

## MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL ESTABLISHES THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE'S RICHEST FEATURE FILM COMPETITION

### Press Release

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#### Images



**EMBARGOED UNTIL 11.30AM FEBRUARY 16**

Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) has announced that its 70th anniversary edition in August will include the debut of the annual **MIFF Film Competition**. Already the Southern Hemisphere's largest and longest-running film festival, MIFF will now also offer one of the world's most substantial festival prize pools.

Initially comprising three awards, the MIFF Film Competition's flagship prize will be the **AUD\$140,000** (approx. US\$100,000) **Best Film Award** – the richest feature film prize in the Southern Hemisphere – supported by the Victorian Government through Film Victoria. Focusing on bold directorial voices and emerging filmmakers, the competition and this prize will celebrate filmmakers on the ascent.

Up to ten films will be in official selection to compete for the Best Film Award, with all types of feature length films eligible for inclusion – from fiction to documentary to animation, and any creative variation in-between. All Competition films will be Australian premieres of director's first-or-second-time feature-length works. The winning film will be decided by a jury of prominent international and Australian guests.

The 70th festival will also see the introduction of the **Australian Innovation Prize**, recognising an outstanding Australian creative within a festival film playing in the MIFF program; a large range of roles will be eligible for award consideration such as director, technical or creative lead or cinema craft. The 2022 festival will also see the return of the festival's **Audience Award**.

“The Competition will recognise and amplify the new, the next, the breakthrough and the best in-screen from Australia and across the globe, bringing incredible films and filmmakers to Melbourne – and making MIFF truly unmissable in 2022 and beyond.” said MIFF Artistic Director Al Cossar.

“We're investing in the future of Victoria's screen industry to deliver growth, jobs and opportunities to our creative industries workforce.” said Victorian State Government Minister for Creative Industries Danny Pearson. “Victoria is a film powerhouse offering cutting-edge production facilities, iconic destinations and world-class creative talent – this competition celebrates the milestone of a much beloved festival and will further cement our state's reputation as Australia's creative destination.”

The introduction of the Competition positions MIFF as the only Southern Hemisphere film festival to feature all the key components of major international festivals such as Rotterdam and Berlin: a Film Competition; a Screen Content Financing Market for creatives, producers and investors (37° South Market); a Commissioning Fund (MIFF Premiere Fund); and talent escalator programs (MIFF Accelerator Lab and MIFF Critics Campus).

“The addition of the Competition, and its prize pool, promises to be one of the most transformational projects in MIFF history,” added MIFF Chair Teresa Zolnierkiewicz. “MIFF welcomes the Victorian Government’s vision of a thriving screen culture in Melbourne – evidenced here with its support enabling MIFF to award a film prize of global significance to an independent filmmaker of substance.”

MIFF Accelerator Lab alumnus Justin Kurzel, who most recently directed the MIFF Premiere Fund-supported multi-award-winning *Nitram* (which premiered in official selection at Cannes) said: “The announcement of such a significant major competition at the Melbourne Film Festival is extremely important to filmmakers around the globe but especially in Australia. This competition will play a crucial part in nurturing and supporting innovative and bold artists, which in combination with the festival’s highly successful Accelerator Lab program makes MIFF the leading festival for new cinematic voices”

Adam Elliot, director of the Oscar-winning *Harvie Krumpet* whose next feature film, *Memoir of a Snail*, is supported by the MIFF Premiere Fund, said: “Looking back, it is the awards that gave me the courage, confidence, and conviction to keep pursuing my urges to be an independent filmmaker. It is great to know that MIFF, one of the world’s oldest and most respected festivals, is celebrating the work of emerging filmmakers with this new competition”.

Oombarra Productions’ Leah Purcell AM, filmmaker of MIFF’s 2021 Opening Night selection, said “The new competition is an outstanding initiative by MIFF, acknowledging the efforts of first-time film makers with financial support for their future endeavours and to keep them motivated. Having just finished my first film, *The Drover’s Wife The Legend of Molly Johnson*, I understand and know what it takes to bring a film to fruition and how much it can take out of you financially and physically. Introducing a prize of this magnitude is so encouraging.”

Melissa Kelly, who produced the multiple award-winning *Hounds of Love* from MIFF Accelerator alumnus director Ben Young, said: “Substantial film competitions with big prizes attract impactful films and generate major attention for the films and filmmakers as well as the festival and its home-territory creative community. The addition of the Competition to MIFF’s existing suite of industry initiatives provides the perfect setting to enable transformative creative and business opportunities for Australian filmmakers.”

Nick Batzias, co-founding partner of Good Thing Productions which produced MIFF 2019 Opening Night film *The Australian Dream*, and the MIFF Premiere Fund-supported films *Nitram* and *Below*, said: “A major competition ensures MIFF’s world-class standing which will benefit both Melbourne’s cinema-loving public and its film industry. Identifying and supporting filmmaking talent has long been core to MIFF’s DNA – including Accelerator Lab nurturing new directors, MIFF Short Film Awards celebrating new talent, 37° South Market connecting local producers to potential international project financing, and the Premiere Fund investing in the production of stories that matter – and the addition of this competition will bring global attention and new opportunities to the festival and filmmakers.”

Gillian Armstrong AM, director of celebrated Australian classics *My Brilliant Career*, *High Tide* and many others, said: “MIFF’s new competition and prize is fantastic support for rising talent. It can buy creative time and space for the next project and pay off the bills from the last one! I can’t wait to see the winners. Well done MIFF.”

## NOTES TO EDITORS

- MIFF returns August 4 - 21
- Visit [www.miff.com.au](http://www.miff.com.au) for more info.
- Images here.