

# Major festival to screen ACT film

By DAVID CURRY

FOR THE first time, a feature film shot and produced entirely in Canberra has been accepted by London's Raindance Festival.

*The Dinner Party*, partly inspired by the killing in 1997 of Joe Cinque by ANU student Anu Singh, premiered at the Dungog Film Festival in May. It has also been accepted for the Melbourne Underground Film Festival.

Producer Brendan Sloane said the film's acceptance at the London festival was a huge coup.

"They got over 20,000 feature films sent, and they choose between 40 and 60. What it means for me and the director [Scott Murden] is a dream come true, from having an idea and watching it grow into something that's making an international impact," he said.

Sloane said negotiations were under way for an Australian cinema release and he could give Canberra "a guarantee" that the film would premiere at Canberra's Dendy cinema in February or March next year.

*The Dinner Party* tells the story of a group of 20-somethings who are invited to a dinner party by Angela, played by Lara Cox (*Heartbreak High*), who tells them she plans to commit suicide with her boyfriend afterwards. Sloane



Lara Cox has a starring role in *The Dinner Party* which was shot entirely in the ACT and on a tight budget.

said the films dealt with "duty of care" through the reactions of the dinner guests.

He said the audience reaction at the Dungog Film Festival had been "incredible".

"It was fantastic to see, because

it was our first true audience. They laughed at all the appropriate places, and froze during the most intense part. People were completely shocked," he said.

"It's a dangerous film, not a safe little Australian film carted out of

the same mould in the cookie factory. The level of honesty shocks people."

Sloane and Murden funded most of the film themselves. The film was shot entirely on Canberra locations, over 12 days in

September 2006, for \$35,000.

About \$100,000 has been spent on post-production, of which \$10,000 came from ScreenACT, the ACT Office of Film, Television and Digital Media.

ScreenACT, administered by the Canberra Business Council, is made up entirely of industry representatives. Manager Monica Penders said ScreenACT was happy to have backed *The Dinner Party* and was excited to see it accepted for the Raindance festival.

"It's a low-budget feature, which are difficult to market and get distribution for. For Brendan and the team to have a film that's totally shot and produced in Canberra, and telling a Canberra story, is really exciting," she said.

"It's exactly the kind of project we like to back."

Sloane said while he was grateful for the support of ScreenACT, the maximum annual grant of \$10,000 allowed by the ACT Government was not the best way to support Canberra films.

"We have a good film," Sloane said.

"But we don't have a government to support that product. Where are you? What do I have to do to get support here?"

■ The Dinner Party website is [www.thedinnerparty.com.au](http://www.thedinnerparty.com.au)

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