

**SYDNEY  
FILM  
FESTIVAL**

**70**

**7-18  
JUNE  
2023**

**EMBARGOED MEDIA RELEASE: WEDNESDAY 10 MAY 2023**

## **SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES FULL PROGRAM FOR 70TH ANNIVERSARY FESTIVAL**

The momentous 70<sup>th</sup> Sydney Film Festival program was officially launched today by Sydney Film Festival Director Nashen Moodley, with a bumper line-up featuring the Australian premieres of new films including Warwick Thornton's latest masterpiece *The New Boy*, starring Cate Blanchett; Wes Anderson's *Asteroid City*; Celine Song's highly anticipated *Past Lives*; films direct from the Cannes Competition by masters Aki Kaurismäki, Wim Wenders, and Kore-eda Hirokazu; actor Alice Englert's directorial feature debut *Bad Behaviour*; and many more.

"A film festival is a gathering of diverse perspectives that offers a collective snapshot of the global zeitgeist, allowing us to delve deeper into our present reality," said **Sydney Film Festival Director Nashen Moodley**. "For 70 years, Sydney Film Festival has been privileged to capture and embody these moments, presenting a rich tapestry of stories that reflect our shared desire to understand the world we live in."

"The 2023 Festival program stands as a testament to its ambitious vision, showcasing a dynamic and expansive line-up of both emerging and established filmmakers from around the world. Through their thought-provoking films, they offer us an invitation to reflect on our shared humanity and contemplate the possibilities that lie ahead," he said.

"As we celebrate our 70th milestone, we extend our gratitude to the city and people of Sydney, whose unwavering curiosity and passion for cinema have made this festival into an inclusive and welcoming platform for filmmakers and film enthusiasts alike," he said.

"Join us once again at The Hub, offering immersive filmmaker talks, panels, and film-themed parties. Grab a drink and enjoy a special archive exhibition, celebrating 70 years of Sydney Film Festival and showcasing the remarkable intersection of world and cinema history," said Moodley.

**Minister for the Arts John Graham** said the Sydney Film Festival is a highlight in Sydney's cultural calendar, connecting audiences to world-class cinema and celebrating a diverse range of established and emerging filmmakers.

"The NSW Government is proud to support the Sydney Film Festival as it celebrates its 70th season. As one of the world's longest running festivals it continues to present courageous, audacious and cutting-edge films and provides a launch pad for countless filmmakers," Mr Graham said.

"The highly-regarded Screenability program continues to profile the immense talents of filmmakers identifying with disability, while the Travelling Film Festival brings audiences together throughout NSW to enjoy the festival experience. I invite everyone to immerse themselves in cinema and celebrate everything our premier Film Festival has to offer."



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In 2023, the Festival will present **239** films from **67** countries including **37** World Premieres and **123** Australian Premieres, bringing together hundreds of new international and local stories, with more to still be announced. The program is made up of **90** narrative feature films, including prestigious international festival prize-winners and **54** documentaries tackling crucial contemporary issues, from established and upcoming documentarians.

### OPENING NIGHT

The 2023 Festival opens with the Australian Premiere of ***The New Boy***, a captivating new film by Cannes Caméra d'Or winning Australian filmmaker Warwick Thornton, and produced by Dirty Films and Scarlett Pictures. The Cannes-selected feature tells a story of spirituality and survival set in 1940s Australia, starring Cate Blanchett, Deborah Mailman, Wayne Blair and newcomer Aswan Reid.

Director Warwick Thornton and producer Kath Shelper will attend opening night to present their film.

### OFFICIAL COMPETITION

For the 15th year, the Official Competition will award the \$60,000 cash Sydney Film Prize to a film that demonstrates audacious, cutting-edge and courageous cinema.

Australian films competing are the Opening Night film ***The New Boy*** and the World Premiere of ***The Dark Emu Story***. This revelatory documentary explores the ground-breaking work of Bruce Pascoe, whose best-selling book challenged Australia's historical narrative and revolutionised our understanding of traditional Aboriginal life.

Directed by Allan Clarke and produced by Blackfella Films, *The Dark Emu Story* dives deep into the controversy surrounding Pascoe's claims, offering a platform for First Nations peoples to share their untold stories.

Internationally awarded films in competition at SFF include Christian Petzold's (*Undine*, SFF 2021; *Barbara*, SFF 2012) Berlin Film Festival Silver Bear winning feature ***Afire***, about four young people trapped in a holiday house as a wild fire draws near; and the Sundance Grand Jury Prize winner ***Scrapper***, Charlotte Regan's joyous debut about a 12-year-old girl who lives happily alone in London until her estranged father (Harris Dickinson, *Triangle of Sadness*, SFF 2022) turns up.

Direct from the 2023 Cannes Film Festival competition will be: ***Monster***, an intense drama from Kore-eda Hirokazu (*Shoplifters*, SFF 2018; *Broker*, SFF 2022), told through multiple perspectives; and Finnish master Aki Kaurismäki's compassionate comedy ***Fallen Leaves***.

Also screening straight from Cannes is ***Cobweb***, Kim Jee-woon's (*A Tale of Two Sisters*, *The Age of Shadows*) film about a director obsessed with re-shooting the end of his completed film; and Moroccan filmmaker Asmae El Moudir's ***The Mother of All Lies***, that melds fact, fiction and figurines to lay bare a hidden personal and national history.

Sundance-selected gems include Alice Englert's directorial debut feature ***Bad Behaviour***, a dark New Zealand-produced comedy starring Jennifer Connelly, Ben Whishaw, Dasha Nekrasova and Englert herself; and Celine Song's Sundance and Berlinale 2023 selected tender romance, ***Past Lives***.



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FESTIVAL**

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JUNE  
2023**

Liu Jian's 2023 Berlinale-selected animation *Art College 1994* will also screen in competition alongside Devashish Makhija's *Joram*, an edge-of-your-seat thriller about an on the run labourer in Mumbai.

The winner of the Sydney Film Prize is announced at the Festival's Closing Night Gala on Sunday 18 June. Previous winners include *Close* (2022), *There Is No Evil* (2021), *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).

The competition is endorsed by FIAPF, the regulating body for international film festivals, and is judged by a jury of international and Australian filmmakers and industry professionals.

### **DOCUMENTARY AUSTRALIA AWARD**

10 documentaries (including three World Premieres and three Australian Premieres) will contest the 2023 Documentary Australia Award.

World Premieres: *The Defenders*, a headline grabbing story of former Socceroos Captain Craig Foster as he fights to rescue the life of fellow player Hakeem al-Araibi; *The Cape*, about the mysterious tragedies in Australia's Cape York from Emmy and previous SFF award winner Michael Ware (*Only The Dead*, SFF 2015); Isabel Darling's *The Carnival*, an epic road trip with a sixth-generation carnival family; *Climate Changers*, documents Australian scientist and conservationist Tim Flannery on his global search for genuine leadership on climate change; Indigenous actor Mark Coles Smith returns home to the Kimberley to interrogate the alarming suicide rates there in *Keeping Hope*, and; *Kindred*, filmmakers Gillian Moody and Adrian Russell Wills' personal journey into the emotional landscape of family, love and loss.

Australian Premieres: Berlin Film Festival Silver Bear winning short *Marungka Tjalatjunu (Dipped in Black)* about a road trip back to Country for Yankunytjatjara artist Derik Lynch; and *Rachel's Farm* which follows actor-director Rachel Ward (*Palm Beach*, SFF 2019) as she revitalises her northern NSW beef farm using sustainable farming practices.

Also in the running: Australian filmmaker Amiel Courtin-Wilson (*Chasing Buddha*, SFF 2000, Dendy Award winner; *Hail*, SFF 2011; *Ruin*, SFF 2014) examines society's approach to death and dying in *Man on Earth*; and *The Last Daughter* documents Wiradjuri woman Brenda Matthews' search to uncover the truth about her government-ordered abduction as a child.

### **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.

Screening at SFF after straight after their Cannes Film Festival premieres are: Wes Anderson's *Asteroid City* starring Jason Schwartzman, Scarlett Johansson and Tom Hanks; Anurag Kashyap's (*Gangs of Wasseypur*, SFF 2012) noirish thriller *Kennedy*; Wim Wenders' Japan-set *Perfect Days*, a reflection on the beauty to be found in the everyday; Amat Escalante's (*The Untamed*, SFF 2017)



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FESTIVAL**

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tense Mexican thriller *Lost in the Night*; and *Pictures of Ghosts*, a cinematic love letter to family and filmmaking by Kleber Mendonça Filho (*Aquarius*, Sydney Film Prize, 2016).

Also coming off the international festival circuit are Ira Sachs' (*Love is Strange*, SFF 2014) sexy Sundance/Berlinale highlight, *Passages*, about a thorny ménage à trois starring Ben Whishaw; and *Biosphere*, a twist-filled comedy from Toronto FF 2022 that sees Mark Duplass (*The Morning Show*) and Sterling K. Brown (*This is Us*) play the last men on Earth.

True stories come to life at the State Theatre with Sydney Sweeney (*Euphoria*, *The White Lotus*) starring in *Reality* as an American veteran turned whistle blower, while *Radical* explores an inspiring teacher's unconventional methods in a Mexican school. *Red, White & Brass*, directed by Damon Fepulea'i and executive produced by Taika Waititi, tells the hilarious tale of Tongan rugby superfans on a surprising journey to the Rugby World Cup.

Two Directors will debut first features at the State Theatre. He Shuming's *Ajoomma* follows the crazy adventure of a Singaporean widow obsessed with Korean soap operas; and actor Randall Park's (*Veep*, *WandaVision*) *Shortcomings* is a biting comedy about race, identity and desire.

## **FEATURES**

Embark on a cinematic journey that spans the globe as the Festival unveils a tapestry of captivating narratives, featuring exceptional talent from Australia and beyond, celebrating the art of storytelling on the silver screen.

Australian productions get the silver screen treatment including Daina Reid's psychological thriller *Run Rabbit Run*, starring Sarah Snook (*Succession*) as a troubled single mother whose daughter grows distant and disturbing. *Carmen* is the directorial debut of acclaimed choreographer Benjamin Millepied (*Black Swan*) and stars Paul Mescal (*Aftersun*) and Melissa Barrera (*In the Heights*). A visionary retelling of the classic opera, the film was shot in NSW and features Sydney Dance Company artists.

Presented by Brix, **Independent in Spirit** champions independent films by bold new Australian voices. The 2023 Independent in Spirit line-up consists of five local features: *The Big Dog*, an acidic comedy about a stockbroker with a financial domination fetish; *Love Road*, an intense drama detailing the highs and lows of a tempestuous relationship; *Sunflower*, a queer coming of age tale set in the outer Melbourne suburbs; psychological thriller *Birdeater*; and *Tennessee*, a drama in which an Iranian arrives in Australia to reunite with his lover.

The Festival presents an exceptional line-up of award-winning films that showcase diverse talent and compelling storytelling. Jafar Panahi's (*Tehran Taxi*, SFF 2015; *Three Faces*, SFF 2018) *No Bears* defies bans on his filmmaking in Iran, weaving parallel love stories and won the Venice Special Jury Prize. The searing drama *Sand* follows an ex-Tamil Tiger survivor of the Sri Lankan Civil War, earning a Special Jury Award at Rotterdam.

Based on a true story, Yemeni feature *The Burdened* shines a light on the human spirit in the face of adversity, recognised with the Amnesty International prize at Berlinale 2023. *A Thousand and One*, winner of the Sundance Grand Jury Prize, presents a sweeping tale of love and determination featuring R&B star Teyana Taylor.



Winner of a Directing Award at Sundance, *Slow* is an exploration of romance between a contemporary dancer and an asexual sign language interpreter. *20,000 Species of Bees* is a stirring coming-of-age story that explores gender identity within a Basque beekeeping matriarchy, featuring an astonishing performance from the youngest-ever Silver Bear winner (Sofia Otero).

*Autobiography*, the first feature from Indonesian filmmaker Makbul Mubarak delves into the depths of corruption and violence and was the recipient of the FIPRESCI prize at Venice 2022. Honoured with the FIPRESCI award at Toronto, delightful comedy *A Gaza Weekend*, turns the tumultuous Gaza into the safest and funniest place on Earth during a pandemic.

Angela Schanelec's *Music* won the Berlinale Silver Bear for Best Screenplay, exploring the complexities of human existence through the myth of Oedipus. *Midwives* received the Ecumenical Prize at Berlinale 2023, celebrating the unsung heroes of the delivery ward. *Sira*, a Burkina Faso revenge saga, earned the Berlinale Panorama Audience Award, as a young Muslim woman seeks retribution after surviving a terrorist kidnapping. Lee Jeong-hong's *A Wild Roomer* won the New Currents competition and the NETPAC Award at Busan, delivering a delightful South Korean comedy of manners.

Cannes Un Certain Regard selected films include: *The Delinquents*, Rodrigo Moreno's unconventional Argentinian bank heist film; and *Omen*, by rapper and artist Baloji and about a man who was accused of sorcery and banished from the Congo, returning 15 years later.

Films popular at international festivals will also screen. David Zonana's explosive drama *Heroic* takes aim at corruption and coercion at a Mexican military academy, and screened at both Sundance and Berlinale 2023; Chandler Levack's hilarious ode to cinephiles *I Like Movies* was a warm hearted hit at Toronto FF 2022; from Sundance 2023, *Sorcery*, is a story of supernatural retribution set in 1800s Chile; and *The Happiest Man in the World*, a drama about the trauma of war and the power of love, from Teona Strugar Mitevska (*God Exists, Her Name is Petrunya*, SFF 2019) screened at Venice (Horizons) 2022.

Tales of true-life feature in the Festival. Fatih Akin's (*Head-On*, SFF 2004; *In the Fade*, SFF 2017) *Rhinogold*, about the extraordinary life story of Kurdish refugee-turned-gangster-turned German rap star Giwar 'Xatar' Hajabi; *Silver Haze* sees director Sacha Polak (*Dirty God*, SFF 2019) reunite with Vicky Knight in the semi-autobiographical role of a burn survivor obsessed with revenge; and *Riceboy Sleeps* is Anthony Shim's semi-autobiographical drama that has won more than 20 international awards.

Explore social issues through fascinating features. BAFTA-nominated drama *Blue Jean* follows a closeted lesbian navigating anti-gay laws, life and love in Thatcher-era England; and *How to Blow Up a Pipeline* is a thrilling environmentalist tale of the sabotage of an oil pipeline.

Experience bold Iranian cinema in Mani Haghighi's (*Pig*, SFF 2018) *Subtraction* - a riveting psychological mystery where a married couple encounter their doppelgängers; *World War III* following a filmset labourer's unexpected rise to stardom, securing accolades at Venice (Horizons) 2022; and Iranian director Vahid Jalilvand's gripping thriller, *Beyond the Wall*, where a near-blind man hides a terrified mother from the police after a protest turns into a riot.

Exciting features with big names include: *The Lesson*, a literary thriller starring Richard E. Grant, Julie Delpy and Daryl McCormack; and *Chevalier*, a sumptuous historical drama based on the true story of



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18<sup>th</sup> century Black composer Joseph Bologne, starring Aussie Samara Weaving (*Mayhem*, SFF 2017) and Kevin Harrison Jr (*Elvis*, SFF 2022).

Stories from Asia include the raucous, rip-roaring kaiju film *Shin Ultraman* and Zhang Lu's charming slice-of-life dramedy *The Shadowless Tower*.

The 70th anniversary program also showcases captivating narratives from Europe and beyond. *Snow and the Bear* is a slow-burning Turkish village noir, while *Piaffe* tells the story of an introverted German Foley artist on a transformative sexual journey. The exhilarating South London odyssey *Pretty Red Dress* celebrates the power of self-expression and challenges notions of masculinity.

Additional highlights include Rima Das's award-winning drama *Tora's Husband*, depicting the challenges faced by a young family in Assam amid the impact of COVID; and Aamir Bashir's *The Winter Within*, which follows a Kashmiri woman's search for her disappeared husband, a militant caught in the grip of occupying forces.

#### **INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARIES**

This year's International Documentary line-up is a mesmerizing, eye-opening, and visually stunning collection of prize-winning and controversial films.

Sundance award winner *The Eternal Memory* captures the heart-wrenching yet humorous journey of a devoted Chilean couple, while *Nam June Paik: Moon is the Oldest TV* presents a creatively distinctive portrait of video art pioneer Nam June Paik. *Joonam* uncovers a complex family history through an Iranian-born mother and grandmother's stories. *Bobi Wine: The People's President* documents the Ugandan musician-turned-politician's campaign against dictatorship.

Explorations and reflections of a life lived feature in the expansive documentary selection with *Stephen Curry: Underrated* which traces the rise of the NBA superstar from high school player to legend; *Blue Bag Life*, Rebecca Lloyd-Evans' deeply personal exploration of addiction and love; and *A Cooler Climate*, Oscar-winning filmmaker James Ivory's documentary revisiting untouched footage from 1960 Afghanistan, offering a richly evocative portrait.

This year's line-up also includes stories of struggle and hope from communities across the globe. *Against the Tide* follows Mumbai's Indigenous Koli fishermen confronting environmental change and its toll on their friendship. *The Echo* offers a lyrical portrait of a rural Mexican village by the director of Cannes winner *Prayers for the Stolen* (SFF 2021).

Berlinale Golden Bear Winner *On the Adamant* by Nicolas Philibert depicts a floating Parisian day-care centre for mental health. *Free Money* explores a charitable initiative providing regular income in an impoverished Kenyan village. Filmmaker Jialing Zhang (*One Child Nation*, SFF 2019) exposes China's surveillance state in the unsettling *Total Trust*.

Experience powerful LGBTQIA+ stories in *Transition*, a film in which Australian journalist and filmmaker Jordan Bryon chronicles his own gender journey while embedded with Taliban forces in Afghanistan; and *Queendom* which explores the risks faced by queer artist and activist Gena Marvin in Putin's Russia.



*Orlando, My Political Biography* creatively delves into gender and identity inspired by Virginia Woolf's novel. *Who I Am Not* follows intersex individuals Sharon-Rose Khumalo and Dimakatso Sebidi's trials and triumphs; and award-winning director Kim Longinotto's *Dalton's Dream*, captures queer artist Dalton Harris' search for love and acceptance after winning *The X Factor UK*.

Explore themes of oppression, politics, and power in the Festival line-up with *Eastern Front* exposing the brutal reality of the Ukrainian conflict, directed by Vitaly Mansky (*Under the Sun*, SFF 2016) and fellow Ukrainian filmmaker Yevhen Titarenko. *Beyond Utopia* follows a family's daring escape from North Korea, revealing the harsh realities of life under an oppressive regime. And the gripping IDFA 2022 award-winning documentary *Paradise* depicts villagers defending their homes against a massive Siberian wildfire, highlighting their abandonment by Russian authorities.

From Australia: the world premiere of *Freedom is Beautiful*, directed by Angus McDonald, follows two Kurdish Iranian asylum seekers, musicians and artists, imprisoned on Manus Island, using their voices to challenge Australia's refugee policy.

US politics is interrogated in two important documentaries: *A Storm Foretold*, a jaw-dropping, portrait of Roger Stone, Donald Trump's former adviser, filmed over three years leading up to the US Capitol storming on January 6<sup>th</sup>; and *The Corridors of Power* exploring the consistent failure of US foreign policy to address genocide, featuring interviews with influential politicians and diplomats.

Delving into the profound impact of historical and societal challenges on women: *Between Revolutions* portrays the enduring friendship of two women, Iranian and Romanian, amidst revolutionary turmoil; and *Pray for our Sinners* sees Irish filmmaker Sinéad O'Shea shed light on the mistreatment of women and children by church and state in her hometown.

Cinephiles and lovers of film will rejoice in: world premiere title, *Cannes Uncut*, a luminary-packed tribute that lifts the curtain on the Cannes Film Festival in its 75th year; Sundance 2023 stranger-than-fiction story *Kim's Video*; *Fantastic Machine*, a Berlinale and Sundance 2023 winner that takes an enthralling trip through 200 years of image making; and Ian Cheney's *The Arc of Oblivion*, a whimsical journey that illuminates the world of archives and memory.

### THE BOX SET

Sydney Film Festival presents the first two episodes of the new Australian series, *Bay of Fires*, a darkly comic crime story starring Marta Dusseldorp, as a mother forced to flee her city life and find refuge in the wilds of Tasmania.

### SUSTAINABLE FUTURE AWARD

At this year's 70th Sydney Film Festival, the Sustainable Future Award has increased from \$10,000 to \$40,000, leading the world in offering the biggest cash prize for a film tackling climate change and sustainability.

The award will be presented to a film that explores the social, economic, political, and environmental consequences of climate change and highlights the urgent need for action to mitigate its effects.

**SYDNEY  
FILM  
FESTIVAL**

**70**

**7-18  
JUNE  
2023**

The feature length films in the 2023 Sustainable Future Award are all documentaries: from Australia, **Climate Changers** and **Rachel's Farm**, and from overseas, **Against the Tide** and **Paradise**.

A series of 11 climate environment orientated shorts, developed in a partnership between Sydney Film Festival, ABC and the Australian Museum, will also all individually compete for the coveted award.

#### **SOUNDS ON SCREEN presented by Mountain Goat**

**Sounds on Screen** highlights four inspiring musical stories with four toe-tapping documentaries featured in the 2023 program.

**Three Cords and the Truth** is an emotive Aussie indie, inspired by the real-life story of singer-songwriter Jackie Marshall, including a dynamo performance from the musician herself.

Also in the line-up: **Little Richard: I am Everything**, honouring the queer Black origins of rock 'n' roll and its ultimate architect, Richard Penniman; **Joan Baez I am Noise** reflects on the life of legendary folk musician and activist Joan Baez; and the Sundance-selected **Pianoforte** showcases young pianists competing in a prestigious competition.

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

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

From Italy to Denmark, and Ireland to Estonia the program casts a spotlight on outstanding, talented female filmmakers.

**The Quiet Migration**, a selection for Berlinale 2023, delves into the struggles of a Korean adoptee raised in rural Denmark, exploring themes of identity and dislocation; **Smoke Sauna Sisterhood**, selected for Sundance 2023, takes audiences into an Estonian log-cabin sauna where women gather to share naked truths and find solace.

**Band** is a raucous and eccentric documentary that follows an all-female Icelandic art rock band on their last-ditch attempt to make it big; **Sunlight**, a heart-warming tragicomedy by Claire Dix, explores the complexity of saying goodbye as a recovering addict discovers that his beloved mentor is terminally ill; **Behind the Haystacks** presents the 2015 refugee crisis on the Greece-North Macedonia border through the perspectives of three family members; and **That Afternoon** is an intimate character study that revolves around two Iranian refugees who find themselves as each other's last hope.

Based on true events, **The Girl from Tomorrow** depicts a gripping legal battle in a Sicilian town during the 1960s, as a strong-willed woman and her family challenge a traditional custom that requires women to marry their rapists.

The program features three directorial debuts: **Elaha**, selected for Berlinale 2023, follows a young Kurdish-German woman on a journey to restore her virginity before her wedding; in Tia Kouvo's **Family Time**, three generations of a Finnish family gather at a snowy cottage for Christmas, setting





the stage for simmering tensions; and Carmen Jaquier's *Thunder* delves into rebellion, spirituality, and sexual awakening as a teen nun returns to the Swiss Alps after her sister's mysterious death.

#### **FIRST NATIONS Supported by Screen Australia's First Nations Department**

The Festival, together with Screen Australia's First Nations Department, continues its support of First Nations storytelling, showcasing important films by First Nations filmmakers across Australia and around the world.

Best Director winner at the Golden Horse Awards 2022, *Gaga*, tells the story of an Indigenous Taiwanese family caught between traditions and modern challenges from Atayal filmmaker Laha Mebow.

Renowned Greenlandic Inuit lawyer and activist Aaju Peter tells the story of her peoples' struggles, as well as her own, in the Sundance and CPH:DOX selected documentary *Twice Colonized*.

First Nations shorts screening across the Festival include: *Babanil*, *Katele*, *Mamirnikuwi*, *Marungka Tjalatju*, *Nyarrpararla Malaju?*, and *Power to Country*.

#### **FAMILY FILMS**

In honour of that trip to the cinema as a kid that made you fall in love with films, Sydney Film Festival invites families to get their kids involved in the Festival fun with two incredible all-ages films.

Disney and Pixar's all-new feature, screening in Cannes 2023, *Elemental*, directed by Peter Sohn (*The Good Dinosaur*), gets its Australian Premiere at SFF, introducing Ember, a tough, quick-witted and fiery young woman, whose friendship with a fun, sappy, go-with-the-flow guy named Wade challenges her beliefs about the world they live in.

And the World Premiere of Aussie animation *Scarygirl* based on the graphic novel, toy and game brand, following 12-year-old Arkie as she rescues her father from space bandits and saves the planet, featuring the voices of Jillian Nguyen, Sam Neill, Deborah Mailman, Tim Minchin and more.

#### **FREAK ME OUT**

Sydney Film Festival's weird and wonderful **Freak Me Out** Program, curated by **Richard Kuipers**, returns with five features, and a super strange double bill from South Korea.

*Late Night with the Devil* is a documentary-style horror set on a US Talk Show in 1977 from Aussies Colin and Cameron Cairnes, winning fans at SXSW. Another SXSW hit, *The Wrath of Becky* sees a 16-year-old waitress who takes spectacularly bloody revenge on the right-wing misogynist scumbags who murdered her friend and stole her dog.

Winner of the SXSW Grand Jury Award, narrative feature *Raging Race* sees a Filipino single mother become the housekeeper at a creepy British mansion. Based in Lapland, 1944, an old prospector exacts bloody revenge on Nazis who stole his gold in *Sisu*; and *Nightsiren* a spellbinding folk horror awarded Best European feature at Sitges Fantastic FF 2022 set in a remote Slovak village.

A celebration of weird and wonderful Korean cinema brings together Jude Chun's absurdist sci-fi *Unidentified* and Park Syeyoung's beautifully bizarre body horror *The Fifth Thoracic Vertebra*, for the ultimate double feature of South Korean strangeness.

### **SCREENABILITY**

Returning to the Festival is Screenability, an exciting program comprised of outstanding films created by filmmakers living with disability.

Curated by Screenability Programmer Rebecca McCormack, a total of six works will screen in the program including SXSW Grand Jury Award Winner *Angel Applicant*, Sundance-selected doc-fiction *The Tuba Thieves*, and the powerfully personal documentary *Is There Anybody Out There?*

Also in the selection, the world premiere of three Australian Screenability Filmmakers Fund for NSW short films: *14 in February*, *Chum* and *Fighting*.

### **FLUX: ART+FILM**

FLUX: ART+FILM explores the fertile ground between art and cinema, with four radical and innovative films by artists who transform the experience of what cinema can be.

Two Australian films feature in the program: *Connection of the Sticks*, is shot as a series of stunning vignettes across three countries, as Polish-Australian artist Kuba Dorabialski conjures the mystique and mysticism of the former Soviet Union; and *Hello Dankness* sees Australia's preeminent pirate archivists Soda Jerk (*Terror Nullius*, SFF 2018) return for a hometown premiere of their latest political parable.

South Korean auteur Hong Sang-soo's experimental film *in water* disassembles cinema's structures, featuring a blurry, impressionistic narrative set on Jeju Island.

In *Last Things*, acclaimed filmmaker Deborah Stratman explores the past and future of the earth through some of its most elemental materials.

### **JANE CAMPION – HER WAY**

Sydney Film Festival in association with ACMI and the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) will present a retrospective of films by the pioneering director Jane Campion.

JANE CAMPION – HER WAY will encompass screenings of all nine Campion feature films, as well as a selection of her short films, and the Australian premiere of a new documentary about her life and career, *Jane Campion, Cinema Woman* by filmmaker Julie Bertuccelli (*The Tree*, SFF 2010).

Campion herself will appear in conversation with David Stratton at the Festival (10 June, 4:15pm, The Hub - \$15).

### **AMITABH BACHCHAN: BACK TO THE BEGINNING**

In celebration of Indian screen legend Amitabh Bachchan's 80th birthday last year SFF presents a remarkable retrospective of his classic films curated and restored by the Film Heritage Foundation.

**SYDNEY  
FILM  
FESTIVAL**

**70**

**7-18  
JUNE  
2023**

Sydney Film Festival have selected four titles from the Bachchan Back to the Beginning program to screen at this year's Festival including: *Deewaar*, *Amar Akbar Anthony*, *Don* and *Kaala Patthar*.

Each film showcases the essence of Hindi cinema at its finest, blending action, melodrama, and life-affirming musical numbers that have become synonymous with the industry.

### **CLASSICS RESTORED**

Two recently restored films will give audiences the opportunity to see cinema classics the way they were intended. Soak up the kitsch costumes, camp soundtrack and performances of John Water's 1988 cult classic *Hairspray* which will screen alongside an immersive themed event in The Hub; and delve into the 1973 Brazilian classic, *The Devil Queen*, a mix of gangster grit, colourful camp and LGBTQIA+ pride that has been beautifully restored for its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

### **AFTRS 50TH - ALUMNI SHORT FILMS**

In 1973, the **Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS)** was established with a revolutionary vision to shape Australian culture. Now, as AFTRS celebrates its 50th anniversary, the indomitable spirit and enduring legacy of the institution are brought to life in a captivating program of short films crafted by its esteemed alumni.

This extraordinary selection showcases the early works of influential filmmakers from the class of '73, including **Gillian Armstrong**, **Phillip Noyce**, and **Chris Noonan**. Their restored films stand alongside remarkable debuts by **Ivan Sen**, **Jane Campion**, **Cate Shortland**, **Robert Connolly**, **Sue Brooks**, and **Catriona McKenzie**. Each filmmaker's journey into the world of cinema is marked by innovation, creativity, and a profound impact on the Australian film landscape.

### **YOUR PLANET - CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT SHORTS**

From wildlife defenders and waste warriors to valleys and reefs, alongside powerful stories from First Nations filmmakers – 11 Australian short documentaries have been selected to showcase the people and communities creating solutions to some of the greatest challenges facing our environment.

Two screenings will be presented at Event Cinemas and the Australian Museum showcasing 11 short films including: *After the Smoke*, *Babanil*, *For Frog's Sake*, *Mad About Maggots*, *Mamirnikuwi*, *The Number 2 Solution*, *Nyarrpararla Malaju?*, *Power to Country*, *The Oyster Gardener*, *Road Kill Warriors* and *Wing Threads*.

Your Planet Climate and Environment Shorts is an ABC Factual and Doc Society Initiative supported by Screen Territory, VicScreen, Screen Tasmania, Screen Queensland and Screenwest.

### **THE DENDY AWARDS FOR AUSTRALIAN SHORT FILMS**

10 finalists have been selected for the Dendy Awards, Australia's longest running short film competition, celebrating its 54<sup>th</sup> year in 2023. Screening over two sessions on 17 and 18 June.



**SYDNEY  
FILM  
FESTIVAL**

**70**

**7-18  
JUNE  
2023**

The short film prizes will be awarded at the Festival's Closing Night: **The Dendy Live Action Short Award, The Rouben Mamoulian Award for Best Director, Yoram Gross Animation Award, AFTRS Craft Award and Event Cinemas Rising Talent Award.**

The shorts films competing include: *The 2IC, The Dancing Girl and the Balloon Man, Kariwa, Katele, Linda 4 Eva, Marionettes (And the Virtue of a Lotus Flower), Teacups, To Fly a Kite, We Circle Silently* and *What's in a Name?*

### **THE HUB**

The Sydney Festival Hub at Sydney Town Hall is the heart of the Festival as an immersive experience, with filmmaker talks, panels, and themed parties.

Open to the public all nights, and select days from 7-18 June, The Hub will feature a Happy Hour special pop-up bar between 4:30pm and 6:00pm on weekdays, with drinks from Brix Rum Distillery, Château Tanunda & Mountain Goat Beer plus a Brix limited edition Mai Tai cocktail made exclusively for SFF's 70th birthday.

See and celebrate 70 years of Sydney Film Festival at a special archive exhibition of the Festival's history on display at The Hub. Explore the remarkable way in which world and cinema history has gone hand in hand, through SFF treasures and witness the evolution of an iconic and internationally renowned film festival – from its foundation at The University of Sydney, to censorship rows that went all the way to parliament, and the premieres of films that have become cinema legend.

Over the last 12 months, Sydney Film Festival have been updating their Living Archive to celebrate 70 years. The digital archive has been renewed with a new user-friendly interface, more images, oral histories and recollections of the moments that stick with us long after the credits roll.

The living archive is live now and can be viewed at [archive.sff.org.au](https://archive.sff.org.au)

### **EVENTS AT THE HUB**

Keep that post-film buzz going with special events paired with screenings to celebrate cinema.

**Film Tracks Hairspray Party**, is an after-screening party featuring DJs spinning '60s tracks, go-go dancers and a photo booth. Dressing divine is encouraged! (8 June, 8:45pm, \$45 inc. film and drink on arrival)

**Red, White & Brass: Scrum at The Hub**, keep the cheers going on the dance floor after the Australian Premiere screening of *Red, White & Brass* (9 June, 8pm FREE).

Gather a team for **SFF Film Trivia Night**, filled with prizes (14 June, 7pm FREE).

**Late Night Party with the Devil** follows a screening of *Late Night With the Devil* with a possessing line-up of magic, music and occult-inspired delights. Dressing freaky is encouraged (15 June, 8:15pm, \$45 inc. film and drink on arrival).

**Korean Cinema Celebration: Geonbae!** Open to all, and a perfect companion following the screening of *A Wild Roomer* at Event Cinemas George St. Be immersed in Korean culture with K-Pop cover



**SYDNEY  
FILM  
FESTIVAL**

**70**

**7-18  
JUNE  
2023**

dance performances, Korean music DJ party, hands-on activities, and complimentary soju and makgeolli (16 June, 8:30pm, FREE).

### TALKS

The **FREE Festival Talks** at the Festival Hub 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.

Celebrate the launch of **Sustainable Screens Australia (SSA)** with an inspiring talk from industry experts (8 June, 5:30pm, The Hub).

Following the State Theatre screening of *Riceboy Sleeps*, join director **Anthony Shim**, actress **Choi Seung-yoon** and a panel of Korean Australians as they explore the significance of Korean culture in the lives of those growing up outside Korea (8 June, 6pm, Korean Cultural Centre).

Join five filmmakers from Europe! Voices of Women in Film program, in conversation with Screen International's **Sandy George** as they discuss their different approaches to filmmaking and how the landscape for women working in film varies across the continent (10 June, 11:30am, The Hub).

Head to the Australian Museum for a special screening of the **Your Planet: Climate and Environment Shorts** and meet some of the filmmakers behind these unique films at a post-screening panel presentation with the Museum's **Dr Jenny Newell**, Curator, Climate Change, Climate Solutions Centre alongside filmmakers Christopher McCormack (*Wing Threads*), Marlikka Perdrisat (*Babanil*) and Elsie Shaw (*Mad About Maggots*) and ABC's **Teri Calder** (11 June, 2pm, Australian Museum).

Following the Australian premiere of *Rachel's Farm*, **Sandy George** sits down with director **Rachel Ward** and the filmmaking team to discuss the issues raised in the film as well as the process of making such a personal film at the same time as dealing with the day-to-day operations of a working farm (11 June, 4:15pm, The Hub).

Mentored by international guests of the 70th edition of SFF, ten emerging and established filmmakers will be challenged to create partnerships and projects in just four days as part of **Platform – For Film's Sake Incubator**. The result of their efforts will be pitched live to an expert industry jury who will give Platform teams immediate feedback and insight into their developing works (17 June, 12:30pm, The Hub).

Not to be missed following the State Theatre screening of *The Dark Emu Story*, author Bruce Pascoe sits down for an in conversation talk (18 June, 2:30pm, The Hub).

### FESTIVAL VENUES

**The State Theatre, Event Cinemas George Street, Dendy Newtown, Palace Central, Palace Norton Street, Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace Cremorne, Ritz Cinemas Randwick, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Australian Museum and Art Gallery of NSW.**

The full Sydney Film Festival 2023 program can be found online at [sff.org.au](http://sff.org.au).





**SYDNEY  
FILM  
FESTIVAL**

**70**

**7-18  
JUNE  
2023**

Sydney Film Festival runs in cinemas 7-18 June 2023. Tickets and flexipasses to Sydney Film Festival 2023 are on sale now. Please call 1300 733 733 or visit [sff.org.au](http://sff.org.au) for more information or to book.

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**\*\*Images are available to download [here](#).**

**EDITOR'S NOTES:**

**ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL**

Sydney Film Festival will celebrate its 70th edition from Wednesday 7 June to Sunday 18 June 2023, offering Sydneysiders another exciting season of cinema amidst a whirlwind of premieres, red-carpet openings, in-depth discussions, film guests and more.

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](http://sff.org.au).

The 70th Sydney Film Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Screen NSW, the Federal Government through Screen Australia and the City of Sydney.

Stay up to date with Sydney Film Festival:

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