

MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES 2015 NEXT GEN PROGRAM FILMS TO ENTERTAIN AND EDUCATE STUDENTS AND THE WHOLE FAMILY

MELBOURNE, 4 May 2015 – The **Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF)** will again capture the imagination of young minds with the 2015 **Next Gen** program, the Festival's 'all-ages' strand that serves to enrich the cinema experience for younger viewers, as well as to stimulate discussion and social awareness.

The program of eight films from all corners of the globe will encourage young audiences to become active viewers, who question and challenge the moving image. Through drama and documentary, these films explore issues such as bullying, respectful relationships, sexuality, self-expression, making positive life choices and personal empowerment

This year, Next Gen is pleased to present Australian documentary ***Gayby Baby*** in which we meet Gus, Ebony, Matt and Graham, 10- to 12-year-olds each coping with growing up. As they navigate challenges of school, sport, friends and their futures, they do so within loving homes and with caring parents – who happen to be gay or lesbian. As marriage equality continues to inspire discussion around the world, Maya Newell's documentary looks at the reality – not the rhetoric – of same-sex parenting. As part of a special **Talking Pictures: Watch and Learn** event the filmmaker and guests will participate in a discussion drawing upon personal experiences and research to dissect what family means to young people today.

Also in the **Junior Secondary +** section, the sweetly told coming-of-age story and the feature debut from Laura Halilovic, ***Me Romantic Romani***. Using gentle humour and wry observations about the oft-discriminated against and misunderstood Romani people, Halilovic has crafted a warm-hearted, timeless tale of young love, rebellion, culture clash and the need to let children trace their own path in life. In partnership for the first time, MIFF Next Gen and NGV Education will present **Famiglia e amore: Italian screen culture and visual arts**, with a screening of *Me Romantic Romani* at the NGV International's Clemenger BBDO Auditorium and a gallery viewing exploring Italian visual culture and fascinating stories of love, family and relationships.

The **Middle Secondary +** section houses four foreign language films: Spanish-language drama ***Mateo***, the assured first feature from Maria Gamboa which is based on her own experiences working with at-risk youths on the frontlines of Colombia's guerilla conflict; tough and touching French documentary ***Spartacus & Cassandra*** which tackles issues of homelessness and poverty in a harsh coming-of-age journey no child should have to experience; German drama, ***The Spiderwebhouse*** which is a challenging but sanguine film, made all the more strange knowing it is based on a true story; and Japanese tale ***Wonderful World End***, about 17-year-old Shiori – a Gothic-Lolita cosplaying model who twitcasts for her burgeoning legion of fans – and her intense friendship with shy 13-year-old runaway Ayumi.

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And finally, for older audiences (**Senior Secondary +**): French friendship drama ***Being 14***, which takes an uncensored look at the lives of three 14-year-old girls navigating friendships, sex, partying, bullying and shaming; plus Taiwanese thriller ***Partners in Crime*** which dissects the complicated teenage psyche fuelled by angst, restlessness and the desperation to fit in.

Since 2007 the **Next Gen** program has endeavoured to provide secondary school students with the opportunity to enjoy a diverse range of entertaining and challenging cinema. The spotlight also provides an opportunity for families to enjoy films in the Festival environment. Through the exploration of cultural and social issues, **Next Gen** encourages students and teachers to intellectually engage with these films using the help of free study guides provided by **ATOM (Australian Teachers of Media Inc.)** This resource provides a greater context for students to engage with the themes raised in the films in relation to their curriculum.

Next Gen is proudly supported by **ATOM**.

To book tickets go to metromagazine.com.au/nextgen.

For program information visit miff.com.au/nextgen.

School bookings now open.

General Admission tickets will be released on Friday 10 July.

The 2015 Melbourne International Film Festival runs 30 July -16 August 2015. MIFFs First Glance will be announced on 26 May 2015 and the full program will be launched 8 July 2015 with public tickets on sale 10 July 2015.

For all media enquiries contact Asha Holmes Publicity:

Asha Holmes | 0403 274 299 | asha@ashaholmespublicity.com.au

Frances Mariani | 0416 069 778 | frances@ashaholmespublicity.com.au

Stephanie Payne | 0409 010 441 | stephanie@ashaholmespublicity.com.au

Rachel Cassar | 0431 606 005 | rachel@ashaholmespublicity.com.au

Office number: + 61 (0) 3 8660 4823