

SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

5-16 JUNE 2024

SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED AT CLOSING NIGHT GALA

The 71st Sydney Film Festival tonight awarded the prestigious Sydney Film Prize to Italian filmmaker Paola Cortellesi for her film *There's Still Tomorrow*, a moving, empowering melodrama about an industrious woman in post-WWII Rome. Cortellesi directs and stars in the film, which became a box office phenomenon in Italy, outperforming the likes of *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer*.

The winner of the \$60,000 cash prize for 'audacious, cutting-edge and courageous' film was selected by a prestigious international jury headed by Bosnian writer and director Danis Tanović.

The announcement was made at the State Theatre ahead of the Australian Premiere screening of Cannes hit *The Substance*.

The award was accepted on stage by the team from Limelight Distribution, before a reaction from Cortellesi herself was shown via video where she remarked "I am honoured to receive this award for my film *There's Still Tomorrow*. Thanks to the Sydney Film Festival, and thank you to all of you of course."

The awarding of the largest prize pool in Sydney Film Festival history also included Australian filmmaker James Bradley, awarded the [Documentary Australia Award's](#) \$20,000 cash prize for *Welcome to Babel*, which charts Chinese-Australian artist Jiawei Shen's plans to create an epic work.

The inaugural recipient of the largest cash prize for First Nations filmmaking, the \$35,000 [First Nations Award](#) proudly supported by Truant Pictures, is New Zealand filmmaker Awanui Simich-Pene's *First Horse*, a short film that follows a young Māori girl in 1826, a time when Aotearoa was on the cusp of colonisation.

The 2024 recipient of the \$40,000 [Sustainable Future Award](#), the largest environmental film prize in the world, is American filmmaker **Alina Simone** for her film *Black Snow*, a moving documentary about a Siberian eco-activist, who fights for her community in a remote Russian mining town.

Five short film prizes were awarded for [The Dendy Awards for Australian Short Films](#). The \$7,000 Dendy Live Action Short Award was awarded to *Die Bully Die*, directed by **Nathan** and **Nick Lacey**. The \$7,000 Yoram Gross Animation Award was awarded to *Darwin Story*, directed by **Natasha Tonkin**. The \$7,000 Rouben Mamoulian Award for Best Director was presented to **Pernell Marsden**, director of *The Meaningless Daydreams of Augie & Celeste*.



The AFTRS Craft Award for Best Practitioner (a \$7,000 cash prize) went to **Chloe Kemp**, screenwriter of *Say*. The Event Cinemas Rising Talent Award, with a cash prize of \$7,000 was awarded to **Bridget Morrison**, lead actor of *Say*.

The \$10,000 Sydney-UNESCO City of Film Award, bestowed by Screen NSW to a trail-blazing NSW-based screen practitioner, went to producer **Debbie Lee**.

City of Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore AO said, "Film delights and excites, and this year's Sydney Film Festival brought people together to help them both escape and explain reality through the power of cinema.

"The City is a proud sponsor of the Sydney Film Festival, as we believe a rich and diverse Arts culture is an essential part of every city.

"Congratulations to everyone involved in staging this festival, and thank you to all the theatre-goers who supported this wonderful event."

Sydney Film Festival CEO Frances Wallace said, "Our 71st Sydney Film Festival has been an extraordinary success, with a remarkable turnout of film enthusiasts attending over 400 screenings, special events, and talks. This year, we showcased over 230 exceptional films from around the world, and our audiences eagerly participated in the festivities, resulting in nearly 150 sold-out sessions throughout the Festival."

Sydney Film Festival Director Nashen Moodley said, "This year, we have been privileged to showcase remarkable films from around the world, each bringing its unique voice and vision to our screens, much like the captivating Sydney Film Prize winner *There's Still Tomorrow*."

"This has been another resoundingly successful year for the Festival. It was heart-warming to see thousands of film fans finding warmth and comfort in our many screenings, coming together to experience the very best cinema from around the globe.

"Over the past 12 days, we have shared excitement, gasped at unexpected jump scares, discovered new insights about distant places, and celebrated the talents of incredible filmmakers who continue to share vital, moving stories," said Moodley.

At the Closing Night Gala, Moodley also honoured the dedication and service of long-time Sydney Film Festival Head of Programs and Documentary Programmer, Jenny Neighbour, who is leaving after 35 years of invaluable contributions to the Festival, "Jenny has dedicated 35 years to Sydney Film Festival and her industriousness, discernment and integrity have been vital to the festival's development."

"She has long served as the institutional memory and wisdom of the organisation and she will be very much missed.

"She leaves with the festival in fantastic shape, for which she should take a great deal of credit, and on the occasion of the exceptional high of a great 2024 edition," said Moodley.



Since joining the Sydney Film Festival in 1989, Jenny Neighbour has programmed over 2,000 documentaries, curated retrospectives, and developed the Guests and Talks Program, significantly shaping the Festival's global reputation and growth. In 2023, she was named 2023 NSW/ACT Cinema Pioneer of the Year for her contributions to Australian cinema.

Jenny Neighbour announced her departure, saying “It has been an immense privilege to work at the Sydney Film Festival for almost 35 years. My thanks to all the incredible filmmakers whose films we’ve screened, the sales agents and distributors, projectionists and venue staff, our financial supporters, our awesome festival goers, and of course the extraordinary and super dedicated festival team. It’s a very different festival from the one I joined in 1989, but the Festival’s commitment to celebrating the power and diversity of cinema has never changed – and I’m really looking forward to sitting in the audience at the 2025 Festival”.

THE SYDNEY FILM PRIZE

On awarding the Sydney Film Prize to Italian filmmaker Paola Cortellesi’s *There’s Still Tomorrow*, the Jury said in a joint statement:

“We had the honour and great pleasure to experience the 12 outstanding films that comprised this year’s Official Competition. At times loud and bombastic, while at others, fiercely intimate, this selection is a testament to theatrical cinema’s contemporary power.

We commend the entire team at Sydney Film Festival for this year’s wonderfully curated selection of films. We congratulate every filmmaker here, with gratitude to their tireless work. Each film in Competition embraced the human spirit with uncompromising artistry, unafraid. Sitting together with the audience at the gorgeously preserved State Theatre, for us this was a path breaking journey of new encounters that conjured cinematic traditions from around the world.

We award the prize to a film that welcomes audiences into one of the historic cradles of cinema. Set in post-War Italy, Paola Cortellesi’s debut feature, *C’è ancora domani* (*There’s Still Tomorrow*) feels intensely relevant today. We relive every woman’s struggle for equality through Cortellesi’s “Delia,” we face the brutal cycles of domestic violence with an immense empathy that ultimately proclaims and affirms the virtues of democracy. *C’è ancora domani* deftly weaves humour, style, and pop music into a dazzling black-and-white cinematic event, then it delivers an ending that will take your breath away.”

A box office phenomenon in its native Italy, where it outperformed *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer*, *There’s Still Tomorrow* is a moving, empowering melodrama about an industrious woman (played by the director herself) in post-WWII Rome.

The Festival Jury was comprised of Bosnian writer and director Danis Tanović as Jury President, joined by Indonesian director Kamila Andini, Australian producer Sheila Jayadev, US producer Jay Van Hoy, and Australian director Tony Krawitz.

Previous winners: *The Mother of All Lies* (2023); *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 five international and Australian filmmakers and industry professionals.

The 12 films in Competition for the 2024 Sydney Film Prize are listed [HERE](#)

THE DOCUMENTARY AUSTRALIA AWARD

The \$20,000 Documentary Australia Award, proudly supported by Documentary Australia was awarded to James Bradley for ***Welcome to Babel***. The Jury comprising Bhutanese director and producer Arun Bhattarai, and Australian directors and producers Dean Gibson and Pat Fiske, said in a joint statement:

“The jury would firstly like to commend all the filmmakers who reached the finals of the Documentary Australia Award for 2024. The high calibre of films and diverse storytelling was remarkable. However, we felt one film made a distinct impression.”

“The Jury felt that *Welcome to Babel's* intimate story of artist Jiawei Shen was a beautifully made and thoughtful film that demonstrated the ambition to tell a global story through the intimate relationship of Jiawei and his wife, Lan. The cinematography and editing were exceptional and tonally perfect for the story. Congratulations to *Welcome to Babel*.”

Previous winners: *Marungka Tjalatjunu (Dipped in Black)* (2023); *Keep Stepping* (2022); *I'm Wanita* (2021); *Descent* (2020); *She Who Must Be Obeyed* (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*, and each film received a \$10,000 cash prize.

The 12 finalists for the 2024 Documentary Australia Award are listed [HERE](#).

FIRST NATIONS AWARD PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY TRUANT PICTURES

This year, Sydney Film Festival launched the inaugural First Nations Award, proudly supported by Truant Pictures. This Award establishes the world largest cash prize in global Indigenous filmmaking, rewarding \$35,000 to the winning First Nations filmmaker.

The winner of the First Nations Award is New Zealand filmmaker Awanui Simich-Pene's short film ***First Horse***. Set in 1826 with Aotearoa on the cusp of colonisation, the film follows a young Māori girl who encounters a dying man and his horse, exposing her to the best and worst of her rapidly changing world.

The Jury comprising of producer and programmer Jason Ryle, Australian producer Kath Shelper and Australian First Nations producer Erica Glynn, said in a joint statement:

“Members of the jury were thrilled with the quality and variety of the works programmed for the inaugural First Nations Competition, noting the power and beauty in the collection of these storytellers' films which represent all types of cinematic art. The jurors also celebrate the launch of this meaningful prize and congratulate the Festival for making it a reality. “

“In awarding the winning work, the jury recognises its originality, elegance, and cinematic achievement in story and form. In a few short minutes, the talented creative team has crafted a deeply impactful film with a resonant emotional punch.”



The 10 films shortlisted for the 2024 First Nations Award are listed [HERE](#).

SUSTAINABLE FUTURE AWARD

The 2024 recipient of the Sustainable Future Award was presented to the documentary ***Black Snow*** directed by American filmmaker **Alina Simone**. The jury also Highly Commended *The Feast* (director Rishi Chandna) and *Wilding* (director David Allen).

The Award is 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.

Black Snow follows a Siberian eco-activist, dubbed the ‘Erin Brockovich of Russia’, who fights for her community in a remote Russian mining town where black snow falls due to the extreme pollution.

This year the Sustainable Future Award cash prize of \$40,000 is the largest cash prize for a film tackling climate change and sustainability.

The Jury was comprised of actor, producer and SFF Board Member Amanda Maple-Brown, Australian Museum’s Curator for Climate Change Jenny Newell and producer Kate Pappas.

The six films shortlisted for the 2024 Sustainable Future Award are listed [HERE](#).

DENDY AWARDS FOR AUSTRALIAN SHORT FILMS

A jury composed of producer Liz Watts, Hong Kong filmmaker Ray Yeung, producer Finbar Watson, and filmmaker Alec Green judged the Festival’s short film awards.

The **Dendy Awards for Australian Short Films** were awarded to ***Die Bully Die***, directed by **Nathan** and **Nick Lacey** (Best Live Action Short), ***Darwin Story***, directed by **Natasha Tonkin** (Yoram Gross Animation Award), **Pernell Marsden**, director of ***The Meaningless Daydreams of Augie & Celeste*** (Rouben Mamoulian Award for Best Australian Director), **Chloe Kemp**, screenwriter of ***Say*** (AFTRS Craft Award for Best Practitioner), and **Bridget Morrison**, lead actor of ***Say*** (Event Cinemas Rising Talent Award).

The Jury provided the following statements for each prize:

Best Live Action Short

Winner: *Die Bully Die*.

“A poignant and yet entertaining story of bullying and revenge done with great style, fun and wit.”

Yoram Gross Animation Award for Best Australian Animation.

Winner: *Darwin Story*.

“A wonderfully executed story with poignant sentiment utilising a rich artistry craft in its animation.”

Rouben Mamoulian Award for Best Australian Director.

Winner: Pernell Marsden, director of *The Meaningless Daydreams of Augie & Celeste*.



“A lovely glimpse into the mind of children told with skill and a vision that marks this director as one to watch.”

AFTRS Craft Award for Best Practitioner.

Winner: Chloe Kemp, screenwriter of *Say*

“A beautifully nuanced script done in a naturalistic style full of tension and relevance.”

The Event Cinemas Rising Talent Award.

Winner: Bridget Morrison, lead actor of *Say*.

“A compelling performance that captures so effectively the pain and anger of a woman trapped in an abusive relationship.”

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 10 films shortlisted for the Dendy Awards for Australian Short Films are listed [HERE](#).

THE UNESCO SYDNEY CITY OF FILM AWARD

The \$10,000 Sydney-UNESCO City of Film Award, bestowed by Screen NSW to a trail-blazing NSW-based screen practitioner, went to producer **Debbie Lee**.

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

EDITOR'S NOTES

ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

From Wednesday 5 to Sunday 16 June 2024, the 71st 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. 72nd Sydney Film Festival will run June 4-15, 2025.

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 71st 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.



