

PRESS RELEASE - 18 July 2011

DEBORAH MAILMAN AND JESSICA MAUBOY TO STAR IN THE SAPPHIRES WITH NEWCOMERS SHARI SEBBENS AND MIRANDA TAPSELL

Hopscotch Films have announced that Deborah Mailman and Jessica Mauboy will be joined by newcomers Shari Sebbens and Miranda Tapsell as the stars of the major new Australian film *THE SAPPHIRES*, to be produced by Goalpost Pictures Australia.

THE SAPPHIRES, which begins filming next month in Sydney and then Vietnam, is an adaptation of the hugely successful stage musical of the same name.

Adapted by Keith Thompson (*Clubland*) and playwright Tony Briggs, *THE SAPPHIRES* will be directed by acclaimed actor and theatre director Wayne Blair and produced by Goalpost Pictures Australia's Rosemary Blight and Kylie du Fresne with Briggs as associate producer.

THE SAPPHIRES is inspired by the remarkable true story of Briggs' mother and her family. The film is set in the heady days of 1968 when four talented singers, from a remote Aboriginal mission, are discovered by an unlikely talent scout. Plucked from obscurity and branded as Australia's answer to The Supremes, The Sapphires grasp the chance of a lifetime when they're offered their first real gig - entertaining the troops in Vietnam. For the girls, a whole new world of sex, war, politics and soul opens before them.

Deborah Mailman was the first Aboriginal actress to win the AFI Award for Best Actress. She won for her leading role in the film *Radiance*, going on to win two more AFI Awards, for Best Supporting Actress for her role in *Bran Nue Dae* (2009) and for Best Guest or Supporting Actress in a television drama for *Offspring* (2011), and two Logie Awards for her leading role in *The Secret Life of Us*. Deborah also appeared in Phillip Noyce's *Rabbit-Proof Fence*.

Jessica Mauboy burst onto the Australian music scene when she was runner up in the 2006 *Australian Idol* series. She subsequently signed a recording contract with Sony Music Australia and has released three top-selling albums, including her most recent *Get 'em Girls*, which debuted at number six on the ARIA Albums Chart. Jessica's acting debut was in the film adaptation of the Aboriginal musical, *Bran Nue Dae* which became one of the highest grossing Australian films of recent years.

Shari Sebbens and Miranda Tapsell are both graduates of NIDA and both will make their feature film debuts in *THE SAPPHIRES*.

Troy Lum, Managing Director of Hopscotch Films comments: "THE SAPPHIRES has it all – a great story with lots of love and laughter, set against the backdrop of the social upheaval of the late 1960's, a wonderful cast and crew and an unbeatable soul music soundtrack. Hopscotch is tremendously excited to be the Australian and New Zealand distributor."

Goalpost Pictures is one of Australia's leading independent production companies with recent credits including the Julien Temple-directed *The Eternity Man*, the 2007 Sundance Film Festival hit *Clubland*, starring Golden Globe winner Brenda Blethyn, the BAFTA nominated television series for the BBC and the Nine Network *Lockie Leonard* and the Cannes Film Festival Closing Night film (2010) *The Tree* (Executive Producer), starring Charlotte Gainsbourg. The company also produced Wayne Blair's short films *The Djarns Djarns*, winner of the prestigious Crystal Bear Award at the Berlin Film Festival, and *Black Talk*, winner of the Dendy Award for Best Fiction under 15 Minutes at The Sydney Film Festival.

The director of *THE SAPPHIRES*, Wayne Blair won an Australian Writers Guild Award for his work on *The Circuit*, and has been acclaimed as a theatre director for productions including *The Removalists* and *Romeo and Juliet* for the Sydney Theatre Company and *Reuben Guthrie* and *Jesus Hopped the A Train* for Belvoir St Theatre. As an actor, Wayne starred in *True West* directed by Phillip Seymour Hoffman and Steven Soderbergh's *The Mystery Project*, both for the Sydney Theatre Company.

THE SAPPHIRES is being made in association with Screen Australia, Screen NSW, the Melbourne International Film Festival Premiere Fund and E-Film Australia. The film will be distributed in Australia by Hopscotch Films and sold internationally by Goalpost Film UK.

Entertainment One Ltd. (LSE:ETO) is a leading international entertainment company that specializes in the acquisition, production and distribution of film and television content. The company's comprehensive network extends around the globe including Canada, the U.S., the UK, Ireland, Benelux, France, Germany, Scandinavia, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Through established Entertainment and Distribution divisions, the company provides extensive expertise in film distribution, television and music production, family programming and merchandising and licensing. Its current rights library is exploited across all media formats and includes more than 20,000 film and television titles, 2,500 hours of television programming and 45,000 music tracks.

Based in Sydney and founded in 2002, eOne's Hopscotch Group has grown to become a well established film distribution business within the Australian and New Zealand markets, focused on independent international titles alongside local Australian content.

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A high-res image of the cast is available on request.