

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**20 January 2021**

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## Young director enchants Flickerfest with teenage anxiety film

This Saturday, short film, [Ella](#), which was directed by [SAE Creative Media Institute](#) Sydney graduate, Madison Novak, will have its premiere at the 30th international short film festival, [Flickerfest](#).

The film will be in contention for Best Australian Short Film and a coveted spot at the 93rd [Academy awards](#) later this year. Produced with fellow SAE graduate, Reggie Grace-Knipe, it addresses the trials and tribulations of anxious high school student Ella and the obstacles she faces as she prepares to speak publicly in class.

“In the film, Ella goes through all the little details that make her anxious, from phone calls to driving, and goes on this journey of how she’ll overcome them,” Madison said.

The [Black Dog Institute](#) has reported that 40 per cent of students in Year 12 have had symptoms of anxiety and depression that are higher than the normal level for that age group. Ella explores this theme and reflects Madison’s own life experiences.

“In the past, I’ve had this overwhelming anxiety, presenting in a classroom setting, so that was the main inspiration for the film.

“Even though anxiety is a serious subject, I work best through humour - so the film has a comedic element to it. I felt if the film was too deep, it may make it hard for the audience to connect with the characters,” Madison said.

Producer Reggie echoed Madison’s sentiments, saying he hoped audiences would identify with the characters. “Life is awkward and Ella symbolises many people’s experiences. Madison and I had seen a lot of films that deal with mental illness, so we wanted to take it in a different direction,” Reggie said.

Up-and-coming actress Madelaine Hopkins, who plays the title character, said she was attracted to the project due to its fresh take on mental illness.

“I fell in love with Ella straight away as I’ve dealt with anxiety my whole life, including at high school,” she said.

“The comedic theme that runs through the film is a really genuine way of portraying the reality of anxiety. Humour is a great coping mechanism, as life is never just one thing - it’s both light and dark,” Madelaine said.

With the film up for the Academy-qualifying award for Best Australian Short Film, Madison hasn’t let herself think about Ella being selected for the Oscars. “I didn’t even think I’d be recognised to be at a film festival, let alone have a chance to be featured at the Academy awards - that would be amazing.”

*Flickerfest is Australia’s leading [Academy](#) accredited and [BAFTA](#)-recognised competitive Australian and International Short Film Festival with thousands of entries coming from filmmakers across the globe. SAE Creative Institute is a proud partner of Flickerfest, with the festival taking place from 22-31 January at Bondi Beach, Sydney.*

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## Imagery



## 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, 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](http://sae.edu.au).*

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