



Media Release

SANTA'S APPRENTICE SLATED FOR THEATRICAL RELEASE THIS YEAR AND WINS PRESTIGIOUS UNICEF ANNECY AWARD

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA – June 23 2011...

Avrill Stark Entertainment and Flying Bark Productions today confirmed the animated theatrical release, *Santa's Apprentice*, is coming to Australian cinemas in the second half of 2011.

The heart-warming Christmas themed animation featuring the vocal talents of Australia's own Shane Jacobsen, Magda Szubanski, Delta Goodrem and Hugh Sheridan recently won the special UNICEF award at the largest animation event, the Annecy International Animation Festival in France. This prestigious award recognises the best animation which highlights the goals of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

UNICEF has long believed in the power of animation to cross language and cultural barriers and appeal to a vast worldwide audience. Animated films are often able to transform the complicated issues of the Convention into simple visual imagery that conveys the importance of child rights in a universally understood fashion.

"Santa's Apprentice truly is a delight for children of all ages. I fell in love with the story immediately as it's uniquely, a Christmas tale set in Australia. We had a fantastically talented Australian team working on the key animation of the film headed up by Ian Harrowell and a wonderful composer in Nerida Tyson-Chew whose music, with a 50 piece orchestra, brought the emotion of the story to life. It is a true honour for all involved for Santa's Apprentice to win the UNICEF Award at this year's Annecy festival" said Creative Producer, Avrill Stark.

Santa's Apprentice follows the story of young Nicolas (voice of Jack Versace), a 7 year old Australian boy on his adventure as he struggles with the ups and downs of being the next Santa Claus. It's a big responsibility that would scare even the bravest boy – but Nicolas wants to be the best Santa ever.

So he will have to learn a few lessons along the way. Christmas has a way of making even the biggest mishaps alright and thanks to his loving mentors, Santa (Shane Jacobsen) and Waldorf (Hugh Sheridan), Nicolas learns, as we all do, the true meaning of Christmas!

Released last year in France – selling over 100,000 tickets in the first week and 650,000 over the life of the release -, *Santa's Apprentice* made over 3.2million Euros at the box office in the country and was ranked 4th at the box office for its first week. *Santa's Apprentice* has already been sold to many countries including Austria, Canada, Greece, India, Russia and the United States of America.

Distributed by Becker Entertainment, *Santa's Apprentice* takes you to a place where wishes really do come true and proves that sometimes, happy endings are only the beginning!

A French – Australian Coproduction by **Gaumont**-Alphanim and Avrill Stark Entertainment Pty Ltd with the participation of Gaumont, Cartoon Saloon and Flying Bark Productions Pty Ltd, ORANGE CINÉMA SÉRIES. Centre National de la Cinématographie et de l'Image Animée, Bord Scannán na hÉireann / Irish Film Board. With the support of Département de la Charente, de la Région Poitou-Charentes & la Région Île-de-France. Developed with the support of The MEDIA Programme of the European Union.

Directed by Luc VINCIGUERRA. Art Director: Richard DESPRES. Based on an Original Idea, Characters and Designs created by Jan VAN RIJSSELBERGE. Script by Alexandre RÉVÉREND.

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