



MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 11.00am WEDNESDAY 10 MAY 2017

FIRST NATION FILMMAKERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

The 64th Sydney Film Festival (7–18 June) in partnership with Screen Australia's Indigenous Department proudly continues support for First Nation storytelling from Australia and around the world.

Leading First Nation Australian directors will premiere their new works at the Festival, including **Warwick Thornton's** Opening Night film and Official Competition contender *We Don't Need a Map*, and **Wayne Blair** and **Leah Purcell's** highly anticipated second series of *Cleverman*.

"Sydney Film Festival is committed to showcasing First Nation filmmakers and storytelling," said **Festival Director Nashen Moodley**. "Throughout the Festival audiences will find examples of outstanding Indigenous cinema, from the red sands of Western Australia to the snowy landscapes of the Arctic Circle. These films promise to surprise, provoke and push boundaries."

"We're proud to continue our partnership with Sydney Film Festival to showcase these powerful documentaries from the world's leading Indigenous filmmakers, as well as premiere the innovative work of emerging new talent from around the country," said **Penny Smallacombe, Head of Indigenous at Screen Australia**.

"We are very pleased to see five films commissioned by NITV take their place alongside such prestigious works from across the world," said **Tanya Orman, NITV Channel Manager**.

Two important Australian First Nation documentaries will also have their premieres at the Festival. *Connection to Country*, directed by **Tyson Mowarin**, about the Indigenous people of the Pilbara's battle to preserve Australia's 40,000-year-old cultural heritage from the ravages of mining, and filmmaker **Erica Glynn's** raw, heartfelt and funny journey of adult Aboriginal students and their teachers as they discover the transformative power of reading and writing for the first time (*In My Own Words*). These ground-breaking documentaries, alongside film *We Don't Need A Map*, are part of Screen Australia and NITV's initiative **A Moment In History**.

Two remarkable Canadian First Nations titles will screen as part of **Focus on Canada: Angry Inuk** from **Alethea Arnaquq-Baril**, about the anti-sealing movement's adverse impact on Inuit communities; and a thrilling Arctic version of John Ford's classic western *The Searchers* (1956), *Maliglutit*, directed by **Zacharias Kunuk**.

Screening in the Festival's retrospective program are two groundbreaking Australian documentaries: **Essie Coffey's My Survival as an Aboriginal**, considered to be the first documentary directed by an Australian Indigenous woman, and the 1981 documentary *Two Laws*, made by the **Borroloola Aboriginal Community**.

Two short documentary initiatives from NITV and Screen Australia's Songlines on Screen will also have their premieres: *Finding Mawiranga*, directed by past SFF Documentary Australia Foundation Award winner **Dylan River** (who also shot part of Warwick Thornton's documentary, *We Don't Need a Map*), and *Marrimarrigun* from **Kimberley West**.



Three short films by emerging talents **Perun Bonser** (*Blight*), **Bjorn Stewart** (*Last Drinks at Frida's*) and **Nakkiah Lui's** *Brown Lips* – also competing for a Dendy Award – will screen for the first time. The films were funded through Screen Australia and ABC's Indigenous Departments' Pitch Black Shorts initiative.

First Nation screenings, guests and talks include:

Films

- **Angry Inuk (Focus on Canada)**
Saturday 17 June, 2.30pm, Dendy Opera Quays
- **Brown Lips (Dendy Awards for Australian Short Films)**
Saturday 17 June, 2.30pm, Event Cinemas George St
Sunday 18 June, 1.45pm, Event Cinemas George St
- **Cleverman 2 (The Box Set)**
Saturday 17 June, 6.30pm, Event Cinemas George St
- **Connection to Country | Introduced by Australian filmmaker Tyson Mowarin (DAF)**
Tuesday 13 June, 6.30pm, Event Cinemas George St
- **Finding Mawiranga (Short - Songlines on Screen)**
Tuesday 13 June, 6.30pm, Event Cinemas George St
- **In My Own Words | Introduced by Australian filmmaker Erica Glynn (DAF)**
Friday 9 June, 6.30pm, Event Cinemas George St
Wednesday 14 June, 10.00am, State Theatre
- **Last Drinks at Frida's, screens with Porto**
Friday 16 June, 6.15pm, Dendy Newtown
Saturday 17 June, 2.00pm, Dendy Newtown
- **Maliglutit (Focus on Canada), screens with short Blight**
Thursday 8 June, 6.15pm, Dendy Newtown
Sunday 18 June, 6.30pm, Dendy Opera Quays
- **Marrimarrigun (Short - Songlines on Screen)**
Friday 9 June, 6.30pm, Event Cinemas George St
Wednesday 14 June, 10.00am, State Theatre
- **My Survival as an Aboriginal, Two Laws (Feminism & Film Retrospective)**
Sunday 18 June, 2.55pm, Event Cinemas George St
- **We Don't Need a Map | Introduced by Australian filmmaker Warwick Thornton (Official Competition)**
Wednesday 7 June, 7.30pm, State Theatre
Sunday 11 June, 1.35pm, State Theatre
Tuesday 13 June, 4.35pm, State Theatre

Talks

- **In Conversation with Warwick Thornton (*We Don't Need a Map*)**
Sunday 11 June, 3.45pm, SFF Hub Town Hall

Sydney Film Festival runs 7 – 18 June 2017.

Tickets for Sydney Film Festival 2017 are on sale now. Please call 1300 733 733 or visit sff.org.au for more information.

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

ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

From **Wednesday 7 June** to **Sunday 18 June 2017**, the 64th 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: *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 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, Randwick Ritz, Casula Powerhouse, the Festival Hub at Sydney Town Hall and SFF Outdoor Screen in Pitt Street Mall.

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.

The 64th 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.

FEATURES

MALIGLUTIT

Director, Screenwriter: Alethea Arnaquq-Baril | Canada | 85mins | In Inuktitut and English with English Subtitles | Australian Premiere

Kunuk masterfully reimagines classic cinema to bring his people and their history to the forefront. Set in 1913, *Maliglutit* has a timeless quality, and patiently provides insight into Inuit life before a pivotal event. When Kuanana's home is attacked by raiders, relatives are killed and his wife and daughter kidnapped. The Inuk man has no option but to seek revenge and rescue his family. Setting out across the Arctic, aided by his family's spirit helper, the loon, he begins an arduous chase. Taking full advantage of the spellbinding landscape and casting members of his First Nations community, Kunuk weaves a magical and expressive tale.

DOCUMENTARIES

ANGRY INUK

Director, Screenwriter: Alethea Arnaquq-Baril | Canada | 85mins | In Inuktitut and English with English Subtitles | Australian Premiere

Stories in the media of brutality and exploitation were at odds with Arnaquq-Baril's childhood memories of seal hunting with her family on remote Baffin Island. Her people were accused of terrible things, which didn't reflect her experience. Environmental groups used footage of baby seals being clubbed decades after this was banned, and falsely claimed that the seal population was endangered. Arnaquq-Baril believes the Inuit approach is ethical and sustainable, but when trying to discuss this with activists, no one returns her calls. This passionate documentary examines the challenges faced by the Inuit community – not least when wealthy nations make the rules that negatively impact their way of life.



CONNECTION TO COUNTRY

Director: Tyson Mowarin | Australia | 57mins | In English and Ngarluma with English Subtitles | World Premiere

In the heart of Western Australia's Pilbara region sits the Burrup Peninsula (or Murujuga). It is host to the largest concentration of rock art in the world, dating back over 40,000 years. It's a dramatic and ancient landscape so sacred that some parts shouldn't be looked upon at all, except by Traditional Owners. Waves of industrialisation and development threaten sites all over the region, but the people of the Pilbara - forever connected to country, forever responsible – are fighting back. Documenting the rock art, recording sacred sites and battling to get their unique cultural heritage recognised, 'digitised' and celebrated.

IN MY OWN WORDS

Director, Screenwriter: Erica Glynn | Australia | 63mins | In English | World Premiere

Raw, heartfelt, sometimes painstaking but often funny, *In My Own Words* follows the journey of adult Aboriginal students and their teachers as they discover the transformative power of reading and writing for the first time in their lives. "They don't think they can do it, but I know they can", says indefatigable class organiser Mary. Erica Glynn's documentary focuses on a classroom in Brewarrina, a rural northwest NSW town with a majority Aboriginal population. Research reveals that 45-65% of Aboriginal adults are functionally illiterate. Filming every day of the 13-week course, Glynn captures the woman and men, the poverty and hardship, behind this sobering statistic.

WE DON'T NEED A MAP

Director: Warwick Thornton | Australia | 85mins | In English, Warlpiri, Wardaman, Dhuwala and Dhuwaya with English Subtitles | World Premiere

In 2009, Warwick Thornton's *Samson and Delilah* won the Camera d'Or at Cannes and he was nominated for Australian of the Year. When asked at a press conference what his main concern would be if he received Australia's highest honour, he replied, "that the Southern Cross is becoming the new Swastika". Seven years later, Thornton takes us on a journey through this five-star constellation's astronomical, colonial and Indigenous history to the present day. For Aboriginal people the meaning of this heavenly body is deeply spiritual. By contrast, the star-adorned Eureka Flag was emblematic of protest and defiance from its first appearance, a quality that caused it to be adopted by activists, and lately, the darker side of Australian nationalism. *We Don't Need a Map* doesn't shy away from the tough questions about the place of the Southern Cross in the Australian psyche, but Thornton's cavalier spirit and inventive filmmaking skilfully balances the provocative and the pleasurable.

THE BOX SET

CLEVERMAN 2

Director: Wayne Blair | Australia, New Zealand | 102mins | In English and Gumbaynggirr | World Premiere

Sexy, bloody, thought provoking and startlingly original, *Cleverman* boasts an acclaimed ensemble cast that includes Iain Glen (*Game of Thrones*), Golden Globe nominee Frances O'Connor (*The Missing*), Hunter Page-Lochard (*The Sapphires*), and Rob Collins (*The Lion King* on stage). The impressive creatures and effects are by world-renowned Weta Workshop (*Lord of the Rings* trilogy, *The Hobbit* trilogy, *Avatar*). The festival is proud to be showcasing brand new episodes of this inventive Australian series, and to bring Koen and the Hairypeople to the big screen.

FEMINISM & FILM RETROSPECTIVE

MY SURVIVAL AS AN ABORIGINAL

Director: Essie Coffey | Australia | 50mins | In English

TWO LAWS



Director, Producer: Borroloola Tribal Council with Carolyn Strachan and Alessandro Cavadini |
Australia | 70mins | In English

TALKS

IN CONVERSATION WITH WARWICK THORNTON

Following the screening of *We Don't Need A Map*, join filmmaker and artist Warwick Thornton in conversation with film writer Sandy George.

