



## MEDIA RELEASE

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 8:45PM TUESDAY 14 JUNE**

# SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES INAUGURAL LEXUS AUSTRALIAN SHORT FILM FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENTS

Lexus Australia and Sydney Film Festival have announced Anya Beyersdorf, Brooke Goldfinch, Alex Murawski and Alex Ryan, as the four recipients of the Lexus Australia Short Film Fellowship.

The four filmmakers will each receive a \$50,000 grant to make a short film, which will then premiere at the 2017 Sydney Film Festival.

The fellows were selected from a shortlist of 21 emerging filmmakers nominated by **The Weinstein Company** from more than 355 Australians who last year entered the global **Lexus Short Film series**.

The announcement was made at the world premiere of Australian actor and filmmaker **Damian Walshe-Howling's** short film *MESSIAH* starring **David Gulpilil**, at the **State Theatre on the evening of 14 June**. The film, made in conjunction with The Weinstein Company, is the result of Walshe-Howling's win at the international Lexus Short Films initiative, where he was selected together with two other filmmakers from France and the USA from more than 4,400 submissions worldwide.

Renowned Australian actress **Judy Davis** presided over the selection process as Jury Chair alongside Sydney Film Festival Director **Nashen Moodley**, Lexus Australia's **Adrian Weimers**, Australian producer and SFF board member **Jan Chapman AO** and indigenous Australian producer **Darren Dale**.

Jury Chair Judy Davis said, "Each of these four young filmmakers has shown incredible promise and vision in their Fellowship submissions. They have demonstrated tenacity and dedication, creativity and capacity, as well as the passion to follow their dreams. The jury is very much looking forward to seeing what this new generation of Australian filmmakers will create in the coming year."

Nashen Moodley, Sydney Film Festival Director said, "The Fellowship recipients are of the highest calibre of emerging Australian talent. They have screened at some of the world's top film festivals, and some have worked with the most renowned directors of our time. The Festival is proud to be providing a platform for these cutting-edge short film projects at our Festival in June 2017."

Adrian Weimers, Corporate Manager, Lexus Australia said, "The Lexus Australia Short Film Fellowship, developed in partnership with Sydney Film Festival, builds on our international platforms of discovering emerging talent including the Lexus Design Award and the Lexus Short Film series."

"Lexus Australia is deeply committed to elevating emerging talent locally. Our support of these new voices for filmmaking is an investment in innovation, and a way to keep art forms evolving in Australia," he said.

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### Meet the Inaugural Lexus Australia Short Film Fellows:

- **Anya Beyersdorf** is not only an actress turned writer-director, she is also a current Doctor of Arts candidate at Sydney University, founder of the Sydney filmmaking collective Gifthouse Films, and an AWGIE award winner. Beyersdorf's short films have played in competition at high profile film festivals internationally including Palm Springs International Shortsfest, Rhode Island International Film Festival, Seattle International Film Festival, St Kilda Film Festival and Flickerfest International Film Festival.

“As an emerging filmmaker, to earn and be granted the support of both Sydney Film Festival and the Lexus Australia Fellowship is a great vote of confidence in my future career as a filmmaker in Australia. And I am very grateful and thrilled to bring my project to life as an inaugural fellow of this critical program for Australian screen stories. There are so few opportunities to practice the craft of short film making before moving on to longer form projects and I thank both Lexus and the Sydney Film Festival for considering me for this project.”

- **Brooke Goldfinch**, studied filmmaking at NYU and last year won the Rouben Mamoulian Award for Best Director at Sydney Film Festival's Dendy Awards for her short film *Red Rover*. Goldfinch was selected to write and direct a segment of James Franco's compendium feature film *The Color of Time*, and also triumphed over a record number of applicants to become one of two director's attachments on the set of *Alien: Covenant*, Ridley Scott's sequel to *Prometheus* currently shooting in Sydney.

“The prestige of being selected for this Fellowship is an important step in my career and I look forward to collaborating with Lexus and Sydney Film Festival. *Outbreak Generation* will be a memorable, special film that will entertain and enthrall. It speaks directly to my first feature and will be instrumental in getting it off the ground!” she said.

- **Alex Murawski** is an AFTRS graduate whose film school short *Kiss* screened at the Berlinale as well as many other international film festivals, including Cannes and Palm Springs International Shortsfest where it took second prize, and has over 70,000 views on YouTube. Murawski, has also completed a director attachment on Bruce Beresford's Emmy-nominated mini-series *Bonnie and Clyde*.

“The Fellowship will substantially help one of my goals when I left film school: to be a versatile filmmaker, able to work with varied narratives, worlds, budgets, environments and people. I

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want to make films people can't wait to see, and going through the Fellowship process will aid me in sharpening these skills – and show I am ready for the next level.”

“Furthermore to have my film premiere at Sydney Film Festival exhibits my filmmaking at a higher level of prestige. I've never had a film screen there and as a long-time attendee of the Dendy Awards, it's something close to my heart.”

- **Alex Ryan** is a UTS and AFTRS graduate with a number of award-winning shorts and music videos to his name. Not only does he run his own production company, Wedge Tail Productions, his most recent short *Ngurrumbang* screened at festivals around the world, was a Dendy Awards Finalist at Sydney Film Festival (2013) and received an ADG award nomination. His music video for The Preatures' 'Is This How You Feel' won *Rolling Stone Magazine's* Best Music Video (2013).

“Being chosen by this prestigious jury will bring a level of exposure and credibility to my work that will support the next steps in my career. The honour of having the completed film screened at Sydney Film Festival 2017 at the State Theatre will bring my work to the attention of filmmakers, critics, and film goers in a new and powerful way, in my hometown.”

**Sydney Film Festival runs 8 – 19 June 2016.**

**Tickets for Sydney Film Festival 2016 are on sale now. Please call 1300 733 733 or visit [sff.org.au](http://sff.org.au) for more information.**

## MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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

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## ABOUT THE LEXUS AUSTRALIA SHORT FILM FELLOWSHIP

The Lexus Australia Short Film Fellowship is a new \$200,000 investment by Lexus Australia, presented by Sydney Film Festival, to support future generations of emerging filmmakers. The Fellowship is the largest cash fellowship for short film in Australia. Up to four Fellowship winners will receive \$50,000 each to produce their next short film in 2016, to premiere at the 64<sup>th</sup> Sydney Film Festival in 2017.

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## ABOUT THE LEXUS AUSTRALIA SHORT FILM FELLOWSHIP JURY

Presiding over the selection process as Jury Chair is renowned Australian actress **Judy Davis**. The other jury members are Sydney Film Festival Director **Nashen Moodley**, Lexus Australia's **Adrian Weimers**, and Australian producers **Jan Chapman AO** and **Darren Dale**.

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### ABOUT LEXUS SHORT FILMS

In 2013, Lexus Short Films was launched with the goal of supporting and nurturing a new generation of emerging filmmakers. These aspiring directors and writers have received a unique opportunity supported by Lexus to collaborate with acclaimed film studio The Weinstein Company to produce and showcase their work on an international stage. For more information, visit [www.lexusshortfilms.com](http://www.lexusshortfilms.com).

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### ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

From **Wednesday 8 June to Sunday 19 June 2016**, the 63<sup>rd</sup> 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. Each year the Festival's programming team curates 12 days of cinema sourced from world-famous film festivals, including Cannes, Sundance, Toronto and the Berlinale; as well as Australia's finest productions.

Sydney Film Festival also presents an Official Competition of 12 films that vie for the Sydney Film Prize, a highly respected honour that awards a \$60,000 cash prize based on the decision of a jury of international and Australian filmmakers and industry professionals. Previous Sydney Film Prize winners are: *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.

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

The 63<sup>rd</sup> 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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### EDITORS NOTES

**Name:** Anya Beyersdorf

**Filmmaker from:** Otford, NSW

**About the finalist:**

- Shortlisted for the Sundance Screenwriters Lab, Anya has also won an Australian Writer's Guild (AWGIE) Award for her writing.
- Her student films have played in competition at Flickerfest, Palm Springs International Shorts Fest, Rhode Island Film Festival, Seattle International Film Festival and the Tropfest shortlist among others.
- *Vampir* has already won a Gold ACS (Australian Cinematographer's Society) Award for best cinematography, and will premiere and start its international festival tour in 2016.
- Actress and lead roles in across six TV series and lead in three feature films: *Rats and Cats* (Melbourne Film Festival 2006) directed by Tony Rogers who plays the lead role in *Vampir - Black & White & Sex* (Sydney Film Festival and Rotterdam 2012) and Aaron Wilson's *Triple Happiness* and many short films which have screened at the Dendy Awards, Melbourne Film Festival and Sundance Film Festival.
- Founding member of Gifthouse Films – a Sydney filmmaker collective dedicated to creating and producing unique and unusual screen stories.

**Name:** Alex Murawski

**Filmmaker from:** Belrose, Sydney, NSW

**About the finalist:**

- His graduate short, *Kiss*, screened at the Berlinale and many other international film festivals, including the Cannes Film Festival and Palm Springs International Shortsfest, where it took second prize.
- Alex is a recipient of Screen Australia's Talent Escalator Program and Hot Shots Program.
- He received Screen Australia's Talent Escalator Program that saw Alex work as Bruce Beresford's director attachment on his Emmy nominated mini-series *Bonnie and Clyde*.
- In 2012, Alex completed a development internship with iconic indie-production company Killer Films, working side by side with Christine Vachon and Pamela Koffler, producers of *Boys Don't Cry* and *Carol* starring Cate Blanchett.
- Also conducted filmmaking workshops in New York City working with a vast range of students, including talented pupils from low-income families as well as hearing impaired students.

**Name:** Alex Ryan

**Filmmaker from:** Marrickville, Sydney, NSW

**About the finalist:**

- His short, *Ngurrumbang*, screened at festivals around the world, was a Dendy Awards Finalist at Sydney Film Festival in 2013 and received an ADG award nomination.
- Alex won a Rolling Stone Magazine's Best Music Video of the Year in 2013 for The Preatures 'Is This How You Feel'.
- He recently launched his own production company, Wedge Tail Productions.

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- The team behind *Red Ink*, Alex Ryan (director), Bethany Bruce (producer) and Duncan Graham (writer) are currently in early development stages of a feature film, *Crazy Horse One Eight*, a kaleidoscopic, broken journey into the latent traumas and hidden social fallouts of war.

**Name:** Brooke Goldfinch

**Filmmaker from:** Camperdown, NSW

#### About the finalist:

- Previously an ABC news reporter in Sydney, Brooke moved to New York and attended the Tisch School of the Arts, where she was taught by Spike Lee, Todd Solondz and many other notable professors.
- Received a Screen Australia Talent Escalator Grant for her short film *Red Rover*, which earned her the Rouben Mamoulian Award for Best Director at the 2015 Sydney Film Festival's Dendy Awards and the Canon Award for Best Direction in an Australian Short Film at 2016 Flickerfest.
- *Red Rover* was also nominated for Best Short at 2015 Austin Film Festival and Best Short Film Script at the Australian Writer's Guild awards, the AWGIES.
- She is currently writing her debut feature, *Splitters*, a fantasy/thriller set in Wollongong.
- Brooke runs the Australian branch of a collective of female writer/directors called [Film Fatales](#).

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