

MEDIA RELEASE: 10am, Wednesday, 17 June 2026
Sydney, Australia

SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

3 - 14 JUNE 2026

SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES 2026 GIO AUDIENCE AWARDS



After receiving more than 24,900 votes, **Sydney Film Festival** today announced the winners of the **2026 GIO Audience Awards**. The annual awards recognise the audience's favourite films across four categories: Best Australian Narrative Feature, Best Australian Documentary, Best International Narrative Feature and Best International Documentary.

Taking home the award for Best Australian Feature was ***The Fox***, directed by Dario Russo, the absurdist, comic Australian folktale starring Jai Courtney and Emily Browning alongside Olivia Colman as a talking fox and Sam Neill as a magpie. The award for Best Australian Documentary went to Rhian Skirving and William A. Bleakley's ***Rodeo Dreams***, following four young Australian bull riders as they chase their dreams to win the prestigious Mount Isa Rodeo.

International winners included the Cannes-hit ***La Bola Negra***, Javier Calvo and Javier Ambrossi's stirring, decades-spanning exploration of queer desire in Spain, which received Best International Feature, and Poh Si Teng's ***American Doctor***, which tracks three American doctors travelling to Gaza to save lives – in turn exposing the reality of the war and the endurance of human compassion, which was named Best International Documentary.

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Runners-up included *First Light* (Best Australian Feature), *The Piano Tuner* (Best Australian Documentary), *All of a Sudden* (Best International Feature), and *The Cycle of Love* (Best International Documentary).

Sydney Film Festival Director Nashen Moodley said, “In a year of record attendance, the audience award feels all the more meaningful. All four wonderful films are distinct from each other and highlight the breadth of strong stories that resonate with audiences at the cinema.”

“Dario Russo’s *The Fox* is equally funny as it is stirring, with a cast of charismatic characters that are a delight to watch on-screen. ”

“*Rodeo Dreams* depicts bull-riding beautifully, not only in a visual sense, but granting the audience with an understanding of the determination and passion that guides those that partake in such a pain-staking sport. ”

“Javier Calvo and Javier Ambrossi’s *La Bola Negra* created a huge buzz at Cannes, and the adoration for the film has spread across seas to Sydney. This decades-spanning odyssey envelopes viewers in its emotion and tender character exploration, and I’m sure this is one of many awards it will collect this year.”

“And sometimes cinema is meant to confront us, like *American Doctor*, that places us inside Gaza as three health professionals work their hardest to aide those harmed by the conflict.” said Moodley.

THE GIO AUDIENCE AWARDS

Australian Feature

Winner: *The Fox* directed by Dario Russo

Runner Up: *First Light* directed by James J. Robinson

Australian Documentary

Winner: *Rodeo Dreams* directed by Rhian Skirving and W.A.M. Bleakley

Runner Up: *The Piano Tuner* directed by Natalia Laska

International Feature

Winner: *La Bola Negra* directed by Javier Calvo and Javier Ambrossi

Runner Up: *All of a Sudden* directed by Ryusuke Hamaguchi

International Documentary

Winner: *American Doctor* directed by Poh Si Teng

Runner Up: *Cycle of Love* directed by Orlando von Einsiedel

The full Sydney Film Festival 2026 program can be found online at sff.org.au.

Sydney Film Festival ran from 3-14 June 2026. Please call 1300 733 733 or visit sff.org.au for more information.



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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, took place from 3 to 14 June 2026, and showcased the very best in contemporary cinema and offered 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.

