

MEDIA RELEASE

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SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL CELEBRATES FIRST NATIONS STORYTELLING

The 69th Sydney Film Festival program, with the support of Screen Australia's First Nations Department and Deutsche Bank, proudly continues its commitment to showcasing First Nations storytelling from Australia and around the world in 2022.

"Sydney Film Festival's 2022 program comprises twelve titles directed or written by First Nations creatives," said **Festival Director Nashen Moodley**. "From a 10 director-led anthology on the survival and resilience of First Nation peoples of the Pacific region in *We Are Still Here*, to an inspiring story of an incredible Māori leader in *Whina*, this year's films, whether tackling the past, present or future, immerses audiences into the perspectives of First Nations peoples."

The Opening Night Film, *We Are Still Here* is the result of a special initiative between Screen Australia's First Nations Department and the New Zealand Film Commission which supported eight Indigenous Pacifica teams teams of writers/directors and three producers on the anthology feature.

Screen Australia's Head of First Nations, Angela Bates said, "We are proud to continue our rich history with Sydney Film Festival and celebrate First Nations experiences and voices on screen. There's so much for audiences to connect with this year. *We Are Still Here* is born out of a unique collaboration with the New Zealand Film Commission and it's wonderful to see the breadth of talented creatives bringing together poignant perspectives on the shared experience of surviving forced colonisation. The film will be essential viewing."

"There's incredible First Nations television dramas coming from around the country and we are excited to see them showcased in a festival setting. *True Colours* offers not only a gripping crime drama but also explores themes of Aboriginal customary Lore and impacts of the NT Intervention that aren't often seen on our screens and delivered with a truly authentic voice from writer/directors Erica Glynn and Steven McGregor and co-creator Warren H. Williams. We are also thrilled to support the next wave of First Nations talent including director Dylan River working with DOP Tyson Perkins on their first long-form series, the incredible *Mystery Road: Origin*."

"We are delighted to again support the First Nations Film Program and to see these important stories shared with new audiences in cinemas. Along with the Deutsche Bank Fellowship for First Nations Film Creatives, we are proud to strengthen our engagement with the Indigenous community and the arts through our partnership with the Sydney Film Festival," said **Glenn Morgan, Deutsche Bank's CEO for Australia**.

We Are Still Here, is a cinematic response to the 250th anniversary of James Cook’s maiden voyage to the Pacific region. Told through the eyes of eight heroic protagonists and traversing 1000 years, it shows the strength of love and hope required to overcome the shared traumas that Indigenous people from Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and the South Pacific continue to face.

Two important Australian series will have their world premiere at SFF, screening in their entirety. Over six episodes, the prequel series, ***Mystery Road: Origin*** depicts the harsh realities of life for a young police officer Jay Swan straddling two worlds in a small town in 1999. The cast includes Mark Coles Smith (*Goldstone*, SFF 2016), Tuuli Narkle and Steve Bisley (*The Stranger*, SFF 2020) and is directed by Dylan River (*Buckskin*, 2013).

The second series is ***True Colours***. Shot in the spectacular country around Mparntwe (Alice Springs) and Yeperenye (East Macdonnell Ranges), and directed by Erica Glynn (*She Who Must Be Obeyed*, SFF 2019) and Steven McGregor (co-writer, *Sweet Country*), the series stars Rarriwuy Hick (*Redfern Now*), Warren H. Williams, and Trisha Morton-Thomas (*Radiance*, SFF 2021).

From Aotearoa New Zealand comes ***Whina***, a stirring biopic of trailblazing Māori leader Dame Whina Cooper, who broke gender boundaries, championed Māori rights, and became one of her nation’s most formidable leaders.

And from Canada comes ***Bootlegger***, winner of Best Dramatic Film, ImagineNATIVE. Filmmaker-artist Caroline Monnet tells the story of a law student who returns to the northern Quebec reservation she grew up on, only to go head-to-head with town leaders over a referendum to legalise the sale of alcohol.

Local Pitjantjatjara language short film ***Donkey***, competing in the 2022 Dendy Awards for Australian Short Films, will screen alongside First Nations short films from around the world: ***Long Line of Ladies***, ***Kicking the Clouds***, ***Big Water Summer: A Creation Story*** (USA); and ***The Headhunter’s Daughter*** (Philippines).

First Nations guests attending their film’s screenings include: the filmmaking team from ***We Are Still Here***; director **Erica Glynn**, writer-director **Steven McGregor**, cast member **Warren H. Williams** and members of the filmmaking team from ***True Colours***; director **Dylan River** and members of the filmmaking team from ***Mystery Road: Origin***.

Hosted at **The Hub**, there will be a talk featuring the First Nation filmmakers of the ***We Are Still Here*** on the creation of the film and the juggling 10 directors in two countries during a global pandemic. It will be presented as part of the free **Festival Talks Program** (Friday 10 June, 5:00pm).

The full Sydney Film Festival 2022 program can be found online at sff.org.au.

Sydney Film Festival runs in cinemas 8-19 June 2022. Tickets and flexipasses to Sydney Film Festival 2022 are on sale now. Please call 1300 733 733 or visit sff.org.au for more information or to book.

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SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

JUNE 08–19 2022



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

EDITOR'S NOTES

ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

From Wednesday 8 June to Sunday 19 June 2022, the 69th 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 69th Sydney Film Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Screen NSW, the Federal Government through Screen Australia and the RISE fund and the City of Sydney.

