

MEDIA RELEASE: WEDNESDAY 10 MAY 2023

2023 SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL AWARDS

The 70th Sydney Film Festival has announced the return of accolades to be awarded at the 2023 Festival including the 15th year of the Festival's Official Competition's Sydney Film Prize.

The 2023 Festival will have the largest prize pool of \$160,000+ for filmmakers and their films in the Festival's history. Prize money on offer this year includes:

- Official Competition and Sydney Film Prize - \$60,000
- Documentary Australia Award for Australian Documentary - \$20,000
- Sustainable Future Award - \$40,000
- Sydney UNESCO City of Film Award - \$10,000
- Dendy Live Action Short Award - \$7,000
- Rouben Mamoulian Award - \$7,000
- Yoram Gross Animation Award - \$5,000
- AFTRS Craft Award - \$7,000
- Event Cinemas Rising Talent Award - \$7,000

OFFICIAL COMPETITION

This year, the Official Competition celebrates 15 years of awarding the prestigious Sydney Film Prize of \$60,000 to a film that demonstrates audacious, cutting-edge and courageous cinema.

In competition are: *Afire*, *Art College 1994*, *Bad Behaviour*, *Cobweb*, *The Dark Emu Story*, *Fallen Leaves*, *Joram*, *Monster*, *The Mother of All Lies*, *The New Boy*, *Past Lives* and *Scrapper*.

"These films push boundaries, challenge norms, and ignite conversations, offering unique perspectives and captivating storytelling," said Festival Director Nashen Moodley.

Australian films competing are the Opening Night film *The New Boy*, a beguiling new film by Cannes Caméra d'Or winning Australian filmmaker Warwick Thornton. 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. The Official Competition also presents 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.

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 World 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.

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Direct from the 2023 Cannes Film Festival competition is **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**, a film 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**. 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 at the State Theatre. Previous winners were *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 six World Premieres and two Australian Premieres) will contest the 2023 Documentary Australia Award.

In competition are: **The Cape**, **The Carnival**, **Climate Changers**, **The Defenders**, **Keeping Hope**, **Kindred**, **The Last Daughter**, **Man on Earth**, **Marungka Tjalatjunu (Dipped in Black)** and **Rachel's Farm**.

Documentary Australia CEO Dr Mitzi Goldman said "This is our tenth year celebrating Australian documentary at the festival in its 70th year. We are so pleased to be able to acknowledge and reward our documentary filmmakers and particularly happy that we have been able to double the prize this year to showcase how important this award is to us an organisation in support of the sector."

"It is a very strong year for documentary in competition this year and I thank you all for your vision, tenacity and truth telling. Your stories reinforce so much of our common purpose and reason for being," she continued.

Australian documentary World Premiere screenings include: **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**, a film that documents



Australian scientist and conservationist Tim Flannery on his global search for genuine leadership on climate change; ***Keeping Hope*** which follows Indigenous actor Mark Coles Smith return home to the Kimberley to interrogate the alarming suicide rate; and ***Kindred***, from filmmakers Gillian Moody and Adrian Russell Wills, a personal journey into the emotional landscape of family, love and loss.

Australian Premieres: Berlin Film Festival Silver Bear winning short ***Marungka Tjalatjuru (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's (*Chasing Buddha*, SFF 2000, Dendy Award winner; *Hail*, SFF 2011; *Ruin*, SFF 2014) ***Man on Earth*** which examines society's approach to death and dying; and ***The Last Daughter***, a film that documents Wiradjuri woman Brenda Matthews' search to uncover the truth about her government-ordered abduction as a child.

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 54th year in 2023, and screening over two sessions on 17 and 18 June.

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

Nick Hayes, Head of Sales and Acquisitions, Dendy/Icon who sponsors the Dendy Awards said, "For the last 35 festivals Dendy Cinemas has sponsored the short film awards, helping showcase Australian filmmaking talent. Congratulations to this year's finalists and congratulations to the Festival on its 70th edition."

The competition for the Australian Short Films was established by the Festival in 1970. Winners of the Best Live Action Short Film Award and the Yoram Gross Animation Award (sponsored by Sandra and Guy Gross in memory of the late Yoram Gross) are Academy Award-eligible, opening new pathways for many Australian filmmakers.

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?***

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 largest 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.

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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, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the Australian Museum, will also all individually compete for the coveted award.

THE SYDNEY UNESCO CITY OF FILM AWARD

Chris Godfrey is this year's recipient of the Sydney UNESCO City of Film Award, which recognises a trailblazing NSW-based screen practitioner whose work stands for innovation, imagination and high impact, with a \$10,000 cash prize awarded by Screen NSW. Previous winners include **Karina Holden**, **Warwick Thornton**, **Leah Purcell**, and **Lynette Wallworth**.

THE GIO AUDIENCE AWARDS

The GIO Audience Awards are the Festival's people's choice awards, where Festival fans get to vote for the most popular films at the Festival. Using the SFF70 2023 app and website, Festival goers are invited to rate films after each screening and the winning films are announced in the week following the Festival. Four awards are presented, for best Australian narrative feature, best international narrative feature, best Australian documentary, and best international documentary.

Previous winners have included: *Evicted! A Modern Romance* and *Keep Stepping* (2022), *Beautiful Minds* and *Blind Ambition* (2021), *Sequin in a Blue Room* and *Martha: A Picture Story* (2019), *The Insult* and *Backtrack Boys* (2018), *Ali's Wedding* and *Roller Dreams* (2017); *Mustang* and *Zach's Ceremony* (2016); *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* and *Wide Open Sky* (2015); *Winter Sleep* and *Love Marriage in Kabul* (2014); and *Mystery Road* and *Big Name No Blanket* (2013).

SIGNATURE DINOSAUR DESIGNS AWARDS

The winners of all Sydney Film Festival awards are presented with the Festival's signature mesmeric swirl award, designed and handmade in Sydney by SFF partner Dinosaur Designs.

The full Sydney Film Festival 2023 program can be found online at sff.org.au.

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 for more information or to book.

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



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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.

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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