



Dr JAMES McNAMARA Writer / Critic

James McNamara is an Australian screenwriter and book critic, with a background in corporate lawyer for top-tier US law firms. James is currently creating *Detective Cooper*, a series for television based on the novels by award winning novelist Malla Nunn (Goalpost Pictures and Quizzicle Productions producing for M-Net). He is also creating a podcast series for Princess Pictures for Audible and is attached to write the feature film.

James began his film and television career as a script analyst at Icon Film Distribution, where he reported directly to the Head of Acquisitions and Development, Susan Boehm. James advised on the artistic and commercial potential of feature film scripts for pre-buy acquisitions. He also had a development role on a number of Icon features, notably psychological thriller *2:22*, directed by Paul Currie and starring Michiel Huisman and Teresa Palmer.

His early work experience included writers rooms for See-Saw Films and Endemol Australia. Working with writers including Craig Pearce, Cate Shortland, Tommy Murphy, Jacquelin Perske, Leon Fox, Giulia Sandler, Adam Todd, Elizabeth Coleman, Andrew Knight, John Doyle, and Justin Monjo. Since then, James became a highly sought researcher and soon began writing during development of *The Monaro* for Matchbox Pictures and Foxtel.

In addition to his creative work, James is an award-winning literary and television critic – something he draws on in script analysis and editing. James’s 8,000-word feature article on the HBO era, “The Golden Age of Television”, was the cover article of the *Australian Book Review* (Australia’s premier literary journal). James won the coveted ABR Ian Potter Foundation Fellowship for this piece – one of Australia’s major awards for cultural criticism. James’s critical work has also appeared in international publications, including the *New York Times*, *LA Review of Books*, *Times Literary Supplement*, *The Spectator*, and *The Australian*.

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James’s critical ability was honed at Oxford, where he held a Clarendon Scholarship in English – the university’s award for “the elite academic candidates of their generation”. He was supervised by Truman Capote Award-winning critic Professor Helen Small, and examined by Professor Valentine Cunningham – former chair of the Booker Prize judges. James received his PhD from Oxford for a topic spanning seventeenth- through nineteenth-century literature and drama, a qualification evidencing world-class training as an editor, critic, and analyst of literary and dramatic texts. James drew on this experience for Porchlight Films, working for Cate Shortland, Liz Watts, and Tommy Murphy as the literary / historical consultant on their feature, *The Young Romantics*.

Before achieving his goal of working in film and television, James was a corporate litigation lawyer specializing in international disputes for McDermott Will & Emery, one of the world’s largest law firms. When James’s team left the firm during the global financial crisis, he elected to remain as the only corporate litigation lawyer in the London office for over a year. Reporting directly to the Global Head of International Arbitration in New York, James experienced an exceptional level and tempo work. Highlights include providing emergency advice on a US\$250,000,000 international dispute, obtaining a High Court injunction in under 4 hours to prevent a £1,000,000 eighteenth-century ‘cello from leaving the United Kingdom, and closing a market-sensitive US\$12,000,000 settlement negotiation after being responsible for the day-to-day management of a case with proceedings in five jurisdictions.

In addition to his PhD from Oxford University, James holds degrees in English and Law from the University of Western Australia and in screenwriting from AFTRS. James’s long-term career goal is to bring his creative abilities as a screenwriter together with his critical and corporate experience to work as a showrunner in US television drama. James has been selected twice for the *BAFTA Newcomers program* in LA and has joined the Board of the ABR (Australian Book Review).

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