



Melbourne  
International  
Film Festival

August 2023  
03-20 Cinemas  
18-27 Online

# OPENING TONIGHT: MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL ROLLS OUT THE RED CARPET FOR 18 DAYS OF MOVIE MAGIC



*Shayda*

The **71st Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF)** opens today with a star-studded red carpet gala event leading the way for 18 days of silver screen cinema action, international guest appearances and stellar special events running **3-20 August**.

After winning over audiences and critics alike at Sundance, ***Shayda*** arrives to officially usher in MIFF 2023 as the festival's **Opening Night Gala** feature on **Thursday 3 August**. Cast and creatives from the film and across the industry will grace the red carpet at The Comedy Theatre tonight in this very special International Premiere event.

Supported by the MIFF Premiere Fund, ***Shayda*** is the powerful and deeply personal debut feature from Tehran-born, Australian-raised writer-director and MIFF Accelerator Lab alumna **Noora Niasari**. Executive produced by Cate Blanchett's Dirty Films and set and shot in Melbourne, the arrival of ***Shayda*** heralds a local filmmaking and storytelling talent on the rise.

Back to deliver memorable movie moments, MIFF will return to theatres across the city with a packed program screening in-cinema from **3-20 August**; in regional Victorian theatres on **11-13** and **18-20 August**; and direct to people's homes via the festival's online viewing platform MIFF Play from **18-27 August**.

**MIFF Artistic Director, Al Cossar**, said: "Welcome back to the start – MIFF is here again! With a jam-packed first weekend full of Australian and international filmmakers, competition screenings, and some of the biggest and most anticipated films of 2023 landing, it's finally time to get back to the movies for audiences across the city and beyond. Welcoming crowds to a stacked 71st edition line-up of over 260 films from

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around the world, we look forward to celebrating cinema with Melburnians in one of our most exciting lineups yet.”

With over three weeks of top notch cinema to come, MIFF 2023 will open to record breaking ticket sales as audiences embrace Australian filmmaking first and foremost, with initial sessions for local titles **Shayda**, queer coming of age drama **Sunflower** and the genre-defying **Birdeater** quickly selling out. Encore screenings are now planned for these popular titles.

Tickets are continuing to sell fast across the program as film lovers book in early for the likes of 2023 Cannes Palme d'Or winner **Anatomy of a Fall**; fashion forward **Happy Clothes: A Film About Patricia Field**; and multisensory XR experience, **In Pursuit of Repetitive Beats**, which takes punters on a euphoric joyride through the 1980s Acid House movement, presented in partnership with Now or Never.



*Happy Clothes: A Film About Patricia Field*

A slew of guests from across the globe are also set to descend on Melbourne throughout August to introduce their films to Australian audiences first-hand. This year's lineup includes **Celine Song**, director of one of the year's most talked about films **Past Lives**; **Molly Manning Walker**, the writer-director behind Cannes-winner **How to Have Sex**; and ultimate slashie in former Olympian, Grammy winner and now debut director, **Savanah Leaf** whose film **Earth Mama** makes its Australian Premiere at the festival.

And this year, MIFF will also award over \$300,000 in film prizes across a suite of six award categories, including the sophomore winner of the **Bright Horizons Competition**, MIFF's recently established breakthrough filmmaking prize; the inaugural **First Nations Film Creative Award** in collaboration with Kearney Group, and return of the **Blackmagic Design Australian Innovation Award** recognising an outstanding Australian creative within a film playing at the 2023 festival.

## OPENING WEEKEND

With the festival officially underway, MIFF's opening weekend is packed with laughs, drama and the odd jumpscare, including a wildly entertaining account of the dramatic rise and fall of the world's first smartphone in **BlackBerry**; the latest from **Carol** director **Todd Haynes** with **May December**, starring **Julianne Moore** and **Natalie Portman**; and a double dose of **Tilda Swinton** who plays two roles in the Gothic-inspired ghost story, **The Eternal Daughter**.

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MIFF favourite **Kore-eda Hirokazu** (*Broker*, MIFF 2022; *Shoplifters*, MIFF 2018) returns with the tender ***Monster***; documentary ***Time Bomb Y2K*** captures the speculation, paranoia and pop-cultural fallout surrounding the arrival of the year 2000; and ***Fremont***, starring real-life Afghan refugee Anaita Wali Zada in her debut performance, offers a heartfelt comedic ode to the immigrant experience.

Other opening weekend highlights include the first of the **Bright Horizons Competition** film screenings, with 11 features vying for one of the world's richest film prizes, to be awarded at the MIFF Awards on 19 August. Of the competition titles, ***Disco Boy*** by **Giacomo Abbruzzese** and **Sean Price Williams' *The Sweet East*** will make their Australian Premieres over the weekend, while the anticipation pays-off handsomely on Saturday 5 August when MIFF world premieres ***The Rooster***, actor **Mark Leonard Winter's** MIFF Premiere Fund-supported feature directing debut.



*The Rooster*

Australian filmmaking talent is also on show over the weekend with **Soda Jerk's** latest cinematic remix, ***Hello Dankness***, which sassily swipes at deepfakes and Trumpism; Stephen King-approved horror from **Colin** and **Cameron Cairnes, *Late Night With the Devil***; and an intimate documentary portrait of a sixth-generation traveling show family in **Isabel Darling's *The Carnival***.

Elsewhere, MIFF's popular **Fulldome** screenings return to the Melbourne Planetarium and the unfiltered and unapologetic **WTF Shorts** line-up will include a Clermont-Ferrand prize winner that satirises capitalism and fame; a Cannes-screening story of a humanoid bird's erotic awakening; and an un-turn-away-able mockumentary about alien sex, lauded at Sitges.

## SPECIAL EVENTS AND OFFERINGS

MIFF is proud to present the festival's first-ever **Music on Film Gala** in ***Ego: The Michael Gudinski Story***, with the city's music royalty set to turn out for the film's World Premiere alongside director **Paul Goldman** next Thursday 10 August. The definitive account of the life and legacy of Australian music icon Michael Gudinski, *Ego* is both a rollicking personal story of the one-man music promoting machine and a rip-roaring record of the artists he helped rocket to the top of the charts.

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The **MIFF Talks** line-up, presented by University of Melbourne, begins on **Saturday 5 August** with a discussion of American politics and cinema featuring international guests **Mel Eslyn** (*Biosphere*), **Christoffer Guldbrandsen** (*A Storm Foretold*), writer **Nick Pinkerton** (*The Sweet East*) and local artist duo **Soda Jerk** (*Hello Dankness*) before a sold-out In Conversation event with **Past Lives** director **Celine Song**, hosted by **Santilla Chingaipe** at the **Wheeler Centre** later that day. More **MIFF Talks** events will be held over the three week festival period, before the program concludes in Castlemaine on **20 August** at a **Meet the Filmmakers** session with local directors **Noora Niasari** (*Shayda*), **Ian White** (*Mutiny in Heaven: The Birthday Party*), **Mark Leonard Winter** and producer **Geraldine Hakewill** (*The Rooster*).

The lines of reality will be blurred – or brought into focus – through the immersive **MIFF XR** program, which features a personal new work, entitled **Turbulence: Jamais Vu**, from the team beyond MIFF 2022’s environmental epic *Gondwana*, and the gorgeous visuals and immersive sound design of **Lou**, an XR experience that celebrates the uniqueness of neurodivergent perspectives.

MIFF’s much loved **Restorations** strand of newly refreshed cinematic treasures begins with the 100th anniversary of Man Ray’s classic **Return to Reason**; the return of **Sue Brooks’** multi-award-winning **Japanese Story**, starring **Toni Collette**, 20 years after it premiered as MIFF’s Opening Night film in 2003; and a dazzling 4K restoration of Taiwanese auteur **Hou Hsiao-hsien’s** sensual 2001 tale, **Millenium Mambo**.



*The Bank*

And on Tuesday 8 August, **Robert Connolly** (*Paper Planes*, MIFF Premiere Fund 2014; *Balibo*, MIFF Premiere Fund 2009) will present a radiant 4K restoration of his debut feature **The Bank** in a special MIFF Ambassador screening event. Some 20 plus years on, Connolly’s sharp anti-capitalist caper of greed and deception remains just as timely as ever. Following the film, Connolly will be in conversation with Australian journalist and author Erik Jensen.

Throughout the festival, the **Campari Cinema Lounge** provides a space for festival goers and film lovers to connect, unwind and debrief. Hosted at ACMI, the pop-up will feature a guest DJ line-up curated by Naarm-based radio station Skylab Radio; a menu designed by Hero’s Karen Martini; and drinks by Wynns, Mountain Goat, Champagne Duperrey; and Campari cocktails. The Lounge is open from 5pm until late throughout the festival.

Further foodie fodder is on offer with a MIFF-curated line-up of film-and-dining experiences available at some of Melbourne's top restaurants, all of which are walking distance from MIFF's CBD theatres. **HERO** will serve up dishes inspired by **Showing Up**, **Zhang Lu's The Shadowless Tower** is matched at **ARU Restaurant** and Collins Street's **La Madonna** will host pre-film feasting ahead of the Palme d'Or winning **Anatomy of a Fall**.

## BEYOND MELBOURNE AND THE BIG SCREEN

Starting 11 August, MIFF presents its extensive regional film schedule, with some of this year's major titles hitting theatres across **Warrnambool, Echuca, Rosebud, South Geelong, Bendigo, Bright** and **Castlemaine**.

Regional festival goers will have the opportunity to catch brand new releases, hot off their World Premieres at the festival – including **Ego: The Michael Gudinski Story**, Hugo Weaving-led **The Rooster**, the endearing **This Is Going to Be Big** and tennis doc **Australia's Open** – as well as notable Australian premieres like Opening Night's **Shayda** and the hilarious musical mockumentary **Theater Camp**, which will also screen as the festival's Closing Night Gala feature in Melbourne.

And for those happier at home, **MIFF Play** – the festival's online streaming platform – returns from 18-27 August with a curated suite of films from the 2023 program available. Highlights include Bright Horizons contender and Cannes Camera d'Or Winner **Inside the Yellow Cocoon Shell**, the dazzling rabbit hole-like **Trenque Lauquen** and Australian and Papuan New Guinea music doc, **Abebe – Butterfly Song** in its World Premiere season at MIFF.

The 2023 Melbourne International Film Festival continues in-cinema through to 20 August and via MIFF Play from 18-27 August. Visit [miff.com.au](http://miff.com.au) to explore the full program.

## NOTES TO EDITOR

- MIFF 2023 runs in-cinema from 3-20 August
- MIFF Regional runs 11-13 and 18-20 August with screenings in Bendigo, Bright, Castlemaine, Echuca, Geelong, Rosebud and Warrnambool
- MIFF Play, the festival's online streaming platform, is available nationally from 18-27 August
- Limited tickets are available to MIFF's film-and-dining experiences via [miff.com.au/food-film](http://miff.com.au/food-film)
- Tickets and passes to all MIFF screenings, talks and events are on sale now
- Visit [miff.com.au](http://miff.com.au) to explore the full program

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