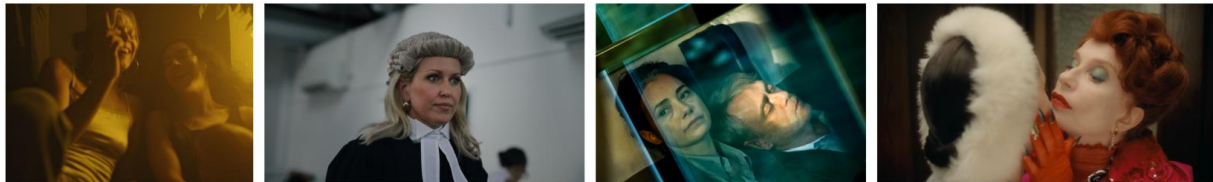


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Interviews available

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SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL | 3 - 14 JUNE 2026

FIRST FILMS ANNOUNCED FOR SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL 2026



The 73rd Sydney Film Festival (3–14 June) today revealed a sneak peek of 13 daring new films set to screen this June, offering a taste of the 200+ strong 2026 program ahead of the full Festival announcement on Wednesday 6 May.

“Prize winners from Berlinale and Sundance, an immersive World Premiere from Australia, Isabelle Huppert as a vampire who’s as fabulous as they come, and more – we wanted to offer a glimpse of the distinctive voices from across the globe coming to SFF,” said **Sydney Film Festival Director Nashen Moodley**.

Australian stories lead with urgent and intimate perspectives. Selina Miles’ ***Silenced*** follows Australian lawyer Jennifer Robinson and survivors including Brittany Higgins and Amber Heard, examining defamation law in the wake of the #MeToo movement. In ***The Valley***, Ian Darling AO (*The Final Quarter*, SFF 2019) crafts a quietly immersive portrait of life in Kangaroo Valley, capturing the rhythms, labour and traditions that sustain a rural community.

Star-led international features include ***Dead Man’s Wire***, directed by Gus Van Sant (*Milk*) and starring Bill Skarsgård, Dacre Montgomery and Al Pacino, recounting the infamous 1977 hostage standoff broadcast live across America. Documentary ***Broken English*** reflects on the life and legacy of Marianne Faithfull, starring Tilda Swinton and George MacKay, from the makers of *20,000 Days on Earth* (SFF 2014).

Distinctive works from acclaimed international auteurs bring singular perspectives to the screen. Ildikó Enyedi’s ***Silent Friend***, winner of the FIPRESCI Prize at the 82nd Venice Film Festival, stars Tony Leung Chiu-Wai and Léa Seydoux in a story spanning three generations connected by a mighty ginkgo tree. Ulrike Ottinger’s ***The Blood Countess*** starring Isabelle Huppert and written by Elfriede Jelinek (*The Piano Teacher*), reimagines vampire mythology in a visually opulent tale. In ***Erupcja***,



Pete Ohs follows a couple's getaway to Warsaw that begins to unravel, starring musician Charli xcx in a lead role.

Prize winning stories shaped by social and political realities span continents. Ilker Çatak's **Yellow Letters**, winner of the Golden Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival, follows a family's descent into turmoil after a simple act of disobedience triggers authoritarian persecution in Türkiye. Rafael Manuel's Sundance award-winning debut feature **Filipiñana**, follows a teenage tee-girl at an elite Manila golf course, unveiling the class divisions and violence beneath its pristine surface. Marwan Hamed's **El Sett** brings the life of legendary Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum to the screen in a lavish and epic telling, tracing her rise to become one of the most influential voices in the Arab world.

Innovative approaches to storytelling explore memory, technology and speculative futures. Damien Hauser's **Memory of Princess Mumbi**, an innovative indie that dazzled audiences across the festival circuit, imagines a future African kingdom shaped by the tension between artificial intelligence and tradition. Firouzeh Khosrovani's **Past Future Continuous**, an International Documentary Festival Amsterdam award-winner, follows a woman who fled Iran decades ago reconnect by watching her ageing parents via cameras in their Tehran home. Tamra Davis' **The Best Summer**, a Sundance world premiere built from archival footage shot on Australia's 1995 Summersault tour, captures backstage moments and performances from bands including Beastie Boys, Sonic Youth and Foo Fighters.

Flexipasses and Subscriptions to Sydney Film Festival 2026 are on sale now. Call 1300 733 733 or visit sff.org.au for more information. The full Sydney Film Festival program is announced on Wednesday 6 May 2026, when tickets to specific film sessions will be on sale.

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ORIGINAL SPIN

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

EDITOR'S NOTES

ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

The Sydney Film Festival is one of the world's longest running and most prestigious film festivals. The 73rd edition, taking place from 3 to 14 June 2026, will showcase the very best in contemporary cinema and offer audiences the chance to experience premieres, red carpet events, and exciting special programs across Sydney.

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

Stay up to date with Sydney Film Festival: [eNews](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

For more information, visit sff.org.au.



FEATURES

THE BLOOD COUNTESS

Dir. Ulrike Ottinger | Luxembourg/Germany/Austria | 119 mins | In German with English subtitles | Australian Premiere

Decadence and depravity rule in this vampire delight starring Isabelle Huppert from director Ulrike Ottinger and writer Elfriede Jelinek (*The Piano Teacher*). Berlinale 2026.

Exquisitely draped in tightly cinched, scarlet couture, with trusty pet bat in tow, the Blood Countess (Huppert) re-emerges in modern Vienna after decades of lying dormant. Searching for an ancient text that could cause her demise, she unleashes a bloodthirsty reign of terror on the majestic streets of the city, where she's both revered and reviled. A long-awaited passion project from avant-garde German auteur Ulrike Ottinger and Nobel laureate Elfriede Jelinek, *The Blood Countess* is a sultry, slyly irreverent treat for devotees of out-there high camp and big artistic swings. It's a bold, gloriously staged revival of the legend of Countess Elizabeth Báthory, brilliantly embodied by a fierce and fabulous Huppert.

DEAD MAN'S WIRE

Dir. Gus Van Sant | USA | 105 mins | In English | Australian Premiere

Gus Van Sant (*Milk*) directs Bill Skarsgård, Dacre Montgomery and Al Pacino in this thrilling, true account of a 1977 hostage standoff. Venice 2025.

In February 1977, Indiana property developer Tony Kiritsis tied a shotgun trigger wire around the neck of mortgage broker Richard Hall (Dacre Montgomery, *Stranger Things*). Claiming to have been betrayed in a land deal, Kiritsis held Hall hostage in his grungy apartment while a media circus formed outside. Interrogating social and economic issues that are even more relevant and corrosive today, this pulsating thriller stars an electrifying Bill Skarsgård (*Nosferatu*) as the suddenly famous little guy who feels his American Dream has been stolen by morally bankrupt elites. Al Pacino brings the spirit of his American Spectacle hostage classic *Dog Day Afternoon* with him in a memorable role as Hall's calculating father.

EL SETT

Dir. Marwan Hamed | Egypt/Saudi Arabia | 162 mins | In Arabic with English subtitles | Australian Premiere

Legendary Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum's life is brought lavishly to the big screen in this epic telling – from her humble childhood to dominating the world stage.

Revered throughout the Arab world and beyond, Umm Kulthum began her career performing religious songs as a child, disguised as a boy, at events she was taken to by her protective father. When her talent was eventually recognised, she moved to Cairo, where the big city customs shocked and success eluded her. But by constantly defying expectations and transcending societal constraints, while displaying incredible business savvy, Umm Kulthum developed a following astonishing in size and fervour. Director Marwan Hamed (*The Yacoubian Building*, SFF 2007) paints a complex portrait of the icon, played deftly by Mona Zaki, as she deals with fame, wealth, romance and politics in this dazzling biopic.

ERUPCJA

Dir. Pete Ohs | USA/Poland | 71 mins | In English and Polish with English subtitles | Australian Premiere

Charli xcx gives an impressively raw and real performance in this tale of messy modern relationships, following a couple's getaway to Warsaw gone awry. Toronto 2025.

When her boyfriend Rob whisks her away to Warsaw, Bethany (Charli xcx) suspects he's about to propose. He's perfectly nice but is that enough? Uncertain, Bethany abandons Rob's carefully laid itinerary and seeks out old friend/flame Nel (Lena Góra), a Polish florist. The pair share an explosive



past – every time they meet, a volcano erupts somewhere in the world. Shot on the fly during Brat summer and written in collaboration between director Pete Ohs and the lead cast, *Erupcja* has an irresistibly spontaneous energy. Amplified by the star power of Charli xcx, who brings her party-girl persona and a convincing, stripped-back naturalism to the role, it's a relatably chaotic study of disrupted destiny.

FILIPINANA

Dir. Rafael Manuel | UK/Philippines/Singapore/France/Netherlands | 100 mins | In Filipino, English and Iloko with English subtitles | Australian Premiere

A young woman enters into the eerily pristine world of an elite Filipino golf resort in this visually stunning, Sundance award-winning debut feature with bite.

Seventeen-year-old Isabel is a 'tee girl' at a lush country club outside Manila, ensuring golf balls are always perfectly lined up for the club's elite guests. The immaculate grounds and dutiful staff seem utterly alien from Isabel's home in rural Ilocos, as she observes the resort's goings-on with intense curiosity. Her attention is particularly drawn to Dr. Palanca, the club's eccentric president. With the entrancing pace of a hot summer's day, a mesmerisingly obsessive control of visual language and a sharp eye for social critique, *Filipiñana* is one of the year's most exciting debuts from director Rafael Manuel, a mentee of filmmaker Jia Zhangke. Winner, Sundance Special Jury Award for Creative Vision.

MEMORY OF PRINCESS MUMBI

Dir. Damien Hauser | Kenya/Switzerland/Saudi Arabia | 79 mins | In English | Australian Premiere

A retro-futurist romance from Kenya about filmmaking, beauty and AI. This innovative indie dazzled audiences across the festival circuit, including Venice, Toronto and London.

In 2093, filmmaker Kuve travels to the African kingdom of Umata, a coastal city made of treetop villages where neo-technologies have been outlawed. Kuve wants to make a documentary about the city's revival since the Great War of the 2070s. There he meets local actress Mumbi. As the two work together, they quarrel over Kuve's fondness for AI as Mumbi shows him the beauty in everyday life. But when the two fall in love, Mumbi reveals she is betrothed to the kingdom's Prince. Director Damien Hauser's deft use of AI to create a fully realised world previously only possible on a multi-million-dollar budget results in a multi-layered meditation on memory, loss and joy – with an emotional core that's hardly artificial.

SILENT FRIEND

Dir. Ildiko Enyedi | Germany/France/Hungary | 147 mins | In German and English with English subtitles | New South Wales Premiere

A mighty ginko tree in a German university town bears silent witness to the lives of three characters over more than a century.

In 1908, a bright botanist (Luna Wedler, Best Young Actress, Venice 2025) forges a challenging path as the first female student accepted by the male-dominated institution. In 1972, two classmates bond over a geranium in politically charged times. And in 2020, a lonely visiting neuroscientist (Tony Leung), stuck on campus, seeks meaning from the tree's electromagnetic signals under the guidance of a French biologist (Léa Seydoux). Oscar-nominated SFF regular Ildikó Enyedi returns in resplendent form with this perceptive exploration of humanity's deep-rooted connection with nature.

YELLOW LETTERS

Dir. İlker Çatak | Germany/France/Türkiye | 127 mins | In Turkish with English subtitles | Australian Premiere

Winner of the Berlinale Golden Bear. A family descends into turmoil after a simple act of disobedience triggers authoritarian persecution. A searing critique of our times.



Celebrated artist couple Derya (Özgü Namal), an actor; and Aziz (Tansu Biçer), a drama professor/playwright; live a happy and fulfilling life in Türkiye. But when Derya refuses a photo op insisted upon by a government official after a performance – the repercussions are severe. Their jobs disappear, they face legal action and they lose their home. In the face of this persecution – and with a daughter to raise – the couple’s relationship comes under extreme strain. Oscar-nominated director İlker Çatak (*The Teacher’s Lounge*) audaciously shot the film in Germany – with ‘Berlin as Ankara’ and ‘Hamburg as Istanbul’ – powerfully showing that threats to civil and artistic freedoms are not limited to certain countries.

DOCUMENTARIES

THE BEST SUMMER

Dir. Tamra Davis | USA | 84 mins | In English | Australian Premiere

Head backstage with the Beastie Boys, Sonic Youth, Foo Fighters and more in this revelatory Sundance rockumentary, capturing the 1995 Australian music festival Summersault.

An infectiously fun tour diary, *The Best Summer* unearths a treasure trove of never-before-seen footage from one of the most stacked festival lineups ever to grace Australian shores. Dusting off tapes recovered from her garage while fleeing the recent Malibu fires, director Tamra Davis (*Jean-Michel Basquiat: The Radiant Child*, SFF 2010; *Billy Madison*) pieces together an electric time capsule of '90s alternative music legends at the peak of their youthful powers. Featuring candid, frequently hilarious interviews with the likes of Kim Gordon, Thurston Moore, Kim Deal, Beck, Dave Grohl and Kathleen Hanna, alongside raucous on-stage antics, it’s an all-access pass to a momentous moment in Australian music history.

BROKEN ENGLISH

Dir. Iain Forsyth, Jane Pollard | UK | 99 mins | In English | Australian Premiere

Tilda Swinton and George MacKay star in this loving tribute to singer, actor and cultural icon Marianne Faithfull from the makers of *20,000 Days on Earth* (SFF 2014). Venice 2025.

A poster child for the 1960s counterculture. Cancelled and almost consumed by the darkness of addiction that followed. A stunning return with 1979 rock masterpiece *Broken English* and subsequent career as a powerful creative force. Marianne Faithfull lived a singular artistic life. With unblinking candour and sparkling wit, Faithfull reflects on six decades of work, life, tumult and triumph in this provocative documentary that comes to SFF a year on from her passing. With inventive dramatic sequences featuring Tilda Swinton and George MacKay, and special contributions by performers including Courtney Love, Beth Orton and Nick Cave, *Broken English* is as unconventional, compelling and richly layered as its subject.

PAST FUTURE CONTINUOUS

Dir. Firouzeh Khosrovani, Morteza Ahmadvand | Iran/Norway/Italy | 76 mins | In Persian with English subtitles | Australian Premiere

At 20, Maryam fled Iran after seeing her friends killed or imprisoned. Now living in the United States, she persuades her parents to install cameras in their home in Tehran so she can witness their lives in real time.

The film draws us into the inner worlds of both Maryam and her parents, as they age apart. Archival footage and glimpses of Iran’s history deepen the story, revealing why Maryam had no choice but to leave. Directed by award-winning filmmaker Firouzeh Khosrovani and visual artist Morteza Ahmadvand, this formally inventive work received top honours at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam and delivers a moving exploration of distance, memory and the enduring allure of home.

SILENCED



Dir. Selina Miles | Australia, United Kingdom | 97 mins | In English | Australian Premiere
In this eye-opening documentary, courtroom footage and behind-the-headlines interviews reveal how the legal system is being used to victimize, discredit and financially ruin survivors, and journalists reporting on their stories.

From Amber Heard at London's Law Courts to journalist Catalina Ruiz-Navarro in Colombia, and Brittany Higgins' experience in our own backyard, women globally face a new kind of silencing at the hands of perpetrators of sexual violence. It's a legal backlash Australian Jennifer Robinson is committed to fighting, inspired by her courageous grandmother who was also a survivor. With unrivalled access, director Selina Miles (*Martha: A Picture Story*, SFF 2019) challenges the flaws in the justice system that make this silencing possible, while simultaneously revealing the personal cost to those who speak up.

THE VALLEY

Dir. Ian Darling | Australia | 181 mins | In English | World Premiere

A meditative cinematic portrait of a place and community, Kangaroo Valley, about two hours south of Sydney. World Premiere directed by Ian Darling (*The Final Quarter*, SFF 2019).

Surrounded by dramatic cliffs and accessed by steep, winding roads that add to the sense of seclusion, this wholly observational documentary skilfully captures the Kangaroo Valley community, from artists to artisans, farmers to builders, council workers to shopkeepers. Many locals spend their working days in quiet solitude, whether milking cows or baking bread. Institutions and traditions, from carnivals to volunteer firefighting, sustain and enrich this rural community, fulfilling a yearning for human contact and a shared belonging. *The Valley* with its rich visuals and Wiseman-inspired verité approach, delivers an immersive experience that savours the rhythms, tranquillity and timelessness of valley life.

