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The Film Agency For Wales Announces £800,000 of Funding for Welsh Filmmakers

Some of the hottest names in the Welsh film industry are to receive funding totalling £800,000, the Film Agency for Wales announced today.

Mackenzie Crook of *The Office* and *Pirates of the Caribbean* fame is set to star in writer-director Wyndham Price's innovative drama *Abraham's Point*; one of four films that has the backing of the Film Agency.

Fresh from his highly acclaimed performance on the Royal Court production in *The Seagull*, Crook will take the lead as Comet Snape, a man disturbed by a mysterious past. *Abraham's Point* will see Crook embark on an emotional journey from London to Pembrokeshire in a struggle to overcome a family tragedy that has haunted him since his youth.

Having spent eight years on the stand-up comedy circuit before a break on the 11 'o' clock followed by the sketch show *TV to GO*, Crook went on to star as Gareth, the territorial army obsessed assistant manager, 'assistant to the manager' in *The Office*. He then filmed *Pirates of the Caribbean* with Jonny Depp before *The Life and Death of Peter Sellers*.

Tony Purves will be producing the film under Wyndham Price's Spinning Head Film's banner, the first company to be spun out of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. They have previously produced several short films including *Mabel*, *Catapult*, *Cardiff West* and *This Mortal Coil*. *Mabel* was nominated for the DM Davies Award at the Cardiff Screen Festival in 2005 and won The Special Commendation Award at The Granada Short Film Festival. *This Mortal Coil* was nominated for a BAFTA Cymru this year.

Wyndham Price is one of Wales' most notable screenwriters and directors. He has written over 30 short screenplays and has also written and directed for the stage and TV. He studied at the University of Sheffield and the New York Film Academy.

"Abraham's Point is a classic tale with an epic conclusion that will be shot on the beaches of Pembrokeshire. The spiritual core of the film is based on fate and chance and a redemptive journey to the guilt which emanates from personal tragedy. Although often funny, the film has the feel of a thriller and is an emotionally gripping story that results in liberation. It's a deeply moving tale and we hope that the epic conclusion leads to there not being a dry eye in the house," explains Price.

"The elements of thriller, western and comedy along with the incredible emotional instability of the main character is what drew Mackenzie Crook to the film which is made up of a fantastic cast of rogues and angels. We are absolutely delighted to be working with Mackenzie."

The film will be shot on location this summer in London, Cardiff, the Brecon Beacons, the Vale of Glamorgan and Pembrokeshire. Sales are being handled by London-based Moviehouse Entertainment who are currently selling John Boorman's *The Tiger's Tail* and Indie Spirit award winner *Sweet Land*. Moviehouse will announce *Abraham's Point* at the forthcoming Cannes Film Festival.

Super Furry Animals vocalist and guitarist Gruff Rhys' and Catryn Ramasut's Cardiff-based production company, ie ie productions, have also received funding for a new feature documentary. *Masquerading as a rockumentary, Seperado!* (a working title) is a captivating and compelling psychedelic western road movie following in the footsteps of Rhys' ancestors. Intertwined with a solo tour of South America, Gruff traces the colonisation of Welsh Patagonia in Argentina, from Brazil through the desert and up to the Andes via Argentina.

The main body of the documentary was shot in Argentina in late 2006 with footage also shot in North Wales and further filming scheduled for Cardiff this summer. Some of the traveling footage has been used by director/cameraman/editor Dyl Goch to produce a video for Rhys's second single *Gyrru Gyrru Gyrru* from his solo album *Candyllion*.

“This project would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of Pauline Burt and the team at the Film Agency - they have absolutely shared our creative view. We are also extremely grateful for the support received from Cwmni Da who are helping with the post-production,” explains Ramasut.

Rhys adds; “There is a cliché amongst musicians who tour that you don’t see anything on the road, every town becomes a blur in the memory. This film is an opportunity to turn a solo tour of South America into an investigation of the nature of identity itself and a journey of musical discovery presented in a visually innovative style.”

The Film Agency for Wales has also awarded funding to the coming of age drama, ‘I Know you Know’, where a young boy believes that his father is a spy. Due to be filmed in Cardiff this summer, the film is written and directed by Cardiff-born Justin Kerrigan.

With several award wins and nominations, Writer and Director Kerrigan is best known for his 1999 hit Human Traffic for which he won a BAFTA Cymru Award for Best Director and a Bermuda International Film Festival Jury Prize Award in 2000. He also won Special Prize of the Jury at the Brussels International Film Festival and was nominated for a Carl Foreman Award for the Most Promising Newcomer at the BAFTA Awards in 2000.

Kerrigan is working alongside experienced and award winning producer Sally Hibbin, whose extensive list of credits include Yasmin, winner of a Dinard British Film Festival Audience Award in 2004, Liam starring Ian Hart, award winning Carla’s Song directed by Ken Loach and writer-director Sandra Goldbacher’s The Governess starring Minnie Driver.

“This is the first film that I’ve made in Wales and we are all therefore very excited. I have been particularly pleased with the support that we have received and I am looking forward to filming in Cardiff this summer,” Hibbin explains.

Additionally, the Film Agency is also supporting Blonde, a horror movie with chills and laughs written by Wales’ own writer-director Caradog James and being produced by Julie Baines of Dan Films. The film follows the painful and unusual rites of passage of a

16 year old boy when he finds a beautiful young woman locked in a basement in her underwear. But is she really what she seems and is she really the girl of his dreams?

Notably, Caradog was nominated for a BAFTA Cymru Award in 2006 for best director drama for *Little White Lies* and has also had a nomination for the Douglas Hickox Award at the British Independent Film Awards in 2006 for the same drama.

Some of Baines' recent successes include the production of Nicolas Roeg's *Puffball*, the director of a number of all-time classics such as *Performance*, *Walkabout*, *Don't Look Now*, *Bad Timing*, *Eureka*, *Track 29* and *The Witches*. Baines also produced '*Creep*', the debut film of Chris Smith, a horror film set on the London Underground starring Franka Potente of *The Bourne Identity* and *Supremacy*.

"Blonde is now fully developed and filming will take place in Cardiff this summer with the release scheduled for autumn 2008. We are delighted to be able to support new Welsh talent and look forward to being part of their success in the international marketplace," comments Baines.

Britt Harrison, Head of Talent for the Film Agency comments: "There is a terrific amount of talent in Wales and it is a privilege to be able to support these and other filmmakers."

"As an agency, we are absolutely focussed on encouraging the development of new and emerging talent, skills and creative innovation in the Welsh film industry while facilitating the production of successful and distinctive films that can act as showcases of Welsh talent throughout the UK and internationally," adds Pauline Burt, Chief Executive of the Film Agency for Wales.

"Our slate is made-up of a diverse range of films as we place no restrictions on the genre, locations or the nature of the stories that Welsh filmmakers wish to explore, other than that they need to be capable of British qualification."

"Consequently, there really is a great mix on our current slate that ranges from low budget art house films to big budget mainstream movies. In addition to these four films that we are now funding, we are working closely with the other projects on our slate

including Gideon Koppel's *The Library Van*, a documentary exploring a rural community in north Wales, Julian Richard's *Summer Scars*, a coming of age drama, and David Howard's stylish horror film 'Flick' starring Faye Dunaway."

"As we look forward to the Cannes Film Festival, we can be confident that there is an air of real vibrancy around Wales as a nation that supports and nurtures Welsh filmmakers. We're here to encourage that, and most importantly, to help turn the ideas and aspirations of talented filmmakers into reality," finishes Burt.

The Film Agency for Wales is funded by the Arts Council of Wales, the UK Film Council and the Welsh Assembly Government, via Creative Business Wales, the latter of which was set up to support, encourage and increase the range and number of films being produced in Wales and to foster the abundance of creative talent in Wales.