

SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

6–17 JUNE 2018

MEDIA RELEASE

WEDNESDAY 20 JUNE 2018

65TH SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL AUDIENCE AWARDS ANNOUNCED

The 65th Sydney Film Festival wrapped on Sunday 17 June with the Australian premiere screening of heart-warming indie comedy *Hearts Beat Loud* at the State Theatre.

Today the Festival announced the **Audience Awards**, the list of the people's top five features and documentaries. Winner for best narrative feature went to *The Insult* directed by **Ziad Doueiri**; and winner for best documentary went to *Backtrack Boys* directed by **Catherine Scott**.

Sydney Film Festival CEO Leigh Small said: "The Festival spread out further this year to include cinemas at Moore Park and expand attendance at Randwick and Casula. Over 170,000 people enjoyed films from 66 countries and our own filmmaking community."

"Audiences of all ages and backgrounds ventured away from their personal screens to attend the Sydney Film Festival cinemas – much to the delight of the filmmakers. Virpi Suutari, Finnish director of *Entrepreneur*, summed it up well; 'It's one of the most open, most receptive, curious audiences that I've ever had in any festival. Really, it was a wonderful experience,' she said."

Sydney Film Festival Director Nashen Moodley said: "It is our delight to report that Sydney Film Festival audiences have spoken, revealing *The Insult* and *Backtrack Boys* as the winners of the feature and documentary categories in the Audience Awards."

"Grounded in long-standing historical tensions and prejudice, *The Insult* is a truly monumental film that has clearly left an impact on audiences. Ultimately, it is a plea for reconciliation, forgiveness and peace."

"The Festival is also thrilled to see all five of the top documentaries focus on unique Australian stories. This enthusiastic response is an undeniable indicator of an appetite for great Australian cinema, that local audiences find real resonance with," he said.

"From a roaring start with *The Breaker Upperers* to a soul-enriching conclusion with *Hearts Beat Loud*, this year's festival has reminded all of us of the joy that comes from cinema. Our city's theatres have buzzed with excitement and now the Festival's regional NSW tour kicks off in Newcastle later this week," said **Minister for the Arts, Don Harwin**.

"Every year the Sydney Film Festival delivers such a wonderfully diverse and engaging program, bringing the magical world of cinema to people from all different walks of life. This year we were proud to once again provide a home for The Hub at Sydney Town Hall and provide support for what is truly one of the best cultural festivals in our city," said **Lord Mayor of Sydney, Clover Moore**.



Nine feature films and two shorts from this year's Festival will premiere in Newcastle this weekend when the Travelling Film Festival brings *The Breaker Upperers* (SFF Opening Night 2018), *Ága, Pig, Don't Worry, He Won't Get Far On Foot, Foxtrot, The Heiresses* (Winner, this year's Sydney Film Prize), *Transit, Jirga*, and *American Animals* to Tower Cinemas from Friday 22 – Sunday 24 June.

THE AUDIENCE AWARDS

The Audience Award for Best Narrative Feature Top Five:

1. *The Insult*, directed by **Ziad Doueiri** (France, Lebanon)
2. *Searching*, directed by **Aneesh Chaganty** (USA)
3. *Rafiki*, directed by **Wanuri Kahiu** (Kenya)
4. *An Elephant Sitting Still*, directed by **Hu Bo** (China)
- = 5. *Ága*, directed by **Milko Lazarov** (Bulgaria, Germany, France)
- = 5. *Leave No Trace*, directed by **Debra Granik** (USA)

The Audience Award for Best Documentary Top Five:

1. *Backtrack Boys*, directed by **Catherine Scott** (Australia)
2. *Teach a Man to Fish*, directed by **Grant Leigh Saunders** (Australia)
3. *I Used to Be Normal: A Boyband Fangirl Story*, directed by **Jessica Leski** (Australia)
4. *Oyster*, directed by **Kim Beamish** (Australia)
5. *Jill Bilcock: Dancing the Invisible*, directed by **Axel Grigor** (Australia)

What: Travelling Film Festival Newcastle

When: Friday 22 June - Sunday 24 June, 2018

Where: Tower Cinemas, 183 – 185 King St, Newcastle NSW 2300

Full program details and ticketing information can be found at: sff.org.au/tff/program/newcastle

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

EDITOR'S NOTES

OTHER 2018 SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL AWARD WINNERS INCLUDE:

The Heiresses, the debut feature of Paraguayan filmmaker **Marcelo Martinessi**, was awarded the prestigious Sydney Film Prize, out of a selection of 12 Official Competition films, at the Festival's Closing Night Gala.

Sydney filmmaker **Ben Lawrence** was awarded the Documentary Australia Foundation Award for Australian Documentary's \$10,000 cash prize for *Ghosthunter*, about a Western Sydney security guard and part time ghost hunter searching for his absent father.

The **Dendy Awards for Australian Short Films** were announced; awarding **Second Best** the Dendy Live Action Short, directed by Alyssa McClelland. Tom Noakes' *Nursery Rhymes* took out the Rouben Mamoulian Award for Best Director, and the Yoram Gross Animation Award went to Andrew Goldsmith and Bradley Slabe's *Lost and Found*.



The **Event Cinema Australian Short Screenplay Award** was awarded to Indigenous screenwriter **Tyson Mowarin** of *Undiscovered Country*.

The \$10,000 Sydney-UNESCO City of Film Award, bestowed by Create NSW to a trail-blazing NSW-based screen practitioner, went to Indigenous Australian filmmaker **Warwick Thornton** (*We Don't Need A Map*, SFF 2017 Opening Night Film).

ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

From Wednesday 6 June to Sunday 17 June 2018, the 65th 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.

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: *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 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 65th Sydney Film Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW and Destination NSW, the Federal Government through Screen Australia and the City of Sydney. The Festival's Strategic Partner is the NSW Government via its tourism and major events agency, Destination NSW.

