

MEDIA RELEASE

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Sydney Film Festival will be the first major festival to reopen to Sydney audiences 3-14 November.

The 68th Sydney Film Festival program was officially launched today by Sydney Film Festival Director Nashen Moodley, becoming the first major festival to be held in Sydney's CBD as restrictions are lifted for the city.

Sydney Film Festival Director Nashen Moodley said, "This year's 68th Sydney Film Festival arrives at a historic and celebratory time for the city, as we come together again with people we have desperately missed, and in the places we yearn to return to – cinemas!"

"With major disruptions in cinema releases, the Festival selection brings together some of the best films of the last two years; extraordinary works from major award-winners to some of the most anticipated films of the year."

"The Festival opens with *Here Out West*, stories from eight talented Western Sydney writers, directed by five powerhouse women directors, and closes with Wes Anderson's comedy-drama *The French Dispatch*."

"From Venice Best Director prize-winner Jane Campion with *The Power of the Dog*, to Denis Villeneuve's star-studded reimagining of *Dune*, to the incendiary shock of 2021 Cannes Palme d'Or winner *Titane*, this year's program has one of the most diverse and exciting line-ups in SFF history."

"It is extremely unusual and fantastic to have in a single Festival program the works of so many of the great, distinctive filmmakers of our time: Pedro Almodóvar, Wes Anderson, Jacques Audiard, Jane Campion, Mark Cousins, Ildikó Enyedi, Asghar Farhadi, Miguel Gomes, Ryusuke Hamaguchi, Mia Hansen-Løve, Mahamat-Saleh Haroun, Oliver Hermanus, Heddy Honigman, Avi Mograbi, Jafar Panahi, Rachel Perkins, Christian Petzold, Mohammad Rasoulof, Paul Schrader, Céline Sciamma, Paolo Sorrentino, Denis Villeneuve, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Frederick Wiseman, Jasmila Žbanić, Zhang Yimou and many more."

"Following close to two years of extremely challenging times for the film industry, SFF is proud to be able to bring these superb films to cinemas. To make the program as accessible as possible, the Festival will also present a bespoke program online through SFF On Demand from 12-21 November," he said.

Head of Screen NSW, Grainne Brunson said "Screen NSW is proud to support the 68th Sydney Film Festival. This year marks the physical return of the Festival, which we've been looking forward to more than ever, as we reunite with some of our favourite cinema spaces, to enjoy cutting-edge productions from NSW and around the world. I hope you enjoy the Festival."

In 2021 the Festival will present **233** films from **69** countries, bringing together hundreds of international and local stories. There are **111 feature films**, including prize-winners from prestigious

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festivals around the world; **50 documentaries** tackling crucial contemporary issues from established and upcoming documentarians; and **72 shorts**. Of these films almost half are directed or co-directed by woman filmmakers.

The Festival will also present **SFF On Demand**, a virtual offering of 56 feature-length films and 13 shorts from the wider program available to stream nationally from 12-21 November.

OPENING AND CLOSING NIGHTS

The 2021 Festival opens with ***Here Out West***, a dramatic anthology of stories from eight talented Western Sydney writers that intertwine poignantly through themes of family and place to reframe the Australian experience.

Here Out West is directed by five powerhouse women directors including **Leah Purcell** (*The Drover's Wife The Legend of Molly Johnson*, SFF 2021), **Fadia Abboud** (*Les Norton*), **Lucy Gaffy** (*The Spa*, SFF 2016), **Julie Kalceff** (*First Day*) and **Ana Kokkinos** (*Blessed*, SFF 2019).

Traversing pertinent themes of assimilation, racism, aspiration and filial connection, the film features a diverse cast of Australian talent: **Arka Das** (*Spice Sisters*, SFF 2016), **Rahel Romahn** (*Down Under*, SFF 2016), **Leah Vandenburg** (*Stupid Stupid Man*) and **Geneviève Lemon** (*Sweetie*, SFF 2019).

Closing the Festival and direct from competing for the Palme d'Or at Cannes is Academy Award-nominated director **Wes Anderson's** (*Moonrise Kingdom*, SFF 2012) ingenious comedy-drama ***The French Dispatch***, a stylish, visually rich tribute to journalism and *The New Yorker*.

The film boasts a star-studded cast including Oscar nominee **Bill Murray** (*The Dead Don't Die*, SFF 2019), Oscar winner **Tilda Swinton** (*The Souvenir*, SFF 2019), Oscar nominee **Owen Wilson** (*She's Funny That Way*, SFF 2015), Oscar nominee **Timothée Chalamet** (*Call Me by Your Name*, SFF 2017) and Primetime Emmy award winner **Jeffrey Wright** (*Casino Royale*).

OFFICIAL COMPETITION

For the 13th year, the Official Competition will award the **\$60,000 cash Sydney Film Prize** for audacious, cutting-edge and courageous cinema.

Among the 12 competing films is ***The Drover's Wife The Legend of Molly Johnson***, a period Western starring AACTA and Helpmann award winner Leah Purcell as a determined mother protecting her children. Purcell also makes her feature debut as director and writer in this searing reimagining of Henry Lawson's classic with an Indigenous female gaze.

Cannes 2021 Palme d'Or nominees from international auteurs are: Ryusuke Hamaguchi's (*Wheel Of Fortune and Fantasy*, SFF 2021) ***Drive My Car***, an intricate adaptation of a Haruki Murakami short story brimming with potent drama; and ***Memoria***, Apichatpong Weerasethakul's (*Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*, SFF 2010) mystical and mysterious new film starring Tilda Swinton as a woman visiting Colombia who is haunted by a loud sound.



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Also from Cannes is ***The Story of My Wife***, Ildikó Enyedi's (2017 Sydney Film Prize, *On Body and Soul*) twisted romance about a sea captain who makes a bet to marry the first woman who enters a café.

Inspired by true events, Jasmila Žbanić's (*For Those Who Can Tell No Tales*, SFF 2013) Oscar-nominated thriller ***Quo Vadis, Aida?*** is a gripping look at a UN translator in Srebrenica attempting to save her family as conflict rages around them.

Grand Jury Prize Winner at Venice Film Festival, ***The Hand of God***, is Oscar-winning director Paolo Sorrentino's (*The Great Beauty*) deeply personal reflection on family, sport, love, desire, tragedy and cinema set against the backdrop of 1980s Naples.

Berlinale Golden Bear winners are: ***Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn***, Radu Jude's scathing and hilarious critique of Romanian society; and ***There Is No Evil***, banned Iranian filmmaker Mohammad Rasoulof's powerful take on the death penalty and its impact on Iranian society.

Winner of the Sundance World Cinema Grand Jury Prize, ***Flee*** is a thrilling documentary fusing animation and archival material to tell the story of a gay Afghan refugee in Denmark who kept his painful past a secret for two decades.

Undine, starring Paula Beer (*Never Look Away*, SFF 2019) and Franz Rogowski (*Victoria*, SFF 2015), combines romance and the supernatural in a European fable about a water nymph who must kill her lover if he betrays her.

Also in Competition are hilarious and poignant BAFTA nominee ***Limbo***, about a promising young Syrian musician who is one of a group of refugees stuck on a remote Scottish island; and ***Petite Maman***, Céline Sciamma's (*Portrait of a Lady on Fire*, SFF 2019) evocative and magical tale of mothers and daughters.

The winner of the Sydney Film Prize is announced at the Festival's Closing Night Gala on Sunday 14 November. Previous winners: *Parasite* (2019); *The Heiresses* (2018); *On Body and Soul* (2017); *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).

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS AT THE STATE

The iconic State Theatre provides the ultimate Sydney Film Festival experience, screening everything from hard-hitting documentaries to indie hits.

Straight from winning Best Director at Venice Film Festival, Oscar-winner **Jane Campion** makes a cinematic return with ***The Power of the Dog***, a tense and boldly idiosyncratic Western exploring masculinity. The film features transfixing performances from Benedict Cumberbatch (*The Imitation Game*), Kirsten Dunst (*The Beguiled*, SFF 2017) and Jesse Plemons (*The Irishman*).

And winner of Cannes' most coveted prize, the Palme d'Or, Julia Ducournau's (*Raw*) incendiary ***Titane*** is a film that combines body horror, serial killings, gender fluidity, extreme violence, family drama and sex with cars into a sexy, violent yet sweet, love story.



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Pedro Almodóvar returns with ***Parallel Mothers***, following his triumphant *Pain and Glory* (SFF 2019). The dramatic tale of motherhood and historical trauma stars Penélope Cruz who won the Best Actress prize at Venice 2021 for her performance.

Australian stories include: ***Wash My Soul In the River's Flow***, an enthralling musical journey through love and country based around a fertile 2004 collaboration between First Nation artists Archie Roach, the late Ruby Hunter, and Paul Grabowsky and the Australian Art Orchestra; and actor Tyler Atkins' debut feature ***Bosch & Rockit***, a magical father-and-son story, imbued with the salt and sun of Australia's east coast, starring Luke Hemsworth and Isabel Lucas (*That's Not Me*, SFF 2017).

Palme d'Or nominated works from acclaimed filmmakers include: multi-award-winning director Mia Hansen-Løve's ***Bergman Island***, set on legendary filmmaker Ingmar Bergman's island home and starring Tim Roth (*600 Mine*, SFF 2015), Mia Wasikowska (*Judy and Punch*, SFF 2019), Vicky Krieps (*Phantom Thread*); and Palme d'Or winner Jacques Audiard's (*A Prophet, Rust and Bone, Dheepan*) ***Paris, 13th District***, a vibrant adaptation of Adrian Tomine's graphic novel *Killing and Dying* exploring a tale of Parisian young love.

Also, Palme d'Or nominated, a film from the revered Chadian filmmaker Mahamat-Saleh Haroun, ***Lingui, The Sacred Bonds***, who tells the story of a single mother whose world collapses when she discovers her teenage daughter is pregnant.

Cannes Un Certain Regard selected films include: ***Blue Bayou***, a moving and timely story about a family man suddenly facing deportation starring director Justin Chon (*The Twilight Saga*) and Alicia Vikander (*The Danish Girl, A Royal Affair*, SFF 2012); and era-spanning epic ***Great Freedom*** which follows Hans, played by Franz Rogowski (*Undine*, SFF 2021), in his quest for love and freedom as he is repeatedly imprisoned for being gay.

Acclaimed comedies screening at the State Theatre, include: ***The Worst Person In the World***, a quirky romcom featuring a Best Actress at Cannes Film Festival winning performance by Renate Reinsve who stars as a young woman indecisive in love and life; and the Cannes selected ***Love Songs for Tough Guys***, a delightfully unconventional comedy about ageing crooks finding love through poetry and the performing arts.

Zola, nominated for a Sundance Grand Jury Prize in 2020, is a girl gaze stripper saga chronicling the infamous 148-tweet thread from A'Ziah "Zola" King, which broke the internet in 2015.

DOCUMENTARY AUSTRALIA FOUNDATION AWARD

12 documentaries will contest the **Documentary Australia Foundation Award for Australian Documentary**.

Powerful First Nations stories include: ***Incarceration Nation***, in which Dean Gibson (*Wik vs Queensland*, SFF 2018) lays bare Australia's appalling history of Indigenous incarceration; alongside ***The Bowraville Murders***, chronicling the epic battle for justice fought by the families of three Aboriginal children murdered 30 years ago in the rural NSW town.



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Strong Female Lead, a shocking exposé of the media, public and political treatment of Julia Gillard; and **Ithaka**, director Ben Lawrence's (*Ghosthunter*, DAF Award winner SFF 2018) powerhouse look into John Shipton's determined public advocacy for his son, Julian Assange, are both commanding documentaries with a political focus.

Pertinent explorations of contemporary issues include: Sascha Ettinger Epstein's (*The Pink House*, DAF Award winner SFF 2017) **The Department**, which delves into the lives of workers and families entwined within NSW's child protection system; and **A Fire Inside**, a reflection on Australia's 2019-20 bushfires and the selfless acts of everyday Aussies that inspired the nation.

Artists take centre stage in **I'm Wanita**, where audiences meet Tamworth's renegade 'Queen of Honky Tonk' on her journey to Nashville to record an album; and **Unseen Skies**, which sees visionary American artist Trevor Paglen attempt his most audacious project yet – to uncover State and corporate surveillance operations. And in **When the Camera Stopped Rolling**, Jane Castle's poignant documentary about her filmmaker mother Lili Fraser and an eye-opening chronicle of women's roles in the film industry.

The program also reflects on important moments in history: **Television Event** provides a fascinating look back at the production and aftermath of a controversial 1983 made-for-TV movie that imagined the impact of a nuclear attack on the USA; and **Under the Volcano** Gracie Otto's (*The Last Impresario*, SFF 2014) deep dive into the story of Montserrat's celebrated recording studio and the legendary musicians who frequented it – including Elton John and The Police.

Rounding out the program, a new look at one of the most notorious teen movies ever made, in **The Kids** from Eddie Martin (*All This Mayhem*, SFF 2014). The film revisits the cast of Larry Clark's notorious indie cult classic *Kids* twenty-six years after its original release, providing a snapshot of the lives of the cast members who didn't hit the big time.

FEATURES

From award-winning hits across the international festival circuit, to exciting new works by emerging filmmaking talent, the Festival will present captivating stories showcasing great cinematic storytellers from both Australia and around the world.

Audiences can look forward to a number of hotly anticipated Hollywood titles including a Special Screening of **Dune**, Denis Villeneuve's (*Blade Runner 2049*) adaptation of Frank Herbert's novel featuring a stellar cast including **Timothée Chalamet** and **Zendaya** (*Euphoria*).

Dear Evan Hansen, Stephen Chbosky's (*The Perks of Being a Wallflower*) adaptation of the Broadway phenomenon is a tender musical about the need for human connection, with **Ben Platt** (*Pitch Perfect*), **Amy Adams** (*Arrival*) and **Julianne Moore** (*Maggie's Plan*, SFF 2016).

The astonishing rise, fall and redemption of televangelist Tammy Faye Bakker is chronicled in **The Eyes of Tammy Faye**, featuring barnstorming performances from **Jessica Chastain** (*The Disappearance of Eleanor Rigby: Him and Her*, SFF 2014) and **Andrew Garfield** (*99 Homes*, SFF 2015).



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Inspirational biopic **King Richard** sees **Will Smith** (*Ali*, *The Pursuit of Happyness*) star as Richard Williams, who against all odds, coaches his children, Venus and Serena, to tennis superstardom.

Legendary writer-director Paul Schrader (*Taxi Driver*) brings his trademark intensity to **The Card Counter**, a revenge thriller starring **Oscar Isaac** (*Ex Machina*), **Tiffany Haddish** (*The Secret Life of Pets 2*, SFF 2019) and **Willem Dafoe** (*Mountain*, SFF 2017).

From Cannes, Directors' Fortnight selected **The Tsugua Diaries**, by Maureen Fazendeiro and Miguel Gomes (*Arabian Nights*, Sydney Film Prize 2015) captures the pleasures and perils of filmmaking during lockdown in Portugal; and **Hit the Road** is a mysterious and raucous feature debut by Panah Panahi, the son of seminal Iranian filmmaker Jafar Panahi.

Selected for Cannes Un Certain Regard, comes a visually mesmerising film from award-winning director Tatiana Huezo with **Prayers for the Stolen**, a portrait of a girl growing up in a mountainous Mexican town living in fear of a shadowy cartel.

Also in the selection: Palme d'Or nominee **A Hero**, the latest feature from celebrated Iranian director Asghar Farhadi (*A Separation*, Sydney Film Prize 2011, Oscar Best Foreign Language Film 2012); and **The Year of the Everlasting Storm**, a love letter to cinema, shot during the COVID-19 pandemic across the USA, Iran, Chile, China and Thailand, by seven of today's most vital filmmakers.

The first Bangladeshi film to make the Cannes Official Selection, **Rehana Maryam Noor** from Abdullah Mohammad Saad, is a provocative and timely film, both gripping and complex.

From Sundance are Grand Jury Prize nominees **The Dog Who Wouldn't Be Quiet**, a beguiling blend of social realism and futuristic fantasy following a man and his dog as they navigate a mysterious world; and **El Planeta**, a darkly funny directorial debut from acclaimed multidisciplinary artist Amalia Ulman which sees a mother and daughter grift their way through post-crisis Spain.

From the Competition at Berlinale 2021, comes **A Cop Movie**, Alonso Ruizpalacios' atmospheric, boundary-breaking documentary-fiction hybrid from Mexico that turns the cop movie genre on its head.

And the great Zhang Yimou (*Red Sorghum*, SFF 1988; *Ju Dou*; *Raise the Red Lantern*; *Hero*, SFF 2004) returns with **One Second**, a beautiful, moving love letter to cinema set during the Cultural Revolution.

Winner of the Best Israeli First Feature, Jerusalem, Orit Fouks Rotem's brings a striking debut featuring professional and non-professional actresses, and scripted and improvised dialogue, in **Cinema Sabaya** for a fascinating portrait of Arab and Jewish women connecting through cinema.

Australian features include: **Fist Of Fury Noongar Dar**, Kylie Bracknell's Noongar language dub of the 1972 Bruce Lee classic *Fist of Fury*; **Friends and Strangers**, an absurdist slacker comedy about 20-somethings in Sydney; and **Crossing Paths**, a unique interactive cinema experience from Sydney-based director JJ Winlove (*June Again*) where viewers choose the story.

Other features with an Australian connection are **The Justice of Bunny King**, starring Australian actress Essie Davis (*The Babadook*, SFF 2019) in this powerful social drama about a single mother battling the



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system and her troubled past; and ***When Pomegranates Howl***, Iranian-Australian filmmaker Granaz Moussavi's (*My Tehran for Sale*) tale about a street-smart boy working to support his family in Kabul.

Impactful features from women directors include: Charline Bourgeois-Tacquet's Queer Palme and Golden Camera nominated ***Anaïs in Love***, a delightful French romantic comedy about a young woman who begins an affair with a much older man but then falls for his wife, and Naomi Kawase's ***True Mothers***, who tackles the definition of motherhood through the eyes of two different women.

INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARIES

Cannes-selected true stories include: ***The Story of Film: A New Generation***, where UK director Mark Cousins (*The Story of Film: An Odyssey*) continues his influential voyage through the splendour of cinema, with an exploration into the state of moviemaking in the last decade; and acclaimed UK filmmaker Andrea Arnold's (*Wuthering Heights*, SFF 2012) documentary debut ***Cow***, a portrait of bovine life.

Best Documentary Winner at Tribeca 2021, ***Ascension*** is Jessica Kingdon's visually stunning exploration of contemporary China – from consumerism to the pursuit of wealth and status – filmed across 51 locations.

And winner of the Best Feature-Length Documentary at IDFA 2020, ***Radiograph of a Family*** is Firouzeh Khosrovani's stylish and inventive documentary about the tense relationship of her parents which mirrors Iran's turbulent recent history.

The Last Shelter, which won the major prize at CPH:DOX is a portrait of a place of temporary refuge for African travellers about to embark on a perilous desert crossing, from Malian filmmaker Ousmane Zoromé Samassékou.

From the Oscar-winning directors of *Free Solo* comes ***The Rescue***, winner of the 2021 People's Choice Documentary Award at Toronto FF, an edge-of-the-seat, headline-grabbing story of the international efforts to rescue a Thai youth soccer team from a flooded cave.

And from Australian filmmakers Robert Coe and Warwick Ross (*Red Obsession*, SFF 2013) comes the Tribeca Film Festival Winner, Audience Award for Best Feature Documentary, ***Blind Ambition***, telling the story of four determinedly optimistic refugees who compete in the World Wine Blind Tasting Championships as Zimbabwe's first-ever representatives.

Two films delving into tales from the U.S. are ***City Hall***, renowned documentarian Frederick Wiseman's (*Crazy Horse*, SFF 2012) epic four and half-hour exploration of democracy in action with the daily operations of Boston's City Hall; and ***The Last Hillbilly***, a poetic portrait of a man and his increasingly rare lifestyle in remote Kentucky.

International documentaries about Australians behind the camera include: ***John Farrow: Hollywood's Man in the Shadows***, focussing on the enigmatic life and prolific Hollywood career of overlooked filmmaker John Farrow; and ***Like The Wind***, a frank and insightful look at the life and career of celebrated cinematographer Christopher Doyle (*Rabbit-Proof Fence*).



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Politics from around the globe are explored in ***When A City Rises***, an urgent and illuminating documentary that tells the story of the Hong Kong pro-democracy protests; and ***The First 54 Years...***, a step-by-step guide to colonial occupation from director Avi Mograbi, using Israel's 54-year occupation of the Palestinian territories as a case study.

In ***President***, Camilla Nielsson (*Democrats*, SFF 2015) examines the battle to establish Zimbabwe's first democratic constitution; whilst ***Four Seasons In a Day*** exposes the invisible borders dividing post-Brexit Northern Ireland, and EU-member Republic of Ireland, through conversations between passengers on a ferry between the two regions.

Visual arts are a focus in ***White Cube***, which follows artist Renzo Martens's plans to build an arts centre in the Democratic Republic of Congo; and real-life art thriller ***The Lost Leonardo***, telling of the controversy surrounding a painting purportedly by Leonardo da Vinci and the million-dollar art deals that have experts at loggerheads.

The origin story of a childhood staple is explored in ***Street Gang: How We Got to Sesame Street***, exploring the early days of Sesame Street, packed with clips, outtakes and interviews with the ground-breaking creative team.

SUSTAINABLE FUTURE AWARD

New to SFF, the inaugural Sustainable Future Award is a \$10,000 cash prize presented to a narrative or documentary film of any length that deepens our knowledge and awareness of the impact of the global climate emergency. The Award is philanthropically motivated and funded by a syndicate of climate activists who believe deeply in the power of film to heighten community awareness of the need for action.

Eight documentaries from around the world have been shortlisted including: Australian documentaries, ***A Fire Inside*** and ***Burning***, both exploring the 2019-20 bushfires in very different ways, inspiring life story of an eco-warrior in ***The Seeds of Vandana Shiva***, tales from the frontlines of climate change in ***The Magnitude of All Things***, Jen Peedom and the Australian Chamber Orchestra's latest collaboration ***River*** narrated by Willem Dafoe, stunningly beautiful yet shocking Georgian documentary ***Taming the Garden***, and two from Scandinavia - Berlinale-selected ***From the Wild Sea*** and CPH:DOX-selected ***How to Kill a Cloud***.

All films will screen in-cinema at the **68th Sydney Film Festival**, with a number of titles also screening in **SFF On Demand's** online program (**12-21 November**). The winner of the Sustainable Future Award will be revealed on Monday 11 October 2021.

DEUTSCHE BANK FELLOWSHIP FOR FIRST NATIONS FILM CREATIVES

Also new to SFF in 2021, the **Deutsche Bank Fellowship for First Nations Film Creatives** provides a \$20,000 grant to an Australian First Nations film creative to further develop their skills through international placement or other professional development.



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Filmmaker **Darlene Johnson** (*Bluey*, SFF 2015) was announced as the inaugural recipient of the Fellowship by a leading industry panel on 7 September 2021. In addition to the Fellowship, Deutsche Bank will support SFF, through a partnership alignment with the Festival's First Nations film program.

FIRST NATIONS

The Festival together with Screen Australia's Indigenous Department and in partnership with Deutsche Bank, continues its support of First Nation storytelling in 2021, showcasing important films by First Nation filmmakers from across Australia and around the world.

In ***Araatika: Rise Up!*** Australian First Nations filmmaker Larissa Behrendt (*Under Skin, In Blood*, SFF 2015) follows a group of NRL stars led by Dean Widders as they create a pre-game performance to meet the famous haka.

First Nation stories from around the world include: Canada-New Zealand production ***Night Raiders***, executive produced by Taika Waititi (*What We Do in the Shadows*, SFF 2014); a tale of Indigenous resistance set in a dystopian future where children have become the property of the state; and Sundance Grand Jury Prize nominee ***Wild Indian***, a slow-burn thriller exploring the haunting consequences of a decades old murder committed by two cousins.

Other films from First Nations filmmakers in the line-up include ***The Bowraville Murders, Here Out West, Incarceration Nation, The Drover's Wife The Legend of Molly Johnson, Fist of Fury Noongar Daa, Radiance, Wash My Soul in the River's Flow***, Dendy Awards short film finalist ***The Moogai*** and more.

EUROPE! VOICES OF WOMEN IN FILM Supported by European Film Promotion

In partnership with European Film Promotion, Sydney Film Festival presents the sixth annual **Europe! Voices of Women in Film**; a program of 10 new films from vital European women filmmakers.

From Slovenia to Sweden, and Kosovo to Greece, the program shines a spotlight on exciting, talented female filmmakers.

Impactful debut features that come from the Cannes selection include: ***Pleasure***, a bold drama about a young Swedish woman striving for success in LA's ruthless porn industry; ***Slalom***, an unflinching portrait of the abuse experienced by a teenage competitive skier at the hands of her domineering coach; and ***Last Days of Spring***, a poignant blend of fiction and documentary exploring the plight of a family facing eviction from a Madrid shantytown.

The program also includes captivating environmental documentaries: ***From the Wild Sea*** dives into the work of volunteers tirelessly trying to rescue Europe's marine life from pollution and the impacts of climate change; and ***How to Kill a Cloud*** sees a Finnish scientist take on a multimillion-dollar project to make it rain in the desert.



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SOUNDS ON SCREEN

Sounds on Screen highlights inspiring musical stories, from an evocative portrait of life on the road for Aussie singer-songwriter Courtney Barnett in *Anonymous Club* directed by Australian music video collaborator Danny Cohen, to a moving tribute to the music and lyrics of The Smiths in *Shoplifters of the World* starring Joe Manganiello (*True Blood*) and Ellar Coltrane (*Boyhood*, SFF 2014).

Other stories include *Hallelujah: Leonard Cohen, a Journey, a Song*, exploring the life and history of the late Leonard Cohen and the impact of his timeless classic *Hallelujah*, and the stirring history of Congolese rumba is explored in *The Rumba Kings*, a deep dive into how a fusion of African rhythms and Afro-Cuban music helped inspire a nation to independence.

FREAK ME OUT

Sydney Film Festival's weird, wonderful and completely whacked-out Freak Me Out program, curated by **Richard Kuipers**, returns with five films from the wild side of contemporary cinema.

Australian director Kiah Roache-Turner is back with more outback zombie madness in *Wyrwood Apocalypse*, a blood-soaked, rip-roaring sequel to the 2014 cult hit.

Horror and fantasy converge in *Gaia*, a visually stunning apocalyptic eco-horror from South Africa; and *Censor*, is about a film censor in 1980s England who believes a "video nasty" from the vaults is connected to a tragic mystery from her past.

Riveting social horror, *The Beta Test* by Jim Cummings (*Thunder Road*, SFF 2016) and PJ McCabe chronicles how a secret sexual encounter turns into an existential nightmare for a Hollywood agent.

Rounding out the program *The Spine of the Night* is a blood-dripping fantasy animation following a female warrior and a quest for unimaginable power. The film features the voices of Lucy Lawless (*The Changeover*, SFF 2018) and Richard E. Grant (*Palm Beach*, SFF 2019).

SCREENABILITY

Returning to the Festival for the fifth year is **Screenability**, an exciting platform for screen practitioners with disability in partnership with Screen NSW. Curated by Screenability Programming Assistant **Rebecca McCormack**, six cutting edge works by filmmakers with disability will be showcased.

Two feel-good features appear in the program, *Best Summer Ever*, a fresh take on the classic teen musical genre featuring a talented cast of which more than half are people with disability; and *Beautiful Minds*, a captivating French comedy inspired by co-director Alexandre Jollien's real-life experiences living with cerebral palsy.

And one documentary, *No Hay Camino – There is No Path*, from award-winning documentarian Heddy Honigmann (*Forever*, SFF 2007), who faced with a terminal illness, confronts her complicated family past and revisits significant moments from her remarkable life and career.



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The program also features three Australian short films produced under the Screenability Filmmakers Fund from Screen NSW: *Blockhead and Sparkles* and *The Flood of Tears*, *Deafying Gravity* and *We Have Me*.

The Festival maintains its inclusion policy with audio described and open captioned screenings, and over 90 English-subtitled films in the program.

FLUX: ART + FILM

FLUX: Art+Film returns for a third year, with 4 titles from artists who challenge and transform the cinema experience, selected by Guest Curator **Bridget Ikin**.

The program includes experimental films from Australian filmmakers: *Shopaapaa* about the 2020 lockdown experience in London, made entirely remotely by Australian Molly Reynolds (*My Name is Gulpilil*) and UK-based creative Shekhar Bassi; and *Drifting Petals*, a free-spirited “alternate cinema” offering from award-winner Clara Law (*Floating Life*, SFF 1996), spanning Australia, Macau and Hong Kong.

Innovative international works include: *this body is so impermanent...*, a magnificent real-time performance of a sacred Buddhist sutra, from renowned theatre and opera director Peter Sellars in collaboration with a luminous group of artists; and *Sandlines, The Story of History*, an extraordinary collaboration between Belgian artist Francis Alÿs and a group of children from a mountain village near Mosul, Iraq.

SHORT FILM AWARDS

12 finalists in the Dendy Awards, Australia’s longest running short film competition, celebrating its 52nd year, will also screen over two sessions on 13 and 14 November. Three prize winners: **The Dendy Live Action Short Award**, **The Rouben Mamoulian Award for Best Director** and the **Yoram Gross Animation Award**, will be announced at the Festival’s Closing Night.

FAMILY

The **Family Films** program returns with four family-friendly films screening in daytime sessions at the Festival.

Animated treasures sure to delight include: offbeat animation *The Ape Star*, about outsiders and unconventional love adapted from Frida Nilsson’s award-winning novel and directed by Sweden’s Linda Hambäck; and action-packed adventure from Quebec, *Felix and the Hidden Treasure*, which follows a fantastic quest to find a missing father and priceless treasure.

The Ancey Film Festival selected *Even Mice Belong in Heaven*, brings to life the surprising friendship between a mouse and a fox through joyful animation.



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Kids, tweens and teens alike will adore French comedy-mystery ***The Fantastic Journey of Margot & Marguerite***, a time-travelling odyssey following two 12-year-old girls transported to different eras via a mysterious chest hidden in an attic.

CLASSICS RESTORED

Three restored films will give audiences the opportunity to see cinema classics the way they were intended, including ***Radiance***, the award-winning first feature by Rachel Perkins (*Mabo*, SFF 2012), the touching and humorous story of estranged sisters reuniting for their mother's funeral.

Other restorations include: ***Mandabi***, the 'father of African cinema' Ousmane Sembène's scathing social satire about the effect of post-colonialism on Senegalese living; and Australia's first-ever submission for Best Foreign Language Film at the Oscars, ***Floating Life***, Clara Law's comic drama following the fortunes of a Hong Kong family that immigrates to sunburnt Aussie suburbia.

THE LONG & WINDING ROAD: THE FILMS OF ABBAS KIAROSTAMI

This year's Festival will include a retrospective of eight essential features and three short films by pioneering Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami, co-presented with the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI).

Entitled **The Long & Winding Road: The Films of Abbas Kiarostami**, the collaboration marks the sixth large-scale retrospective season ACMI and Sydney Film Festival have co-presented since 2015, allowing audiences in Sydney to deep dive into the works of cinema greats from around the world.

Selections include Kiarostami's beloved Koker trilogy: Bronze Leopard Winner at the 1989 Locarno Film Festival ***Where is the Friends House?*** a poetic tale about a young boy who must return a classmate's schoolbook; Un Certain Regard Opening Film at the 1992 Cannes Film Festival ***And Life Goes On***, a self-reflexive meditation on identity set amidst the aftermath of the 1990 earthquake that devastated northern Iran; and ***Through the Olive Trees***, a wildly meta examination of class and romance.

ONLINE TALKS & PANELS

The Festival will present a number of virtual filmmaker **Meet the Filmmakers, After Movie Discussions and Panels** to create a space for audiences, filmmakers and industry professionals to progress a dialogue about the important topics and issues of the year, addressed in Festival films.

The amazing line-up of talent behind Opening Night Film ***Here Out West*** will participate in a Meet the Filmmakers session, allowing audiences to hear more about the making of the film and the opportunity it offers.

Journalist and television presenter **Jennifer Byrne** will be joined by guests from the world of politics and media to unpack the issues raised in powerful Julia Gillard documentary ***Strong Female Lead***.

Audiences will also have the opportunity to go in depth with broadcaster and author **Indira Naidoo** in conversation with **Vandana Shiva** following the screening of ***The Seeds of Vandana Shiva***.



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UTS Talks

In partnership with the University of Technology, the Festival will present an online post-film talk following the screening of ***Araatika: Rise Up!***. Audiences will be treated to a discussion with the powerhouse academic, writer, Indigenous rights advocate and the director of the film, **Larissa Behrendt** and former NRL footballer, **Dean Widders**.

Festivalgoers can also look forward to a panel discussion on **The Future of Storytelling** exploring the role of AI, interactive and immersive media. Featuring UTS academic, artist and filmmaker **Dr Gregory Ferris**, filmmaker **JJ Winlove** and leading media futurists, followed by a screening of JJ Winlove's ***Crossing Paths***.

CASULA POWERHOUSE ARTS CENTRE (CPAC)

Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Liverpool City Council and Sydney Film Festival have partnered for over five years to bring world class Festival films to South Western Sydney audiences.

Sydney Film Festival Screenings at Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre (5-14 November):

- ***Here Out West*** | Friday 5 November, 8:00 PM
- ***Felix and the Hidden Treasure*** | Saturday 6 November, 2:30PM
- ***Blind Ambition*** | Saturday 6 November, 8:00 PM
- ***Nowhere Special*** | Sunday 7 November, 2:30PM
- ***River*** | Friday 12 November, 8:00PM
- ***A Fire Inside*** | Saturday 13 November, 2:30PM
- ***Hit the Road*** | Saturday 13 November, 8:00PM
- ***When Pomegranates Howl*** | Sunday 14 November, 2:30PM

FESTIVAL VENUES

Official Festival venues for 2021: **The State Theatre, Event Cinemas George Street, Dendy Cinemas Newtown, Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace Cremorne, Ritz Cinema Randwick, and Casula Powerhouse**. Plus new to SFF in 2021: **Palace Central Broadway, Palace Chauvel Cinema Paddington and Palace Norton Street Leichhardt**.

The Festival's outdoor screen, SFFTV @ Pitt St returns to Pitt St Mall during the Festival. Audiences can catch short films and trailers for must-see Festival films on the giant, double-sided screen.

SFF ON DEMAND

From 12-21 November, **SFF On Demand** presents a selection of titles available to stream online nationally from this year's program. 56 feature-length films and 13 shorts will be available from the Festival's many popular film strands. Single rentals start from \$15, with a variety of packages available from \$14-\$130. SFF Demand program and tickets available at ondemand.sff.org.au

The full Sydney Film Festival 2019 program can be found online at sff.org.au.



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Sydney Film Festival runs in cinema 3–14 November 2021. SFF On Demand's online program runs 12-21 November. Tickets to Sydney Film Festival 2021 are on sale now. Please call 1300 733 733 or visit sff.org.au for more information.

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

EDITOR'S NOTES

ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

From Wednesday 3 November to Sunday 14 November 2021, the 68th Sydney Film Festival offers Sydneysiders another exciting season of cinema amidst a whirlwind of premieres, in-depth discussions with film guests, and now a virtual offering with SFF On Demand streaming nationally from 12-21 November.

Sydney Film 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 sff.org.au.

The 68th Sydney Film Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Screen NSW, the Federal Government through Screen Australia and the City of Sydney.



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