

# SKYDANCE<sup>®</sup>

## MEDIA

### Skydance Media Acquires Global Live Action Rights To “Sword Art Online” Phenomenon

#### Studio Fast-Tracks Launch of All-New Franchise with First-Ever Live Action TV Series

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**Santa Monica, CA, August 2, 2016** – Skydance Media, a diversified media company that creates elevated, event-level entertainment for global audiences, today announced that it has acquired the global live action rights to *Sword Art Online* (SAO), the smash hit Japanese novel and anime franchise, in partnership with KADOKAWA Corporation.

Skydance plans to fast-track the launch of an all-new franchise by developing and producing the first-ever live action SAO TV series. Laeta Kalogridis (*Avatar*, *Shutter Island*, *Terminator Genisys*) will write the pilot episode and serve as an executive producer alongside David Ellison, Dana Goldberg and Marcy Ross.

SAO is a global franchise based on the popular light novel series of 22 books by author Reki Kawahara, which have collectively sold over 19 million print copies worldwide. The novels have been spun off into nine comic adaptations, two anime television series, a video game and merchandise program, and – most recently – an animated film set to be released in Japan in 2017.

The all-new Skydance Television series will follow a brilliant young beta tester Kirito and his group of friends when they are trapped – alongside 10,000 other people – in a next-generation virtual reality online role-playing game. The game is a world unto itself: filled with sword fighting, monsters, magic and mystery, where the stakes are life and death. Kirito and an ensemble of diverse characters must fight their way through this hostile environment while making lives for themselves in the fantastical world that is *Sword Art Online*. Following its television series, Skydance plans to launch a first-of-its-kind SAO virtual reality experience through Skydance Interactive.

“At Skydance we are in the business of world-building and SAO is a massive pop-culture phenomenon from which we plan to launch a full-scale and wide-ranging set of live action franchise extensions across our business verticals, beginning with television,” said Skydance Media Chief Executive Officer David Ellison. “We look forward to working alongside Laeta, Reki Kawahara and the teams at KADOKAWA and Aniplex to build out a deeply immersive new universe of SAO in an authentic way that honors its well-established fan base around the globe.”

“I am excited and moved that *Sword Art Online* will be adapted into a live action series by the highly respected Skydance Media,” commented Reki Kawahara. “I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation and gratitude to everyone involved in this project, and to the fans all over the world who have so generously and enthusiastically supported SAO.”

“For years I have been inspired by the inventive and masterful storytelling of the SAO franchise,” added Kalogridis. “I’m thrilled to get the opportunity to work with such talented partners to bring this cutting-edge yet timeless story to a new format at Skydance.”

Laeta Kalogridis is a film and television writer-producer. Her writing work includes the first *X-Men*, *Tomb Raider*, *Scream 3*, *Alexander*, *Night Watch*, *Bionic Woman*, *Pathfinder* and Martin Scorsese’s *Shutter Island*, which she also executive produced. She worked alongside Skydance as writer and producer on 2015’s feature film *Terminator Genisys*. Additional producing credits include James Cameron’s *Avatar* and *White House Down*. Kalogridis has a first-look and consulting arrangement with Skydance and is currently writing and executive producing the studio’s sci-fi television series *Altered Carbon* for Netflix. She is repped by WME.

### **About SAO**

Sword Art Online (SAO) is a global franchise based on the popular novel series of 22 books by author Reki Kawahara and published by KADOKAWA, which have collectively sold over 19 million print copies worldwide since the first novel was published in 2009. The novels have spawned nine comic adaptations published by KADOKAWA, a video game that has sold over 1.9 million copies and been downloaded over 9 million times globally since its release in 2013, two anime television series adaptations distributed by Aniplex and animated by A-1 Pictures that have together sold over 930,000 home video units worldwide, as well as merchandise programs. *Sword Art Online* has been available on Netflix in North America since March of 2014. An animated film titled *Sword Art Online The Movie: Ordinal Scale*, featuring an original story written by Reki Kawahara, distributed by Aniplex and animated by A-1 Pictures, is set for theatrical release in 2017 in Japan.

### **About Skydance Media**

Skydance is a diversified media company founded by David Ellison in 2010 to create elevated, event-level entertainment for global audiences. The Company brings to life stories of immersive worlds across platforms, including feature film, television and interactive. Among Skydance Media’s commercially and critically successful feature films are *Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation*, *Terminator Genisys*, *World War Z*, *Jack Reacher*, *G.I. Joe: Retaliation*, *Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol*, *Star Trek Into Darkness* and *True Grit*. Its 2015 feature films, *Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation* and *Terminator Genisys*, together grossed over \$1 billion at the worldwide box office. Skydance’s feature film slate includes *Star Trek Beyond* on July 22, 2016, *Jack Reacher: Never Go Back* on October 21, 2016, *Life* on March 24, 2017 and *Geostorm* on October 20, 2017. Skydance Media’s rapidly growing and critically acclaimed television division launched in 2013. The Company’s television slate now features a variety of projects across a number of networks, including Emmy-nominated *Grace and Frankie* and *Altered Carbon* on Netflix, *Red Mars* on Spike TV, *Jack Ryan* on Amazon, and *Condor* on DirecTV. In 2016, Skydance acquired leading game developer The Workshop Entertainment and formed Skydance Interactive, a new division that creates and publishes virtual reality experiences.

### **About KADOKAWA Corporation**

Headquartered in Tokyo, Japan, KADOKAWA Corporation is one of the most well established Japanese entertainment companies. Founded in 1945, it produces a wide variety of publications and visual contents, including novels, comics, magazines, live-action films and animation series. In April 2016, KADOKAWA announced partnerships with Hachette Book Group and Crunchyroll, Inc. for the distribution of its works in the North American market.

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