



## Big Screen Symposium Announces Exciting Line Up for 2-Day Conference

48 local and international speakers across 17 thoughtfully crafted sessions

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AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND - The 10<sup>th</sup> Big Screen Symposium has unveiled an exciting line-up of sessions for its upcoming conference on April 5-6, featuring a diverse group of industry experts from the film and television sector.

Highlights include special guest writer and director **Lulu Wang** (*Expats/The Farewell*) flying in from Los Angeles for the event. Additionally, esteemed New Zealand actors **Pax Assadi, Cliff Curtis, Jess Hong, Beulah Koale, Lucy Lawless, Robyn Malcolm,** and **Shane Rangi** will each be part of the [Keynote Address](#), sharing their insights on what the theme "Stepping into the Unknown" means to them.

The conference will explore significant industry topics such as [Mana Whenua - navigating Māori concepts in western contexts](#), [crew job-sharing](#), and ensuring [access and inclusion](#) for deaf, disabled and/or neurodivergent (DDN) crew. The Regional Film Offices of New Zealand will discuss their [Spirit of Coopetition](#) and there will be a brief joint address from the Executive Directors of NZ On Air, Te Mānga Pāho and the New Zealand Film Commission about the current turbulence hitting local media and the independent production sector, and how they are navigating this.

For screenwriters, an engaging panel discussion on [Writing Methodology](#) with **Dianne Taylor** (*After the Party/Beyond the Known World*), **Michael Bennett** (*The Gone/In Dark Places*) and **Lulu Wang** is scheduled. Australian guest **Alexander Swords**, writer and narrative designer of video games, will present two sessions, [Diverse Storytelling Patterns](#), and [Getting on the Same Page](#) for story collaborators.

Two case studies from NZ On Air reference local TV shows; one on [equity and inclusion](#) with Sky Open's *Miles From Nowhere*, and another about the [beautiful collision of local music in local shows](#) with the up-and-coming TVNZ2 series *Testify*.

[Viva La Dirt League](#) will share the story of their rise to over six million YouTube subscribers watching their sketch comedy, and the establishment of their Auckland film studio.

Other sessions will cover topics such as [AI for VFX](#) with Wētā FX's **Kimball Thurston**, Casting with Australian casting director [Anousha Zarkesh](#), and a [Directing Masterclass with James Napier Robertson](#).

The conference will conclude with “[Sneak Previews](#)” of seven upcoming local feature films. Each film is introduced by its director, *A Mistake* (Dir. **Christine Jeffs**), *Bookworm* (Dir. **Ant Timpson**), *Grafted* (Dir. **Sasha Rainbow**), *Joika* (Dir. **James Napier Robertson**), *Ka Whawhai Tonu* (Dir. **Mike Jonathan**), *The Moon is Upside Down* (Dir. **Loren Taylor**) and *Tinā* (Dir. **Miki Magasiva**).

This is a great opportunity to learn from industry professionals and network with like-minded creatives. Tickets are on sale now and there is a discount for members of screen industry organisations. Secure your spot at this must-attend event.

Big Screen Symposium is possible thanks to support from industry partners **New Zealand Film Commission, NZ On Air, Te Māngai Pāho, Images and Sound**, and sponsors **Screen Auckland, WingNut, Wētā FX, Vista Foundation, Screenrights, South Pacific Pictures** and **Department of Post**.

For more information and to register, please visit [www.bigcreensymposium.com](http://www.bigcreensymposium.com).

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