

MEDIA RELEASE: Wednesday 6 May 2026  
Sydney, Australia

# SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

# 3 - 14 JUNE 2026

## SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES FULL PROGRAM FOR 3-14 JUNE FESTIVAL



**HISTORIC LINEUP UNVEILED, FEATURING RETURNING SYDNEY FILM PRIZE WINNERS AND  
SPECTACULAR NEW VOICES FROM AUSTRALIA AND AROUND THE WORLD  
— INCLUDING 19 FILMS DIRECT FROM CANNES**

The 73rd Sydney Film Festival program was officially launched today by **Festival Director Nashen Moodley**, including 19 films direct from the Cannes Film Festival, among them Andrey Zvyagintsev's long-awaited return *Minotaur*; Asghar Farhadi's *Parallel Tales*, starring Isabelle Huppert; Cristian Mungiu's *Fjord*, starring Sebastian Stan and Renate Reinsve; Paweł Pawlikowski's *Fatherland*, starring Sandra Hüller; Ira Sachs' *The Man I Love*, starring Rami Malek; and Kore-eda Hirokazu's *Sheep in the Box*.

Other SFF program highlights include Olivia Wilde directing herself, Seth Rogen, Penélope Cruz and Edward Norton in the Sundance comedy *The Invertebrate*; Jane Schoenbrun's psychosexual horror *Teenage Sex and Death at Camp Miasma*, starring Hannah Einbinder and Gillian Anderson; Australian horror sensation *Leviticus* from Adrian Chiarella; and Hugh Jackman and Jodie Comer in *The Death of Robin Hood*.

"We want to invite you to join us at SFF this year, where each moment offers an opportunity for discovery and empathy," said **Sydney Film Festival Director Nashen Moodley**. "Art and cinema help us make sense of the world, take us into the lives of people far away from us, and remind us to remain vigilant about our own rights and freedoms. And we can't forget, they're also an enormous source of joy."

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**Minister for the Arts, John Graham** said, "Once again Nashen Moodley and the team have curated the best films in the world for what will be another incredible Sydney Film Festival experience. As we continue backing the NSW screen industry for growth, it will be fantastic to see our local film makers alongside the world's best."

**Minister for Jobs and Tourism, Steve Kamper** said, "Sydney Film Festival spotlights the Harbour City as a vibrant global hub for the arts and world-class cultural experiences. Not only does it showcase local and world films before they receive international acclaim, but it also attracts thousands of visitors each year, creating a buzz around Sydney and supporting businesses and jobs across our visitor and night-time economy."

In 2026, the Festival will present 248 films from 81 countries including 19 World Premieres, 3 International Premieres and 140 Australian Premieres, with screenings at the State Theatre, Sydney Opera House and cinemas across the city.

### **OPENING NIGHT**

The 73rd Sydney Film Festival will open Wednesday 3 June with the Australian Premiere of ***Silenced***, directed by Selina Miles. The Sundance-premiered documentary follows international human rights lawyer Jennifer Robinson as she fights against the weaponisation of defamation law by alleged perpetrators to silence survivors and journalists. The film traces the cases of Brittany Higgins, Catalina Ruiz-Navarro and Amber Heard.

Director Selina Miles, and subject Jennifer Robinson will attend Opening Night to present the film.

### **OFFICIAL COMPETITION**

In 2026, the Official Competition celebrates 18 years of the prestigious Sydney Film Prize, which sees \$60,000 awarded each year to an "audacious, cutting-edge and courageous" film.

From Australia, ***Leviticus*** is a bold, breakout Sundance hit from Australian Adrian Chiarella, where two teenage boys contend with an evil force that takes on the form of the person they desire most: each other.

Films direct from the Cannes Competition include Andrey Zvyagintsev's ***Minotaur***, a taut thriller that melds the personal and political in 2022 Russia; Asghar Farhadi's ***Parallel Tales***, in which a writer uses surveillance for inspiration, with an all-star French cast including Isabelle Huppert and Catherine Deneuve; Kore-eda Hirokazu's (*Shoplifters*, SFF 2018; *Monster*, SFF 2023) ***Sheep in the Box***, a moving near-future drama about grieving parents who turn to AI to rebuild their family; and Paweł Pawlikowski's (*Ida*; *Cold War*, SFF 2018) ***Fatherland***, a sensational snapshot of writer Thomas Mann and his daughter Erika navigating post-war Germany, starring Sandra Hüller and Hanns Zischler.

Also straight from the Cannes Competition are; Marie Kreutzer's ***Gentle Monster***, starring Léa Seydoux; Valeska Grisebach's ***The Dreamed Adventure*** following a woman on a perilous mission through the Bulgarian borderlands; and Cristian Mungiu's (*4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*) English-language debut ***Fjord***, a thought-provoking family drama starring Sebastian Stan and Renate Reinsve.

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Also from Cannes Un Certain Regard, Marie-Clémentine Dusabejambo's **Ben'Imana** is an emotionally powerful exploration of reconciliation following the Rwandan genocide, set to be one of the year's most acclaimed debuts.

Major international prize winners and much anticipated film also compete. Visar Morina's **Shame and Money**, winner of the World Cinema Grand Jury Prize at Sundance, is a deeply humane drama following a Kosovar family in dire financial circumstances; Alain Gomis' (*Félicité*, SFF 2017) **Dao**, presented in the Berlinale Competition, is a swirling, life-affirming epic across Guinea-Bissau and France. Shahrbanoo Sadat's **No Good Men**, a sparkling political romantic comedy from Afghanistan, opened the Berlinale. Olivia Wilde's (*Booksmart*, SFF 2019) **The Invite**, a Sundance hit starring Seth Rogen, Wilde herself, Penélope Cruz and Edward Norton, dissects modern relationships over one combustible dinner party.

The winner of the Sydney Film Prize is announced at the Festival's Closing Night Gala on Sunday 14 June. Previous winners include: *It Was Just an Accident* (2025), *There's Still Tomorrow* (2024), *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 the only film competition in Australia endorsed by FIAPF, the regulating body for international film festivals, and is judged by a jury of international and Australian filmmakers and industry professionals.

The 2026 Official Competition jury will be presided over by Brazilian director **Kleber Mendonça Filho** (*The Secret Agent*, SFF 2026), alongside Hungarian filmmaker **Ildikó Enyedi** (*On Body and Soul*, SFF 2017), Singaporean filmmaker **Boo Junfeng** (*Apprentice*), Australian cinematographer **Ari Wegner** (*The Power of the Dog*), and Australian First Nations producer and director **Sally Riley** (*Mystery Road*).

### **DOCUMENTARY AUSTRALIA AWARD**

Ten outstanding new Australian documentaries will compete for the \$20,000 Documentary Australia Award, with the winning film also becoming Academy Award eligible.

World Premieres include **Rodeo Dreams**, the engrossing story of four young Queensland bull riders following their dreams across Gulf Country to the Mount Isa Rodeo; **Yumburra**, Grace McKenzie's portrait of Bruce Pascoe in the aftermath of *Dark Emu*, living on his riverside farm and testing the theories of his landmark book; and **The Piano Tuner**, Natalia Laska's eight-year profile of Martin Tucker, a passionate piano doctor on a mission to save Australia's ageing instruments.

Australian films premiering in competition include **Mockbuster**, Anthony Frith's hilarious audience award-winning documentary charting his attempt to make a dinosaur film for notorious B-movie house The Asylum in just six days; **Whistle**, Christopher Nelius' (*Girls Can't Surf*, SFF 2021) offbeat crowd-pleaser following the world's greatest whistling competition, from Toronto 2025; **Phenomena**, Josef Gatti's visually stunning psychedelic odyssey into the forces that shape the natural world, a hit at True/False and CPH:DOX; and **Replica**, in which three Chinese women turn to AI for love and connection, an award-winning documentary from debut director Chouwa Liang.

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Also in competition are *Silenced*, which opens the Festival; *Sukundimi Walks Before Me*, a powerful documentary following an Indigenous PNG community's campaign to preserve the Sepik River from a mining project; and *Time and Tide*, Vee Shi's compelling hybrid docu-drama tracing contemporary China through a multigenerational family navigating the pressures of familial obligation.

### **SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS AT THE STATE**

The State Theatre sets the stage for Sydney Film Festival's biggest nights, with red carpet premieres, award-winning films and star-studded special events.

Star-led features include *Dead Man's Wire*, directed by Gus Van Sant and starring Bill Skarsgård, Dacre Montgomery and Al Pacino, recounting the infamous 1977 hostage standoff broadcast live across America; and *Rays and Shadows*, Xavier Giannoli's sweeping epic starring Oscar-winner Jean Dujardin as a press baron navigating Nazi-occupied France.

Direct from Cannes comes *The Man I Love*, Ira Sachs' romantic drama set in 1980s New York, starring Rami Malek, Tom Sturridge and Rebecca Hall; *The Birthday Party*, a taut thriller starring Hafsia Herzi and Monica Bellucci; *Colony*, from *Train to Busan* director Yeon Sang-ho, a propulsive zombie action film from Cannes Midnight; *Silent Friend*, winner of the Venice FIPRESCI Prize, starring Tony Leung Chiu-wai and Léa Seydoux in Ildikó Enyedi's (*On Body and Soul*, Sydney Film Prize 2017) story spanning a century through the life of a ginkgo tree; *Teenage Sex and Death at Camp Miasma*, Jane Schoenbrun's (*I Saw the TV Glow*, SFF 2024) stylish psychosexual horror, starring Hannah Einbinder and Gillian Anderson; and *The Samurai and the Prisoner*, Kiyoshi Kurosawa's (*Cure*, SFF 1998) majestic Cannes-selected samurai epic.

Australian voices feature strongly. *Pressure*, the much-anticipated latest from acclaimed Australian director Anthony Maras (*Hotel Mumbai*), stars Andrew Scott and Brendan Fraser in the true story of one meteorologist's impact on D-Day. Ian Darling's (*The Final Quarter*, SFF 2019) *The Valley* also has its World Premiere, a meditative portrait of life in Kangaroo Valley.

Major award winners also screen. *Yellow Letters*, the Berlinale Golden Bear winner, and *Rose*, which earned Sandra Hüller the Berlinale Silver Bear, both have their Australian premieres. *Sundays*, winner of Best Film at the San Sebastián Film Festival, follows a teenage girl whose decision to enter convent life unmasks the frailties of her family. Also screening are *Knife: The Attempted Murder of Salman Rushdie*, Oscar-winner Alex Gibney's (*Taxi to the Dark Side*, SFF 2008) captivating account of Rushdie's recovery after being stabbed 15 times; and *Árru*, a powerful Berlinale debut following a Sámi reindeer herder confronting a mining project threatening her ancestral lands.

### **FEATURES**

Australian features lead with bold new work, including *Saccharine*, from Natalie Erika James (*Relic*), a body horror following a medical student addicted to sinister weight-loss pills; *The Fox*, Dario Russo's absurdist Australian folktale starring Jai Courtney and Emily Browning, with Olivia Colman as a talking fox and Sam Neill as a magpie; *First Light*, a debut from Filipino-Australian director James J. Robinson, about a nun whose suspicion leads her to a crisis of faith; *Yesterday Island*, Sam Voutas' dark indie comedy about a man trapped on an island in a time loop; and *Don't Tell Mother*, Anoop Lokkur's debut set in 1990s Bangalore, from Busan.

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Other Australian features include the World Premiere of **French Girls**, the impressive debut from Hyun Lee, following a young Sydney woman drawn into the world of modelling; **Boss Cat**, Genevieve Clay-Smith's World Premiere, a story of family, friendship and the power of krumping from Bus Stop Films; and **Body Blow**, Dean Francis' erotic thriller starring Paul Capsis, following a disgraced cop plunged into Sydney's neon-lit gay nightlife.

International award winners and top festival selections include **Queen at Sea**, Lance Hammer's (*Ballast*, SFF 2008) Berlinale Silver Bear Jury Prize winner, starring Juliette Binoche; **Animol**, Ashley Walters' debut starring Stephen Graham, winner of the FIPRESCI Prize at the Berlinale; **We Are All Strangers**, Anthony Chen's (*Ilo Ilo*, SFF 2014) quietly epic drama and the first-ever Singaporean film in Berlinale Competition; **The Blood Countess**, Ulrike Ottinger's passion project starring Isabelle Huppert and written by Nobel laureate Elfriede Jelinek; **Filipiñana**, Rafael Manuel's Sundance Special Jury Award-winning debut, following a teenage tee-girl uncovering class divisions beneath the pristine surface of an elite Manila golf course; and **Lost Land**, the first-ever Rohingya-language feature and Venice award winner, following two young siblings on a perilous journey to reunite with their family.

Direct from Un Certain Regard at Cannes comes **Strawberries**, directed by Laïla Marrakchi's (*Rock the Casbah*, SFF 2014), following exploited Moroccan migrant women working the strawberry picking season in Andalusia; and **Behind the Palm Trees**, from filmmaker Meryem Benm'Barek, charting the risky affair of an opportunistic Moroccan man and a wealthy French woman in Tangier. Also from Cannes, **Everytime**, Sandra Wollner's psychological drama starring Birgit Minichmayr, follows a family reckoning with tragedy between Berlin and Tenerife. From Cannes Directors' Fortnight come **9 Temples to Heaven**, produced by Apichatpong Weerasethakul, a debut accompanying a Thai family's pilgrimage; and **I See Buildings Fall Like Lightning**, Clio Barnard's ensemble drama about five Birmingham childhood friends, starring Anthony Boyle and Joe Cole.

Star-led international features include **The Death of Robin Hood**, in which Hugh Jackman stars alongside Jodie Comer and Bill Skarsgård in Michael Sarnoski's radical reimagining of the legend; **Palestine 36**, Annemarie Jacir's (*Wajib*, SFF 2017) sweeping historical epic starring Hiam Abbass and Jeremy Irons, winner of Best Film at Tokyo; **Rosebush Pruning**, Karim Aïnouz's (*Motel Destino*, SFF 2024) satire of privilege, starring Elle Fanning, Callum Turner and Riley Keough; and **The Wizard of the Kremlin**, Olivier Assayas' (*Personal Shopper*, SFF 2016) political thriller about the rise of Vladimir Putin, starring Paul Dano and Jude Law, from Venice.

Also featuring major screen talent are **Late Fame**, starring Willem Dafoe and Greta Lee in Kent Jones' drama about a retired poet rediscovered by New York poseurs; **The Good Boy**, from Polish Oscar nominee Jan Komasa, starring Stephen Graham and Andrea Riseborough in a twisted psychological thriller; **Heart of Light — Eleven Songs for Fiji**, featuring Tilda Swinton in Cynthia Beatt's speculative autobiography about a British woman returning to her childhood home in Fiji, from Rotterdam; **I Want Your Sex**, Gregg Araki's darkly funny sex comedy starring Olivia Wilde, Cooper Hoffman and Charli xcx, from Sundance; and **Gail Daughtry and the Celebrity Sex Pass**, from the creators of *Wet Hot American Summer*, starring Zoey Deutch and Jon Hamm.

Intimate character studies span the globe, including **Hen**, György Pálfi's beguiling survival drama following an extraordinarily courageous hen, an Honourable Mention at Toronto Platform; **The Loneliest Man in Town**, from Austrian duo Tizza Covi and Rainer Frimmel (*Mister Universo*, SFF 2017), a docufiction about an ageing bluesman, from the Berlinale Competition; **The Mutation**, Shin

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Su-won's (*Hommage*, SFF 2022) drama about division and identity in South Korea, from Busan; ***People and Meat***, a bittersweet Korean gem following three elderly Seoul residents who become a dine-and-dash gang; ***The World of Love***, praised by Bong Joon-ho; ***Mama***, Israeli director Or Sinai's debut starring Evgenia Dodina as a Ukrainian housekeeper returning home to Poland; and ***A Sad and Beautiful World***, a Venice audience award winner set against decades of turmoil in Lebanon.

Queer stories feature across the program, including ***Strange River***, a sensual queer coming-of-age Venice debut; ***Julian***, produced by Lukas Dhont (*Close*, Sydney Film Prize 2022), winner of five Flemish Film Awards including Best Film; and ***On the Road***, David Pablos' Venice Queer Lion winner following two Mexican drug dealers whose relationship blossoms into romance.

Asian cinema brings further distinctive voices, including ***Morte Cucina***, from Thai auteur Pen-ek Ratanaruang and shot by Australian Christopher Doyle (*In the Mood for Love*), a darkly funny Bangkok revenge thriller; ***Master***, Rezwan Shahriar Sumit's Rotterdam award-winning political drama about a Bangladeshi official caught between his electorate and those in power; and ***Ripples in the Mist***, Clara Law's (*Drifting Petals*, SFF 2021) essayistic drama following two Hong Kong women in exile across Taiwan and Australia.

Latin American, North African and Middle Eastern cinema offers a rich selection, including ***The Arab***, Malek Bensmail's debut reworking Albert Camus' *The Stranger* through a postcolonial lens; ***Isabel***, Gabe Klinger's (*Porto*, SFF 2017) Berlinale character study about a São Paulo sommelier; ***Soumsoum***, ***The Night of the Stars***, from Chadian master Mahamat-Saleh Haroun (*Lingui*, SFF 2021), a magical-realist tale about a young woman whose visions lead her to freedom; ***Flies***, Fernando Eimbcke's (*Olmo*, SFF 2025) blackly comic tale of an unlikely pair of housemates, produced by Michel Franco; and ***El Sett***, portraying the life of legendary Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum in a lavish and epic telling.

Further highlights include ***100 Sunset***, a debut noir following a young Tibetan thief; ***Mile End Kicks***, Chandler Levack's (*I Like Movies*, SFF 2023) romantic comedy starring Barbie Ferreira; ***Mouse***, a coming-of-age gem starring Oscar nominee Sophie Okonedo; ***Rose of Nevada***, Mark Jenkin's (*Bait*, SFF 2019) Venice time-travel mystery starring George MacKay and Callum Turner; and ***Erupcja***, Pete Ohs' portrait of a Warsaw getaway gone awry starring musician Charli xcx, from Toronto; ***The American Dream***, a joyous true-story buddy movie about basketball from the producers of *The Intouchables*; ***Memory of Princess Mumbi***, exploring artificial intelligence and human creativity; and ***Black Rabbit, White Rabbit***, Shahram Mokri's (*Fish & Cat*, SFF 2014) meta-narrative in which three dreamlike stories involving a car accident, a prop gun and an aspiring actress collide.

## **INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARIES**

From the frontlines of war to extraordinary stories of survival, the 2026 International Documentaries lineup delivers compelling true stories from around the world.

Major prize-winners lead the program. ***If Pigeons Turned to Gold***, Pepa Lubojacki's portrait of four family members navigating intergenerational addiction, won the Berlinale Documentary Award. ***Traces***, from Ukrainian directors Alisa Kovalenko and Marysia Nikitiuk, won the Berlinale Panorama Audience Award for Best Documentary, following activist Iryna Dovhan as she documents the testimonies of women who survived sexual violence during Russia's war.

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**Landmarks**, Lucrecia Martel's (*Zama*, SFF 2018) first documentary, won Best Film at the BFI London Film Festival, a gripping investigation into the killing of an Indigenous leader in Argentina. **A Fox Under a Pink Moon**, directed remotely by Mehrdad Oskouei with 16-year-old Afghan refugee Soraya as co-director, won the top prize at IDFA. And **Past Future Continuous**, from Firouzeh Khosrovani (*Radiograph of a Family*, SFF 2021) and Morteza Ahmadvand, won the IDFA Envision Competition's top prize, following an Iranian exile who installs cameras in her parents' Tehran home to witness their lives from afar.

Sundance prize-winners arrive in force. **Nuisance Bear**, winner of the Sundance Grand Jury Prize for US Documentary, follows polar bears in Manitoba as their ancient migration collides with modern life. **To Hold a Mountain**, winner of the Sundance World Cinema Grand Jury Prize for Documentary, follows a shepherd mother and daughter defending their ancestral Montenegrin highland from becoming a NATO military training ground.

**Closure**, Michał Marczak's (*Fuck for Forest*, SFF 2013) devastating portrait of a father's obsessive search for his missing teenage son along Poland's Vistula River, won the Golden Alexander at Thessaloniki after premiering to rave reviews at Sundance. **Remake**, Ross McElwee's (*Sherman's March*, SFF 1986) heart-rending tribute to his lost son, crafted from decades of home video, won the Golden Globes Impact Prize for Documentary at Venice.

**Everybody to Kenmure Street**, Felipe Bustos Sierra's account of the Glasgow community uprising that halted an immigration raid, featuring Emma Thompson, won the Sundance Special Jury Award for Civil Resistance. **Birds of War**, the love story between a Lebanese journalist and Syrian cameraman told through 13 years of personal archives across war and exile, won the Sundance Special Jury Award for Journalistic Impact. **Just Look Up**, Emma Wall and Betsy Hershey's portrait of young climate activist Michael Greenberg and his movement Climate Defiance, executive produced by Joshua Oppenheimer and Adam McKay, won the CPH:DOX F:Act Award.

**My Father and Qaddafi**, Jihan K's debut following her investigation into her father's disappearance under Qaddafi's regime, won Best Documentary at Doha and the Jury Prize at Marrakech, after premiering at Venice as the first Libyan title there in over a decade.

Further prize-winners include **Baby Jackfruit Baby Guava**, Nôg Nhât Quang's portrait of a Vietnamese family confronting their past, winner of the Visions du Réel Special Jury Award; **TheyDream**, William D. Caballero's blend of family archives and animation, winner of the Sundance NEXT Special Jury Award for Creative Expression; **The Seoul Guardians**, the electrifying account of six hours when martial law was declared in South Korea in December 2024, winner of the Rotterdam Audience Award; **Daughters of the Forest**, Otilia Portillo Padua's magical portrait of two Indigenous Mexican mycologists preserving ancestral mushroom knowledge, winner of the Visions Audience Award at SXSW; and **Summer 2000: The X-Cetra Story**, Ayden Mayeri's joyful account of four childhood friends whose amateur album unexpectedly goes viral decades later, winner of the SXSW Documentary Competition.

**Once Upon a Time in Harlem**, from William and David Greaves, captures a once-in-a-lifetime 1972 gathering of Harlem Renaissance legends, from Sundance and Cannes Directors' Fortnight.

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Sport documentaries include **Lomu**, Gavin FitzGerald and Vea Mafile'o's pitch-perfect tribute to New Zealand rugby legend Jonah Lomu; and **Give Me the Ball!**, from two-time Academy Award nominee Liz Garbus and Elizabeth Wolff, is the definitive Billie Jean King documentary, from Sundance.

Human stories of love, family and grief span the globe. **The Cycle of Love**, from Oscar-winner Orlando von Einsiedel (*Virunga*), charts the epic true story of a Delhi street artist who cycled from India to Sweden. **A Child of My Own**, from two-time Oscar nominee Maite Alberdi (*The Eternal Memory*, SFF 2023), follows a Mexican woman who fakes a pregnancy and goes to extreme lengths to sustain the lie. And **The Tale of Silyan**, Oscar-nominated Tamara Kotevska's (*Honeyland*, SFF 2019) tender portrait of a Macedonian farmer and an injured stork whose unlikely friendship transforms a solitary life, won the Cinema & Arts Award at Venice.

Politics, conflict and civic action fuel several outstanding films. **American Doctor** follows three doctors — Palestinian, Jewish and Zoroastrian — who travel to Gaza to save lives. And **Steal This Story, Please!**, from Oscar-nominated directors Carl Deal and Tia Lessin, is an urgently human portrait of Democracy Now! co-founder Amy Goodman, executive produced by Jane Fonda.

Nature and the environment power four vital works. **Time and Water**, from Oscar-nominee Sara Dosa (*Fire of Love*, SFF 2022), sees writer Andri Snær Magnason reflect on family, memory and Iceland's disappearing glaciers. **Hanging by a Wire** is a nail-biting account of a desperate rescue mission when a cable car carrying eight people fails 900 metres above remote Pakistan. **32 Meters** follows a Turkish village woman who defies tradition to launch her own shooting competition for women. And **Whispers in the Woods**, a visual stunner from photographer Vincent Munier that drew one million people to French cinemas.

Inventive works round out the program. **The History of Concrete**, from John Wilson (*How To with John Wilson*), sees the cult documentarian's attempt to pitch a film about concrete derail into a meditation on politics, celebrity and urbanism. **The AI Doc: Or How I Became an Apocaloptimist**, from Oscar-winner Daniel Roher (*Navalny*, SFF 2022), delivers the most comprehensive documentary on artificial intelligence to date.

And **Crocodile**, directed by Pietra Brettkelly (*A Flickering Truth*, SFF 2016) and the Nigerian filmmaking collective The Critics, charts the story of a group of children who began making science-fiction films on a smartphone and found a global audience, executive produced by Idris Elba.

### **SUSTAINABLE FUTURE AWARD**

The Sustainable Future Award amplifies voices for environmental progress. The \$40,000 prize is the largest in the world dedicated to environmental-led cinema through philanthropic support from Amanda Maple-Brown. The award is a beacon, harnessing cinema's reach to rally people around the global and urgent issues of today.

The 2026 nominees include **Ceremony**, **Just Look Up**, **Nuisance Bear**, **Sukundimi Walks Before Me**, and **Time and Water**.

### **SARTORIAL: FASHION ON FILM**

Sartorial: Film On Fashion, curated by SFF Senior Programmer Jessica Moraza, brings together seven films spanning decades of cinema, in which some of the world's most distinctive filmmakers use

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fashion as a lens on identity, culture and power. From the ateliers of Paris to the factory floors of China, the program moves between documentary and fiction to explore how clothing reflects and shapes the societies that produce it.

Highlights include the World Premiere of Australian film ***French Girls***, directed by Hyun Lee, following a young woman navigating Sydney's modelling industry; alongside the Australian premiere of ***Marc by Sofia***, Sofia Coppola's first ever documentary and a personal portrait of designer Marc Jacobs.

The strand also features Frederick Wiseman's landmark ***Model***, Jia Zhangke's ***Useless***, Agnès Varda's playful profile ***Jane B. par Agnès V.***, Wim Wenders' ***Notebook on Cities and Clothes***, and Robert Altman's satirical ensemble ***Prêt-à-Porter***, offering a rich and multifaceted exploration of fashion on screen.

### **SOUNDS ON SCREEN**

Music and sound-driven storytelling take centre stage in Sounds On Screen. These features and documentaries focus on music and offer an aurally exhilarating experience.

Intimate documentaries lead the program. ***Broken English*** sees Tilda Swinton and George MacKay star in a loving tribute to singer, actor and cultural icon Marianne Faithfull from the makers of *20,000 Days on Earth* (SFF 2014), with special contributions from Courtney Love, Beth Orton and Nick Cave.

***Amadou & Mariam: The Blind Couple from Mali*** celebrates fifty years of music and love in a portrait of legendary blind Malian duo Amadou and Mariam, featuring Chris Martin, Damon Albarn and Manu Chao. And ***Tenor: My Name is Pati*** is the stirring story of acclaimed Samoan-born New Zealand tenor Pene Pati and his brother Amitai, the voices behind the beloved Aotearoa popera phenomenon SOL3 MIO.

Music history and archival treasures complete the program. ***Newport & The Great Folk Dream*** is a thrilling time capsule of the Newport Folk Festival from 1963 to 1966, where music, activism and cultural change collided — and where Bob Dylan famously went electric. ***The Best Summer***, Australian Tamra Davis' (*Jean-Michel Basquiat: The Radiant Child*, SFF 2010) Sundance rockumentary, unearths never-before-seen footage from the 1995 Australian festival Summersault, featuring the Beastie Boys, Sonic Youth, Foo Fighters and more.

And ***Jack Johnson: SURFILMUSIC*** follows the sea-sprayed evolution of Jack Johnson from O'ahu grommet to the world famous musician behind hits like "Upside Down" and "Banana Pancakes".

### **EUROPE! VOICES OF WOMEN+ IN FILM Supported by European Film Promotion**

Now in its second decade, EUROPE! Voices of Women+ in Film returns with six striking features by female and genderqueer filmmakers from across the continent, presented in partnership with European Film Promotion (EFP) and Cineuropa.

Leading with major prize winners, ***Hold Onto Me***, Cypriot director Myrsini Aristidou's debut follows an 11-year-old girl and her drifter father forming an unlikely petty crime duo, winner of the World

Program Launch [Press Pack](#). Festival [Press Pack + Photography](#). Program Launch [Red Carpet Photography](#).

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Cinema Dramatic Audience Award at Sundance. ***The Kidnapping of Arabella***, Carolina Cavalli's sophomore feature, stars Benedetta Porcaroli, winner of Best Actress at Venice, and an unexpectedly Italian-fluent Chris Pine. And ***Heysel 85***, Teodora Ana Mihai's tense drama based on the 1985 Heysel Stadium disaster, from the Berlinale.

Also screening are ***The Currents***, Swiss-Argentinian director Milagros Mumenthaler's sophisticated third film, following a fashion designer whose icy plunge into a Swiss lake triggers a profound interior transformation; ***La Belle Année***, Angelica Ruffier's autobiographical work in which a filmmaker rediscovers her teenage diaries, a secret crush and a queer awakening, prize winner at Rotterdam; and ***Sorella di Clausura***, Ivana Mladenović's bawdy Romanian rom-com starring Katia Pascariu (*Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn*, SFF 2021), winner of Best Film at Sarajevo.



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**FIRST NATIONS AWARD proudly supported by Truant Pictures**

The First Nations Award, proudly supported by Truant Pictures and carrying a \$35,000 cash prize — the largest in the world for Indigenous filmmaking — returns with a bold program spanning supernatural thrillers, epic dramas, animated ancestral stories and vibrant rom-coms. The 2026 jury comprises Beck Cole, Mark Coles Smith and Shozo Ichiyama.

Canadian Indigenous cinema leads the program with three films from Toronto. ***Wrong Husband***, from celebrated Inuk filmmaker Zacharias Kunuk (*Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner; Searchers*, SFF 2016), is an epic supernatural drama set in 2000 BCE following two lovers defying an evil shaman's curse, winner of Best Canadian Film. ***At the Place of Ghosts***, L'nu filmmaker Bretten Hannam's (*Wildhood, North Mountain*) supernatural thriller, follows estranged Mi'kmaw siblings battling a malevolent spirit in a primordial forest. And ***Nika & Madison***, Eva Thomas' gripping second feature, follows two Indigenous women on the run after an act of self-defence turns their lives upside down.

Also from Canada, Banchi Hanuse's hybrid documentary ***Ceremony***, that traces memory, ceremony and the ripples of colonialism through Nuxalk lands in British Columbia through breathtaking watercolour animation, winner of the Audience Award at SXSW.

From the United States; ***Aanikoobijigan***, Adam and Zack Khalil's piercing hybrid documentary tracing Anishinaabe repatriation efforts for their Ancestors held in museums, a hit at Sundance; and ***Powwow People***, visionary filmmaker Sky Hopinka's immersive documentary dropping us into a contemporary powwow as a political assertion of Indigenous presence, from Toronto.

***Árru***, Norwegian-Sámi director Elle Sofe Sara's powerful song-filled debut, is also featured in Special Presentations.

Also screening are nine short films. Australian World Premiere shorts include ***The Native Police***, Charles Perrurle Perkins' drama following an Aboriginal Native Police officer; and ***Proper Loved Up***, gathering five bold First Nations rom-coms: ***Belly; G.O.A.T.; I Dare (Love) You; Manutji (Catching Eyes);*** and ***A Grief Encounter***, starring Deborah Mailman and Wayne Blair.

From New Zealand, ***Kurī***, Ana Chaya Scotney's poetic meditation on grief and belonging; and ***Socks***, produced by Jane Campion, following a Māori boy who forms a bond with a Mormon missionary in small-town New Zealand. From Canada, ***The Gnawer of Rocks***, Inuit director Louise Flaherty's tale of two young women guided by ancestral teachings toward survival.

**FAMILY FILMS**

Curated by Katharine Rogers, this year's Family Films program delivers big-screen adventure and heart for the whole family.

***The Last Whale Singer***, the thrilling animated adventure that made waves at the Zurich International Film Festival, follows a self-doubting teenage humpback whale who must find his voice to save the ocean. And ***The Desert Child***, from director Gilles de Maistre, brings to life the breathtaking true story of Hadara, a boy who survives ten years in the Sahara raised by ostriches, in a visually stunning family adventure.

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## **FREAK ME OUT**

Freak Me Out, Sydney Film Festival's sidebar dedicated to all things strange and scary, returns with six features curated by Richard Kuipers, spanning riotous body-horror comedy, brain-bending mystery and a whole lot of ghostly goings-on.

Direct from Sundance, ***Mum, I'm Alien Pregnant***, the hilarious debut from Kiwi duo THUNDERLIPS, turns the gross-out dial up to 11 in an outrageous tale that radiates the dry wit New Zealanders do best. ***Ghost in the Cell***, from Indonesian genre ace Joko Anwar (*Satan's Slaves*), sees a vengeful demon run amok inside a high-security prison in a gleefully gruesome horror-action-comedy spectacular, from the Berlinale. And ***Imposters***, Caleb Phillips' widely praised debut, stars scream queen Jessica Rothe (*Happy Death Day*) in a sci-fi horror about the apparently miraculous return of a couple's missing child, from SXSW Midnigher.

***Never After Dark***, winner of the SXSW Midnigher Audience Award, is a stunningly executed J-horror from director Dave Boyle (*House of Ninjas*) starring Moeka Hoshi (*Shōgun*), following a travelling psychic. ***The Peril at Pincer Point***, winner of the SXSW Auteur Award, is the eccentric British comedy-horror-fantasy debut from Noah Stratton-Twine and Jake Kuhn, shot in monochrome, with the directors attending as Festival guests. And ***Dawning***, Patrik Syversen's breathtaking genre-defying psychodrama following three sisters who gather at a Norwegian family cabin where disturbing news and an ominous stranger awaits.

Also screening are six short films, led by ***The Pearl Comb***, Ali Cook's spellbinding Cornwall mermaid folk-horror, Oscar shortlisted and winner of over 60 international awards; ***Heirlooms***, winner of Best Canadian Short at Fantasia 2025; and Australian World Premiere ***The Lounge***.

## **SCREENABILITY**

Sydney Film Festival marks ten years of its Screenability program with a bold lineup of films by and about people living with disability, curated by Rebecca McCormack.

***Joybubbles***, Rachael J. Morrison's exuberant, life-affirming documentary following a blind man who uses his gift for perfect pitch to manipulate the phone system and make free calls, comes from Sundance, produced by Sarah Winshall (*I Saw the TV Glow*, SFF 2024). ***Retreat***, Ted Evans' groundbreaking thriller featuring an all-Deaf cast, follows a young woman who arrives at a remote wellness retreat where nothing is as it seems, nominated for the Golden Eye Award at Zurich. And ***You Look Fine***, comedian J. Snow's documentary capturing the unfiltered realities of living with sickle cell disease with humour and perseverance, won both the Unstoppable Feature Grand Jury Prize and Unstoppable Audience Award at Slamdance.

Also screening are three Australian short films — ***Sarsaparilla***, in which a sheriff and his outlaw nemesis bond over their love of line dancing; ***Trapeze***, a World Premiere exploring autonomy, ancestral ties and Deaf identity; and ***When You Hear Hoofbeats***, an Australian Premiere in which a woman struggles to have her medical symptoms taken seriously, leading her to believe she's been possessed by the devil.

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### **FLUX: ART+FILM**

Curated by Ruby Arrowsmith-Todd and Dr. Harriet Johnson, this program celebrates films that expand the language of cinema, blurring the lines between fact and fiction. This year's program presents five striking works, including *Dry Leaf*, Georgian auteur Alexandre Koberidze's formally daring road trip mystery shot entirely on an old mobile phone in stunning 144p, a prize winner at Locarno 2025; *Joy Boy: A Tribute to Julius Eastman*, a prismatic, polyphonic tribute by six Belgian-Congolese artists to Julius Eastman, a visionary queer African American composer and unsung pioneer of 20th century minimalism; *Maddie's Secret*, comedian John Early's acclaimed debut balancing satire and earnest melodrama, inspired by 1950s golden age Hollywood, campy daytime movies and the 90s classic *Showgirls*; *Chronovisor*, the strikingly original debut from American duo Jack Auen and Kevin Walker, following a professor who becomes obsessed with a mysterious occult device capable of visualising the past; And *Tycoon*, the debut of Canadian visual artist Charlotte Zhang, which plays as *Miami Vice* for the doom scroll era — a glitchy, dystopian portrait of a 2028 Los Angeles gripped by paranoia.

### **THE TROPICAL TRAIL: A PROGRAM OF BRAZILIAN FILMS Curated by Kleber Mendonça Filho**

Sydney Film Festival presents The Tropical Trail, a personal selection of Brazilian films curated by recent Oscar nominated filmmaker (*The Secret Agent*) and 2026 Official Competition jury president Kleber Mendonça Filho. Spanning six decades of cinema, the program presents shorts and features steeped in history and in contemporary images, showcasing Brazil's diverse culture, its beauty and the irony of its inequality and its violence.

Mendonça Filho describes *Man Marked for Death, Twenty Years Later* as "the title I always show, no matter where" — Eduardo Coutinho's documentary masterpiece about the Teixeira family, torn apart by political violence in the 1960s, whose subject Elizabete Teixeira turns 100 in 2026.

The program also includes: *The Hour and Turn of Augusto Matraga* (Roberto Santos, 1965, 4K restoration); *São Paulo, Incorporated* (Luis Sérgio Person, 1965, 4K restoration); *Black God, White Devil* (Glauber Rocha, 1964, 4K restoration); *Lúcio Flávio: The Passenger of Agony* (Héctor Babenco, 1977, 4K restoration); *Cinema, Aspirins and Vultures* (Marcelo Gomes, 2005); *Man Marked for Death, Twenty Years Later* (Eduardo Coutinho, 1984); *Central Station* (Walter Salles, 1998, 4K restoration, starring Oscar-nominated Fernanda Montenegro); *The Second Mother* (Anna Muylaert, 2014); and *Neon Bull* (Gabriel Mascaro, 2015).

### **BARBARA HAMMER: RADICAL VISIBILITY**

Pioneering lesbian and feminist icon Barbara Hammer (1939–2019) didn't just make films. She reinvented cinema. Forging a radical and deeply personal body of work that placed lesbian experience, desire and identity at its centre, Hammer won three Teddy Awards at the Berlinale and her work has been exhibited at MoMA and the Tate.

The 2026 retrospective presents 19 of the more than 80 films she made across a five-decade career, anchored by the Australian premiere of *Barbara Forever*, Brydie O'Connor's debut documentary portrait of Hammer's life and radical vision, winner of the Berlinale Teddy Award and the Sundance Editing Award.

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The program includes her groundbreaking features *Nitrate Kisses* and *History Lessons*, alongside short film packages *Barbara Hammer: A Visual Poet*, charting her experimental practice across five decades, and *Barbara Hammer: Was a Superdyke*, celebrating her formative early avant-garde work. The program is curated by Lisa Rose.

### **CLASSICS RESTORED**

Sydney Film Festival presents six classic films the way they were meant to be seen — on the big screen. The 2026 Classics Restored program spans six decades of world cinema, from a landmark of Hong Kong independent film to a Taiwanese New Wave masterpiece, an unfinished Hollywood silent and an Australian cult classic.

Four films screen in new 4K restorations, led by *He Died with a Felafel in His Hand* (Richard Lowenstein, Australia, 2001), the beloved Australian cult classic, with director Richard Lowenstein attending as a Festival guest. Also restored in 4K are *Queen Kelly* (Erich von Stroheim, USA, 1929), the lavish and unfinished final film of a Hollywood visionary, from Venice 2025; *Vive L'Amour* (Tsai Ming-liang, Taiwan, 1994), winner of the Venice Golden Lion and one of the key works of the Taiwanese New Wave; and *Yam Daabo* (Idrissa Ouédraogo, Burkina Faso, 1987), one of the great debuts of African cinema.

Also screening are *The Arch* (T'ang Shushuen, Hong Kong, 1968), an early landmark of Hong Kong independent cinema shot by Satyajit Ray cinematographer Subrata Mitra, from Cannes Classics 2025; and *Eureka* (Shinji Aoyama, Japan, 2000), the hypnotic Cannes Competition masterpiece adored by Bong Joon-ho.

### **THE DENDY AWARDS FOR AUSTRALIAN SHORT FILMS**

In its 57-year history, Sydney Film Festival's short film competition has launched the careers of countless directors, writers, producers, cinematographers and other film creatives.

The 10 finalists compete for five illustrious prizes: the **Dendy Live Action Short Award**; the **Yoram Gross Animation Award**; the **Dendy Rouben Mamoulian Award for Best Director**; the **AFTRS Craft Award**; and the **Event Cinemas Rising Talent Award for Screenwriting**.

The short films competing are *Mr Adidos*, *Flesh Fruit*, *Date 3*, *Our Choir Has Always Travelled*, *Saint Valentine*, *Sugar*, *Flywire*, *Ginkgo*, *Raft Race* and *Manutji (Catching Eyes)*.

### **THE HUB**

The Hub at Lower Town Hall is where Sydney Film Festival steps off the screen. Connect with fellow filmgoers and filmmakers, participate in special events and exclusive talks, or grab a drink and a bite to eat with friends as you discuss your Festival favourites.

Open to the public each night, and select days from 3-14 June, The Hub will feature a daily Happy Hour special pop-up bar between 4:30pm and 6:00pm with drinks from Kirin Ichiban and Mt Yengo Wines.



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The Hub will also feature the Air Canada Lounge, where Festivalgoers can enjoy a taste of Canada with complimentary in-flight snacks, with poutine on sale behind the bar to refuel between sessions.

### **SPECIAL EVENTS AT THE HUB AND BEYOND**

#### **SFF Film Trivia Nights**

**Mon 8 June & Tue 9 June | 7:00pm | \$10pp**

Hosted by comedian Alexei Toliopoulos, featuring live music and big prizes. Free beer or wine on arrival for all guests.

#### **Letterboxd User Meet-Up**

**Sat 6 June | 4:00pm | Free**

Meet up with fellow film fans from around Sydney and afar and chat about your Festival picks. Enjoy the pop-up bar, fun and games, and giveaways.

#### **The World's Best Whistle**

**Sun 7 June | 11:30am | Free**

Following the Australian premiere of *Whistle*, enjoy a live demonstration by participants from the film — and perhaps show off your own skills.

#### **Refused Classification**

**Thu 11 June | 8:00pm | \$45 | Darling Quarter Theatre**

The hit live show from comedians Zachary Ruane and Alexei Toliopoulos recounts the story of the *Ken Park* ban at the 2003 Sydney Film Festival in an outrageous hybrid of comedy, documentary and verbatim theatre.

#### **Umm Kulthum Celebration with Live Music**

**Sat 13 June | 3:15pm | Free**

An evocative afternoon celebrating the legacy of Umm Kulthum with live music tributes, preceding a screening of *El Sett*.

#### **French Girls Premiere Party**

**Fri 12 June | 8:30pm | Free**

Following the premiere screening of *French Girls*, join members of the film team for a très chic celebration in honour of the film and the Sartorial: Fashion on Film program.

#### **Dendy Awards Ceremony and Celebration**

**Sat 13 June | 5:00pm | Free entry with any ticket to the 13 June Dendy shorts screening**

Find out the winners of five prestigious awards and cash prizes and celebrate alongside Australia's most exciting filmmakers.

### **FREE TALKS**

The **free Festival Talks** at The Hub create a space for audiences, filmmakers and industry professionals to gather and discuss the important topics and issues of the day, as addressed in so many Festival films.



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**Women in Film with Ari Wegner**

**Fri 5 June | 5:30pm | Free**

Academy Award-nominated cinematographer Ari Wegner (*The Power of the Dog*) reflects on her career, craft, and navigating a traditionally male-dominated field. Moderated by Aimée Lindorff, followed by a Screen Vixens and WIFT meet-up.

**The Academy Awards: A Deep Dive**

**Sat 6 June | 2:00pm | Free**

A lively discussion into everything you've ever wanted to know about the Academy Awards, with Wenlei Ma (*The Nightly*), Hannah-Rose Yee (*Vogue Australia*) and Nicholas Fonseca (*Stellar*).

**microWAVE at The Hub**

**Sat 6 June | 10:30am–1:30pm | Free**

Presented in partnership with UTS Creative Practice Research Group, a series of conversations exploring bold, independent filmmaking, featuring microbudget champion Mark Jenkin (*Bait*, SFF 2019; *Rose of Nevada*, SFF 2026), filmmakers Hyun Lee (*French Girls*) and Anthony Frith (*Mockbuster*), and host Jason Di Rosso.

**AustraliaARRGHH! Horror's Moment in the Australian Sun**

**Sun 7 June | 1:45pm | Free**

Australian horror has emerged as a defining force in contemporary cinema. This panel explores why the genre is thriving now, with filmmakers from *Leviticus* and *Saccharine*, moderated by Freak Me Out curator Richard Kuipers.

**In Conversation with Peter Weir — The 2026 Ian McPherson Lecture**

**Wed 10 June | 5:30pm | Free**

Presented in partnership with AFTRS. Legendary Oscar-winning filmmaker Peter Weir joins Rob Carlton for a fireside conversation reflecting on a body of work including *Gallipoli*, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, *Dead Poets Society* and *The Truman Show*.

**Local Talent, Global Storytelling**

**Thu 11 June | 5:30pm | Free**

Presented by Screen Australia, this session explores global storytelling through a uniquely Australian lens, with Selina Miles (*Silenced*), Camilla Mazzaferro (*Whistle*) and Andy Huang (*Replica*), moderated by Screen Australia's Richard Huddleston.

**Short Story Long: From Shorts to Features**

**Fri 12 June | 5:30pm | Free**

Filmmakers and key industry partners explore the journey from short to feature filmmaking, with Dendy alumni returning with new feature films alongside works from Screen NSW and Screen Australia's First Nations Department.

**Masterclass with Kleber Mendonça Filho**

**Sat 13 June | 1:30pm | Free**

Join recent Oscar nominee and 2026 Official Competition Jury President Kleber Mendonça Filho for an in-depth masterclass on his distinctive approach to storytelling, from shaping atmosphere to interrogating history and place.

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**Platform Pitch — For Film's Sake Incubator**

**Sat 13 June | 11:00am | Free**

Back for a fourth year, the For Film's Sake Incubator challenges emerging filmmakers to form new collaborations and develop original projects over just four days, before pitching live to an expert industry jury.



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### **SFFTV**

SFFTV returns to light up Martin Place from June 3-14 and bring Sydney's ultimate celebration of cinema to the streets. Enjoy an eclectic array of acclaimed animated shorts, SFF film previews, and special activations from SFF partners. Exclusive \$10 rush tickets, free lunchtime screenings with complimentary popcorn, and free twilight screenings round out the daily activities.

The full Sydney Film Festival 2026 program can be found online at [sff.org.au](http://sff.org.au).

**Sydney Film Festival runs from 3-14 June 2026. Tickets and FlexiPasses to Sydney Film Festival 2026 are on sale now. Please call 1300 733 733 or visit [sff.org.au](http://sff.org.au) for more information or to book.**

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**Sydney Film 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](http://sff.org.au).