to their world.

The world of **The Legend of Monkey** is marked by the clash of three beings: gods, demons and humans. Traditionally, gods have used their power to counter the forces of demons, maintaining the cosmic balance that allowed the world to function as it should.

Five hundred years before our story begins, the world was in balance. Gods ruled peacefully, harmoniously. Demons were in hiding, their powers held in check by the gods. Humans were free to live a life unencumbered by the scattergun forces of darkness. There was happiness across the land.

Monkey, a young god born from a stone on a mountaintop, lived in plain sight, enjoying Monkey-ish pursuits with his monkey brethren. Monkey's very existence was special and he was earmarked for great things by the gods.

That's how it used to be... But then everything changed.

There was a battle between the gods and demons, one that was unwittingly set in motion by the young Monkey god. What he did he do? Only Monkey can remember. As punishment the gods locked him in a statue, frozen in time. But it was too late. The forces of evil were now out in the world, plunged into a chaos that has been raging for five hundred years.

Today the ranks of demons have swelled to the point they are the majority. They inhabit the world inciting disorder and anarchy, as their power grows unopposed.

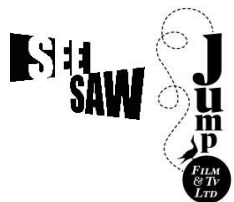
The gods, their numbers dwindling as they are hunted like animals, have gone into hiding. Their powers have been greatly reduced, almost entirely lost. And the people, abandoned and confused, have lost their way. And an even greater darkness approaches.

A motley trio of fallen gods with magical superpowers and incredible martial arts skills are working together to put the world back into balance, trying to regain the godly powers they once had. They escort a young girl disguised as a monk on a perilous quest to bring an end to demonic rule and restore balance to the world.

Production information: The Legend of Monkey is produced for ABC, Netflix and TVNZ 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.

Gerard Johnstone: New Zealand Executive Producer / Director. Jacquelin Perske: Executive Producer / Writer. Iain Canning, Emile Sherman, Rachel Gardner, Hakan Kousetta and Jamie Laurenson: Executive Producers. Robin Scholes: Producer. Craig Irvin: Writer / Director. Samantha Strauss: Writer.

For more information please contact Amy Reiha, ABC Audiences, on (02) 8333 3852 / 0404 026 039 or Reiha.amy@abc.net.au.
Images are available from abc.net.au/tvpublicity



NETFLIX





EPISODE SYNOPSSES

Telemovie premiere – Sunday 28 January at 6pm on ABC ME, the ABC ME App and iview

A young girl uncovers a statue of the legendary Monkey King, but in order to release this ancient God from his stone prison she must first find his golden crown, a crown that has fallen into the hands of Demons.

Whilst waitressing in a tavern in Palawa, the girl sees in a man's cup the reflection of the very same Font Demon that stole the crown, killed her mentor and destroyed her home. Then she notices the stolen crown in his bag. It is the Font Demon in disguise. She waits until the man starts dozing, then she chooses her moment and swipes the crown. The man realizes the crown is missing and transforms into the Font Demon, pursuing the girl. She heads into the forest towards the Monkey King's statue. Just as she reaches the statue, grappling to put the golden crown on its head, she is yanked back by the demonic power of the Font Demon. But she has succeeded. The Monkey King has been released. He appears, and parries with the Font Demon, eventually overpowering him.

Having released the Monkey King, the girl, calling herself Tripitaka, is shocked to find him indifferent to the Scholar's mission. Struggling to keep him on side, and still being pursued by Demons, she finds help in the unlikelyst of places.

**Following the telemovie premiere, the remainder of the series will air daily from Monday 29 January at 6pm on ABC ME, the ABC ME App and iview
The complete series will be available on the ABC ME App and iview on Sunday 28 January at 7.30pm.**

Episode Four – Monday 29 January at 6pm on ABC ME and the ABC ME App

As the heroes set off to the Western Mountains they are intercepted by a gang of rebel bandits, who worship the legend of the Monkey King. When the leader discovers Tripitaka can control Monkey's magic crown he plans to capture Monkey.

Episode Five – Tuesday 30 January at 6pm on ABC ME and the ABC ME App

Monkey, Pigsy and Sandy are glamourised by a mystical shamanic Demon and taken to a strange prison called the Breaking Ground. Tripitaka must use all her strength to break her friends out of this prison and find out what the Demons want with the captured Gods.

Episode Six – Wednesday 31 January at 6pm on ABC ME and the ABC ME App

As Monkey travels further into his past Tripitaka must act quickly before he is lost forever. Using the sutra, she is able to find a way to go after Monkey, and in doing so unravels the mystery of his imprisonment 500 years before.

Episode Seven – Thursday 1 February at 6pm on ABC ME and the ABC ME App

As Tripitaka, Monkey, Pigsy and Sandy flee from the Shaman and his Demonic henchman, they seek shelter in a sprawling forest. When the Shaman and his men stop their pursuit, the group think they are safe, but an even deadlier foe lurks in the dark undergrowth, ready to pounce...

Episode Eight – Friday 2 February at 6pm on ABC ME and the ABC ME App

Tripitaka leaves the quest to go in search of her mother, but Sandy won't let her travel alone, and the two journey to the North Water. Meanwhile, Monkey and Pigsy decide to go in search of the Demons, before they are hunted down themselves.

Episode Nine – Saturday 3 February at 6pm on ABC ME and the ABC ME App

As Monkey and Pigsy hide in plain sight within the walls of Davari's palace, Tripitaka realises why Davari is so determined to translate the Sacred Scrolls. Can she stop him completing the translation before it's too late?

Episode Ten – Sunday 4 February at 6pm on ABC ME and the ABC ME App

While Monkey and Pigsy smuggle themselves into Davari's banquet, Tripitaka must work out the secret to controlling the army of Font Demons before Davari can use his new powers.





CHARACTER AND CAST BIOS

Tripitaka

Tripitaka is a sixteen-year-old girl who hides behind the identity of a boy monk. Tripitaka is resourceful, adventurous, idealistic, smart and as stubborn as an ox. Her pious appearance as a monk is a mask she must wear. However, it both protects her and stops her from being who she really is. She is constantly struggling with the fact that she has lied to Monkey and to the world by posing as the 'chosen one'. Raised in a library amongst the ancient tomes of her adopted father, the Scholar, Tripitaka has a theoretical understanding of the world that will be tested by experience. She will have to learn that life is not a book, that humans break rules more than they follow them - and that her new friends break them more than most.

Lonely and driven by a need to understand who she is, Tripitaka's deepest desire is to find her real parents. As her journey unfolds, there are hints that she may in fact be fulfilling her true destiny. But Tripitaka isn't sure that she wants to be special – she just wants to find her parents and her home.

Luciane Buchanan plays Tripitaka

Luciane Buchanan's first screen role was as comedian Billy T James' daughter Cherie in Peter Burger's biopic *Billy*. She has since gone on to perform in *The Blue Rose*, *Power Rangers* and, most recently, as core cast in two seasons of *Filthy Rich* playing the role of Kennedy Truebridge.

Luciane is of Tongan descent but was born in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Her early acting training was with Fiona Edgar as a student of TAPAC's Acting for Screen course and it was Fiona who introduced her to her current agent Gail Cowan. Luciane has recently completed studying for a Bachelor of Arts in Drama and Psychology at The University of Auckland.



Monkey

Monkey is an enigma – a God. Monkey is centuries old but presents as a young man. Born from a rock on a mountaintop and raised with wild animals in a jungle, Monkey is the ultimate autodidact. Monkey was always the brightest, fastest and best. In today's world he'd be earmarked for an athletic career but in the world of Monkey he was noticed by the Ancient Gods. They saw in him huge potential, a game-changing God who could harness powers of both good and bad to build perfect balance in the universe. Yet Monkey's need for worship and adulation ran him afoul of the powers that be. The Gods were forced to contain his irrepressible energy in a statue that has stood untouched for five hundred years.

Monkey has incredible strength and acrobatic abilities. He has perfected all schools of Kung Fu, and fights with a legendary wishing staff that can change size at will. Monkey also has other powers to rediscover, which are dormant after being trapped in the statue. He is restless, ambitious, and irreverent. He's prone to engage feet and fists before brain and is slow to recognise that doing so often leaves him in the wrong. He does have a wicked sense of humour and deep down a yearning to improve. He just can't help but get into trouble; it's in his nature. Monkey has always felt out of place.

When Tripitaka releases Monkey from his statue prison, she believes that Monkey is the key to the Scholar's quest and her best chance at surviving in a brutal world. As their journey continues, Tripitaka discovers that Monkey was not imprisoned by Demons as the Scholar had led her to believe, but imprisoned by the Gods for a crime he didn't commit. She learns she cannot completely trust Monkey, but she can trust a magical prayer that tightens his immovable crown to keep him by her side and in check. Tethered to Tripitaka, Monkey begins the journey waiting for an opportunity to escape the power of the crown. The whole world has changed in his absence and his fellow Gods are in short supply these days. Monkey develops a sneaking suspicion that he might be responsible for the chaos he sees before him. As the gang pushes further into their quest, Monkey begins to care for his fellow travelers – in particular the equally headstrong Tripitaka.

Chai Hansen plays Monkey

Chai was born in Ko Samui, Thailand, and migrated to Australia at the age of seven. In 2007 he completed his scholarship and gained a Diploma in Performing Arts in 2011. Chai then went on to be cast as one of the leads, Zak Blakely, in the international Netflix series *Mako Mermaids*, which aired for three series. His feature film debut was in the film *Thicker Than Water*.

Chai has recently wrapped on the US series *The 100* shooting in Vancouver, in what was meant to be a two-episode guest appearance. However, this turned into a 10-episode major guest role in which an entire story arch was especially written for his character.



Sandy

Sandy was once a strong and powerful water God, shamefully reduced to living as a reclusive sewer Demon. Sandy is socially inept and deeply sensitive. She is a “Bogeyman” presence in her hometown, a symbol of terror for children, however her anti-social exterior hides an overwhelming passion – there’s just nowhere to put this energy, and so she has learned to channel it into being an outsider.

While Sandy has lived for many lifetimes, she looks seventeen. With dark Goth clothing, flowing dreadlocks, strange markings on her arms and piercing eyes, it’s safe to say that Sandy stands out in a crowd – which could explain her fear of them. Although she uses her exotic looks to keep the world at arm’s length, the fact that she is viewed as a monster causes her deep shame.

Sandy has mastered the art of gathering intel by lurking and listening. She plots attacks on Demons and keeps an eye on new dangers in town. When Tripitaka shows up in the village, Sandy is suspicious of the newcomer but instantly recognises her name and knows the legend of her quest. Sandy joins Tripitaka, and quickly becomes a zealot, wanting to redeem herself and believing, for the first time in many years, that she has some good to offer. But the journey will force her to confront and accept her past. Sandy is agile and strong, excelling in the “soft styles” of martial arts like Aikido and Aikijujitsu that use an attacker’s own force against them. She has the magical ability to find water, a skill that will prove infinitely useful on this treacherous quest.

Emilie Cocquerel plays Sandy

Born in Sydney to a French father and an Australian mother, Emilie Cocquerel attended bi-lingual schools in France, Los Angeles and Houston before settling in Sydney. Studying at Sydney University she led performances in the Drama Society (SUDS), and finished runner-up in the Dungog Film Festival Speed Auditions. Emilie was then accepted into the prestigious Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) acting program. At the end of her first year she attended a three- month exchange program with the Conservatoire National Supérieur d’Art Dramatique de Paris (CNSAD) where she studied under renowned director Daniel Mesguish.

In 2016 Emilie was seen in the feature films *Joe Cinque’s Consolation*, based on the book by Helen Garner, *Lion* starring Dev Patel and Rooney Mara and *Mormon Yankees: The Spirit of the Game*. She also featured in Rachel Ward’s ABC telemovie *An Accidental Soldier*.

Emilie was a runner-up for the 2015 Heath Ledger Scholarship and is one of Australia’s most intriguing newcomers, being recently included in the *Australian Women’s Weekly’s* Generation Next portfolio.



Pigsy

Pigsy lived a life of indulgence as a God, enjoying all of the finer things that were on offer to him – food, jewels, clothing... you name it. Unable to give up this lifestyle when the Gods were forced into hiding, Pigsy has found himself in debt, working as low life henchman for Princess Locke, a demon who reigns over his village, shaking down the poorest villagers for their hard-earned pennies and, worst of all, capturing Gods. When Monkey and Tripitaka meet Pigsy he is at his lowest, trying to fill his unhappy void with gluttony. At first, he captures Tripitaka and Monkey under orders from Princess Locke. Tripitaka however recognises something in Pigsy and is convinced he is destined to join their quest. Pigsy is not so sure.

As the journey continues it becomes clear to him that what he is searching for lies in joining the group and their fight for the greater good. Pigsy's journey is one of redemption and rediscovering self-worth; he often surprises himself along the way with his usefulness to the mission. Having once protected a farmer from a Demon attack, he was gifted a simple-looking rake, but Pigsy soon discovered its true earth-shattering powers. With it he can charge a target with enough speed and momentum to crumble the thickest castle walls. At full power he can also summon earthquakes, but he'd give all that up in a second to be truly loved and respected for who he is. If only he can find a way to show that self to the world.

Josh Thomson plays Pigsy

New Zealander Josh Thomson is Timaru-born from sturdy South Island and even sturdier Tongan Island Stock. He studied Theatre and Film at the University of Otago. He arrived in Auckland to do standup comedy and appeared in a couple of Pulp Comedy shows, but took up acting because, he says, actors get lunch, and most of the time they don't have to pay for it.

Josh has graced the small screen in some iconic commercials and TV series including *Terry Teo*, *Hounds*, *Coverband*, the voice of the tubby ginger kid in *Barefoot Bandits* and in his first feature film lead role as Gary in *Gary of the Pacific*.

Josh continues to work as an actor, MC and comedian when he is not appearing on the daily news show *The Project*. He's toured with New Zealand's best comedians from *7Days* doing stand up and the *7Days:Live* show around the country. In demand for his MC skills, he has hosted the New Zealand Film Awards, the 48Hour Film awards, various corporate events and guest spots at the New Zealand Music awards.

He still loves working behind the scenes as a director, writer, editor and whatever else he can do to pay for the new floor in the laundry since he broke the last one when he tried to fix it himself.



CREW BIOS

GERARD JOHNSTONE – NEW ZEALAND EXECUTIVE PRODUCER / DIRECTOR

Gerard Johnstone is a New Zealand-born writer/director who first rose to prominence for twice winning the 48Hours film competition as a young filmmaker. His feature film directorial debut was the internationally successful horror-comedy *Housebound*, declared by Peter Jackson to be “Bloody Brilliant” – so much so that Jackson was instrumental in convincing New Line to option the rights for a U.S. re-make with Johnstone at the helm.

Prior to *Housebound* he co-created, wrote and directed two seasons of New Zealand’s most successful narrative comedy series *The Jackie Brown Diaries*, which won Best Comedy at the New Zealand Film and TV Awards two years in a row. His most recent project was his 2016 TV series reimagining of the highly successful 1980s comedy *Terry Teo*, about a savvy 12-year-old surviving the mean city streets.

JACQUELIN PERSKE – EXECUTIVE PRODUCER / WRITER

Jacquelin Perske script produced the recent television series *Deadline Gallipoli* and *Seven Types of Ambiguity* and she was the producer, co-creator and writer of the first and second series of *Spirited*. She received the Australian Writers Guild award for Best Drama in 2010 for her pilot script for *Spirited*.

Jacquelin produced, co-creator and was a writer of the acclaimed series *Love My Way* and she was part of an international team of writers working on George Lucas' live action series for television, *Star Wars: Underworld*. Additional credits as a writer or script producer include *Big Sky*, *Raw FM*, *Fireflies* and the AFI award-winning *The Secret Life of Us*.

Jacquelin wrote the film *Little Fish*, starring Cate Blanchett, Hugo Weaving and Martin Henderson. The film received an astonishing 13 AFI award nominations. In 2013, she won the prestigious Foxtel Fellowship at the Australian Writers Guild Awards.

IAIN CANNING AND EMILE SHERMAN – EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Academy Award®-winning producers Iain Canning and Emile Sherman co-founded See-Saw Films in 2008 and have produced a number of prestige film and television projects, including six-time Academy Award® nominated *Lion*, the four-time Academy Award® winning film *The King's Speech* and the Emmy Award winning series *Top Of The Lake*. Among See-Saw's upcoming, highly anticipated projects are *Mary Magdalene* starring Rooney Mara and Joaquin Phoenix, John Cameron Mitchell's *How to Talk to Girls At Parties* starring Elle Fanning and Nicole Kidman, Steve McQueen's *Widows* starring Viola Davis, Liam Neeson and Michelle Rodriguez and the recently released *Top Of The Lake: China Girl* starring Elisabeth Moss, Nicole Kidman and Gwendoline Christie.

RACHEL GARDNER – EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Rachel Gardner has Produced and Executive Produced a wide range of award winning film and television drama and comedy. Rachel joined See-Saw Films after joining forces with them on the 2013 produced NZ/UK co-production *Slow West* as the New Zealand producer. She currently heads See-Saw's Australian film and TV slates as producer (film) and executive producer (television), driving the development, production and delivery of renowned material that has ambition to speak to worldwide commissioners and international audiences.

Prior to See-Saw, until 2012 Rachel was a partner in Great Southern Television, a dynamic and independent production company based in New Zealand, producing over a hundred hours of prime-time programming in the seven years she drove the drama and factual slates. In 2008 Rachel jointly won the Independent Producer of the Year Award by New Zealand's Screen Production Association (SPADA).

HAKAN KOUSETTA – EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Hakan joined See-Saw in 2014 as Chief Operating Officer, co-running the TV division with its creative head Jamie Laurenson.

Throughout his career Hakan has overseen the finance and production of hundreds of films and television programmes and has recently overseen the production of *Top Of The Lake: China Girl*, the highly acclaimed second instalment of Jane Campion's Emmy and Golden Globe® nominated series *Top of the Lake*. Previously at See-Saw Hakan oversaw the production of mini-series *Love, Nina* for BBC1 written by Nick Hornby and based on the bestselling novel by Nina Stibbe.

Hakan is a council member of UK trade association PACT as well the BFI launched commission to investigate the health of the UK independent film industry.

JAMIE LAURENSEN – EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Jamie Laurenson joined See-Saw Films in 2012 to head up its newly formed Television department. Jamie most recently executive produced *Top Of The Lake: China Girl*, the highly acclaimed second instalment of Jane Campion's Emmy and Golden Globe® nominated series *Top of the Lake* and is in development on *The North Water* to be written and directed by Andrew Haigh (*45 Years*), adapted from the novel by Ian McGuire.

Previously at See-Saw Jamie executive produced the mini-series *Love, Nina* for BBC1 written by Nick Hornby and based on the bestselling novel by Nina Stibbe.

Prior to See-Saw Films, Jamie was an Executive Producer for BBC Films and Commissioning Editor for Drama BBC4 where he worked on such films as *Quartet*, *Salmon Fishing In the Yemen*, *My Week With Marilyn*, *Project Nim*, *Brighton Rock*, *An Education* and television dramas *Enid*, *Room At The Top*, *Holy Flying Circus* and *Lennon*.

ROBIN SCHOLES – PRODUCER

Robin Scholes was a founding partner and managing director at high profile company Communicado, where she began working alongside a number of New Zealand filmmakers early in their careers, from Lee Tamahori on local blockbuster *Once Were Warriors* to Gregor Nicholas on *Broken English* and Christine Jeffs on *Rain*.

Her television drama producing credits include thriller/romance mini-series *The Chosen*, the ambitious British-New Zealand co-production *Greenstone*, and the series *Burying Brian*. On the big screen, Robin has *The Hopes and Dreams of Gazza Snell*, starring Robyn Malcolm, *Mr Pip* starring Hugh Laurie and Kerry Fox, and *Mahana*, reuniting her with *Warriors* director Lee Tamahori.

CRAIG IRVIN – WRITER /DIRECTOR

Craig Irvin wrote and directed the award-winning live action series *Nowhere Boys*, which garnered him both AWGIE and ADG Awards. The series also won the 2014 AACTA Award for Best Children's Series and the 2014 and 2015 Silver Logie Awards for Most Outstanding Children's Program. *Nowhere Boys* has been recognised internationally with a nomination for Best Children's Series at the International Emmy® Awards in 2014. Craig also wrote and directed the short film *Tethered*, for which he won the Rouben Mamoulian Best Director Award at the 2011 Sydney Film Festival. The film was selected for the Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival in 2012 and Craig also received a nomination for Best Direction in a Live Action Short at the ADG Awards in 2012.

SAMANTHA STRAUSS – WRITER

Samantha Strauss co-created the hit Australian teen drama series *Dance Academy*, which screens in over 160 countries. It has been nominated for two International Emmys and won the Most Outstanding Children's Series Logie awards in 2012 and 2013. For her work on *Dance Academy* Samantha has been individually nominated for five Australian Writer's Guild Awards and won twice. She also wrote *Dance Academy: The Movie*, which was released in cinemas in 2017.

Samantha wrote the telemovie *Mary: The Making Of A Princess*, and has written for series including *Wonderland* and *Offspring*.