

SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL UNVEILS FINALISTS FOR 2021 DOCUMENTARY AUSTRALIA FOUNDATION AWARD FOR AUSTRALIAN DOCUMENTARY

The 68th Sydney Film Festival has announced 12 new Australian documentaries selected to contest the **Documentary Australia Foundation Award for Australian Documentary**. Selected to be screened in the Festival's original August dates, the films are due to be screened in SFF's November program.

The winning film will be presented with a **\$10,000 cash prize** at the Festival's Closing Night on Sunday 14 November. 2021 marks the twelfth year of the competition, and the eighth year the prize has been supported by the Documentary Australia Foundation.

Sydney Film Festival Head of Programs & Documentary Programmer Jenny Neighbour said, "We are thrilled to once again invite audiences to come together and experience these unforgettable true stories captured and shared by Australia's very best documentary filmmakers."

"From exposing racism in Australia's criminal justice system to an evocative reflection on the misogyny endured by our first female Prime Minister, this year's documentaries will resonate with audiences long after the final credits stop rolling," he said.

Powerful First Nations stories include: ***Incarceration Nation***, in which Dean Gibson (*Wik vs Queensland*, SFF 2018) lays bare Australia's appalling history of Indigenous incarceration; and ***The Bowraville Murders***, chronicling the epic battle for justice fought by the families of three Aboriginal children murdered 30 years ago in the rural NSW town.

Strong Female Lead, a shocking expose of the media, public and political treatment of Julia Gillard; and ***Ithaka***, Director Ben Lawrence's (*Ghosthunter*, winner SFF 2018) powerhouse look into John Shipton's determined public advocacy for his son, Julian Assange, are both commanding documentaries with a political focus.

Pertinent explorations of contemporary issues include: Sascha Ettinger Epstein's (*The Pink House*, SFF winner 2017) ***The Department***, which delves into the lives of workers and families entwined within NSW's child protection system; and ***A Fire Inside***, a reflection on Australia's 2019-20 bushfires and the selfless acts of everyday Aussies that inspired the nation.

Artists take centre stage in ***I'm Wanita***, where audiences meet Tamworth's renegade 'Queen of Honky Tonk' on her journey to Nashville to record an album; and ***Unseen Skies***, which sees visionary American artist Trevor Paglen attempt his most audacious project yet – to uncover State and corporate surveillance operations. And in ***When the Camera Stopped Rolling***, Jane Castle's poignant documentary about her filmmaker mother Lili Fraser and an eye-opening chronicle of women's roles in the film industry.

The program also reflects on important moments in history: **Television Event** provides a fascinating look back at the production and aftermath of a controversial 1983 made-for-TV movie that imagined the impact of a nuclear attack on the USA; and **Under the Volcano** Gracie Otto's (*The Last Impresario*, SFF 2014) deep dive into the story of Montserrat's celebrated recording studio and the legendary musicians who frequented it – including Elton John and The Police.

Rounding out the program, a new look at one of the most notorious teen movies ever made, in **The Kids** from Eddie Martin (*All This Mayhem*, SFF 2014). The film revisits the cast of Larry Clark's notorious indie cult classic *Kids* twenty-six years after its original release, providing a snapshot of the lives of the cast members who didn't hit the big time.

Documentary Australia Foundation CEO Dr Mitzi Goldman said, "It is not only more important than ever to screen, view and award excellence in the documentary genre in these strange times, it is a joy and an honour to be able to share these powerful films and to celebrate their excellence."

"The award that Documentary Australia Foundation gives to the winner in this competition is only a small measure of our appreciation of the commitment, the artistry, the tenacity and resilience of Australian documentary filmmakers."

"It's not easy to finance these films, they often take many years to make, they confront traumatic experiences and carry them in profound and poetic narratives to audiences far and wide. I'm proud to have spent my working life in the documentary sector and I thank you all for the dedication and love that you have given to your subjects and your art," she said.

In previous years, all the films selected for the Documentary Australia Foundation competition enjoyed their premiere screening at the annual June Sydney Film Festival. With the change of the festival dates, due to the impact of COVID-19, a number of the films in this year's competition will be broadcast prior to the 2021 Festival.

Past winners of the Australian documentary prize at Sydney Film Festival are: *Descent* (2020); *She Who Must Be Obeeyed* (2019); *Ghosthunter* (2018); *The Pink House* (2017); *In the Shadow of the Hill* (2016); *Only the Dead* (2015); *35 Letters* (2014); *Buckskin* (2013); *Killing Anna* (2012); *Life in Movement* (2011), and; *The Snowman* (2010). In 2009 the inaugural prize was shared between *Contact* and *A Good Man* (each film received a \$10,000 cash prize).

TICKETING & VIEWING

Flexipasses are also on sale and can be redeemed for the Documentary Australia Foundation Award for Australian Documentary line-up:

- Flexipass 10: \$165
- Flexipass 20: \$310
- Flexipass 30: \$435
- Youth Pass 6 (15-24 Years): \$75

The Festival will reveal its **Full Program** in coming weeks, with subscriptions valid for the new dates.

Flexipasses to Sydney Film Festival 2021 are on sale now.
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](#)**

EDITOR'S NOTES

ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

From Wednesday 3 November to Sunday 14 November 2021, the 68th 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.

The 68th Sydney Film Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Screen NSW, the Federal Government through Screen Australia and the City of Sydney.

