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## Indigenous film maker Ivan Sen

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LEIGH SALES, PRESENTER: There's an excited buzz around the release of a new movie by Indigenous filmmaker Ivan Sen. It opened the Sydney Film Festival this week. Goldstone was filmed in Outback Queensland, and not only is Sen the director; he wrote, shot and edited the film and composed its music. The new thriller is a spin-off from his 2013 award-winning film *Mystery Road*, and much like his own life, the main character is caught between worlds. Monique Schafter met Ivan Sen in his hometown of Tamworth.

(Excerpt from the film *Goldstone* shown)

ACTOR: You might want to know, a stranger blew into town last night. A detective.

ACTRESS: What's he doing here?

ACTOR: Not too sure yet.

ACTRESS: Well find out.

(End of excerpt)

IVAN SEN, FILMMAKER: *Goldstone*, it's a thriller about an Aboriginal detective who arrives in an Outback mining town on a missing persons inquiry. But he soon starts to reveal that there's a lot of corruption, murder, all kinds of dark things going on and he has to get to the bottom of it.

ACTRESS (from film *Goldstone*): Now here we are being civilised to one another. But you and I both know things are gonna change sooner or later, 'cause that's how life is, Jay.

MONIQUE SCHAFTER, REPORTER: You've got an all-star cast including Jacki Weaver and Aaron Pedersen and you specifically created the character of Detective Jay Swan for Aaron Pedersen. Is that where all this began?

IVAN SEN: Yeah, *Mystery Road* was the initial film which I had written for Aaron Pedersen. The role which I created for him - I wanted to work with Aaron for years and I just couldn't find the right project. In *Goldstone*, it's a lot more personal for Jay Swan. He's on a spiritual journey in this film as much as he's solving a case. And so - but in the film he does reclaim a sense of his cultural past and sense of who he is, his identity, and it's something that's pretty close to my own heart, growing up myself kind of between the black world and the white world and maybe not really feeling like I belong in either camp. That's something that finds its way into my work a bit.

MONIQUE SCHAFTER: We're in a place called Coledale in Tamworth where you grew up. What was that like?

IVAN SEN: Wow, it was a lot different to now, I think. It was kind of segregated from the rest of the town back then, living down here, but I think these days, it's a lot more integrated. A lot of the Indigenous people are integrated throughout the town a lot more. Coledale was the first public housing area in Tamworth and a lot of the Indigenous people from the outer areas came in here and this was the first experience of - I guess of a town, really, for a lot of people.

MONIQUE SCHAFTER: So your house was right here?

IVAN SEN: Yep, this was it. This was where I grew up initially. The house was here. I'm not sure what's happened to it since then. I think my mother planted some of these trees and ...

MONIQUE SCHAFTER: And how has it changed now?

IVAN SEN: A lot of hard drugs have settled into the place and stuff like ice and things like that. So - and lots of break-ins and car stealing - stuff like that.

MONIQUE SCHAFTER: Does that make you sad?

IVAN SEN: I've been faced by all these kind of things all my life, really, travelling around the north-west area and places like Moree - all those issues that are facing young Indigenous people I've grown up with all of those and so I think I'm a bit past the sadness and just really wanting to address all of these things in the work that I do.

(Excerpt from the film Goldstone shown)

ACTOR: Been drinking today? No worries. Just need you to blow into this.

(End of excerpt)

IVAN SEN: I first fell in love with cinema here - living here. The local cinema was a long walk from here, maybe 10 kilometres, but every few weeks we had the money and we would, yeah, go to the other side of town across the railway tracks and I remember watching Gallipoli by Peter Weir.

(Excerpt from the film Gallipoli shown)

When I was maybe eight years old or something and that eight kilometres back, I just cried all the way back, and I realised that this movie made me feel more than I've ever felt in my life, in my real life. And so I think that's when the seed was planted. And it's such a different thing to go to the cinema and watch a movie - it's such a different experience to growing up in a place like this, in this public housing area, in the late-'70s, early-'80s here.

(Excerpt from the film Goldstone shown)

ACTOR: Just a word of warning. You see out here? Folks don't take too kindly to outsiders. So if you do want to go looking around, just be careful where you step. There's plenty of snakes about.

(End of excerpt)

MONIQUE SCHAFTER: The film weaves its way through a range of different issues like land rights and Stolen Generations. How important is it that we see issues like this fleshed out on screen?

IVAN SEN: Well I think film is just - it's an amazing medium which allows you to collect all these different issues and let them manifest into something that's

digestible by a mainstream audience. If there's something that my films all have is a lot of weight given to the location and a lot of respect given to the land that the characters are standing on and the land actually helps inform the characters and the decisions that they make.

MONIQUE SCHAFTER: You wear lots of different hats in this film. You're the writer, director, DOP, editor and composer. Why do you like to be so hands-on in your filmmaking?

IVAN SEN: I find filmmaking like painting. I find it a very personal and intimate thing and it's almost like dipping your brush into a different paint on the palette and then deciding where to put that colour.

(Excerpt from the film Goldstone shown)

ACTRESS: Oh, and this is for you. I was planning to give you just one slice, but I thought, "What the hell?" Hope you got a sweet tooth. Thanks for the little chat. And if you need anything, just ask.

(End of excerpt)

LEIGH SALES: Monique Schafter there.