

MEDIA RELEASE

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Internationally acclaimed director stars at Byron Bay Masterclass

Next month, award-winning film director Poppy Walker will feature at Flickerfest's free film masterclass at SAE Creative Media Institute's Byron Bay campus alongside Flickerfest Executive Director, Bronwyn Kidd. The two and half hour session will give aspiring filmmakers the opportunity to learn from Poppy - who has made documentary films for the United Nations, Oxfam and World Vision, and had her films featured at international film festivals.

Before the event we caught up with Poppy to chat about her career and get her tips on how to make a quality short film.

Hi Poppy, can you explain the skills and knowledge you'll be sharing at the upcoming Flickerfest Masterclass at SAE?

I'm going to be talking about my experience as a filmmaker, how to market short films for festivals, and the art of film production amongst many other things!

I understand you were a journalist in the not-for-profit sector previously before transitioning into filmmaking. What attracted you to making films?

Collaboration! Writing is such a solitary pursuit and I love working with different people, like composers and editors, and developing something which I couldn't make on my own. What I love about film is working with lots of different people to bring a vision to life.



What skills from being a journalist have helped you to become a better filmmaker?

That's a good question. The writing skills, analysis and being comfortable with the interview process - which you do a lot of as a journalist, has been a major part of the filmmaking, as a lot of the films I've made have been documentaries.

Your short *Dust Devil* (2019) was screened at festivals internationally and won the Jury Award for Best Short Documentary at the Ashland Independent Film Festival, USA. Can you explain a bit about what the film and what inspired the story?

I visited Death Valley Junction in California about 15 years ago when I was on a road trip, and I was completely enchanted by the Amargosa Opera House. I then returned many years later and learnt that American dancer and actress, Marta Becket was elderly by that point.

I met with her and asked if she'd be interested in making a film that explored her creativity towards the end of her life - she was very open about talking about death and dying. Exploring the themes of creativity and mortality were my main focal points for that film.

You've had a number of human rights-focused documentaries commissioned by the United Nations, Oxfam and World Vision. What is it about real human stories you enjoy exploring?

I think people are always the best storytellers of their own experiences. I'm interested in seldom heard voices as they enrich our understanding of the diversity of human experience.

What elements are needed for a quality short film?

There are so many elements that are needed; but in short, there needs to be a level of authenticity and drive in the storytelling. The choice of sound and music also needs to be the right fit for the film to be a success - that is so crucial.

Do you think there are more opportunities for filmmakers now than ever before?

I really do think there are more opportunities for filmmakers than ever before. They can spend time finding their voice without spending a lot of money. There are opportunities to experiment and take risks as we're not shooting on physical film anymore.

Have you done that yourself, taken risks and shot film on an iPhone?

Absolutely! I've done all sorts of things like that. The most important thing is to find a distinctiveness in voice and style.

What guidance would you give to a year 12 student who was looking to become a filmmaker?

I would certainly take risks, try things out. I always talk about this, as I was someone that didn't do this. I was probably too afraid of failure! Only now, where I am in life, am I starting to take creative risks. That's the best advice I can give.

The free Flickerfest Film Masterclass at SAE Creative Media Institute's Byron Bay campus takes place on Friday 19 March 2021 from 1.30pm-4pm (AEST). Reserve your seat at: sae.edu.au/events

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Imagery (L to R: Bronwyn Kidd and Poppy Walker)



About SAE

SAE Creative Media Institute is the place for creatives and innovators. Since 1976 we've been the leaders in creative media education across animation, audio, music, creative industries, design, film, games, web and mobile. Every year, we support more than 10,000 students globally to develop the skills and experience needed to carve successful careers. Students enjoy access to the latest technology and are taught by industry-experienced faculty, while putting their skills to the test in small class environments. Our graduates become part of a highly-respected global community of creatives that's been around for over 40 years. We pride ourselves on being technically explorative, transformative and brave through our range of creative media programs, from short courses and professional training through to bachelor and postgraduate degrees. In Australia, our programs are delivered at campuses in Sydney, Brisbane, Byron Bay, Melbourne, Perth and Adelaide. SAE is a part of Navitas Pty Ltd. More information about SAE is available at sae.edu.au.

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