

## MEDIA RELEASE

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01am THURSDAY 07 OCTOBER 2021**

# 2021 Sydney Film Festival Awards

The 68<sup>th</sup> Sydney Film Festival has announced the return of eight accolades, and one new Sustainable Futures Award to be presented at the 2021 Festival. This year will be the 13<sup>th</sup> year of the Festival's Official Competition awarding the Sydney Film Prize.

All films will screen at Sydney Film Festival in cinema (3–14 November 2021), with a selection also screening in SFF On Demand's online program (12-21 November).

### OFFICIAL COMPETITION

"This year, the Official Competition celebrates the return of the prestigious Sydney Film Prize, now in its 13<sup>th</sup> year," said **Festival Director Nashen Moodley**. "Featuring a selection of innovative and provocative works from the world's finest auteurs, the Prize is awarded to the most audacious, cutting-edge and courageous film."

"Among the 12 competing films are Cannes Palme d'Or nominees: Ryusuke Hamaguchi's (*Wheel Of Fortune and Fantasy*, SFF 2021) ***Drive My Car***, an intricate adaptation of a Haruki Murakami short; and ***Memoria***, Apichatpong Weerasethakul's (*Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*, SFF 2010) mystical and mysterious new film, executive produced by and starring Tilda Swinton (*The Souvenir*, SFF 2019)," he said.

"International award winners include: Grand Jury Prize Winner at Venice Film Festival, ***The Hand of God*** from Oscar-winning director Paolo Sorrentino's (*The Great Beauty*); and Winner of the Sundance World Cinema Grand Jury Prize ***Flee***, a thrilling documentary fusing animation and archival material to tell the story of a gay Afghan refugee in Denmark."

"Berlinale Golden Bear winners are ***Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn***, Radu Jude's scathing and hilarious critique of Romanian society; and ***There Is No Evil***, from banned Iranian filmmaker Mohammad Rasoulof - a powerful take on the death penalty and its impact on Iranian society."

"Also in competition is Australian contender, ***The Drover's Wife The Legend of Molly Johnson***, a period Western written, directed by and starring AACTA award winner Leah Purcell".

"2017 Sydney Film Prize Winner Ildikó Enyedi's Cannes selected ***The Story of My Wife***; Jasmila Žbanić's Oscar-nominated thriller ***Quo Vadis, Aida?***; ***Undine***, a supernatural take on a European fable about a water nymph; hilarious and poignant BAFTA nominee ***Limbo***; and ***Petite Maman***, Céline Sciamma's evocative and magical tale of mothers and daughters, will also compete" he said.

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The winner of the Sydney Film Prize is announced at the Festival's **Closing Night Gala on Sunday 14 November** and will join the ranks of celebrated prior winners: *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).

## DOCUMENTARY AUSTRALIA FOUNDATION AWARD

12 finalists have been announced for the **Documentary Australia Foundation Award for Australian Documentary**. The Foundation awards a \$10,000 cash prize to the winning film.

The twelve films in competition are: *The Bowraville Murders*, *The Department*, *A Fire Inside*, *Incarceration Nation*, *I'm Wanita*, *Ithaka*, *The Kids*, *Strong Female Lead*, *Television Event*, *Under the Volcano*, *Unseen Skies*, and *When the Camera Stopped Rolling*.

**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.

Past winners of the Australian documentary prize at Sydney Film Festival are: *Descent* (2020); *She Who Must Be Obedient* (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).

## THE DENDY AWARDS FOR AUSTRALIAN SHORT FILMS

12 finalists in the Dendy Awards, Australia's longest running short film competition, celebrating its 52<sup>nd</sup> year, will screen over two sessions on 13 and 14 November. Three prize winners: **The Dendy Live Action Short Award**, **The Rouben Mamoulian Award for Best Director** and the **Yoram Gross Animation Award**, will be announced at the Festival's Closing Night.

**Nick Hayes, Head of Theatrical Sales and Acquisitions, Dendy / Icon** said, "Short films have a special place in the hearts of all filmmakers. It is where they first try out their ideas and skills. It is the first time most will ever use the credit of Director. For some filmmakers it will be a form to which they



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return, even when they have established themselves in the industry. Such is the joy of the perfectly formed film and Dendy is once again so proud to support all the 2021 Dendy finalists.”

The competition for Australian Short Films was established by the Festival in 1970 and have been sponsored by Dendy Cinemas since 1989. 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.

## SUSTAINABLE FUTURE AWARD

New to SFF, the inaugural Sustainable Future Award is a \$10,000 cash prize presented to a narrative or documentary film of any length that deepens our knowledge and awareness of the impact of the global climate emergency. The Award is philanthropically motivated and funded by a syndicate of climate activists who believe deeply in the power of film to heighten community awareness of the need for action.

Eight documentaries from around the world have been shortlisted including: Australian documentaries, *A Fire Inside* and *Burning*, both exploring the 2019-20 bushfires in very different ways, inspiring life story of an eco-warrior in *The Seeds of Vandana Shiva*, tales from the frontlines of climate change in *The Magnitude of All Things*, Jen Peedom and the Australian Chamber Orchestra’s latest collaboration *River* narrated by Willem Dafoe, stunningly beautiful yet shocking Georgian documentary *Taming the Garden*, and two from Scandinavia - Berlinale-selected *From the Wild Sea* and CPH:DOX-selected *How to Kill a Cloud*.

The winner of the Sustainable Future Award will be revealed on Monday 11 October 2021.

## THE SYDNEY–UNESCO CITY OF FILM AWARD

Presented by Create NSW, this annual award recognises a trailblazing NSW-based screen practitioner whose work stands for innovation, imagination and high impact. A filmmaker will be awarded a \$10,000 cash prize at the Closing Night Gala. Previous winners include: **Warwick Thornton**, **Leah Purcell**, and **Lynette Wallworth**.

## THE AUDIENCE AWARDS

**The 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 SFF 2021 app, Festivalgoers are invited to rate films after each screening. Two awards are presented: one for best narrative feature and one for best documentary. Previous winners have included: *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).



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## 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 our partners **Dinosaur Designs**.

**Sydney Film Festival runs in cinema 3–14 November 2021. SFF On Demand's online program runs 12-21 November. Tickets to Sydney Film Festival 2021 are on sale now. Please call 1300 733 733 or visit [sff.org.au](http://sff.org.au) for more information.**

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

### EDITOR'S NOTES

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#### 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, in-depth discussions with film guests, and now a virtual offering with SFF On Demand streaming nationally from 12-21 November.

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](http://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.

