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MIFF ANNOUNCES FIRST GLANCE TITLES AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE SCREENING OF *TOP OF THE LAKE: CHINA GIRL*

MELBOURNE, 6 JUNE 2017 – For its 66th edition, the Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) is thrilled to uncover its First Glance selection of 30 films that will screen at this year's festival from 3 August to 20 August, including the Australian premiere of Jane Campion's much anticipated new television series *Top of the Lake: China Girl* presented by BBC First and Foxtel.

Artistic Director Michelle Carey says, "We're hoping that this sneak peek of the 2017 program gives you a taste of what's to come. The calibre of films on offer this year is very impressive, from Australian stalwart Jane Campion's *Top of the Lake: China Girl* to breakout hit *Patti Cake\$*, MIFF brings you the story of the world through curated and unforgettable screen experiences."

Straight from a standing ovation in Cannes, this special Australian premiere of the entire second season, directed by Jane Campion and MIFF Accelerator alumnus Ariel Kleiman from a script by Campion and Gerard Lee (*My Mistress*, MIFF 14), will show all six episodes in three concurrent two-hour sessions – a unique opportunity to see the series before its television premiere on BBC First on Foxtel. *Top of the Lake: China Girl* (Australia) is a crime mystery story that finds Detective Robin Griffin (Elisabeth Moss) recently returned to Sydney and trying to rebuild her life. When the body of an Asian girl washes up on Bondi Beach, there appears little hope of finding the killer, until Robin discovers 'China Girl' didn't die alone. Also starring Nicole Kidman, Gwendoline Christie (*Game of Thrones*), David Dencik (*Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*), Ewen Leslie (*The Daughter*) and Accelerator alumnus Alice Englert (*The Boyfriend Game*, MIFF 16).

Also hotting up the screen will be Australian premieres *Golden Exits* (USA), the latest film from Alex Ross Perry (*Listen Up Phillip* MIFF 14; *Queen of Earth*, MIFF 15), an unnerving ensemble drama shot on 16mm that boasts a star-studded cast led by Emily Browning, Chloë Sevigny, Jason Schwartzman with Beastie Boy Adam Horowitz and a moody score by Keegan De Witt; and *The Lost City of Z* (USA), James Gray's (*The Immigrant* MIFF 14) sumptuous and poignant Amazon adventure based on real life explorer Percy Fawcett's quest to find the fabled city of El Dorado, starring Charlie Hunnam, Sienna Miller, Robert Pattinson and featuring lush 35mm cinematography by Darius Khondji.

Leading Australian director Kriv Stenders (*The Principal*, MIFF 15; *Red Dog* MIFF 11) returns to MIFF with two productions: *The Go-Betweens – Right Here* (Australia), a documentary charting the four-decade long story of beloved indie rock band The Go-Betweens, in their own words and with never-before-seen archival footage; and *Australia Day* (Australia), an excoriating, illuminating take on our country's most fraught debate, set over a pulse-racing 12 hours on 26 January with a powerhouse ensemble cast including Bryan Brown, Matthew Le Nevez, Sean Keenan, Shari Sebbens and Jenny Wu (who also features in *Top of the Lake: China Girl*).

Local comedies include *Ali's Wedding*, based on the real-life experience of lead actor Osamah Sami's ill-fated arranged marriage, the absurd and poignant tale about family in multicultural Australia stars Don Hany with direction by Jeffrey Walker (*Jack Irish: Bad Debts*, MIFF 12), and *That's Not Me* (Australia). *Ali's Wedding* is a fast-paced comedy of very Muslim manners that shines

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with wit, humanity and crowd-pleasing charisma; while *That's Not Me* is **Gregory Erdstein's** (*Two Devils*, MIFF 14) charming feature debut about a young woman and aspiring actor who takes advantage of her identical twin sister's success and fame, featuring an impressive performance by writer/star **Alice Foulcher** in dual roles.

In *Mountain* (Australia), **Jennifer Peedom** (*Sherpa*, MIFF 15) returns to the mountains that so captivate her in a unique cinematic and musical collaboration. Working with high-altitude cinematographer **Renan Ozturk**, bestselling author **Robert Macfarlane** (*Mountains of the Mind*) and the Australian Chamber Orchestra's **Richard Tognetti**, Peedom has created a breathtaking cine-sonic journey through awe-inspiring vistas narrated by **Willem Dafoe**.

One of Australia's most innovative filmmakers and MIFF regular **Amiel Courtin-Wilson** (*Hail* MIFF 11; *Ruin*, MIFF 13) captures two legends – free jazz pioneer **Cecil Taylor** and modern dance artist **Min Tanaka** – in an intimate performance piece like no other in *The Silent Eye* (Australia). Shot over three days in 2016 at Taylor's New York home, the film captures these two masters riffing, offering the audience a glimpse of the creative process at its most sublime.

Master international filmmakers bring their works to the big screen at MIFF with **Terrence Malick's** *Song to Song* (USA), a beautifully lensed love story set against the backdrop of the Austin music scene, with a luminous cast including **Ryan Gosling**, **Rooney Mara**, **Michael Fassbender**, **Natalie Portman** and **Cate Blanchett**; and **Sally Potter's** (*Ginger and Rosa*, MIFF 12) caustic comic satire of a broken, post-Brexit England, *The Party* (UK), offering a masterclass of acting from a stellar ensemble headed by **Kristin Scott Thomas**, **Patricia Clarkson** and **Timothy Spall**, and filmed entirely in stunning black and white.

The director of *A Bigger Splash*, **Luca Guadagnino**, presents his most accomplished film yet: a passionate Italian summer romance headed by **Armie Hammer** and star on the rise **Timothée Chalamet**. Adapted from André Acimen's novel with a script co-written by James Ivory, *Call Me By Your Name* (Italy) is a sensuous story of first love and the end of adolescence.

Turning galvanising portraits of marginalised women into his own niche, **Sebastián Lelio** (*Gloria*, MIFF 13) returns with another beguiling character study, delivering a nuanced and moving account of a vital fight for love, acceptance, and respect that won both Best Screenplay and Best LGBT Film at Berlin. But *A Fantastic Woman* (Chile) belongs to its determined, defiant titular character and the stunning performance by transgender actress **Daniela Vega**, making one of the most memorable and formidable movie debuts in recent history.

Peter Mackie Burns' nuanced debut feature *Daphne* (UK) is a character study about a dissatisfied young woman in present-day London – featuring a superb performance from **Emily Beecham** in title role – that balances complex comedy and disarming drama and offers a refreshing portrait of contemporary womanhood.

Music video director **Jeremy Jasper's** fabulous feature debut *Patti Cake\$* (USA), about an aspiring rapper, is a triumphant tale of how music can give a nobody a voice, which wowed critics and

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audiences alike at Sundance and Cannes. But the film belongs to Australian acting discovery **Danielle McDonald**, who was dubbed the breakout star of Sundance for her sensational performance as the New Jersey battler and hailed as the “Next Big Thing” by *The Hollywood Reporter*.

Another acclaimed feature debut is **Kirsten Tan’s Pop Aye** (Thailand), the warm and ever-so-strange tale of a Bangkok architect, his elephant and 300 miles of mid-life crisis, which won the Special Jury Award for Screenwriting at Sundance and the Big Screen Award at Rotterdam.

God’s Own Country (UK) was also a favourite at Berlin (Teddy Jury Award winner) and Sundance, where it won the World Cinema Dramatic Best Director Award and comparisons to *Brokeback Mountain*. **Francis Lee’s** emotionally rich feature debut captures the quiet yearning of forbidden romance with heated sex scenes and a documentary-like depiction of British rural life that subverts the familiar path taken by queer love stories.

The makers of *Spring* (MIFF 15) return with **The Endless** (USA), an engrossing high-concept horror centred on two brothers following their escape from a cult. **Justin Benson** and **Aaron Moorhead** write, direct and star in a film of creeping dead that is part horror, part science fiction, which skirts the supernatural and keeps the audience guessing until the very end.

With over 62,000 oil paintings and a cast including **Chris O’Dowd** and **Saoirse Ronan**, Oscar-winning filmmaker Hugh Welchman (*Peter and the Wolf*) and Polish painter Dorota Kobiela bring the story of Vincent Van Gogh’s last days to the screen in the world’s first feature-length painted animation, **Loving Vincent** (UK). Inspired by Van Gogh’s own words – “we cannot speak other than by our paintings” – and using an army of painters from across Europe, every single frame of the film is an oil painting (12 per second) and the result is a truly astonishing visual feast that demands to be seen on the biggest of screens.

Winner of the Sundance Special Jury Prize for Inspirational Filmmaking, **STEP** (USA) charts the senior year of the Baltimore Leadership School for Young Women step-dance team as they chase dual dreams – to be state champions and to be the first in their families to go to college – against the backdrop of the #BlackLivesMatter movement. Fun and empowering, the film optimistically explores community, sisterhood and the realities of being black and female in contemporary America.

Another timely examination of race relations in America is Haitian auteur **Raoul Peck’s** (*Fatal Assistance*, MIFF 13) Oscar-nominated **I Am Not Your Negro** (USA): a stirring portrait of the writer, civil rights activist and queer icon James Baldwin and his lifelong fight against racial and sexual injustice, narrated by **Samuel L. Jackson**.

Award-winning filmmaker **Matthew Heinemann’s** (*Cartel Land*, MIFF 15) new film focuses on the anonymous activists of Raqqa as Being Slaughtered Silently in the heartland of ISIS’s self-declared caliphate. **City of Ghosts** (USA) is an urgent, deeply personal real-world thriller about the world’s most crucial fight against misinformation.

In 2012, Iraq veteran David Crowley posted a YouTube trailer for his planned libertarian opus, *Gray State*, warning of America’s looming Second Civil War. Three years on, the rising alt-right filmmaker,

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his Muslim wife and their daughter were found slaughtered, "Allahu Akbar" smeared on the walls in blood. A conspiracy or something even more horrific? Executive produced by Werner Herzog, Erik Nelson's **A Gray State** (USA) is a riveting murder mystery, a political thriller and an unparalleled psychological profile of a mind descending into paranoia.

Jumping over to New Zealand, the program will feature **Pecking Order** (New Zealand), which follows the members of the 148-year-old Christchurch Poultry, Bantam and Pigeon Club as they prepare for the National Show. Their president has brought them championship glory over the years, but is now facing off against the next generation of poultry fanciers who seem determined to knock down this

award-winning cock of the walk. This entertaining flockumentary uncovers a cutthroat world of passion, obsession, power struggles, and competition. It's like a Kiwi *Best in Show*, only real ... and with chooks!

Also from NZ, MIFF regular and Accelerator alumnus **Florian Habicht** (*Pulp: A Film About Life, Death and Supermarkets* MIFF 14; *Love Story* MIFF 12) welcomes you to **Spookers** (NZ), a former psychiatric hospital outside Auckland, where visitors gather to be petrified by killer clowns and zombies at the Southern Hemisphere's largest 'scream park'. Habicht reveals the personalities beneath the costumes, wigs and greasepaint with characteristic affection and humour in this funny, compelling documentary.

And the MIFF shorts program will deliver a string of highlights and award winners from the festival circuit including **A Gentle Night** (China), the Short Film Palme d'Or winner from the 2017 Cannes Film Festival by MIFF Accelerator alumnus **Qiu Yang** (*The World*, MIFF 14; *Under the Sun*, MIFF 2015); **Small Town** (Portugal), the dark, mysterious and beautiful coming-of-age story that took out the Golden Bear for Best Short at the 2017 Berlinale; **DeKalb Elementary** (USA), a tense drama, by filmmaker **Reed Van Dyk** (*Nasty HardcoreXXX Amateur Couple*, MIFF 14) based on the real 911-call during an incident at a school in Atlanta, Georgia that was the winner of the International Competition Grand Prix prize at the 2017 Clermont-Ferrand Film Festival; and **The Hedonists** (Hong Kong), the new comedy from 2013 festival guest **Jia Zhang-ke** (*A Touch of Sin*, MIFF 13) about a trio of unemployed labourers who find work in the most unlikely of places - a bizarre theme park. These are just a taste of the 300+ film program to immerse yourself in this August.

The full program will be announced on Tuesday 11 July with public tickets on sale Friday 14 July.

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The 2017 Melbourne International Film Festival runs 3 – 20 August.

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