



MEDIA RELEASE

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SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES 2015 OFFICIAL COMPETITION JURY

Sydney Film Festival announces the 2015 Official Competition jury, who will judge the 12 titles in the Official Competition and award the Sydney Film Prize and \$60,000 cash to the winner.

The Jury President is renowned Australian film producer **Liz Watts**. The other jury members are program consultant **Hiromi Aihara** (Japan), screenwriter **Andrew Bovell** (Australia), filmmaker **Penek Ratanaruang** (Thailand) and the Austrian Film Commission's **Martin Schweighofer** (Austria).

The internationally recognised Official Competition, now in its eighth year, recognises courageous, audacious and cutting-edge film. The winner of the Sydney Film Prize is announced at the Festival's Closing Night ceremony at the State Theatre on Sunday 14 June.

"The 2015 jury is made up of five Australian and international film professionals of exceptional talent and vision, led by Liz Watts, one of Australia's most respected filmmakers," says **Sydney Film Festival Director Nashen Moodley**. "With this year's strong Official Competition lineup, they have their work cut out for them."

"It's an honour to be chosen to head the jury for the 2015 Official Competition," said Liz Watts. "Not only is the Sydney Film Prize a widely esteemed and sought-after award, but the Official Competition is simply a stellar program of contemporary cinema. I'm looking forward to watching the films with my fellow jury members."

The jury members for the 2015 Sydney Film Festival Official Competition:

The 2015 **Jury President Liz Watts** (Australia) produced *Animal Kingdom* (2010, Director David Michôd), *The Home Song Stories* (2007, Director Tony Ayres), *Little Fish* (2005, Director Rowan Woods), Cannes & Sundance selected *Jewboy* (2005, Director Tony Krawitz), and Berlin selected *Walking On Water*, (2002 Director Tony Ayres). Her last feature *The Rover*, reteaming with writer/director David Michôd, premiered in Official Selection Cannes Film Festival 2014. *The Rover* stars Guy Pearce and Robert Pattinson, and is sold by FilmNation. She produced German Australian co-production *Lore*, directed by Cate Shortland, and *Dead Europe*, directed by Tony Krawitz, with Emile Sherman & Iain Canning, both of which premiered at Festival Special Presentation Toronto International Film in 2012. As Executive Producer, her credits include *The Hunter* (2011, Daniel Nettheim), starring Willem Defoe, *Lou* (2010 Belinda Chayko, starring John Hurt), *Prime Mover* (2009 David Caesar), and in 2015, *The Kettering Incident* 8 part TV series for Foxtel, and upcoming feature film *Jasper Jones* with director Rachel Perkins. Liz's other TV credits include *Laid* (ABC TV, Marieke Hardy & Kirsty Fisher), *Martha's New Coat* (2003, SBS, Rachel Ward), *Delivery Day* (2001, SBS, Jane

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Manning); documentaries including *Buried Country* (2000, SBS); *The Pitch* (1998, ABC) and *Island Style* (1999, SBS).

Hiroshi Aihara (Japan) began working with Japanese independent films in 1978, when she joined the film editorial division of Pia, which presents the Pia Film Festival. She established her own company, Bewiz, in 1995. After that she has been forging a new career as an independent producer and consultant for international festivals (Rotterdam, Toronto), project market (HAF, APM) and promotions. She worked for UNIJAPAN, the organization that promotes Japanese films and stimulates cultural exchange internationally, until 2009. She has established an extensive network of colleagues in the Japanese film industry, both in the independent community and in the studios. As the international liaison on many projects, she has developed strategies for bridging the realities of Japanese film production with international markets. Her producing credits include: *TETSUO II / The Body Hammer* (1992) and *Tokyo Fist* (1995) by Tsukamoto Shinya; *Last Life in the Universe* and *Invisible Waves* (2006) by Pen-ek Ratanaruang; and *Under Water Love* (2011) by Imaoka Shinji.

Andrew Bovell (Australia) is an award-winning writer for the stage and screen. His most recent screen credit is the adaptation of the John Le Carre' novel *A Most Wanted Man*, directed by Anton Corbijn and starring Phillip Seymour Hoffman. The film premiered at Sundance in 2014 before its US and international release. His first major screen credit came in 1992 when he wrote the original screenplay for *Strictly Ballroom*. In 2001 he adapted his own stage play *Speaking in Tongues* into the acclaimed feature film *Lantana*. His other film credits include *Edge of Darkness* (with William Monahan); *Head On* (with Ana Kokkinos and Mira Robertson); *The Book of Revelation* (with Ana Kokkinos); and *Blessed* (with Christos Tsiolkas, Melissa Reeves and Patricia Cornelius), adapted from their stage play *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?* His recent work for the stage includes the adaptation of Kate Grenville's novel *The Secret River* for the Sydney Theatre Company; and *When the Rain Stops Falling*, which premiered at the Adelaide Festival of Arts in 2008 and has subsequently been performed in London, New York and throughout Europe. Other works for the stage include *Holy Day* and *After Dinner*, which was revived by the Sydney Theatre Company in 2015.

Pen-ek Ratanaruang (Thailand) was born in Bangkok. He made his debut as a feature-film director in 1997 with a movie that broke the mould of Thai cinema called *Fun Bar Karaoke*. The film premiered at the Berlinale the same year. His second film, *Sixty-nine*, premiered in the Tiger Competition at the International Film Festival Rotterdam in 1999. *Mon-rak Transistor* premiered in Director's Fortnight at Cannes in 2002. *Last Life in The Universe* premiered at the Venice Film Festival in 2003. *Invisible Waves* was selected for competition in the Berlinale in 2006. *Ploy* was selected for Directors' Fortnight at Cannes in 2007. *Nymph* premiered in Un Certain Regard at Cannes in 2009. *Headshot* premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2011. Pen-ek is one of the handful of directors who have helped to reinvent the Thai film industry since its slump in the 1990s, and has pioneered both the trend of looking back at retro Thai pop culture for inspiration and the expansion of Thai cinema into the realms of international co-production.

Martin Schweighofer (Austria) is the Executive Director of the Austrian Film Commission (AFC), the official agency for strategic support and promotion of Austrian cinema abroad. Michael Haneke, Ulrich Seidl and Jessica Hausner are some of the filmmakers Martin has been associated with for

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many years. Martin studied journalism and drama at the University of Vienna. His career highlights include: film, theatre critic and arts editor for Austrian periodicals; co-founder of and dramatic adviser with the theatre company Theater im Kopf; member of various selection boards of film subsidy agencies (including the Austrian Film Institute); founder and director of the film festival Diagonale (1993-1996); founding member of the pan-European organization European Film Promotion (EFP), and current member of EFP's Board of Directors and Vice President (since 2013); lecturer at Vienna's *University of Applied Sciences* (since 2013); member of the European Film Academy; and jury duties at numerous international film festivals (Buenos Aires, Copenhagen, Dubai, Thessaloniki, Wroclaw).

2015 Official Competition titles:

- **ARABIAN NIGHTS** Portugal, France, Germany, Switzerland | 2015 | Total 383 mins (Vol. 1: 125 mins, Vol. 2 132 mins, Vol. 3 126 mins) | In English, Portuguese, French and German with English subtitles | Feature
Director: Miguel Gomes | Screenwriters: Miguel Gomes, Mariana Ricardo, Telmo Churro | Producers: Sandro Aguilar, Luis Urbano | Cast: Crista Alfaiate, Adriano Luz, Américo Silva, Carloto Cotta, Crista Alfaiate, Chico Chapas, Luísa Cruz
- **BLACK SOULS** Italy | 2014 | 108 mins | In Italian with English Subtitles | Feature
Director: Francesco Munzi | Screenwriters: Francesco Munzi, Fabrizio Ruggirello, Maurizio Braucci | Producers: Gianluca Arcopinto, Luigi Musini, Olivia Musini | Cast: Marco Leonardi, Peppino Mazzotta, Fabrizio Ferracane
- **THE DAUGHTER** Australia | 2015 | 96 mins | In English | Feature
Director, Screenwriter: Simon Stone | Producers: Jan Chapman, Nicole O'Donohue | Cast: Geoffrey Rush, Ewen Leslie, Paul Schneider
- **ME AND EARL AND THE DYING GIRL** USA | 2014 | 105 mins | In English | Feature
Director: Alfonso Gomez-Rejon | Screenwriter: Jesse Andrews | Producers: Jeremy Dawson, Steven Rales, Dan Fogelman | Cast: Thomas Mann, Olivia Cooke, RJ Kyler
- **A PIGEON SAT ON A BRANCH REFLECTING ON EXISTENCE** Sweden, Norway, France, Germany | 2014 | 100 mins | In English and Swedish with English subtitles | Feature
Director, Screenwriter: Roy Andersson | Producer: Pernilla Sandström | Cast: Holger Andersson, Nils Westblom, Charlotta Larsson
- **SHERPA** Australia, Nepal | 2015 | 96 mins | In English, Nepali and Sherpa with English subtitles | Documentary
Director, Screenwriter: Jennifer Peedom | Producers: Bridget Ikin, John Smithson
- **STRANGERLAND** Australia, Ireland | 2014 | 112 mins | In English | Feature
Director: Kim Farrant | Screenwriters: Fiona Seres, Michael Kinirons | Producers: Naomi Wenck, Macdara Kelleher | Cast: Nicole Kidman, Joseph Fiennes, Hugo Weaving
- **TALES** Iran | 2014 | 88 mins | In Persian with English Subtitles | Feature
Director, Producer: Rakhshan Bani-Etemad | Screenwriters: Rakhshan Bani-Etemad, Farid Mostafavi | Cast: Golab Adineh, Saber Abar, Farhad Aslani
- **TANGERINE** USA | 88 mins | In English | Feature
Director: Sean Baker | Screenwriters: Sean Baker, Chris Bergoch | Producers: Sean Baker, Karrie Cox, Marcus Cox, Darren Dean, Shih-Ching Tsou | Cast: Kiki Kitana Rodriguez, Mya Taylor, Karren Karagulian
- **TEHRAN TAXI** Iran | 2014 | 82 mins | In Farsi with English subtitles | Feature
Director, Screenwriter, Producer: Jafar Panahi | Cast: Jafar Panahi
- **VICTORIA** Germany | 2015 | 140 mins | In English, German and Spanish with English Subtitles | Feature
Director: Sebastian Schipper | Screenwriters: Sebastian Schipper, Olivia Neergaard-Holm,

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Elke Schulz | Producers: Jan Dressler, Sebastian Schipper, David Keitsch, Anatol Nitschke, Catherine Baikousis | Cast: Laia Costa, Frederick Lau, Franz Rogowski

- **VINCENT** France | 2014 | 77 mins | In French with English subtitles | Feature
Director, Screenwriter: Thomas Salvador | Producer: Julie Salvador | Cast: Thomas Salvador, Vimala Pons, Youssef Hajdi

Guests attending from Official Competition films:

Francesco Munzi, director of Italian crime drama **Black Souls** will attend SFF. Munzi's first feature film, *Saimir* (2004), was received with critical acclaim at film festivals worldwide, earning a Special Mention at the Venice Film Festival and the Silver Ribbon for Best New Director. Francesco Munzi will also host a talk at the Istituto Italiano di Cultura.

Kim Farrant, director of Australian thriller **Strangerland**. Farrant graduated from AFTRS with a Masters in directing. Her documentary *Naked on the Inside* was a Dendy finalist at the Festival in 2007 and was nominated for the Film Critics Circle of Australia Award for Best Documentary. **Strangerland** is her feature debut. **Strangerland** producer **Naomi Wenck** will also attend and introduce the film. Farrant will appear at a free **Meet the Filmmakers Talk** at the **Apple Store** on Saturday 6 June June, 2-3pm.

Rakhshan Bani-Etemad, writer and director of Iranian drama **Tales** will introduce the Australian Premiere of her film. Bani-Etemad is one of Iran's most loved and well-known filmmakers. Her feature films *Off Limits* (1987), *Nargess* (1991), *Gilaneh* (2005) and *Mainline* (2006) have won numerous awards from festivals around the world.

Jennifer Peedom, director of Australian documentary **Sherpa**. Peedom is known for her intimate documentation of both epic and everyday stories. Her films *Miracle on Everest* (2008) and *Solo* (2008) are internationally renowned. She has won an AFI and Film Critics Circle Award for Best Documentary and multiple Australian Directors' Guild Awards for Best Direction. Producers **Bridget Ikin** and **John Smithson** will also attend and introduce the World Premiere.

Sean Baker, director and co-writer of American feature **Tangerine**, a drama about Los Angeles' transgendered community shot on an iPhone 5s. Baker is an American director, writer, and producer known for the Independent Spirit Award-nominated films *Take Out* (2004) and *Prince of Broadway* (2008) and will introduce the International Premiere.

Sydney Film Festival runs 3 – 14 June 2015.

Tickets for Sydney Film Festival 2015 are on sale now. Please call 1300 733 733 or visit sff.org.au for more information.

ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

From **Wednesday 3 June to Sunday 14 June 2015**, the 62nd Sydney Film Festival offers Sydneysiders another exciting season of cinema amidst a whirlwind of premieres, red-carpet openings, panel discussions, international guests and more. Each year the Festival's programming team curates 12 days of cinema sourced from world-famous film festivals, including Cannes, Sundance, Toronto and the Berlinale; as well as Australia's finest local productions.

Sydney Film Festival also presents an Official Competition of 12 films that vie for the Sydney Film Prize, a highly respected honour that awards a \$60,000 cash prize based on the decision of a jury of international and Australian filmmakers and industry professionals. Previous Sydney Film Prize winners are: *Two Days, One Night* (2014); *Only God Forgives* (2013); *Alps* (2012); *A Separation* (2011), which went on to win an Academy Award; *Heartbeats* (2010); and *Bronson* (2009).

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The Festival takes place across greater Sydney: at the State Theatre, Event Cinemas George Street, Dendy Opera Quays, Dendy Newtown, Art Gallery of NSW, Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace Cremorne, Casula Powerhouse, the Festival Hub at Sydney Town Hall and SFF Outdoor Screen.

The Festival is a major event on the New South Wales cultural calendar and is one of the world's longest-running film festivals. For more information visit: www.sff.org.au.

The 62nd Sydney Film Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Screen NSW and Destination NSW, the Federal Government through Screen Australia and the City of Sydney.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Amber Forrest-Bisley, Publicity Manager, Sydney Film Festival

E: amber@cardinalspin.com.au P: 02 8065 7363 M: 0405 363 817

Katie Eastment, Communications Advisor

E: Katie@cardinalspin.com.au P: 02 8065 7363 M: 0435 918 466

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