



MEDIA RELEASE

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SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

FIRST ANNOUNCE: GUEST LINE UP FOR 2014 FESTIVAL

The **61st Sydney Film Festival** today announced the first list of stars and filmmakers to attend the Festival this June. These distinguished guests will walk the red carpet for their Australian and World Premieres, introduce their films and participate in talks, panels and Q&A sessions. Please note: there will be a second, full announce of Festival guests on Wednesday 28 May. For the most up-to-date information please visit sff.org.au

Highlights include:

Direct from its world premiere screening at the Cannes Film Festival, SFF and **Vivid Ideas** are proud to present the Australian Premiere of the highly anticipated futuristic thriller ***The Rover*** and host the director **David Michôd** and key talent **Guy Pearce** and **Robert Pattinson** at the State Theatre on Saturday 7 June. *The Rover* screens as part of the SFF Official Competition.

Actor **Cate Blanchett** will attend the Festival to introduce a special screening of DreamWorks Animation's ***How to Train Your Dragon 2***, the second chapter of the epic trilogy in which Blanchett is the voice of the character Valka. The screening is held at 2pm on the Public Holiday Monday on 9 June at Event Cinemas George Street.

UK visual artists and film directors **Iain Forsyth & Jane Pollard** introduce the Australian premiere and SFF Opening Night film ***20,000 Days on Earth*** on Wednesday 4 June at the State Theatre (also in Official Competition). Iain Forsyth & Jane Pollard have worked together as artists since the mid-1990s. Performance and music play significant roles in their work, including a sound installation with Scott Walker at Sydney Opera House and their ongoing collaboration with the musician and author Nick Cave. *20,000 Days on Earth* is their debut feature.

Director **Fred Schepisi** takes part in the annual Ian McPherson Memorial Lecture on Monday 9 June at Event Cinemas George Street, following the Australian Premiere of his new feature ***Words and Pictures***, starring **Clive Owen** and **Juliette Binoche**. ABC-TV's **David Stratton** will bring his consummate interviewing skills to host a special discussion with Schepisi, one of the most respected directors in the international film and television industry. Schepisi's first feature film, *The Devil's Playground* (1976) won six AFI Awards. Two years later, the success of his second film, *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith*, took him to the USA, where he directed *Barbarosa* (1982), *Iceman* (1984), *Plenty* (1985) and *Roxanne* (1987). He returned to Australia to write and direct *Evil Angels* (1988), based on John Bryson's book about the infamous Azaria Chamberlain case. His other films include *The Russia House* (1990), *Six Degrees of Separation* (1993) and *The Eye of the Storm* (2011).

Official Competition Guests include:

Black Coal, Thin Ice writer and director **Diao Yinan** is a leading figure in China's avant-garde theatre, and has also written numerous screenplays. He is attending SFF for his third feature film *Black Coal, Thin Ice*, which won the Golden Bear at the Berlinale 2014. He graduated with a degree in literature and screenwriting from the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing. His screenplays for other directors include: *Spicy Love Soup*, *Shower*, *All the Way* and *Eternal Moment*. As an actor, he starred in Yu Likwai's independent feature *All Tomorrow's Parties*, which premiered in the Un Certain Regard section of the Cannes Film Festival in 2003. He wrote and directed his debut feature *Uniform* in 2003; the film went on to win the Dragons & Tigers Award at the Vancouver International Film Festival and was released in several countries. He wrote and directed his second feature, *Night Train* in 2007; it premiered in the Un Certain Regard section of the Cannes Film Festival the same year, winning critical acclaim for its minimalist style and securing distribution throughout Europe.

Boyhood actor **Ellar Coltrane** and producer **Cathleen Sutherland** will attend the Australian premiere and take part in an Apple Store Talk on Saturday 7 June. Coltrane was born and raised in Austin, Texas. Unconventionally schooled through most of his childhood, he was allowed to learn through experience and develop a deep interest in art of all kinds. He stumbled into acting at a young age and after a few small roles in independent films and commercials, was cast in **Richard Linklater's** *Boyhood* which was filmed over a 12-year period.

Cathleen Sutherland is a native Austinite and holds a BS in Radio-Television-Film from the University of Texas. Having been exposed to film production at an impressionable age, while visiting the set of her aunt's production of *The Whole Shootin' Match*; then as a fish-chomped kid camper for two weeks on *Piranha*; and securing her first PA job at 16 on *Mongrel*, her roots are firmly planted in the early days of independent filmmaking in Texas.

Director **Kasimir Burgess** will attend the World Premiere of his first feature, ***Fell***, and take part in a Meet the Filmmakers Talk at the Apple Store with actor **Matt Nable** on Saturday 14 June. Burgess studied at the Victorian College of the Arts. His award-winning shorts include *Lily*, winner of the Crystal Bear at the 2011 Berlin International Film Festival. Also attending SFF 2014 are *Fell* producer **John Maynard** and writer **Natasha Pincus**.

Fish & Cat director **Shahram Mokri** will introduce the Australian premiere of his film at the State Theatre on Thursday 12 June. Born in 1978 in Marand, Iran, Mokri is a graduate of cinema from Tehran's Soreh College. He has been making short films since 2000 and he has also edited eight TV dramas, two TV series and more than 20 short and documentary films. His short films brought him national and international recognition and *Ashkan, The Charmed Ring And Other Stories*, his debut feature film, had its international premiere at Busan IFF in 2009. The premiere of his second feature film, *Fish & Cat*, was at Venice Film Festival in 2013.

Kumiko, the Treasure Hunter director **David Zellner** is an Austin-based filmmaker who has directed, written and produced a number of award-winning shorts and two feature films, *Goliath* and *Kid-THING*, which have screened at international festivals including Sundance and the Berlinale. David will introduce his Australian premiere screening at the State Theatre on Monday 9 June.

Ruin co-directors **Michael Cody** and **Amiel Courtin-Wilson** will introduce their Australian premiere screening on Tuesday 10 June at the State Theatre. Amiel Courtin-Wilson (SFF2012 Official Competition Jury member) is a writer, director and producer. At 19 his feature-length film debut *Chasing Buddha* (2000) won best Australian documentary at SFF. His narrative-feature debut *Hail*

(SFF 2011) premiered at Venice and won international attention. Michael Cody is a graduate of UTS. He produced *Hail* (SFF 2011). *Ruin* is his feature debut as director.

Official Competition Jury President:

Rachel Perkins is also the director of the *Black Panther Woman*, competing for SFF's Documentary Australia Foundation Award. Rachel's filmmaking work spans documentary, TV drama series, telemovies and feature films. She recently directed the multi-award-winning series *Redfern Now* as well as the telemovie *Mabo*, which premiered at SFF 2012. Her feature-directorial work includes the musical hit *Bran Nue Dae*, *One Night the Moon* and *Radiance* (SFF 1998), which screened at Berlin, Sundance and many other international festivals. In 2009 she completed the landmark documentary series *First Australians*. Other documentary work includes the series *Blood Brothers* and *From Spirit to Spirit*. She is currently engaged in the development of multiple TV drama and factual projects through her production company Blackfella Films, one of Australia's leading content creators, which she co-founded in 1992. Rachel lives between Sydney and Alice Springs, the traditional lands of her people, the Arrernte Nation.

The full Jury will be announced on Wednesday 28 May. For up-to-date guest information visit sff.org.au

Robert Altman Retrospective:

Michael Altman is the eldest son of director Robert Altman. At age 14 he wrote the lyrics for 'Suicide is Painless,' the theme song for *M*A*S*H*. He has spent most of his career working in feature film. He founded several technical and service companies relating to motion picture production. In the last 10 years Michael has focused on producing, writing and directing, including Hollywood stage production of *EXIT 10*, several sound track albums and the multi-award-winning documentary film *American Songwriter*. He currently has a number of projects in development and is looking to expand his directing career.

James Benning Retrospective:

James Benning is little known in mainstream film culture, but hugely important to a small but discerning group of curators, critics, academics, and fellow artists from all over the world who continually support him and engage in dialogues about his work. Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, during World War II, James Benning played baseball for the first 20 years of his life, receiving a degree in mathematics while on a baseball scholarship. At the age of 33 he received an MFA from the University of Wisconsin. For the next four years he taught filmmaking at Northwestern University, the University of Wisconsin, the University of Oklahoma and the University of California, San Diego. In 1980 he moved to New York, making films with the aid of grant and German television money. After eight years in New York he moved to Val Verde, California, where he currently resides teaching film and video at California Institute of the Arts.

Non-competition documentaries:

Keep on Keepin' On director **Alan Hicks**, winner of Best New Documentary Director and the Audience Award for Best Documentary at Tribeca. A first-time director/drummer/surfer from Australia, Hicks convinced his surfing mate and cinematographer, Adam Hart, to travel to the U.S. to follow and film 89-year-old jazz legend, **Clark Terry** (Quincy Jones' first teacher) over four years – to document an unlikely mentorship between Terry and a driven, blind piano prodigy, Justin Kauflin, 23.

Dior & I director **Frederic Tcheng** is a French-born filmmaker who has also co-produced, co-edited and shot *Valentino: The Last Emperor*, the 2009 hit documentary shortlisted for the Best Documentary Oscar. He is the co-director of *Diana Vreeland: The Eye Has to Travel*. His collaborations include such varied personalities as the poet Sarah Riggs and the fashion photographer Mikael Jansson. He works as an editor on commercials for brands such as H&M, Jimmy Choo and Ferragamo.

Double Play director **Gabe Klinger**, also presenter of the James Benning retrospective, is a film studies professor, critic, archivist, curator, and filmmaker. His articles have appeared in *Sight & Sound*, *Film Comment*, *Cinema Scope*, and many other publications. Klinger has taught film studies at University of Illinois and Columbia College in Chicago, Illinois, and has worked in the motion-picture departments at George Eastman House, MoMA in New York, and the Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art at Northwestern University. His book on Joe Dante, co-edited by Nil Baskar, will be published by the Austrian Filmmuseum and Slovenian Cinematheque in fall 2013. *Double Play: James Benning and Richard Linklater* is his first feature film.

E-Team co-director **Ross Kauffman** is the director, producer, cinematographer and co-editor of *Born Into Brothels* which won the 2005 Academy Award for Best Documentary. *Born Into Brothels* was shown in over 50 film festivals worldwide, and has since received a multitude of awards. Ross filmed a number of the E-Team missions in Syria and Libya and travelled with them to Moscow, Paris, Berlin, Geneva and beyond. *E-Team* subject **Dr. Anna Neistat** is a specialist in humanitarian crises and works to investigate and expose human-rights violations in crisis situations on a rapid-response basis. She has experience working in Haiti, Zimbabwe, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Armenia, Belarus, Israel, the Philippines and Kenya. Previously, as director of Human Rights Watch's Moscow office, Neistat worked on the conflict in Chechnya and other human rights problems in the former Soviet Union. Neistat also holds an LL.M. degree from Harvard Law School, a J.D. and Ph.D. in law, and an M.S. in history and philology.

Feature guests:

Calvary director **John Michael McDonagh** is an English-born film director and screenwriter of Irish descent. He made his first foray into writing and directing with *The Second Death*, a short film released in 2000. Next McDonagh adapted Robert Drewe's 1991 novel *Our Sunshine* into the screenplay for the 2003 film *Ned Kelly*, which was directed by Australian filmmaker Gregor Jordan. McDonagh gained considerable attention in 2011, with the theatrical release of his feature film directorial debut *The Guard* (SFF2011) starring Brendan Gleeson and Don Cheadle. The film received critical acclaim and went on to become the most financially successful independent Irish film of all time. His brother is the playwright and filmmaker Martin McDonagh (*In Bruges*).

Other filmmaker guests to introduce the films in the 2014 Special Presentations at the State program are: **Gabrielle** actor **Alexandre Landry** on Friday 13 June at 8:35pm and **The Two Faces of January** director **Hossein Amini** on Wednesday 11 June at 8:35pm.

SFF will also welcome the following feature filmmakers: **Appropriate Behaviour** director **Desiree Akhavan**; **Casa Grande** director **Fellipe Barbosa**; **For Those Who Can Tell No Tales** director **Jasmila Zbanic** and actor **Kym Vercoe**; **The Little Death** director **Josh Lawson**; **Siddharth** director **Richie Mehta**; **Touch** director **Christopher Houghton**; producer **Julie Byrne** and actor **Onor Nottle**.

Australian Documentary Foundation Prize Guests:

SFF is pleased to include the following Australian documentary filmmaker guests: **35 Letters** director **Janine Hosking**, **Once My Mother** director **Sophia Turkiewicz** and producer **Rod Freedman**; **All This Mayhem** director **Eddie Martin**; **Black Panther Woman** director and producer **Rachel Perkins** and the film's subject **Marlene Cummins**; **China's 3Dreams** director and producer **Nick Torrens**; **The Last Impresario** director **Gracie Otto** and producer **Nicole O'Donohue**; **Love Marriage in Kabul** director **Amin Palangi** and producer **Pat Fiske**; **The Redfern Story** director **Darlene Johnson** and producer **Sue Milliken**; **Tender** director **Lynette Wallworth** and producer **Kath Shelper**; **Ukraine Is not a Brothel** director and producer **Kitty Green**.

Dendy Short Film Award Guests:

Crochet Noir director **Jessica Harris** and producer **Heamin Kwun**, **Grey Bull** director and screenwriter **Eddy Bell**; **The iMom** director **Ariel Martin**; **I Want to Dance Better at Parties** directors **Matthew Bate** and **Gideon Obarzanek** and producer **Rebecca Summerton**; **Man** director **Richard Hughes** and writer and producer **Dave Christison**; **Showboy** director **Samuel Leighton-Dore** and producer **Diana Burnett**; **Stuffed** director **Warwick Young** and producer **Rachel Argall**; **The Video Dating Tape of Desmond Ray, Aged 33 & ¾** director and screenwriter **Steve Baker**; and **Welcome to Iron Knob** director **Dave Wade** and co-producer **Maxx Corkindale**.

MEET THE FILMMAKERS: SFF TALKS AT THE APPLE STORE:

To celebrate the 2014 Sydney Film Festival and the spirit of fine filmmaking, the Apple Store Sydney once again hosts its free Meet the Filmmakers series, where you can hear esteemed writers, directors, producers and actors discuss their latest projects and answer your questions.

- **Ellar Coltrane and Cathleen Sutherland** Saturday 7 June, 3-4pm
Young actor Ellar Coltrane and producer Cathleen Sutherland discuss the making of Richard Linklater's *Boyhood*. A groundbreaking cinematic experience covering 12 years in the life of a family, it was filmed over short periods from 2002 to 2013, a process that spanned most of Coltrane's childhood. The film screens in SFF's Official Competition.
- **Kasimir Burgess and Matt Nable** Saturday, 14 June, 2-3pm
Following his award-winning shorts, there has been much anticipation over the first feature of Kasimir Burgess. *Fell*, his auspicious feature film debut, screens in its World Premiere in SFF's Official Competition. Burgess and actor Matt Nable will discuss the making of this visually breathtaking film.
- **Frédéric Tcheng** Sunday 15 June, 12:30-1:30pm
French-born filmmaker Frédéric Tcheng discusses the challenges of writing, directing and producing. His latest film *Dior and I*, is an insight into Raf Simons's first haute couture collection as Christian Dior's new artistic director. The film screens in its Australian Premiere at SFF.
- **Gracie Otto** Sunday 15 June, 2-3pm
Australian director Gracie Otto talks about her film *The Last Impresario*, a biographical documentary of Michael White, the playboy who transformed the UK's cultural scene in the 1970s with musicals like *Oh! Calcutta!* and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. The film is a finalist in the Documentary Australia Foundation Award.

Visit apple.com/au/Sydney to see the latest schedule and reserve your spot.

HUB TALKS & PANELS AT TOWN HALL

- **Altman on Altman** Thursday 5 June, 5:30-7pm
In this live recording of the *Hell Is for Hyphenates* podcast, hosts Lee Zachariah and Paul Anthony Nelson run through the filmography of the great Robert Altman with his son Michael.
- **Eames on Eames** Friday 6 June, 6pm
Iconic American designers Charles and Ray Eames were also filmmakers. Grandson and Eames Office director Eames Demetrios presents a program of short films that define the designers' legacy. \$10
- **Trippy Films** Friday 6 June, 8-9pm
Australian Film Critics Association chair Richard Haridy presents an illustrated talk on representations of altered states and psychedelia in cinema, from *Easy Rider* to *Enter the Void*.
- **Panel: Women in Film** Saturday 7 June, 5:30-7pm
How do we measure and improve female representation on film? How do we ensure complex and realistic portrayals of women? What is the Bechdel Test and how can it help disrupt the status quo? Join producer Julie Byrne (*Touch*), film critic Christopher Johnson, screenwriter Natasha Pincus (*Fell*) and Sophia Turkiewicz (*Once My Mother*) as they tackle the issue of vexed gender equality on screen.
- **Film Critics Death Match** Sunday 8 June, 3:30-5pm
Can the indefensible film be defended? Can you write a review in 140 characters or less? What's the weirdest movie ever made? Come and put our panel of film critics to the test in this interactive set of movie review challenges. *Presented in association with the Australian Film Critics Association*
- **It's Not Just An Act: Kate Mulvany Chats with Josh Lawson** Sunday 8 June, 6-7pm
Highly regarded actress Kate Mulvany chats with The Little Death actor and director Josh Lawson, unpacking the filmmaking experience from an actor's point of view. *Presented in association with The Equity Foundation and Screen Australia*
- **Panel: Can Docs Change the Woeld?** Monday 9 June, 3:30-5pm
Can cinema really make a difference? Hear from a panel of passionate activists, including Oscar-winning filmmaker Ross Kauffman, Professor Andrea Durbach, Director of the Australian Human Rights Centre at UNSW, Good Pitch² Australia's Malinda Wink and Human Rights Watch Emergency Team member Anna Neistat (*E-Team*).
- **Panel: Action, Romance and Silliness – Great Cinematic Moments** Monday 9 June, 6-7:30pm
Fun, playful and full of banter this special panel discussion delves into the history of film to examine memorable screen moments in the action and romance genres: the good, the bad and the cringeworthy. *Presented in association with AFTRS.*
- **Panel: Cross-Pollination – The Hive Project** Tuesday 10 June, 6-7:30pm
HIVE Lab alumni share their experience of this groundbreaking project, which aims to nurture screen-based creative ideas that cut across artistic boundaries. Panelists include filmmakers Lynette Wallworth (*Tender*), Gideon Obarzanek and Matt Bate (*I Want to Dance Better at Parties*) and Adelaide Film Festival director Amanda Duthie. *Presented in association with the Australia Council for the Arts.*
- **In Conversation: Alan Hicks** Wednesday 11 June, 6-7pm
OzDox presents an in-depth conversation with US-based Australian musician and documentary filmmaker Alan Hicks (*Keep on Keepin' On*).
- **In Conversation: David Zellner** Thursday 12 June, 6-7:30pm
The Australian Directors Guild presents an in-depth conversation with American filmmaker David Zellner, director of the award-winning *Kumiko, the Treasure Hunter*.

- **Friday on My Mind: Pan Nalin** Friday 13 June, 6-7:30pm
AFTRS presents an in-depth conversation with Indian filmmaker Pan Nalin (*Faith Connections*), as part of their popular Friday on My Mind series.
- **Junkee Debate: The Death of Horror?** Friday 13 June, 8-9pm
Celebrate Friday the 13th with pop culture and comment site Junkee, whose film experts pick sides: can cinema still scare us, or has the genre become a joke?
- **Micro-Talks** Saturday 14 June, 4-5:30pm
A series of four entertaining and fascinating 15-minute talks by academics from the University of Sydney, including Associate Professor Catherine Driscoll on teen movies and Dr Rebecca Sheehan on masculinity in cinema.
- **The Dom & Giles Talk Show** Saturday 14 June, 8-9:30pm
The Chaser's Dom Knight and entertainment journalist Giles Hardie take an irreverent look back at the Festival with very special surprise guests from the line-up.
- **Panel: Dendy Awards Finalists** Sunday 15 June, 2-3:30pm

Meet the Dendy Awards finalists at this enlightening panel hosted by Metro Screen, and grill them on what it took to bring their acclaimed short film from idea to red-carpet premiere.

The 61st Sydney Film Festival runs 4-15 June and brings a packed program of screenings and special events to even more venues across Sydney. For tickets and full up-to-date program information visit sff.org.au

ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

Sydney Film Festival screens feature films, documentaries, short films and animated films across the city at the State Theatre, Event Cinemas George Street, Dendy Opera Quays, the Art Gallery of NSW, Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace Cremorne, the Apple Store, SFFTV at Martin Place, Skyline Drive-In Blacktown, and the Festival Hub at Town Hall.

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

Sydney Film Festival also presents 12 films that vie for the Official Competition, a highly respected international 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 include: *Only God Forgives* (2013), *Alps* (2012), *A Separation* (2011) – which went on to win an Academy Award, *Heartbeats* (2010), *Bronson* (2009) and *Hunger* (2008).

The 61st Sydney Film Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Screen NSW, the Federal Government through Screen Australia, and the City of Sydney. The Festival's Strategic partner is the NSW Government through Destination NSW.

What: Sydney Film Festival

When: 4-15 June, 2014

Tickets & Info: 1300 733 733 sff.org.au

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