

Australian Motion Picture Ballad of a Sundowner Calls on Entertainment Industry to Reignite Our National Cinema Presence

Reignite Australian Motion Pictures National Cinema Presence

SYDNEY, NSW, AUSTRALIA, August 13, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Australia once led the world in filmmaking.](#)

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Australia was once at the forefront of global cinema. We now have one of the lowest cinema attendance anywhere in the world and we risk losing an important part of our Australian cultural identity.”

Russell Cunningham

In 1906, Australia produced and theatrically exhibited the world's first full-length narrative feature film, *The Story of the Kelly Gang*. Made for just £450 (around \$50,000 today), it went on to earn the equivalent of more than £20,000 (around \$2.25 million today) and secured Australia's place in world cinema history.

Today, the film is recognized on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register as a milestone of global cultural significance. More than a century later, Australia's independent filmmakers are fighting to keep that

pioneering spirit alive.

Producer Russell Cunningham of RLC Motion Pictures believes the nation has reached a crossroads.

“Australia was once at the forefront of cinema quite literally. Today, we have one of the lowest levels of audience participation in our own films anywhere in the world. Unless audiences choose to support Australian stories at the production stage to demonstrate to Exhibitors we have an audience, we risk losing an important part of our cultural identity. This is an industry driven by profit.”

His latest independent feature film, *Ballad of a Sundowner*, has launched a 100% tax-deductible. Fundraising campaign (\$2 or more) through the Australian Cultural Fund (ACF), inviting Australians who value our storytelling to become part of bringing the film to completion.

Directed by Matthew Holmes, acclaimed for *The Legend of Ben Hall*, *Ballad of a Sundowner* is set

against the sweeping landscapes of South Australia in 1934. The film follows a drifting horseman, portrayed by Joshua Jaeger, as he confronts the ghosts of his past while travelling through isolated communities across the rugged Australian outback.

Produced by RLC Motion Picture Entertainment, Two Tone Pictures and GrandLine Motion Pictures, the feature celebrates Australian history, resilience and identity at a time when independently financed Australian films face unprecedented financial challenges.

With principal photography approximately 75% finished, the campaign is now seeking support to complete the final stages of post-production, including editing, sound design, colour grading, original music, visual finishing, distribution preparation and national and international film festival submissions.

For Cunningham, this campaign is about far more than completing a single film. "Every donation, whether it's \$2 or \$20,000, becomes part of the legacy of this film. Every supporter helps ensure Australian voices continue to be seen and heard, both here and overseas."

Rather than relying solely on government funding or overseas investment, *Ballad of a Sundowner* is inviting Australians themselves to become partners in preserving the nation's storytelling tradition. This call to action is a must to prove to Exhibitors there is an audience.

The production team is always optimistic the campaign will inspire film lovers, arts supporters, businesses and philanthropists to invest in Australian culture by helping complete a feature film already well on its journey to the screen.

"If we don't invest in our own stories, who will? Together, we can help ensure we don't become spectators in our own cinematic future."

For Australians, donations of \$2 or more are 100% tax deductible through the Australian Cultural Fund. But the world can donate as well.

<https://artists.australianculturalfund.org.au/s/project/a2EMn00000eUbazMAC/ballad-of-a-sundowner>.

Every contribution directly supports the completion of *Ballad of the Sundowner* and helps ensure independent Australian filmmaking continues to have a future.

ABOUT RUSSELL CUNNINGHAM

Russell Cunningham is an American-born, Australian-based film and television producer, writer, and founder of RLC Motion Picture Entertainment, with a career in the entertainment industry dating back to the late 1970s. He began in television as an associate producer on *The Wallace & Ladmo Show*, later moving to Hollywood where he worked in film marketing and promotion on major studio releases before relocating to Australia in the 1980s. There, he transitioned into

cinema operations and eventually into independent film production, becoming known for producing and supporting Australian feature films such as *The Legend of Ben Hall*, *The Cost*, and *Birth of a Warrior*.

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