

AFK

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 8, 2015

ANTICIPATION GROWS FOR UNMADE WEB SERIES

AUCKLAND, Wednesday 8 April, 2015 - A yet-to-be launched web series, *AFK* (Away From Keyboard), which has garnered over 1300 likes on Facebook, exceeded its \$15,000 Kickstarter target to fund productions - with filming currently underway in locations around Auckland, New Zealand.

The highly anticipated series features a collection of up-and-coming faces in the local and international entertainment industry such as JJ Fong (*Go Girls*, *StepDave*), Mia Pistorius (*Spartacus*, *Wonderland*), Calum Gittens (*Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*) and Dallas Barnett (*Spartacus*, *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug*).

New Zealand filmmaker Peter Haynes wrote and will direct this new web series, which follows the adventures of six gamers trapped inside their characters' bodies in the world of an online RPG. This group of disparate individuals is forced to work together in a new land with no rules, no game masters, and no multiple lives ... only the fittest, fastest, strongest and most cunning will survive. Basically, *AFK* is: *Lord of the Rings* meets *Battle Royale* meets *The Breakfast Club*.

They are AFK - away from keyboard.

Mysteriously finding themselves waking up in a place devoid of modern conveniences and technology, driven to live off the land. It will be a compelling and frequently hilarious look at what would happen to a group of modern gamers if they were suddenly forced to inhabit the world they (virtually) spent so long in.

The main story arc would follow the lead character 'Q' searching for a way back to the real world and the child she left behind, while dealing with the various factions and splinter groups that form in the fantasy environment. There would be chaotic roaming killers known as 'PKs' (Playerkillers) and bandit groups who would steal as much food, armour and weapons as they can get their hands on.

Along with that, director, Haynes, says the series is a fascinating look at contentious topics within the online world dealing with female gamers and the ambiguity of online players.

“*AFK* will be tackling many of these issues head on, from sexism to racism, and even ageism. Because of our unique setting and characters, we can approach these topics from an unusual angle, allowing for a fresh look. Also, because the main thrust of the series will always be humour, we can hopefully make people laugh while still making them think.

“For example one of our characters is a guy who was an American football player in the real world. He was a self described ‘Alpha Male’ and a bit of a player, and we’ve put him in the body of a woman in the game, because that’s the avatar he chose. How does he cope with that? How do the other players react to him differently because he’s a woman?” he explains.

Also, our lead character Q is a larper (Live Action Roleplayer), and a historical re-enactor. She does sword fighting, archery and outdoor living, and some might describe her as on the fringe of modern society. But in the game, which forces the players to utilize skills long forgotten, she actually has an advantage.”

AFK is challenging the stereotypical mores within the gaming culture by using entertainment and humour to touch upon the prevailing social issues faced by gamers in society today. Including that of players’ lives being affected by a game so much so they live vicariously through the lives of their online avatars.

“The concept came from a time a few years back when I was playing *World of Warcraft (WoW)* pretty heavily. This experience made me realise there are millions of people around the world whose lives may revolve around everything that happens between logging into the game in the morning and logging off at night. I wanted to explore what might happen to these people, for whom the game does have a great deal of ‘reality’, if they were forced to live and survive in the game world they have a love / hate relationship with.”

The project’s success will see a community of New Zealand filmmakers and passionate creative talent coming together to hone their gifts and skillsets. Without aiming for pecuniary gains, this dedicated team of artists, producers and actors have volunteered their time and skills in making possible the pilot and all teaser videos. Now continuing to devote their resources to finishing Season 1 of *AFK*.

Many people in the cast and crew are avid gamers, and we understand the unique feeling of exploring the world of a new game for the first time. We want to try and recapture some of that magic in *AFK*, while adding an element of real danger.

There will be action, adventure, witty dialogue, romance and enough gaming references to appeal to the hardcore players, while still being accessible to more casual gamers, or even the general public.

“In a nutshell, it was a concept that got into my head and needed to get out, otherwise it was going to keep bugging me until it did,” says Haynes.

Notes for Editor

About Peter Haynes

Peter Haynes has been extremely active in directing and producing short films and webseries for the last 15 years. He has twice won the 48 hours Peter Jackson wildcard pick for 2005 (*Jungle Fever*) and 2014 (*Flicker*), and came runner up in the international competition for ABCs of Death with his short film *T is for Talk*. He also won the 2011 LA new media award for 'Best Webseries' with *JF2: Primal Fury*.

About Epically Casual Limited

The production house making *AFK* consists of director Peter Haynes and two other producers, Hweiling Ow and Joselyn Khor. With their combined experience in the theatre, film and creative industries, Epically Casual Limited will bring together an epic list of local actors, costume and prop makers, makeup artists, sound technicians, filmmakers and other essential artists in the New Zealand film and television industry. Forming a raid of people passionately devoting their time away from their keyboards on the quest to create *AFK*.

More information

Official AFK promo trailer https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QyIMzxMLG_c

/facebook <https://www.facebook.com/afkwebseries>

/website www.afkwebseries.com

/youtube https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCK8cgghs2w_n6L80unC-BFLQ

/EXIT

For interviews and media enquiries contact

Joselyn Khor +64 21 110 6635 afkwebseries@gmail.com

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