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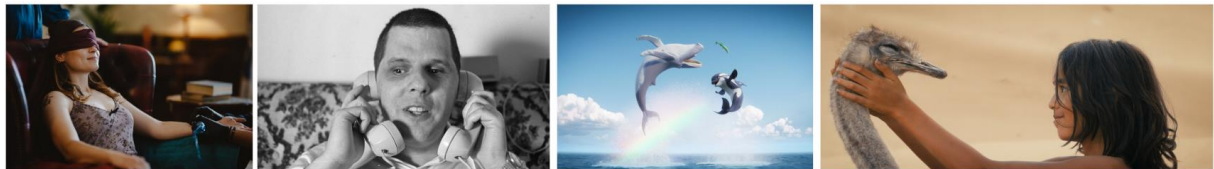
MEDIA RELEASE: 29 April 2026
Sydney, Australia

SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

3 – 14 JUNE 2026

FROM BOLD NEW VOICES TO BIG SCREEN ADVENTURES

SFF REVEALS SCREENABILITY AND FAMILY FILMS



Sydney Film Festival today announces the 2026 Screenability and Family programs, presenting eight new films as part of the 73rd Sydney Film Festival from 3–14 June.

“Screenability is about opening the screen up, not just to new stories, but to the people telling them,” said **SFF Director Nashen Moodley**. “And with our Family films, it’s pure cinema joy. Big ideas, big emotions, and the kind of stories that hook you early and stay with you. This is where the next generation of film lovers begins.”

SCREENABILITY

Sydney Film Festival proudly presents Screenability for its tenth consecutive year, showcasing a vibrant lineup of films created by filmmakers living with disability and expanding the space for stories that are too often left unseen.

This year’s program features ***Retreat***, Ted Evans’ debut psychological thriller with an all-Deaf cast, following a young woman whose arrival at a secluded Deaf wellness retreat in the English countryside sets a community unravelling.

In ***Joybubbles***, Rachael J. Morrison’s Sundance-selected debut documentary follows Josef Carl Engressia Jr., born blind and gifted with perfect pitch, from his challenging childhood to becoming a pioneering phone hacker and founding figure of an underground subculture. Produced by Sarah Winshall (*I Saw the TV Glow*, SFF 2024). Some sessions will also be available with open audio description, offering the film going experience for blind audiences.

You Look Fine, winner of the Unstoppable Feature Grand Jury Prize and Audience Award at Slamdance, follows comedian J. Snow as he documents his life with sickle cell disease with humour, candour and unflinching honesty.



Press Pack [HERE](#)

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Three short films screen alongside the features. ***When You Hear Hoofbeats***, following a young woman whose struggle to have her medical symptoms taken seriously leads her to believe she has been possessed; ***Sarsaparilla***, in which a sheriff and his outlaw nemesis find unexpected common ground over a shared love of line dancing; and ***Trapeze***, a deeply personal exploration of autonomy, ancestral ties and Deaf identity expressed through movement and Auslan choreography by Jeremy Lowrenčev.

FAMILY FILMS

Bring the whole family to Sydney Film Festival, where this year's Family program delivers big-screen storytelling for younger audiences and adults alike.

The 2026 lineup includes ***The Last Whale Singer***, a Zurich Film Festival selection following Vincent, a young humpback whale who must find his voice to save the ocean, in a sweeping animated adventure of friendship and self-belief. ***The Desert Child*** follows a teenage girl whose grandfather's story of a boy raised by ostriches in the Sahara turns out to be true, in a family adventure rooted in resilience and connection to the land.

Tickets to Screenability, Family Films, Opening Night film *Silenced*, Sartorial: Fashion on Film, as well as FlexiPasses and subscriptions to Sydney Film Festival 2026 are on sale now at sff.org.au. 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 all films will be on sale.

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Sydney Film Festival [Screenability and Family Press Pack](#) and [Festival Press Pack](#) 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.



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FILM INFORMATION

SCREENABILITY

Joybubbles

USA | 2026 | 79 mins | In English

Born blind, Joybubbles uses his gift for perfect pitch to manipulate the phone system and make free calls in this exuberant, life-affirming documentary. Sundance 2026.

Driven by a desire for connection and a knack for telecommunications, Josef Carl Engressia Jr. – who legally changed his name to Joybubbles – discovers he can disrupt the global phone network and make free calls by whistling a certain frequency. As one of the original ‘phonephreaks’ (among notable peers like Apple founders Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak), Joybubbles played a crucial role in founding this fascinating subculture. Produced by Sarah Winshall (*I Saw the TV Glow*, SFF 2024), Rachael J. Morrison’s marvellously entertaining debut doc follows Joy bubbles’ unforgettable journey, from his challenging childhood to becoming a world-leading phone hacker, while pursuing his dream of independent living.

Retreat

United Kingdom | 2025 | 107 mins | In English and British and Standard Sign Language with English subtitles

An all-deaf cast enrich this atmospheric thriller in which a young woman arrives at a remote wellness retreat for Deaf people where nothing is as it seems. Toronto 2025.

Eva (Anne Zander), a young woman from Berlin, seeks connection and a chance to escape her past at a secluded Deaf community in the English countryside. The retreat, run by the enigmatic Mia (Sophie Stone), promises to prepare its residents for the harsh realities of the hearing world. But when Eva develops a bond with long-time resident Matt (James Boyle, *Reunion*), this idyllic community begins to unravel as the pair question everything, including their identity and the costs of maintaining a supposedly utopian society. Director Ted Evans makes his feature debut with this groundbreaking psychological thriller that features an all-Deaf cast. Nominated for the Golden Eye Award at the Zurich Film Festival.

You Look Fine

USA | 2025 | 83 mins | In English

In this award-winning doc, comedian J. Snow records himself with humour and perseverance to capture the unfiltered realities of living with sickle cell disease.

In this unflinching documentary, comedian J. Snow offers a first-hand account of living with sickle cell anaemia, the frustrations of navigating the health system, and the isolation that accompanies living with a chronic illness. Blending his signature humour with moments of vulnerability, Snow candidly shares the relentless and severe impacts of sickle cell disease. Along the way, he continues to laugh, challenge societal expectations and increase awareness about the condition. Executive produced by Marlon Wayans and featuring appearances by Rashida Olayiwola, Sydney Castillo, and Marcus Henderson (*Get Out*, *Whiplash*). Winner of the Unstoppable Feature Grand Jury Prize and Unstoppable Audience Award at Slamdance.

SCREENABILITY SHORTS

Sarsaparilla

When a determined Sheriff catches up with his outlaw nemesis, rivalry quickly turns to respect after the duo find common ground over their mutual love of line dancing.

Screens with *Joybubbles*.



Press Pack [HERE](#)

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Trapeze

A powerful exploration of autonomy, ancestral ties and Deaf identity expressed through movement, narration and Auslan choreography. A deeply personal work from Jeremy Lowrenčev.
Screens with *Retreat*.

When You Hear Hoofbeats

Into the horrors of misdiagnosis. When a young woman struggles to have her medical symptoms taken seriously, she starts to believe she's been possessed by the devil.
Screens with *You Look Fine*.

FAMILY

The Desert Child

France | 2026 | 91 mins | In English

The breathtaking true story of Hadara, a boy who survives ten years in the Sahara, raised by ostriches, unfolds as a wondrous and visually stunning family adventure.

When 14-year-old Sun publishes her debut novel about a boy lost in the Sahara and raised by ostriches, based on a story her grandfather told her, she never expects it to be real. Invited to the desert, she is guided by local Indigenous tribespeople who reveal they are descendants of Hadara—and that the tale is true. As they share his story, Sun uncovers an extraordinary ten-year survival story shaped by resilience and connection to the land, while gaining new insight into her grandfather's past. From Gilles de Maistre, premiering at Joburg Film Festival, this sweeping family adventure blends stunning visuals with an incredible story.

The Last Whale Singer

Canada/Germany/ Czech Republic | 2025 | 91 mins | In English

This thrilling animated adventure follows a self-doubting teenage humpback whale who must find his voice (with a little help from his friends) in order to save the ocean.

The Last Whale Singer is sweeping animated adventure made waves at the Zurich International Film Festival. When Vincent, a young humpback whale, loses his parents, he begins to doubt his own abilities. How could he possibly live up to the legacy left behind by his father, the last of the Whale Singers? But when a colossal, ancient force awakens in the ocean depths, Vincent learns he is the only one who can stop it, he just has to find his voice. With his loyal, quick-witted nanny fish, Walter, by his side, Vincent embarks on a breathtaking journey that will test his strength, resilience and the true power of his song. A dazzling tale of friendship and self-belief, *The Last Whale Singer* is a splash of fun for the whole family.

