

# SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

# 5-16 JUNE 2024

## SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL ADDS EIGHT NEW FILMS DIRECT FROM CANNES AND EXTRA SCREENINGS, ON SALE NOW!

The 71st Sydney Film Festival (5-16 June) announces that eight new films straight from Cannes will have their Australian premiere at the Festival, including Un Certain Regard winner *Black Dog*, L'Œil d'or winner for Best Documentary *Ernest Cole: Lost and Found*, Francis Ford Coppola's *Megalopolis* starring Adam Driver, and *Rumours* starring Cate Blanchett. The Festival also added past SFF winner (*There Is No Evil*, 2021) Mohammad Rasoulof's *The Seed of the Sacred Fig* which won five awards at Cannes - after its inclusion at Cannes prompted the Iranian government to sentence Rasoulof to flogging and imprisonment, and he was forced to flee.

"We're thrilled to unveil an extraordinary selection of eight new films, direct from Cannes, to complete the final line-up of the 71st Sydney Film Festival," said Festival Director Nashen Moodley.

"Festival-goers will be captivated by the Un Certain Regard crowd-pleaser *Black Dog*, offering a unique cinematic experience that blends genres and even riffs on Festival guest George Miller's *Mad Max* - with some fantastic canine performances!

"Mohammad Rasoulof's daring and allegorical drama *The Seed of the Sacred Fig*, winner of five awards at Cannes including a Jury Special Award, tells an urgent and powerful story set against the backdrop of Iran's political turmoil.

"Francis Ford Coppola's ambitious passion project *Megalopolis*, starring Adam Driver, will have its Australian premiere at IMAX Sydney, showcasing grand ideas on a suitably large scale.

"Cult director Guy Maddin's apocalyptic comedy (co-directed by brothers Evan and Galen Johnson) *Rumours*, starring Cate Blanchett, which received a standing ovation at Cannes, humorously explores the absurdities of a G7 summit gone awry in a German forest.

"Adding to our compelling documentary offerings, *Ernest Cole: Lost and Found*, winner of L'Œil d'or (Best Documentary) at Cannes and directed by multi award winner Raoul Peck (*I Am Not Your Negro*, SFF 2018), provides a poignant and powerful portrayal of the South African photographer's life and work during apartheid and in exile.

"From the Cannes Competition, acclaimed filmmaker Jia Zhangke's *Caught by the Tides* captures a love story spanning two decades, reflecting the transformation of modern China, while *The Girl with the Needle* immerses audiences in post-WWI Copenhagen's underground adoption scene.

"The edge-of-your-seat revenge thriller *Ghost Trail*, the opening film of Cannes Critics' Week, depicts a Syrian refugee's pursuit of his former tormentor in France.

"Due to overwhelming demand, we have added additional screenings for Closing Night film *The Substance*, a buzzy satirical body horror led by Demi Moore and Margaret Qualley, to accommodate more Festival-goers eager to experience this highly anticipated film," said Moodley.



The full Sydney Film Festival 2024 program can be found online at [sff.org.au](http://sff.org.au).

**Sydney Film Festival runs from 5-16 June 2024. Tickets and Flexipasses to Sydney Film Festival 2024 are on sale now. Please call 1300 733 733 or visit [sff.org.au](http://sff.org.au) for more information or to book.**

Stay up to date with Sydney Film Festival:  
[eNews](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

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

## **EDITOR'S NOTES**

### **ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL**

From Wednesday 5 to Sunday 16 June 2024, the 71<sup>st</sup> Sydney Film Festival offers 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 71<sup>st</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.

### **FILM INFORMATION**

#### **BLACK DOG**

**A one-of-a-kind crowd pleaser featuring a man and many, many dogs that spectacularly riffs on westerns, Asian indie cinema, neo-noir and even *Mad Max*. Winner of Un Certain Regard at Cannes.**

Returning to his hometown on the edge of the Gobi Desert after a lengthy stint in prison, Lang (Eddie Peng, fantastic – *Jump Ashin!*) is the classic anti-hero: slinky, sullen and into motorbikes. The town is in strife, with buildings under demolition orders and abandoned dogs roaming the streets. Weeks out from the Beijing Olympics, the town officials decide to crack down on the stray canines, particularly the elusive Black Dog. The story of how Lang finds his canine soulmate is full of surreal twists and turns and *Lassie*-like heroics – not to mention a circus troupe, a lonesome tiger, a sneaky performance by acclaimed director Jia Zhangke (*Caught by the Tides*), and a snake farmer called Butcher Hu. Hit director Guan Hu (*The Eight Hundred*, *The Sacrifice*) relishes the sandblasted setting, making this strikingly shot Cannes winner an irresistible cinematic treat.

#### **CAUGHT BY THE TIDES**

**Straight from the Cannes Competition, acclaimed Chinese filmmaker Jia Zhangke's masterly and poetic epic combines footage from his past films with a contemporary narrative in an enduring love story shot over 20 years.**



Qiaoqiao (Zhao Tao) and Bin (Li Zhubin) – characters frequently featured in Jia’s films – fall in love in Datong in the early 2000s. At the start of their romance, the city seems filled with music, dancing and possibility. But one day, Bin leaves without notice to make his way in the wider world. Qiaoqiao decides to search for him, and so begins a decades-long journey of searching and longing. Without an over-reliance on dialogue, the film is edited with a propulsive energy, and the soundtrack is filled with surprises. And in telling this fragile love story, Jia (*Still Life*, SFF 2007; *Ash is the Purest White*) – a brilliant and incisive chronicler of modern China – traces a radically transforming nation.

#### **ERNEST COLE: LOST AND FOUND**

**Winner of L’Œil d’or (Best Documentary) at Cannes, an outstanding, impassioned portrait of South African photographer Ernest Cole, directed by Oscar nominee Raoul Peck (*I Am Not Your Negro*, SFF 2018).**

Over almost a decade, Ernest Cole photographed the pitiless reality of Black life in his home country at the height of apartheid. Forced to move to America to publish his provocative 1967 book, *House of Bondage*, he never returned to South Africa. On assignment as a photojournalist to the Deep South, Cole came to realise that America wasn’t all that different from his homeland when it came to racial inequality. Isolated, stateless and downtrodden, he struggled to find his place in the world, eventually abandoning his camera. Recently, thousands of Cole’s previously-lost negatives – including mesmerising images from the streets of New York – were mysteriously found in a Swedish bank vault. Peck elegantly overlays these evocative images with Cole’s heartbreaking story, often using the exiled artist’s own poetic words, with a melancholic jazz-fuelled score and narration from Academy Award-nominated actor LaKeith Stanfield.

#### **GHOST TRAIL**

**The Opening Film of Cannes Critics’ Week is a brilliantly performed edge-of-your-seat thriller about a Syrian refugee in France on the trail of his former torturer.**

Hamid (Adam Bessa, superb) is part of a secretive group of Syrian exiles who pursue fugitive leaders of the Syrian regime, perpetrators of atrocities against the populace who have managed to slip into Europe under false identities. Hamid is determined to track down the war criminal who tortured him. As he was blindfolded throughout his ordeal, he is reliant on his memories of the man’s voice and his scent – so he must get uncomfortably close to verify the identification. With all the tension of the very best espionage thrillers, *Ghost Trail* is all the more effective given its connection to recent and ongoing world events. An astonishingly assured and meticulously executed debut feature by Jonathan Millet, this is a tense thriller not to be missed.

#### **THE GIRL WITH THE NEEDLE**

**Straight from the Cannes Competition, this intense true crime drama steeped in brilliantly executed tension and dread follows a young factory worker in post WW1 Copenhagen who gets involved in an underground adoption agency.**

Karoline (Vic Carmen Sonne, *Holiday*, SFF 2018; *Godland*, SFF 2022) works as a machinist in a factory manufacturing uniforms. Her husband went off to the frontline and never returned. Through her rebelliousness, Karoline attracts the attention of wealthy, aristocratic factory owner Jorgen and the two embark on a reckless affair. When she falls pregnant and Jorgen promises marriage, Karoline finally imagines a more comfortable life. But it is not to be, and she finds herself unemployed and abandoned. A chance meeting with Dagmar (Trine Dyrholm, *Queen of Hearts*, SFF 2019), a kindly sweet shop owner, leads to Karoline taking employment at the shop, which also serves as a front for underground adoption. But behind the façade lies a devastating reality about the fates of these children destined for new homes. With tremendous performances, *The Girl with the Needle* is a meticulously crafted and observed descent into the darkest shadows of human behaviour.



## MEGALOPOLIS

**Adam Driver stars in Francis Ford Coppola’s ambitious passion project charting the decline of a mythic civilization, but one with obvious contemporary parallels. Straight from Cannes, see the Australian Premiere at IMAX Sydney: huge ideas on a screen to match.**

Coppola has taken some big swings before (*Apocalypse Now*, *The Godfather*), but this time he’s smashed convention, expectations and style with his heady sci-fi tale about a future city beset by corruption. New Rome is a hybrid between New York and ancient Rome, complete with chariot races and togas a stone’s throw from the Chrysler Building. Driver plays an architect with the ability to pause time, but his grand vision for a more utopian society is at risk of being thwarted by ruthlessly pragmatic politicians. The actor is joined by Aubrey Plaza, Shia LaBeouf and Laurence Fishburne, and they commit fully to Coppola’s singular and operatic vision. Made on a truly grand scale, *Megalopolis* is one to see on the biggest screen possible.

## RUMOURS (awaiting final film note)

### THE SEED OF THE SACRED FIG

**Director Mohammad Rasoulof (*There Is No Evil*, Sydney Film Prize 2021) undertook a daring escape from Iran to present his extraordinarily brave allegorical drama in Cannes, winning the Jury Special Award.**

Rasoulof was sentenced to eight years in prison and a flogging just prior to fleeing Iran, and his spellbinding and powerful film has at its centre a once tight-knit family devastated by political turmoil. Iman is an investigator in the Revolutionary Court in Tehran; his responsibilities include prosecuting young political protestors. As the nationwide protests intensify, Iman’s family becomes embroiled in the events. When Iman’s work-issued gun disappears, he suspects the involvement of his wife and daughters, and his paranoia leads him to enforce increasingly stringent constraints on his family. As the repression levels rise, the women fight back, leading to an explosive clash. Daringly including real-life footage of the “Women, Life, Freedom” protests that erupted after the death of Mahsa Amini in 2022 – and of the regime’s subsequent brutal and lethal crackdown – *The Seed of the Sacred Fig* is an urgent and devastating film, and a bold tribute to those who have and continue to resist.