



GOLDEN AGE
CINEMA AND BAR

MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 6AM TUESDAY 21 MARCH 2017

GOLDEN AGE TO SCREEN EVERY SYDNEY FILM PRIZE WINNER

Sydney Film Festival celebrates ten years of its Official Competition and the Sydney Film Prize with a screening of each Prize-winning film at the Golden Age Cinema & Bar, Surry Hills – every Tuesday for nine weeks, leading into the Sydney Film Festival.

“The Official Competition, which awards the Sydney Film Prize – a \$63,000 cash prize - was created to celebrate that rare but thrilling kind of film that truly moves the art form forward. The Festival is delighted to show all nine winners, starting with Steve McQueen’s *Hunger* from 2008,” said **Festival Director Nashen Moodley**.

“Provocative, controversial or cutting edge, these films broaden our understanding of the world and say important things in original ways.”

“Golden Age is thrilled to bring our audiences this series, representing the most audacious, and innovative films of their year, as judged by a selection of international and local industry luminaries appointed by Sydney Film Festival,” said **Golden Age Cinema & Bar Programming Director, Kate Jinx**.

“From Steve McQueen’s **Caméra d’Or** award-winning political drama *Hunger* (2008), starring Michael Fassbender; to Miguel Gomes’ extraordinary trilogy *Arabian Nights* (2015); two-time Cannes Palme d’Or winners the Dardenne brothers’ *Two Days One Night* (2014) starring Oscar-winning actress **Marion Cotillard**; and Ryan Gosling in *Only God Forgives* (2013); we hope cinephiles all over Sydney will join us at Golden Age on Tuesdays from 4 April for these not to be missed contemporary masterpieces.”

In 2016, the \$63,000 Sydney Film Prize went to Brazilian director Kleber Mendonça Filho for his film *Aquarius*. In previous years, the Sydney Film Prize went to: *Arabian Nights* (2015); *Two Days, One Night* (2014); *Only God Forgives* (2013); *Alps* (2012); *A Separation* (2011), which went on to win an Academy Award; *Heartbeats* (2010); *Bronson* (2009); and *Hunger* (2008).

The Official Competition was established in 2008 and is endorsed by Fédération Internationale des Associations de Producteurs de Films (the regulating organisation for international film festivals).

All screenings on sale via www.ourgoldenage.com.au from 3pm, Tuesday 20 March. A special ticket price available for each volume of *Arabian Nights*.

Synopses for these special screenings:

HUNGER - Tuesday 04 April, 6.20pm

UK artist Steve McQueen, in collaboration with Irish playwright Enda Marsh (*Disco Pigs*), has created an extraordinary feature debut about the life-and-death of IRA hunger striker Bobby Sands. Establishing the conditions of Her Majesty’s Prison Maze near Belfast in the early ’80s, the first movement powerfully pushes into abstraction, with McQueen approaching the prison cells as

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installation sites for articulating the human body as both weapon and battleground in a series of intense and violent clashes between the wardens and prisoners. In a bold narrative choice, Sands only emerges as a character towards the end of this section, and is brought into sharp relief in a punchy philosophical exchange with a Catholic priest, dissecting the political and religious implications of his decision to starve himself. Michael Fassbender's breathtakingly visceral performance as Sands comes to the fore in the final section which focuses on the minutiae of his gradual demise. Clearly influenced by McQueen's recent stint as war artist in Iraq, the contemporary relevance of *Hunger* is loud and resounding.

BRONSON – Tuesday 11 April, 8.30pm

Nicolas Winding Refn's (*The Pusher* Trilogy, SFF 06) high-octane cabaret features Tom Hardy in a career-defining performance as Britain's most notorious criminal 'Charles Bronson'. Initially imprisoned for armed robbery, the real-life Bronson (aka Michael Peterson) has been out of jail only four months in 34 years, with 30 of those spent in solitary confinement. Repellent and seductive, Hardy's muscular interpretation channels *A Clockwork Orange's* Alex de Large and comes on like an amped-up Chopper Reid – jester, mustachioed showman and raconteur – a character to whom the prison cell is the perfect stage and an artist whose chosen form is extreme violence. Underscored by an explosive soundtrack and heightened use of visual and sound design, Refn and Brock Norman Brock's audacious script delivers an uppercut to the jaw of the traditional biopic. It is not the arc of his life that is interesting, but Bronson's response to circumstance: the monotony of incarceration that has given way to endless permutations of violence and character, a man in a permanent state of reinvention whose only audience is the very institution which struggles (pretty unsuccessfully) to contain him.

HEARTBEATS – Tuesday 18 April, 8.30pm

Xavier Dolan follows the adolescent scream of *I Killed My Mother* with a more reflective (though equally teasing) second film about wilful delusion, rejection and the politics of the competing and unrequited crush. Francis (the filmmaker himself) and Marie (Monia Chokri) are a couple of drop-dead gorgeous twenty-something hipsters whose friendship is rocked when they both fall for Nicolas. Luscious and elusive, the curly-headed blonde is the definition of ambiguous, flirting with both of them and enjoying the power of his attractiveness. Intoxicated by the image of Nicolas (in one party scene, Francis sees him as a series of Cocteau drawings while Marie sees Michelangelo's statue of David), the pair refuse to let reality intrude on their constructed world (as does the film which injects it through an intermittent series of interviews with spurned lovers). Dolan's queer reworking of the romantic ménage-a-tois (Niels Schneider's performance as Nicolas plays like a knowing tribute to Jean Moreau in *Jules et Jim*) is heightened by a black, psychological dimension that constantly threatens to disrupt the film's dreamy surfaces.

A SEPARATION – Wednesday 26 April, 8.30pm

This utterly compelling, emotionally resonant drama from Asghar Farhadi – director of *About Elly* (SFF 2009) – was awarded Best Film and both acting prizes for its superb ensemble cast at the Berlin Film Festival. Not exactly out-of-love, Nader and Simin are attempting to divorce on the grounds of irreconcilable differences. They have acquired visas to emigrate from Iran – Simin is anxious to ensure a better future for their 10-year-old daughter Termeh, but Nader refuses to leave his elderly father who suffers from Alzheimer's disease. When the judge refuses to formalise their separation, Simin resolutely departs the family home, leaving the obstinate Nader to contract the services of a housekeeper. Razieh is a devout, impoverished woman who tends to the apartment and Nader's father with her own four-year-old daughter in tow. When Nader returns one day to find his father alone and compromised, his fury leads to an altercation that has unexpected and devastating consequences. Propelled by an acute attention to class, religious and gender differences, Farhadi's mathematically precise script interrogates the very basis of truth and ethics, its imploding narrative movement the perfect metaphor for the social and political discord that plagues contemporary Iran.

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ALPS – Tuesday 02 May, 6pm

Director Yorgos Lanthimos, who put the Greek ‘Weird Wave’ on the map with the biting black comedy *Dogtooth* (2009), and also produced Athina Rachel Tsangari’s acerbic and offbeat *Attenberg* (which screened in SFF’s 2011 Official Competition), returns with another warped vision of lives on the periphery of a society in decay. *Alps* (co-produced by Tsangari, and co-starring *Attenberg*’s Ariane Labed) follows a secret club whose members are paid to act as replacements for the recently deceased – going into their homes, impersonating them, getting uncomfortably intimate with the bereaved. It’s part therapy, part theatre, with more than a hint of prostitution. Aggeliki Papoulia plays a young member who takes her awkward roleplaying perhaps too seriously, while quietly rebelling against the group’s sadistic leader (Aris Servetelis). Though the morbid transgressions at the film’s heart are presented with characteristic icy clinical detachment, and acted in a deadpan way that’s both amusing and creepy, Lanthimos finds a strange kind of beauty and haunting undercurrents of grief amidst the absurd. *Alps* posits a surreal world where human connection is a commodity, but real, painful emotion lurks between the lines. It’s a disturbing imitation of life, but a fascinating one.

ONLY GOD FORGIVES – Tuesday 09 May, 8.30pm

Following the international hit *Drive*, director Nicolas Winding Refn (who won the 2009 Sydney Film Prize with *Bronson*) reunites with Ryan Gosling for this brutal story of rage, betrayal and redemption. Set almost entirely in a neon-lit Bangkok at night, each frame in this dazzling, muscular film, which was shot by Larry Smith (*Bronson*, *Eyes Wide Shut*), is a carefully composed work of art. Gosling, in a restrained and complex performance, plays Julian, an American who runs a Thai boxing club in Bangkok and who is clearly involved in the criminal underworld. When Julian’s brother Billy is murdered, their mother Jenna (Kristin Scott Thomas) – the dangerous head of a powerful criminal organisation – arrives in Bangkok to collect her son’s corpse. She also dispatches Julian to find his brother’s killers, which pits him against the ‘Angel of Vengeance’, a terrifying cop called Chang (Vithaya Pansringarm) who is determined to restore order, and unafraid to use his sword to do so. As the film patiently reveals more and more about their histories, these violent, damaged characters clash explosively, in the boxing ring and beyond. If there were any doubts before, with this Cannes Competition contender Winding Refn proves himself a master of the cinematic language of extreme violence.

TWO DAYS, ONE NIGHT – Tuesday 16 May, 8.30pm

The Dardenne brothers are amongst that select company who have won the Palme d’Or twice: for *Rosetta* (1999) and *The Child* (2005). They return to Competition at Cannes with their latest. Oscar-winner Marion Cotillard (*La Vie en Rose*, *The Dark Knight Rises*) is wonderful as Sandra, a woman in a precarious position. Her employer at a factory has given her colleagues a stark choice – to either receive a bonus or have Sandra return to work after a leave of absence. An initial ballot is not promising. The employer agrees to another vote, leaving Sandra one weekend to convince her colleagues to let her keep her job. Sandra visits them one by one to make her case. With this intriguing premise, the Dardennes fashion a very special film. Without resorting to sentiment, the film is filled with emotion. Every interaction is so rich with possibility you can imagine each of these working-class characters inspiring a film of their own. *Two Days, One Night* is gentle in tone but provocative in spirit.

ARABIAN NIGHTS VOL I (Tuesday 23 May, 6.00pm) **VOL II** (Tuesday 23 May, 8.45pm) **VOL III** (Wednesday 24 May, 8.30pm)

Ambitious, indignant and filled with offbeat humour, Miguel Gomes’ extraordinary new film draws on the structure of ‘Arabian Nights’ to create a vivid portrait of Portugal today. Following *Tabu* (SFF 2012), Gomes was anguished by the austerity measures imposed on his homeland and commissioned journalists to gather true stories from all over the country that were then fictionalised. The outcome is a heady blend of the surreal and the all too real, told in a series of thrilling segments. As Gomes says in his captivating voiceover narration: “I thought I could make a fine film, filled with wonderful and seductive stories. At the same time, I thought the film could follow Portugal’s current miserable situation. Any muttonhead understands that, more or less skilfully, one of these two films can be

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made. But it's impossible to make both at once." Gomes has gone down that "impossible" path, and has made a singular film. It is a snapshot of his country in economic strife and a collection of riveting stories that will resonate far beyond Portugal's borders.

AQUARIUS – Tuesday 30 May, 8.30pm

Neighbouring Sounds, Kleber Mendonça Filho's extraordinary examination of race, class and fear in Recife, Brazil appeared in the SFF Official Competition in 2012. In *Aquarius*, selected for the Competition in Cannes, Mendonça returns to his native Recife, again telling a story of great ambition and scope. This time he hones in on an unforgettable protagonist Clara, played brilliantly by the incomparable Sonia Braga (*Kiss of the Spider Woman*). 65-year-old Clara is a fiercely independent and intelligent retired music critic and the last resident of the seaside Aquarius building. Every other apartment has been acquired by a development company with plans for the site. Clara politely refuses to sell, but the requests from the company become increasingly aggressive. What follows is an escalating battle between Clara and the firm. In *Clara*, Mendonça has created a remarkable character for whom we feel great concern and affection. The film's strength is in the way her life is conveyed in its fullness – her intellectual, family and sex lives are all explored. Through Clara, Mendonça masterfully reflects on an entire society in this powerful and complex film.

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***Sydney Film Festival Press Pack and Images Available [HERE](#)

EDITORS NOTES

ABOUT GOLDEN AGE CINEMA

Drawing upon its rich history, the former screening room of Paramount Pictures has been lovingly renovated by a bewitching collective of architects, interior designers, auteurs and furniture makers. It brings together the past, present and future to create a unique environment for people to watch films, enjoy a drink or host an event.

Today, the cinema presents an outstanding independent film program that brings together classics, cults, creepies and the best new releases. Every month, the program features a film that will screen exclusively at Golden Age in Sydney, with a themed programming built around the film to help showcase work that might otherwise not go beyond a festival showing. The cinema has screened a range of exclusives including SFF titles *Chevalier*, *Ruin* and *The Tribe* as well as *The Fits*, *The Love Witch* and *Eden*. Golden Age is committed to supporting Australian cinema by programming Australian new releases and classics and by offering complimentary cinema hire to local emerging filmmakers.

ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

From **Wednesday 7 June to Sunday 18 June 2017**, the 64th Sydney Film Festival offers Sydneysiders another exciting season of cinema amidst a whirlwind of premieres, red-carpet openings, in-depth discussions, international guests and more.

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

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international and Australian filmmakers and industry professionals. Previous Sydney Film Prize winners: *Aquarius* (2016); *Arabian Nights* (2015); *Two Days, One Night* (2014); *Only God Forgives* (2013); *Alps* (2012); *A Separation* (2011); *Heartbeats* (2010); *Bronson* (2009); and *Hunger* (2008).

The Festival takes place across Greater Sydney: at the State Theatre, Event Cinemas George Street, Dendy Opera Quays, Dendy Newtown, Skyline Drive-In Blacktown, Art Gallery of NSW, Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace Cremorne, Casula Powerhouse, the Festival Hub at Sydney Town Hall and SFF Outdoor Screen in Pitt Street Mall.

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 64th 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. The Festival's Strategic Partner is the NSW Government through Destination NSW.

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