

Melbourne International 71st edition Film Festival Program

August 2023
03–20 Cinemas
18–27 Online

MIFF

The Melbourne International Film Festival acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we live, learn and work, and pays respect to their Elders past and present, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. MIFF celebrates the history and contemporary creativity of the world's oldest living culture.

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ST. ALI COFFEE

Aēsop.

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Welcome

Al Cossar
Artistic Director



This year, celebrated auteurs abound, from Godard's final work, to the restored glory of Hou and Ozu, to those new filmmakers, like Celine Song, who are making definitive work on debut; there are festival blockbusters; a Palme d'Or winner; in *Biosphere*, a warning against electing Mark Duplass president; an array of the best new short filmmaking; and, for you cinematic maximalists out there, enough epics to unsettle your internal body clock.

We're particularly proud to return with the second-year line-up of MIFF's Bright Horizons competition, supported by the Victorian Government through VicScreen. It is a competition that looks forward – dedicated to the new, the next, the bold and the best; those first- and second-time filmmakers breaking through with vital cinema from Australia and around the world. There are many extraordinary, unmissable films that will see their Australian premieres in competition here at MIFF this year, alongside a number of attending filmmakers from all over the globe. Don't miss it.

Elsewhere, our 2023 retrospectives invite a deep dive through cinema history. Director in Focus: Argento Restored is an expansive 12-film strand of the *giallo* icon's filmography, presented in a major new set of restorations. We celebrate the work of pioneering Senegalese filmmaker Safi Faye, the first Sub-Saharan African woman to direct a commercial feature film. And it's time to break out the hot takes – and the more considered critical thoughts – for the 10th anniversary of MIFF's Critics Campus in our Critical Condition retrospective. Guest-curated by local and internationally attending

film critics, the strand combines compelling cinema with consideration about the role of response, dissecting how the conversations that wrapped around these films have defined them or changed how we now see them.

MIFF, as ever, is here to meet you where you are. In Melbourne, we welcome you to our metropolitan season. Outside of the city, you can enjoy the festival when we come to your town, across two weekends and in seven country Victorian centres, as part of MIFF Regional. Or wherever you are in Australia, the magic of MIFF is yours via a terrific array of festival features and shorts playing in the latter part of our festival dates on our at-home platform, MIFF Play.

In 2023, with wallets hurting and algorithms churning, MIFF is flying the flag for the survival, for the thriving, of cinema that matters. We celebrate that festivals such as ours are rare, special places – communities built on top of curiosities.

Thank you for your support. We can't wait to share what's in store this year, at the 71st edition of the Melbourne International Film Festival!

Welcome back to the welcome page of our much-missed and newly restored print Program Guide for 2023 – that familiar place where we reintroduce and ready ourselves for the remarkable cinematic feats of a Melbourne taken over by MIFF each August. Highlighters at the ready, all!

If you've paused to look at our cover art this year on the way through, you will have seen a figure – or something approaching one, perhaps – colourful, defocused. For me, the joy of MIFF can be seen here, even if the figure cannot – a space to celebrate the uncertain, and the unfamiliar; an alternative to the bold-stroke brush lines that multiplex cine-culture colours within; a space, a place, a crowd and a community that invites you to lean forward, to make meaning from everything on offer. Think and see for yourself. Such is the joy of a festival.

MIFF is once again taking over the month of August wholesale with eclectic and electric journeys through film's present, past and possible futures. The winter dark always tends to come up second best against the light of a cinema screen.

The Hon. Daniel Andrews MP
Premier of Victoria



Sally Capp
Lord Mayor of Melbourne



The Hon. Steve Dimopoulos MP
Minister for Creative Industries



It's my pleasure to welcome you to the 71st Melbourne International Film Festival.

Victoria is the cultural capital of Australia. In no small way, that's because of internationally celebrated events like MIFF drawing in thousands of visitors from across our state – and the country.

Every year, MIFF breaks new ground. Since 1952, the festival has showcased the finest local and international cinema right here on our shores. Today, it's better than ever: held not just in the city, but across regional Victoria and online too. From screenings at the Theatre Royal in Castlemaine to the Capitol in Warrnambool – plus a curated program you can stream from home – MIFF is an event every Victorian can enjoy. And the festival's work to provide a platform for First Nations storytelling, women in film and LGBTIQ voices is something all Victorians can be proud of.

To the organisers, workers, volunteers – and creatives – who make MIFF such a success year after year: thank you for everything you do.

Enjoy the festival.

The Melbourne International Film Festival illuminates our city each year, enticing cinephiles and the cinema-curious to Melbourne's unique venues and theatres.

The brilliant and diverse program offers audiences access to world-class films.

MIFF is a highlight on our city's arts and culture calendar and contributes to Melbourne's reputation as the home of powerful and creative events.

The City of Melbourne is proud to be a long-time supporter of MIFF through its Arts and Creative Investment Partnership program.

Enjoy MIFF 2023.

Australia's longest-running film festival returns for its 71st year with a show-stopping program celebrating the very best of international and local film.

From the internationally acclaimed Opening Night film *Shayda* by Victorian filmmaker Noora Niasari to the world premiere of *Ego: The Michael Gudinski Story*, this year's Melbourne International Film Festival will celebrate local stories and place our local talent firmly in the spotlight.

The Victorian Government is proud to once again support the festival, which celebrates Melbourne's reputation as a global screen city, home to a vibrant calendar of world-class screen events.

This year's festival also sees the return of the Bright Horizons Award, a substantial cash prize as part of the MIFF Awards, honouring the work of up-and-coming filmmakers.

Congratulations to the entire team at MIFF on another fantastic festival – and see you at the movies!

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Browse the festival program by section or use the Film Index on page 46 to find specific films.



MIFF Guest

Selected sessions may feature festival guest introduction or Q&A



Available on MIFF Play

From 18 August

For accessible session info, visit miff.com.au/access.

THANK YOU TO OUR MIFF CIRCLE PATRONS

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Martina Schaerf
Anne & Michael Smith
Pinky Watson
Lou Weis & Kim Kneipp
Teresa Zolnierkiewicz

And all those who wish to remain anonymous.
miff.com.au/patron

Book now online or using the MIFF 2023 App



For full program details including session times, extended film descriptions and the complete festival schedule, visit miff.com.au.

Your Guide to MIFF

Cinemas 03–20 August

Tickets to MIFF sessions in cinemas are strictly limited. Book ahead to avoid missing out.

Classification

The Classification Board has granted MIFF special customs and censorship clearances. Except where indicated, anyone under 18 (including infants) cannot attend sessions. For MIFF Schools films (page 36), no-one under the age of 15 will be admitted unless in the company of an adult guardian.

For more detailed information, visit miff.com.au/classification.

Regional 11–13 and 18–20 August

MIFF returns to select cinemas in Bendigo, Bright, Castlemaine, Echuca, Geelong, Rosebud and Warrnambool.

See page 43 for more information.

Online 18–27 August

Extend your festival with MIFF Play. Catch up on titles you missed and enjoy a selection of free programming, including the winners of the MIFF Shorts Awards. Bundle up and save with a MIFF Play Flexi-pass!

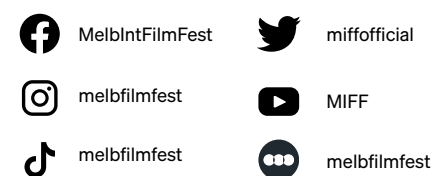
Be sure to book ahead, as capacity is strictly limited.

See page 43 for more information.

Stay updated

Follow us to keep up to date with program announcements, late additions, encores and surprise screenings.

#MIFF2023



Sign up to *Widescreen*, the MIFF newsletter
miff.com.au/subscribe

Tickets and Passes



Standard Admission

Peak (Mon-Fri evening sessions and weekends)

FULL: \$26
CONCESSION: \$21
MEMBERS: \$19.50

Off-peak (Mon-Fri daytime sessions)

FULL: \$22.50
CONCESSION: \$19.50
MEMBERS: \$17

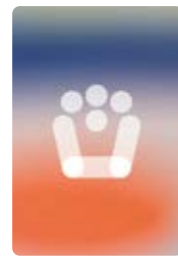


Discovery Pass

See more, save more.

Six (6) standard festival admissions at MIFF 2023

FULL: \$115
CONCESSION: \$104
MEMBERS: \$92



Share Pass

The best way to see MIFF with friends.

12 standard festival admissions, which you can enjoy by yourself or share with up to three (3) friends per session.

FULL: \$205
CONCESSION: \$190
MEMBERS: \$175



Bright Horizons Pass

See all 11 films in the prestigious Bright Horizons competition at a discounted rate.

FULL: \$155
CONCESSION: \$145
MEMBERS: \$135

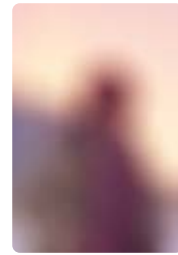


U26 Pass

U26 MIFF Member exclusive

Redeemable for three off-peak sessions during the festival.

U26 MEMBERS: \$30



Festival Passport

Included with a Deluxe MIFF Membership

Admission to every standard session at MIFF 2023.

DELUXE MEMBERSHIP: \$580

Become a Member

Show your love for MIFF and unlock exclusive benefits, including:

- discounted tickets in cinemas and on MIFF Play
- 48-hour ticket pre-sale access
- year-round Member screenings
- industry concession entry to all of our cinema partners.

FULL: \$78
CONCESSION: \$65

U26 Membership

A new offering for our younger film lovers!

For a special price, everyone under the age of 26 can enjoy the same benefits of a MIFF Membership with a U26 Membership. This allows you to purchase the exclusive U26 Pass.

U26 MEMBERSHIP: \$25

Passes are valid for standard in-cinema sessions only unless otherwise stated. For full terms and conditions, visit miff.com.au/tickets.

Book Tickets

Online – miff.com.au

MIFF 2023 App

Available for iOS and Android
Proudly supported by Ferve Tickets

Phone – 03 8660 4888

Pre-festival Hours
11am–4pm

Festival Hours
10am–9pm

Box Office – Pre-festival

ACMI Box Office
10am–4pm, Fri–Wed
10am–6.30pm, Thu

Box Office – During Festival

ACMI Box Office
10am until 15 minutes after start of last session.

Box Offices at festival screening venues open one hour prior to the first session and close 15 minutes after start of last session.

Standby queues

MIFF will operate queues for all sessions listed on standby. Please see Front of House or Box Office staff at each venue for details. Standby queues begin no earlier than 30 minutes before sessions commence and may be admitted up to 15 minutes into session time. Admission to sessions is not guaranteed.

Accessibility

MIFF is committed to delivering access for everyone. The festival offers a range of accessible services across our venues, screenings and events in order to facilitate all film lovers' access to quality cinema experiences.

MIFF is proud to offer a selection of films screening with Open Captions, Audio Description tracks, films that are 100% subtitled, Auslan-interpreted events and sensory-friendly sessions. Step-free and wheelchair access is also available across all metropolitan venues, while MIFF Play offers a curated program of films to stream from the comfort of your home.

See page 47 for more information and visit miff.com.au/access.

If you require any access service that MIFF offers, please advise our Ticketing team on boxoffice@miff.com.au, by phone on **03 8660 4888**, or in person at a MIFF Box Office to ensure that MIFF can provide you with the best customer service.

You can also get in touch with MIFF's Access Coordinator by emailing access@miff.com.au to discuss any services that MIFF offers or for more information.

Get the MIFF App

Browse the program, watch film trailers, make a shortlist of your favourites and access all your tickets in one place with the MIFF 2023 App.

Available on iOS and Android



Schedule your festival

Save a shortlist, compare session times and schedule your festival with the online schedule grid at miff.com.au.

The place to see and be seen at MIFF.

Join us for pre-screening drinks and post-screening tipples.

CAMPARI

CINEMA LOUNGE

ACMI, FED SQUARE
OPEN 5PM - LATE

HAPPY HOUR 5PM - 6PM

MIFF × ACMI × HERO

Menu by Karen Martini
of HERO
Hosted by ACMI

Drinks by Wynns,
Mountain Goat and
Champagne Duperrey

DJs by Skylab Radio
Cocktails by Campari



Metro Venues

- 1 ACMI + MIFF Box Office
Fed Square
- 2 Forum Melbourne
154 Flinders St (cnr Flinders St & Russell St)
- 3 The Capitol
113 Swanston St
- 4 Kino Cinema
Lower Ground Level,
45 Collins St
- 5 Hoyts Melbourne Central
Level 3, cnr Swanston St & La Trobe St
- 6 Comedy Theatre
240 Exhibition St
- 7 IMAX
Rathdowne St, Carlton
- 8 The Astor Theatre
1 Chapel St, St Kilda East



Discount Parking

Pre-book your car parking and save.

Discount parking is available at Secure Parking locations throughout the CBD. Discounted prices only available by pre-booking online.

Apply promo code on booking page: MIFFDAY for \$25 Day Rate (Monday to Friday)

MIFF for \$12 Night and Weekend

Visit secureparking.com.au/miff for full terms and conditions.



Galas & Special Events

Roll out the red carpet and celebrate MIFF's 71st edition in style with these unmissable events.

Opening Night Gala Thursday 3 August

MIFF 2023's festivities commence with the Australian premiere of Noora Niasari's *Shayda*.

Rub shoulders with the best-dressed and brightest stars on the red carpet with a drink on arrival, to be followed by the film screening with special guest introductions.

After the screening, enjoy drinks and canapés, entertainment and dancing at the *Shayda*-inspired afterparty, to be held at the iconic State Library of Victoria.



Shayda

Dir. Noora Niasari Australia

پاییز شیدا

Cannes Best Actress winner Zar Amir-Ebrahimi (*Holy Spider*, MIFF 2022) anchors this Sundance Audience Award-winning portrait of a mother seeking a new life for herself and her daughter.

Shayda, a brave Iranian mother, finds refuge in an Australian women's shelter with her six-year-old daughter. Over Persian New Year, they take solace in Nowruz rituals and new beginnings, but when her estranged husband re-enters their lives, Shayda's path to freedom is jeopardised.

Supported by the MIFF Premiere Fund, the accomplished feature debut from MIFF Accelerator Lab alumna Noora Niasari (*Tam*, MIFF 2020; *Waterfall*, MIFF 2017) was produced by Vincent Sheehan and Niasari, and executive-produced by Cate Blanchett. While forthright about the challenges of healing for those who have survived domestic violence, the film also shines a light on the indomitable hope that propels its spirited, beautifully complex characters. With affecting lead performances from Amir-Ebrahimi and newcomer Selina Zahednia – alongside Leah Purcell AM (*The Driver's Wife*, *The Legend of Molly Johnson*, MIFF 2021), Jillian Nguyen (*Hungry Ghosts*), Osamah Sami (*All's Wedding*, MIFF 2017), Mojean Aria (*KAPO; Reminiscence*) and Rina Mousavi (*Itch*) – *Shayda* is a moving story of resilience, the desire for independence, and the sacrifices and strength of a mother's love.

117 MINS MIFF GUEST VIEWER ADVICE: CONTAINS STROBOSCOPIC IMAGERY; STRONG IMPACT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE THEMES; DISCUSSION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Music on Film Gala Thursday 10 August

Be the first to see the biopic of the year at the world premiere of *Ego: The Michael Gudinski Story*.

Join us on the rock 'n' roll red carpet with a drink on arrival, followed by the film screening with special guest introductions.

PRESENTED BY



Ego: The Michael Gudinski Story

Dir. Paul Goldman Australia

The wild ride of maverick entrepreneur Michael Gudinski, who defied convention and revolutionised the Australian music industry over five decades.

Michael Gudinski was a music man, impresario and natural-born hustler. He repeatedly risked everything for his one obsession: Australian music. At age 19, he launched Mushroom Records and went on to sign and nurture iconic artists including Skyhooks, Split Enz, Jimmy Barnes, Paul Kelly, Hunters & Collectors, Kylie Minogue, Archie Roach and Yothu Yindi. But he wasn't content with just a label – his hunger extended to being on the road promoting legendary international acts such as Foo Fighters, Ed Sheeran, Bruce Springsteen and Sting. There's barely a living Australian whose life hasn't been touched by the music he was behind.

Helmed by acclaimed feature film, documentary and music video director Paul Goldman (*Suburban Mayhem*, MIFF 2006; *Australian Rules*, MIFF 2002) and produced by Bethany Jones (*Molly: The Real Thing*), *Ego* features personal accounts from Gudinski himself, exclusive interviews with some of the world's most influential artists, rare archival footage and an electrifying soundtrack.

111 MINS MIFF GUEST

Closing Night Gala Saturday 19 August

Curtain call! The spotlight's on you as you farewell MIFF 2023 with pizzazz and belly laughs, courtesy of *Theater Camp*.

After the screening, enjoy MIFF's famous Closing Night festivities with film-inspired DJs, dancing and drinks 'til late.

PRESENTED BY

CHAMPAGNE
DUPERREY



Theater Camp

Dir. Molly Gordon, Nick Lieberman USA

Waiting for Guffman meets *Wet Hot American Summer* as a ragtag cast and crew of theatre nerds bring extra drama to save their beloved summer camp.

When an unfortunate lighting effect at a middle-school production of *Bye Bye Birdie* sends revered summer-camp director Joan (Amy Sedaris) into a coma, it could be curtains for her cash-strapped musical theatre program, AdirondACTS. Joan's son Troy, a social-media finance grifter, has no idea about musical theatre, and a rival summer camp is eyeing off the property. So to the histrionic misfits who work at AdirondACTS as camp instructors – in every sense – the solution is obvious: they'll put on a show!

Winner of Sundance's US Dramatic Special Jury Award for Ensemble, *Theater Camp* is the brainchild of show-pony pals clearly adlibbing out their own adolescence – and it lands. Power couple Nick Lieberman and Molly Gordon (*Booksmart*) make their feature directing debut and co-wrote the film with Ben Platt (*Dear Evan Hansen*) and Noah Galvin (*The Real O'Neals*), the last three of whom also have key onscreen roles. Joining the cast are rising comedy stars Jimmy Tatro (*Home Economics*), Ayo Edebiri (*The Sweet East*, MIFF 2023; *The Bear*) and Patti Harrison (*Together Together*, MIFF 2021), along with *Minari*'s tiny, delightful breakout Alan Kim. You'll laugh! You'll cry! You might even sing and dance!

94 MINS



The world premiere of *Abebe-Butterfly Song* will include a short Q&A and a special live performance by David Bridie, George Telek and their long-time collaborator Phil Wales. This promises to be a magical afternoon where film, cultures, friendships and music harmoniously collide.

Abebe-Butterfly Song

Dir. Rosie Jones Australia, Papua New Guinea

Discover the legacy and enduring friendship between Papuan musician Sir George Telek MBE and Not Drowning, Waving's David Bridie.

In 1986, Bridie travelled to Papua New Guinea, where he heard the heartfelt sounds of Telek and the Moab Stringband's 'Abebe' (*Butterfly Song*) on board a bus. It marked the beginning of a deep fascination with the nation and its culture – and of a bond with Telek that would last more than 30 years. *Abebe-Butterfly Song* is a portrait not only of two musicians, but of the cross-cultural exchange between Australia and one of its closest neighbours.

94 MINS MIFF GUEST

World Premiere & Live Performance Sunday 13 August

PRESENTED BY



MIFF Ambassador Special Screening Tuesday 8 August

The Bank 4K Restoration

Dir. Robert Connolly Australia

MIFF Ambassador Robert Connolly (*Paper Planes*, MIFF Premiere Fund 2014; *Balibo*, MIFF 2009) presents a 4K restoration of his debut feature: an entertaining, anti-capitalist caper of greed and deception that won an AFI Award for Best Original Screenplay.

Jim Doyle (a mysterious David Wenham) is a maths prodigy working on a formula to predict stock-market fluctuations. His quest piques the interest of Simon O'Reilly (a sharp-talking Anthony LaPaglia), the CEO of Centabank, who is under pressure from the bank's board to boost profits. If that's not enough, ruthless O'Reilly is also dealing with bereaved parents on a mission to sue the bank for dodgy offshore loan advice, yet his ethics aren't the only ones that are called into question.

106 MINS MIFF GUEST



MIFF Bright Horizons Special Screening Wednesday 16 August

Slam 4K Restoration

Dir. Marc Levin USA

MIFF 2022 Bright Horizons Award winner Saul Williams (*Neptune Frost*), who returns to the festival as Bright Horizons Jury co-president, presents this restored American indie classic in which he plays a young Black prisoner who seizes poetic justice.

When Ray is arrested during a drug deal gone wrong, he insists he wasn't involved. But he's young and Black, so his public defender convinces him to take a plea deal for a reduced sentence. In jail, he meets Lauren, who teaches a writing class for inmates; eventually, Ray is welcomed into her world of slam poetry. But are words enough to break a cycle of systemic oppression?

Marc Levin's fiercely inspirational film won both the Sundance Dramatic Grand Jury Prize and the Cannes Camera d'Or in 1998.

100 MINS MIFF GUEST

Planetarium Fulldome Showcase 5 & 12 August

MIFF's popular annual program of fulldome screenings at the Melbourne Planetarium returns for the 2023 festival.

Showcase 1

–22.7°C

Dir. Dirty Monitor, SAT, Molécule Canada, France, Belgium

An immersive work inspired by the musician Molécule's adventures in the polar circle.

French music producer Molécule is the pioneer of 'nomadic electronic music'. Following on from his debut album *60°43' Nord*, for which he spent 34 days on an Atlantic fishing trawler, he went to Greenland to make –22.7°C. Starting out from a remote Inuit village, he went on various trips to glaciers and fjords, during which he used his 'survival elektrokit' to record environmental sounds such as howling wind, loud crackling deep in the Arctic ice and the crunch of snow. He then processed the sounds and mixed them into beats, which are reinforced in this unique and immersive fulldome live experience created by Dirty Monitor.

37 MINS

Recombination

Dir. Julius Horsthuis Netherlands

Visionary fractal artist Julius Horsthuis collaborates with seven of his favourite musicians to create an abstract journey through music, space-time and mathematics.

In *Recombination*, his latest project, Horsthuis features original music by Michael Stearns, David Levy, Max Cooper, Desert Dwellers, Ben Lukas Boysen, Temple Invisible and Ott.

48 MINS



Showcase 2

Trial

Dir. CLAUDE x Shin Hyejin South Korea

An enveloping, awe-inspiring contemplation of the vast universe and humans' place within it.

The sudden fear that arises when imagining the infinite nature of the universe comes from realising the finiteness and weakness of human existence. *Trial* is intricately designed for us to think about what we can have and what attitudes we can bolster as soon as the morality that we have built and the laws that history has established become totally powerless.

45 MINS

Biliminal

Dir. Francis Drouin, Alexandre Pariseau Canada

An immersive audiovisual experience through undulating and vaporous atmospheres, in the liminal space between the palpable and the elusive.

Biliminal immerses the audience in a universe of constant tension – between meditative lullabies and chaotic explosions. The work explores the metamorphosis of sound and visual materials inspired by reality, using algorithmic transformation systems to create new audiovisual landscapes whose various elements, at the limit of the perceptible, evoke an ethereal form of their original state.

41 MINS

Encore Screenings & Late Announcements

Check the website for up-to-date information, including late additions to the MIFF 2023 program.

miff.com.au

VICSCREEN

PROUDLY SUPPORTING
AUSTRALIA'S PREMIER
FILM FESTIVAL



Opening Night film *Shayda* by Noora Niasari, made in Melbourne with support from VicScreen. Photo Jane Zhang



MIFF AWARDS 2023



Winners announced Saturday 19 August.

Bright Horizons Award

Presented by VicScreen

The MIFF film competition's flagship prize awards \$140,000 to a filmmaker on the ascent, making it the richest feature film prize in the Southern Hemisphere.

VICSCREEN

Bright Horizons Jury Presidents



Saul Williams is an American poet, musician and actor, as well as the co-director, screenwriter and composer of *Neptune Frost*. He made his acting debut in Marc Levin's *Slam*, which he co-wrote, winning Sundance's Dramatic Grand Jury Prize and the Cannes Camera d'Or in 1998. Williams has published five books of poetry and has released six albums of music.



Anisia Uzeyman is a Rwandan-born actress, playwright and director, as well as the co-director and cinematographer of *Neptune Frost*. She made her directorial debut with *Dreamstates*, and she has starred in the films *Tey (Aujourd'hui)* and *Ayiti Mon Amour*. Her first book is a poetic treatment of her original screenplay *Saolomea, Saolomea*.

Blackmagic Design

Australian Innovation Award

This \$70,000 cash prize recognises an outstanding Australian creative within a film playing in the MIFF program. The prize can be awarded to a director or a technical or creative lead.

Blackmagicdesign 

Introducing

First Nations Film Creative Award in collaboration with Kearney Group

Awarded a \$20,000 cash prize and \$25,000 worth of financial services with Kearney Group, the winner will be an outstanding Australian First Nations creative within a film playing in the MIFF program.

 **Kearney
Group**

Audience Award

Love it? Hate it? Rate it! This award crowns viewers' favourite title from the festival.

Vote for the Audience Award online or through the MIFF App.

Bright Horizons

Competition

MIFF's film competition, Bright Horizons, recognises the new, the next, the breakthrough and the best, with an extraordinary international line-up of first- and second-time filmmakers competing for one of the richest film prizes in the world.



Inside the Yellow Cocoon Shell

Dir. Pham Thien An Vietnam, France, Singapore, Spain

This hypnotic, transcendental debut feature follows a young man's mystical journey across a beguiling rural Vietnam.

Thien, a detached and morose Saigon thirtysomething, has little idea that his life is about to be pushed towards a vast spiritual reckoning. After learning of his sister-in-law's death in a motorcycle accident, he is given temporary custody of her five-year-old son; together, uncle and nephew begin the arduous mission of returning the body to her home village for burial while searching for the boy's father – Thien's long-lost brother.

Expanding on his prize-winning 2019 short *Stay Awake, Be Ready*, Pham Thien An has delivered a breathtaking, formally accomplished tale of family, loss and grief – a spellbinding journey across the seductive, dreamlike landscape of the countryside and the soul, which won the 2023 Camera d'Or at Cannes. With its hypnotic rhythm, exquisite visuals and textured sound design, Pham's three-hour film evokes the work of such heavyweight auteurs as Apichatpong Weerasethakul and Tsai Ming-liang, confirming it as an unmissable masterpiece from one of cinema's most gifted new talents.

182 MINS MIFF GUEST



Pham Thien An

Pham Thien An was born in the Lam Dong Province before relocating to Houston, Texas, and has won several film awards in Vietnam. His short film *The Mute* was followed by *Stay Awake, Be Ready*. His first feature film *Inside the Yellow Cocoon Shell* had its world premiere at the 2023 Cannes Film Festival, where it won the Camera d'Or award.



Ama Gloria

Dir. Marie Amachoukeli France

A heartbreaking and unforgettably tender portrait of a six-year-old French girl's bond with her Cape Verdean nanny.

In an astonishing performance of charisma and detail, Louise Mauroy-Panzani plays Cléo, a Parisian child who lives with her widower dad but is largely raised by her Cape Verdean nanny Gloria, whom she adores. When Gloria is informed that her mother has died, she must return to her homeland to look after her own children, who have grown into adulthood in her absence. Distraught, Cléo decides to spend the summer with her nanny and discovers the life the woman had to leave behind.

Opening this year's Cannes Critics' Week, the debut solo feature from French filmmaker and 2014 Camera d'Or winner Marie Amachoukeli (*It's Free for Girls*, MIFF 2010) is a compellingly delicate drama filled with warm, feel-good energy that's impossible to resist. Produced by Céline Sciamma's Lilies Films, it shares with that director's *Petite Maman* (MIFF 2021) a keenly observed sense of childhood, capturing a transformative, once-in-a-lifetime relationship with extraordinary sensitivity. And Mauroy-Panzani's breakout rendition – displaying wonder and precocious maturity at all of six years old – is one for the ages.

83 MINS



Marie Amachoukeli

A French director and writer of Georgian descent, born in Paris, Marie Amachoukeli made her writing debut in 2005 with the short film *Tantalus*, and her directorial debut *Party Girl* competed in the Un Certain Regard section of the 2014 Cannes Film Festival (where it won the Camera d'Or). Her second feature *Ama Gloria* had its world premiere as the opening film of Cannes Critics' Week in 2023.



Banel & Adama

Dir. Ramata-Toulaye Sy France, Senegal

Fresh from Cannes competition, Franco-Senegalese director Ramata-Toulaye Sy's first longform work is a haunting fable of star-cross'd lovers set in a rural village.

Banel and Adama are blissfully in love. Their marriage comes after the death of Banel's first husband – Adama's brother, Yero – a union community elders initially saw as an act of honour. But suspicions about the couple's all-consuming passion grow when Adama refuses to assume Yero's role as chief and Banel scorns her domestic duties. When drought besets the region, villagers fear the disobedient lovers have incited a curse.

Scripted in the Pulaar language and featuring a local cast of non-professional actors – Khady Mane is particularly gripping in her starring turn – *Banel & Adama* shows Senegalese village life through a young woman's eyes. Sy's follow-up to the coming-of-age short *Astel* (MIFF 2022) is atmospheric and languid, its ethereal tone drawing comparisons with Terrence Malick, and was the only debut selected for the 2023 Cannes competition. With this lyrical tale of love and duty, the director refuses singular interpretations, conjuring a beguiling world of folklore, fate, madness and obsession.

87 MINS VIEWER ADVICE: DEPICTIONS OF VIOLENCE TOWARDS ANIMALS



Ramata-Toulaye Sy

French-Senegalese Ramata-Toulaye Sy was born and raised in the Paris region. She worked as a screenwriter on the film *Sibel* by C. Zencirci and G. Giovanetti as well as on *Our Lady of the Nile* by A. Rahimi. In 2020, *Astel*, her first short film as director, was selected in more than 80 festivals and pre-selected for the 2023 César Awards. Her feature debut *Banel & Adama* had its world premiere in competition at the 2023 Cannes Film Festival.



Earth Mama

Dir. Savannah Leaf USA

This delicate, absorbing portrait of motherhood follows a young Black woman caught up in a spiral of institutional disadvantage.

Heavily pregnant Gia, a cash-strapped twentysomething mother living in California's Bay Area, is up against the punitive measures of a system set up to fail her. Recovering from a drug addiction, she's only allowed to see her two children for a one-hour supervised visit each week. Steered towards considering an open adoption for her unborn child, much to the chagrin of her religious best friend, Gia is faced with a gut-wrenching decision.

Powered by a star-making performance from Tia Nomore – a mother and aspiring doula plucked from the Oakland rap scene by former Olympic athlete, Grammy winner and first-time feature director Savannah Leaf – *Earth Mama* draws on its maker's short documentary *The Heart Still Hums*. Laying bare the oft-racialised pathways for young Black women, Leaf approaches poverty and the fallible US foster-care system in the sensitive manner of the Dardennes, a feat of such resonance that she won San Francisco's Audience Award. Capped off with Jody Lee Lipes's mesmerising 16mm cinematography, this arresting debut confidently tackles the complexities of American institutions through its empathetic character drama.

100 MINS



Savannah Leaf

Savannah Leaf has transitioned from a 2012 Olympian to award-winning filmmaker. Her latest short film *The Heart Still Hums* (2020) won Best Documentary Short at the Palm Springs International ShortFest. Her music video *This Land* for Gary Clark Jr was nominated for Best Music Video at the 2020 Grammys. Her feature film debut *Earth Mama* had its world premiere at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival.



Tótem

Dir. Lila Avilés Mexico, Denmark, France

A spellbinding family portrait that presents a child's-eye view of love, loss and life in all their messy, glorious, heartbreaking colour.

Over the course of a single day, seven-year-old Sol and her extended family prepare for a surprise birthday party. The guest of honour is Sol's father, who is nowhere to be found – at least, as far as Sol can determine. As her aunts, uncles, cousins, grandfather and others busy themselves with baking cakes, dyeing hair or generally trying to corral (or evade) the chaos leading up to the evening's big celebration, Sol begins to understand that the adults are not telling her everything.

Mexican actor turned director Lila Avilés's second film (following 2018's *The Chambermaid*) was awarded the Berlinale Prize of the Ecumenical Jury for the complex and sensitive way it illustrates the love that holds Sol's family together during a time of great upheaval. With splendid acting from its cast of mostly non-professionals, *Tótem* captures the freewheeling, intimate joys and sorrows of close-knit relatives grappling with something bigger than all of them. As she meticulously directs the familial hubbub towards a breathtaking conclusion, Avilés infuses every scene with abundant life, creating a bittersweet and beautiful work of extraordinary emotional depth.

95 MINS MIFF GUEST



Lila Avilés

Mexican director, screenwriter and producer Lila Avilés founded the Limerencia Films production company in 2018, and her award-winning debut feature film *The Chambermaid* screened at over 50 international festivals, and was selected as Mexico's entry for the Best International Feature Film Oscar. Her second feature *Tótem* had its world premiere in Competition at the 2023 Berlin International Film Festival.



The Rooster

Dir. Mark Leonard Winter Australia

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Hugo Weaving and Phoenix Raei play a hermit and a cop who form an unlikely connection amid crisis in this wonderfully weird sucker-punch of tenderness.

Dan (Raei, *Clickbait*) works in a regional Victorian police outpost, but when a childhood friend is discovered dead following an incident, his judgement and credentials are thrown into question. Consumed with guilt, Dan camps out in the forest, where he encounters a cranky jazz-listening, ping-pong-obsessed misanthrope (Weaving). At first transactional, this bond soon becomes transformative for the broken men. But, surrounded by trees, far away from any trace of civilisation, is everything really as it seems?

Supported by the MIFF Premiere Fund, the feature debut from actor turned writer/director Mark Leonard Winter (*Little Tornadoes*, MIFF Premiere Fund 2021) is a delicate, at times droll dramatisation of masculinity, mental health and the solace found in companionship. Winter's storytelling talents are on display in a film unafraid to make bold choices: painterly compositions of rural isolation and the natural sublime; an eerily intriguing soundscape. With Weaving and Raei welded by a tremendous chemistry, *The Rooster* unfurls as an unforgettable tale of two individuals discovering what hides behind the bravado.

101 MINS MIFF GUEST VIEWER ADVICE: STRONG IMPACT MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE THEMES



Mark Leonard Winter

Mark Leonard Winter is an Australian actor and director. His screen roles include *Little Tornadoes*, *The Dressmaker*, and *Fires*; he is one of the founding members of independent theatre company Black Lung; and won the Best Male Actor Helpmann Award for his starring role in *Birdland* at the Melbourne Theatre Company. His feature directorial debut *The Rooster* will have its world premiere at MIFF 2023.



The Sweet East

Dir. Sean Price Williams USA

Famed indie cinematographer Sean Price Williams makes his feature directorial debut with this freewheeling picaresque trip through the cliques and communes of today's USA.

Listless Lillian is on a school trip to Washington, DC. Separated from her classmates, she finds herself on a feverish journey through the eastern seaboard, falling into the orbit (or trap) of various freaks and interlopers who call this great nation home: predatory professors, vampiric filmmakers, white supremacists and rich kids cosplaying as anarchists. The teen is open to play-acting at each leg, and what results is a darkly satirical road movie that takes the temperature of modern America with gleeful irreverence.

Williams's glorious, grainy lensing – previously seen in films such as the Safdie brothers' *Good Time* (MIFF 2017), MIFF 2022 favourite *Funny Pages* and more – is on full display here, depicting Lillian's encounters with tactile dreaminess. Lead Talia Ryder (*Never Rarely Sometimes Always*) is joined by Simon Rex (*Red Rocket*), Ayo Edebiri (*Theater Camp*, MIFF 2023; *The Bear*), playwright Jeremy O Harris and Australia's own Jacob Elordi (*Euphoria*). Screening straight from Cannes Directors' Fortnight and penned by film critic Nick Pinkerton, *The Sweet East* is chatty, compulsive, always unpredictable and hilarious in its mayhem.

104 MINS VIEWER ADVICE: STRONG IMPACT THEMES



Sean Price Williams

Sean Price Williams was born in Wilmington, Delaware, USA. He is a cinematographer who has worked on numerous major independent films by directors such as Josh and Benny Safdie (including *Good Time* and *Heaven Knows What*), Owen Kline (*Funny Pages*), Alex Ross Perry (including *Her Smell* and *Queen of Earth*) and Albert Mayles (*Iris*). His feature debut as a director, *The Sweet East*, had its world premiere in Directors' Fortnight at the 2023 Cannes Film Festival.



How to Have Sex

Dir. Molly Manning Walker UK, Greece

A sun-drenched, hormone-laden trip of teenage kicks turns dark in this compellingly contemporary navigation of sexual politics.

High school is over and, before the reality of exam results hits, a trio of British teenagers are determined to have the “Best! Holiday! Ever!” Tara, Em and Skye arrive in Malia, a party town in Crete, primed for a blowout of clubbing, binge-drinking and attempts at seduction. But after a tryst that challenges the limits of consent, the harsh light of day breaks on the bacchanal’s seedy aftermath, testing friendships that the young women thought would last forever.

Receiving the 2023 Prix Un Certain Regard at Cannes, writer/director Molly Manning Walker – who was cinematographer on the Sundance prize-winning *Scrapper* (also screening at MIFF 2023) – staunchly refuses the coming-of-age clichés of her Hollywood counterparts. In this radiant, revelatory drama, hedonistic revelry à la *Spring Breakers* is soon shattered by a painful truth – a portrayal with keen attention to adolescent social dynamics, and which has drawn comparisons to the breakthrough *Aftersun* (MIFF 2022). Mia McKenna-Bruce delivers a career-making performance as Tara, our Dante in this dizzying inferno of hormones and the darkness of the teenage brink.

98 MINS VIEWER ADVICE: HIGH IMPACT THEMES; SEXUAL VIOLENCE



Molly Manning Walker

Molly Manning Walker graduated from the NFTS in 2019 with an MA in Cinematography, and recently shot Charlotte Regan’s debut feature *Scrapper*. Molly’s directing debut was the short film *Good Thanks, You?* which premiered at Cannes Critics’ Week, and her second short, *The Forgotten C*, was BIFA-nominated. Her directorial debut feature *How to Have Sex* had its world premiere at the 2023 Cannes Film Festival, where it won the Un Certain Regard prize.



Shayda

Dir. Noora Niasari Australia

Cannes Best Actress winner Zar Amir-Ebrahimi (*Holy Spider*, MIFF 2022) anchors this Sundance Audience Award-winning portrait of a mother seeking a new life for herself and her daughter.

Shayda, a brave Iranian mother, finds refuge in an Australian women’s shelter with her six-year-old daughter. Over Persian New Year, they take solace in Nowruz rituals and new beginnings, but when her estranged husband re-enters their lives, Shayda’s path to freedom is jeopardised.

Supported by the MIFF Premiere Fund, the accomplished feature debut from MIFF Accelerator Lab alumna Noora Niasari (*Tam*, MIFF 2020; *Waterfall*, MIFF 2017) was produced by Vincent Sheehan and Niasari, and executive-produced by Cate Blanchett. While forthright about the challenges of healing for those who have survived domestic violence, the film also shines a light on the indomitable hope that propels its spirited, beautifully complex characters. With affecting lead performances from Amir-Ebrahimi and newcomer Selina Zahednia – alongside Leah Purcell AM (*The Driver’s Wife*, *The Legend of Molly Johnson*, MIFF 2021), Jillian Nguyen (*Hungry Ghosts*), Osamah Sami (*Ali’s Wedding*, MIFF 2017), Mojean Aria (*KAPO: Reminiscence*) and Rina Mousavi (*Itch*) – *Shayda* is a moving story of resilience, the desire for independence, and the sacrifices and strength of a mother’s love.

117 MINS MIFF GUEST VIEWER ADVICE: CONTAINS STROBOSCOPIC IMAGERY; STRONG IMPACT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE THEMES; DISCUSSION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE



Noora Niasari

Tehran-born, Australia-raised Noora Niasari is a writer/director and co-founder of Parandeh Pictures. She is a graduate of architecture and cinema, and her short films and documentaries have screened at film festivals from Beirut to New York. *Shayda* is her debut feature film and had its premiere on the opening night of the World Cinema Dramatic competition of the 2023 Sundance Film Festival. It has been selected as MIFF 2023’s Opening Night Gala film.



Disco Boy

Dir. Giacomo Abbruzzese France, Italy, Poland, Belgium

Franz Rogowski (*Passages*, MIFF 2023) propels this mesmeric musing on wounded masculinity, which is ignited by French electro superstar Vitalic’s feverish soundtrack.

In Giacomo Abbruzzese’s sensorially and emotionally arresting debut dramatic feature, Rogowski delivers a tremendous starring turn as Alex. The rogue Belarusian harbours dreams of slipping unnoticed across the French border, but the aspiration soon sours. Stumbling from terrible loss into the arms of the French Foreign Legion suggests a future, but all-encompassing grief and cruel fate throw Alex headlong into the path of another lost soldier (played by astounding newcomer Morr Ndiaye), binding him to the past.

Premiering in competition at the Berlinale, this luminous story of outsiders adrift in Paris secured cinematographer Hélène Louvart the Silver Bear for Outstanding Artistic Contribution. Having worked with titans of French cinema Agnès Varda and Claire Denis as well as on Alice Rohrwacher’s MIFF 2018 favourite *Happy as Lazzaro*, she brings an incandescent colour to Abbruzzese’s sensorially bold film. Sitting somewhere between Denis’s *Beau Travail* (MIFF 2000) and the kinetic whirlwind of Gaspar Noé (*Climax*, MIFF 2018; *Enter the Void*, MIFF 2015), *Disco Boy* is simply ethereal.

92 MINS VIEWER ADVICE: CONTAINS STROBOSCOPIC IMAGERY; STRONG IMPACT THEMES



Giacomo Abbruzzese

Born in Taranto in the south of Italy, Giacomo Abbruzzese studied at Le Fresnoy in France and has made several short films that have screened at festivals including Oberhausen, Clermont-Ferrand and the Viennale as well as on international television. In 2022, his documentary *America* was nominated for a César. His debut feature-length fiction film *Disco Boy* had its world premiere in competition at the 2023 Berlin International Film Festival.



Animalia

Dir. Sofia Alaoui France, Morocco, Qatar

A heady mix of sci-fi genre-bending and apocalyptic tension, this extraordinary debut uses an alien invasion to peer across the stakes of faith and family in contemporary Morocco.

From humble Berber origins, Itto has married into a wealthy, conservative family, enduring her mother-in-law’s endless disapproval. Now pregnant, she’s relieved to stay behind at their opulent country estate while the rest of the family leaves to seal a business deal. But when a mysterious supernatural catastrophe happens nearby, Itto must fight her way through the chaos to find her in-laws, past people and animals who now behave ... strangely. On the way, she meets Fouad, a fellow Berber who challenges Itto’s faith and newfound privilege – and a farm boy who’s definitely not all he seems.

Sofia Alaoui’s dreamlike, enigmatic imagery combines the family-focused humanism of Steven Spielberg with the inner voyages of Terrence Malick to startlingly original effect. Working from her own script, Alaoui uses sci-fi to comment on class, religion and gender roles in contemporary Morocco – a feat that won her Sundance’s World Cinema Dramatic Special Jury Award for Creative Vision. Like the hypnotic fog that spreads across the landscape, *Animalia* envelops you in a trance state of new storytelling possibilities.

91 MINS



Sofia Alaoui

Sofia Alaoui is a French-Moroccan filmmaker, raised between Morocco and China. Featured as one of *Screen Daily’s* Arab Stars of Tomorrow, she has credits including the short films *So What If the Goats Die* (Sundance Film Festival Grand Jury Prize 2020, César Awards Best Short Film 2021), followed by *The Lake* for 20th Century Fox, broadcast on Hulu. *Animalia* is her feature debut and had its world premiere at Sundance in 2023 in the World Cinema Dramatic competition.

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Perfect Days

Dir. Wim Wenders Japan, Germany

In this triumphant return to narrative film, Wim Wenders tackles life's little details – mess and all – with his trademark meditative movement.

Hirayama (Cannes Best Actor winner Koji Yakusho) wakes at dawn, tends to his plants, then spends his days transforming the Sisyphean labour of cleaning Tokyo's

public toilets into a poetic practice of appreciating life's small pleasures. In his van, he listens to mid-century American classic songs; on his lunch break, he photographs patterns of light through trees; in the evenings, he inhales great novels.

This sublime portrait of existence and joy is perhaps the most perfect distillation of the 77-year-old filmmaker's signature style and themes.

123 MINS



La Chimera

Dir. Alice Rohrwacher Italy, France, Switzerland

A preternaturally skilled archaeologist goes on an Orphean quest for his lost love in Alice Rohrwacher's most romantically bewitching film.

Just out of jail, crumpled English archaeologist Arthur reconnects with his crew of happy-go-lucky grave-robbers, who survive by looting Etruscan tombs and

fencing the treasures they dig up. Arthur isn't interested in the artefacts, though; he's seeking a legendary door to the underworld, and to his late beloved Beniamina.

Rohrwacher plays with film gauges (35mm, super-16 and 16mm) and aspect ratios to depict differing states of reality. With Hélène Louvart's exquisite cinematography and starring Josh O'Connor (*The Crown; God's Own Country*, MIFF 2017), *La Chimera* is a modern myth in the making.

130 MINS



About Dry Grasses

Dir. Nuri Bilge Ceylan Türkiye, France, Germany, Sweden

Nuri Bilge Ceylan (*The Wild Pear Tree*, MIFF 2018) presents an ambitious epic of maladjusted male ego.

Art teacher Samet takes comfort in the rapport he builds with his students, but the lines between favouritism and impropriety grow blurry. When Samet and his colleague Kenan are falsely accused of misconduct, the allegations

threaten Samet's self-image as beloved mentor – something inseparable from his problematic desire for adulation.

Premiering in competition at Cannes, Ceylan's ninth feature proves him a master of intricate plotting and captures the harsh beauty of Anatolian summer and winter, which reflect the Janus face of his unforgettable antihero.

197 MINS



Kidnapped

Dir. Marco Bellocchio Italy, France, Germany

A pope's audacious act tears the Catholic Church and all of Italy apart in this gripping true story.

When Pope Pius IX, racked with antisemitic beliefs, attempts to shore up his crumbling power base by ordering the kidnapping of a six-year-old Edgardo, the child's Jewish family is powerless to resist. The

justification? Edgardo's Catholic nurse had him baptised in secret, making him a ward of the Catholic Church. But the pope's action eventually sparks a campaign for the boy's return that will reshape Italy and the world.

More than half a century into his career, Marco Bellocchio (*The Traitor; Blood of My Blood*, MIFF 2016) still has an unwavering eye, a stellar command of operatic flourish and a willingness to critique his country's darkest hours.

134 MINS



Anatomy of a Fall

Dir. Justine Triet France

Bristling with emotional depth, this Palme d'Or-winning courtroom drama puts the complexities of a relationship on trial.

Successful novelist Sandra stands accused of murdering her husband, Samuel, himself an author. But when her case goes before the courts, what comes under scrutiny

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are the machinations of a failing marriage – as obscure to outsiders as it is to the couple's 11-year-old son. Were their fiery spats signs of something more sinister?

Anatomy of a Fall depicts marital acrimony with a veracity rivalling Ingmar Bergman's *Scenes From a Marriage*. Sandra Hüller (*Toni Erdmann*, MIFF 2016) is compelling as the beguiling and unknowable Sandra, proving herself one of the most dynamic actors of her generation.

150 MINS



Last Summer

Dir. Catherine Breillat France, Norway

Catherine Breillat (*Abuse of Weakness*, MIFF 2014) returns with a daring portrait of a woman's relationship with her teen stepson, starring Léa Drucker.

Well-to-do family lawyer Anne finds her morals tested with the arrival of her husband Pierre's adolescent 'problem child'. Théo's hedonistic behaviour epitomises

pure teenage rebellion; Anne, meanwhile, discovers that his presence stirs a desire that oversteps legal and familial boundaries.

Renowned for her uncompromising explorations of female sexuality, Breillat has crafted a story about the confluence of temptation and the abuse of power, while the performances from Drucker (*Incredible but True*, MIFF 2022) and newcomer Samuel Kircher offer nuance and tension.

104 MINS



May December

Dir. Todd Haynes USA

Julianne Moore and Natalie Portman team up in Todd Haynes's perfectly camp melodrama that dredges up a sexual scandal.

At 36, Gracie landed herself behind bars after her predatory sexual relationship with a 13-year-old boy was made public. Some 20 years later, with Gracie now

married to him with children of their own, the complexities resurface when actor Elizabeth arrives in their hometown ahead of playing her in an upcoming biopic.

With unsurprising depth, Portman and Moore deliver captivating performances, while Charles Melton (*Riverdale*) is commendable as baby-faced husband Joe. As an intertextual touch, Marcelo Zarvos's score is adapted from that of 1971 illicit-romance flick *The Go-Between*.

113 MINS



Showing Up

Dir. Kelly Reichardt USA

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As much an ode to the daily creative grind as it is to the creative partnership between Kelly Reichardt (*First Cow*, MIFF 2020) and Michelle Williams.

Sculptor Lizzy has a show opening in a week, but life keeps getting in the way of her work. Her parents are dismissive, her brother is digging himself into a hole,

her day job takes up too much time and her cat has just mauled a pigeon. Worst of all, Lizzy needs a shower, but her landlord (and fellow artist) Jo is too busy preparing for her two upcoming shows to fix the hot water!

That rare, honest work of art about the work of making art, *Showing Up* is the fourth collaboration between Reichardt and Williams, whose superb turn as Lizzy is matched by a cast that includes Hong Chau (*The Whale*).

108 MINS



Past Lives

Dir. Celine Song USA, South Korea

What if the lover who never was is 'the one'? This swooning romance follows a Korean woman whose heart is torn by the road not taken.

The Korean concept of 'inyeon' suggests that two souls colliding is a twist of joyous fate but can also leave a heart bound in doubt when their paths diverge. That's

the case for Na-young. Even after a quarter of a century – during which she has gotten married and moved to New York – she can't seem to quite move on from the memory of her childhood friend Hae-sung.

Starring Greta Lee (*Russian Doll*), John Magaro (*First Cow*, MIFF 2020) and Teo Yoo (*Decision to Leave*, MIFF 2022), playwright turned filmmaker Celine Song's feature debut has rightfully drawn comparisons to Richard Linklater's *Before* trilogy.

106 MINS MIFF GUEST



Monster

Dir. Hirokazu Kore-eda Japan

Hirokazu Kore-eda's (*Shoplifters*, MIFF 2018) tender answer to the question 'Who's the monster?', awarded Best Screenplay and the Queer Palm at Cannes, will melt your heart.

Minato has been acting strangely since his dad's death: cutting his hair, leaping from a moving car, claiming his

brain has been replaced with a pig's. When he comes home from school injured, his mum is convinced something sinister is at play and sets out to expose Minato's teacher, Hori, as the culprit. In turn, Hori claims Minato is a bully. But Minato has his own perspective, focused on his new friend, with troubles of his own.

Featuring a delicate piano score by Ryuichi Sakamoto in his final screen work before his death this March.

126 MINS



The Eternal Daughter

Dir. Joanna Hogg UK, USA

Tilda Swinton and Tilda Swinton star in Joanna Hogg's Gothic coda to her two *Souvenir* films, executive-produced by Martin Scorsese.

Swinton reprises her role as *The Souvenir* (MIFF 2019) matriarch Rosalind and steps in to play a now-middle-aged Julie. The two have travelled to Wales to stay in the

family's wartime country home; Julie plans to work on her latest film, of which Rosalind is the unwitting subject. But the house's long-buried secrets have other plans.

In her dual roles, Swinton is characteristically brilliant, while Hogg – trading aching realism for something much more menacing – masterfully deploys intertextual nods to everything from *The Turn of the Screw* to *The Shining* to *Vertigo*.

96 MINS

Australian

MIFF is the world's largest showcase of exceptional Australian filmmaking. This scintillating sample of the festival's local fare tells the nation's story through documentary, drama, comedy and innovative First Nations filmmaking.



Sunflower

Dir. Gabriel Carrubba Australia

In this affecting Melbourne-set queer drama, a teenager's coming of age is complicated by an unexpected sexual awakening.

On the surface, 17-year-old Leo lives a typical life within a working-class family in Melbourne's outer suburbs. At school, he also enjoys the 'safety' of popularity and the respect of his peers. But beneath that projected persona lie questions around desire and sexuality: he is blindsided by his growing attraction to his best friend, Boof. Amid heteronormative pressures from all sides, will Leo be able to embrace this newfound aspect of his identity and come into his own?

The feature debut of writer/director Gabriel Carrubba, *Sunflower* is a delicate marvel of low-budget independent local filmmaking.

80 MINS **MIFF GUEST** VIEWER ADVICE: STRONG IMPACT THEMES, VIOLENT ASSAULT



Ukraine Guernica – Artist War

Dir. George Gittoes Afghanistan, Ukraine, Australia

George Gittoes follows the frontline artists daring to stand up to the Russian invasions of Ukraine and Afghanistan.

This anti-war film in the tradition of Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* takes us behind the battle lines and into the lives of the artists confronting Russia's march on Ukraine and Afghanistan following the withdrawal of foreign forces. From the ashes of unspeakable tragedy and destruction, new creative works are born, including projects completed at the former House of Culture in Irpin, Ukraine, and at the Yellow House Art School in Jalalabad, Afghanistan.

Filmmaker and activist Gittoes, a former recipient of the Sydney Peace Prize, collaborates with producer/musician Hellen Rose to document a landscape devastated by atrocities, finding optimism in the process of creation.

100 MINS **MIFF PLAY** **MIFF GUEST** VIEWER ADVICE: STRONG IMPACT THEMES



Rebel With a Cause

Dir. Douglas Watkins, Jill Robinson, E.J. Garret, S.F. Tusa Australia

Four First Nations trailblazers – a senator, a magistrate, a media icon and a poet – put everything on the line for a brighter future.

Neville Bonner, a Jagera elder, was the first Indigenous person elected to Parliament, serving across four federal governments. Pat O'Shane, a Kuku Yalanji woman, was Australia's first Aboriginal magistrate. Birri Gubba Gungalu radio host Tiga Bayles presented Sydney's *Radio Redfern* and established the Brisbane Indigenous Media Association and the National Indigenous Radio Service. And Noonuccal poet and activist Oodgeroo Noonuccal was the first Aboriginal person to publish a book of verse. Commissioned by National Indigenous Television (NITV), this four-part documentary showcases how four Queensland trailblazers altered the course of Australian history.

4 x 51 MINS **MIFF PLAY** VIEWER ADVICE: MAY CONTAIN IMAGES AND VOICES OF DECEASED FIRST NATIONS PERSONS



Keeping Hope

Dir. Tyson Mowarin Australia

Mark Coles Smith (*Sweet As*, MIFF Premiere Fund 2022; *Mystery Road: Origin*) faces down a traumatic event from his past in the hope of helping young First Nations men in the Kimberley.

Coles Smith, an actor and Nyikina man, grew up surrounded by the beauty of the Kimberley. But there is deep heartache ingrained below the surface of this astounding landscape: the rate of suicide among the region's young First Nations men is alarmingly high. For Coles Smith, these terrible statistics – some of the most troubling in the world – are more than just numbers; his best friend tragically took his own life when they were in their 20s. Commissioned by National Indigenous Television (NITV), *Keeping Hope* follows his intensely personal search for answers and, hopefully, solutions.

56 MINS **MIFF PLAY** VIEWER ADVICE: STRONG IMPACT SUICIDE THEMES WITHIN FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES



Monolith

Dir. Matt Vesely Australia

A disgraced journalist is confronted with an artefact that may not be of this world, but is about to become the centre of hers.

Eager to salvage her reputation, a journalist retreats to her parents' house to work on a podcast about the paranormal. While researching, she learns about a retiree's encounter with a puzzling black brick, which appeared out of nowhere. A raft of similar anecdotes involving other black bricks leads her down shadowy paths and to a desperate fixation on the truth behind the mysterious objects – until, one day, a sinister brick of her own appears.

Blending sci-fi and thriller in his gripping feature debut, Matt Vesely (*My Best Friend Is Stuck on the Ceiling*, MIFF 2016) astutely crafts dramatic tension through constraint, aided by an intensely expressive Lily Sullivan (*Evil Dead Rise*) in the lead role.

98 MINS



Voices in Deep

Dir. Jason Raftopoulos Greece, Australia

Following a tragedy at sea, the lives of two orphaned refugees and an Australian aid worker are inextricably woven together in this bracing, humanistic drama.

In Athens, just after the devastating 2015 refugee crisis, Tarek and Zaeed fend for themselves on the street. Their parents died during their ocean journey; in a bid for shelter and food, Tarek accepts exploitative sex work and Zaeed takes desperate, risky measures to change their circumstances. Meanwhile, Bobby, a humanitarian worker dealing with her own painful past, is trying to offload bags of illegally harvested shellfish before she returns to Australia.

An astute examination of statelessness, trauma and time, *Voices in Deep* is the second feature from Jason Raftopoulos (*West of Sunshine*, MIFF 2015).

91 MINS



Birdeater

Dir. Jack Clark, Jim Weir Australia

A bachelor party takes a feral turn in this genre-defying debut from an exciting new Australian directing duo.

On an isolated country property, Louie and Irene have gathered their closest friends for a pre-wedding celebration. Things start festively enough, but as the night wears on, an uncomfortable revelation about the pair's relationship upends the festivities. Soon, the party is plunged into full-blown chaos as the night descends into a vicious nightmare.

This debut feature tackles the evolving debate around gender roles head-on, tangling with the uncomfortable dynamics of relationships – and the menace of unchecked masculinity – through a riveting genre hybrid that fuses anxious domestic drama with the surreal terror of the remote landscape.

113 MINS MIFF GUEST



The Carnival

Dir. Isabel Darling Australia

Amid bushfires, the pandemic and punters' changing tastes, the family behind the Bells Family Carnival fight to preserve the attraction's century-long legacy.

The Bells Family Carnival is a sixth-generation family business, and all year round, across Australia, the Bells drive a 30-strong fleet of trailers containing the vast disassembled rides they'll rebuild by hand come rain, hail or shine. Visitors' shrieks and giggles are all that matter to 54-year-old patriarch Elwin, for whom there is no better life. But whereas some of his children share his sentiments, others dream of a different path. Meanwhile, rising costs, unreliable insurance, unpredictable patronage, the bushfires and COVID-19 complicate the Bells' struggle to keep the operation afloat.

85 MINS



The Hidden Spring

Dir. Jason Di Rosso Australia

Divided by 4000 kilometres, a son and his dying father connect in this profoundly intimate documentary debut.

In Perth, a father is on the precipice of death. In Sydney, his son picks up a camera to process his grief. Shot in the terrace home of writer/director Jason Di Rosso – best known as host of ABC Radio National's *The Screen Show* – this essay film becomes a way of bridging not just physical distance but also the emotional and philosophical breach between two worldviews. Di Rosso's father, an adherent of alternative spirituality and an architect well practised in constructing reality, believes he can heal his terminal illness himself.

The Hidden Spring sees one of Australia's foremost critics return to his roots in film and TV production, meditating on time, memory, history and family.

51 MINS MIFF GUEST



Kindred

Dir. Adrian Russell Wills, Gillian Moody Australia

An autobiographical story about the removal of Aboriginal children from their birth families, *Kindred* is also a celebration of friendship, unconditional love and resilience.

Wonnarua writer/director Adrian Russell Wills and Wodi Wodi producer Gillian Moody have been best friends for more than two decades. Part of their unshakable bond has been similar life experiences – both were adopted into white families in Sydney's northern suburbs – and, later in life, a desire to reconnect with their bloodlines.

Following their collaborative efforts on the short films *Angel* and *Daniel's 21st* and on the feature documentary *Black Divaz*, they now turn the camera on themselves in this tribute to Indigenous strength, courage and sovereignty.

90 MINS



Rose Gold

Dir. Matthew Adekponya Australia

Sit courtside as the Boomers win their history-making Olympic medal and affirm Australia as a force to be reckoned with in global basketball.

On 7 August 2021, the Australian men's basketball team, the Boomers, defeated Slovenia 107-93 at the Tokyo Summer Olympics. That win earned them a podium spot, behind the US and France, their 'rose gold' third-place medal breaking a 65-year streak of losses and agonising near-misses.

Matthew Adekponya's feature debut is a clear three-pointer: not only a behind-the-scenes look at how the Boomers achieved their first ever international medal, but also the story of basketball in the country and a thrilling account of mateship that saw Australia held up on the world stage.

89 MINS



Mercy Road

Dir. John Curran Australia

The first virtually produced Australian feature, *Mercy Road* is an unrelentingly tense psychological thriller.

Tom learns just how far he must go to protect what matters most to him. His daughter Ruby has been abducted, and to save her, he must carry out a series of tasks dictated by a psychopathic voice on the other side of a phone call. Tom realises the true ransom demanded of him is a piece of his soul.

Director John Curran (*Tracks*) teamed up with Alex Proyas's (*Dark City: Director's Cut*, MIFF 2017) production company Heretic Foundation to bring *Mercy Road* to life using a real-time in-camera compositing technique involving LED screens and Unreal Engine. Matching Curran's ingenious direction is an arresting star turn from Hollywood star-on-the-rise Luke Bracey (*Point Break*, *Hacksaw Ridge*).

85 MINS

MIFF Premiere Fund

Now well into its second decade, MIFF's film fund proudly continues its focus on 'stories that need telling' from diverse voices tackling today's big themes.

This year's slate of Premiere Fund films also includes *Shayda* (page 6, page 12), *The Rooster* (page 11) and *This Is Going to Be Big* (page 37).



Australia's Open

Dir. Ili Baré Australia

PRESENTED BY
7am

Relive the most thrilling moments of Australia's beloved tennis tournament in this chronicle of its ascent to top-seed status on the world stage.

The Australian Open is one of the world's four tennis Grand Slams, but its early days in 1970s Kooyong were humble. Now the highest-profile sporting event in the country, the Open has hosted innumerable tennis legends and iconic matches, such as the Williams sisters' finals clash in 2017. It has also become both a celebration of greatness and a site for the playing-out of social issues, from Aboriginal and queer representation to border control.

Supported by the MIFF Premiere Fund, *Australia's Open* illuminates just how entwined the stories of the tournament and the nation truly are.

96 MINS



Memory Film: A Filmmaker's Diary

Dir. Jeni Thornley Australia

Revered filmmaker Jeni Thornley (*Maidens*, MIFF 1979) composes an immersive cine-poem from her extensive super-8 archive spanning three decades.

Set against the backdrop of radical feminism, Aboriginal land rights and widespread social upheaval, this hyper-intimate opus traces its maker's inner journey towards liberation. Adopting the lenses of psychotherapy and Eastern spirituality, and incorporating footage from Thornley's earlier works, the film contemplates gender fluidity, sexual politics, the pleasure and pain of motherhood, and the desire for a world free of war and colonisation.

Supported by the MIFF Premiere Fund, *Memory Film* features a sweeping score by Egyptian-Australian multi-instrumentalist Joseph Tawadros.

85 MINS

Asia Pacific

Dive into sweeping, splendid and spirit-lifting tales from across the Asia Pacific region, including the latest from festival faves Hong Sang-soo and Anthony Chen; stories from India, New Zealand and Japan; and two noteworthy Malaysian prize winners.



Tiger Stripes

Dir. Amanda Nell Eu Malaysia, Taiwan, France, Germany, Netherlands, Indonesia

The beast is unleashed in this original, darkly funny debut feature – and she's a 12-year-old Malaysian schoolgirl whose body is changing in more ways than one.

Zaffan isn't afraid to do as her conservative faith and strict education say she shouldn't. She's also the first at school to embark on the treacherous journey of puberty, which causes her status as ringleader to be replaced with being a target for mockery. Then mysterious scars appear and Zaffan's changing body becomes animalistic ... If you rile this beast, she'll show her claws.

Tiger Stripes is the first film from a Malaysian female director to be selected for Cannes and the first Malay-language film to scoop the Grand Prize at Cannes Critics' Week.

95 MINS



Cobweb

Dir. Kim Jee-woon South Korea

Parasite's Song Kang-ho stars as a 1970s filmmaker-in-crisis in this chaotic comedy from the director of *I Saw the Devil*.

Song plays an ambitious but beleaguered director trying to finish the movie – a black-and-white melodrama entitled 'Cobweb' – that he's convinced is going to be his masterpiece. But the project is rife with chaos: censors are interfering, bewildered actors and producers struggle to make sense of the rewritten ending, and everything else that seemingly can go wrong does.

Delighting in orchestrating the mayhem of a film shoot run amok, Kim Jee-woon (*A Bittersweet Life*, MIFF 2006) reveals a considerably more playful flip side to his dark, twisted thrillers. *Cobweb* is a sharp, stylish and sometimes silly showbiz satire that will be catnip for cinephiles and movie fans alike.

135 MINS



The Shadowless Tower

Dir. Zhang Lu China

This beguiling tale of a middle-aged man who's lost his bearings doubles as a charming meditation on the frayed bonds of family.

Fortysomething food critic Gu Wentong ponders what life might have been like if he'd kept in touch with his estranged father. For his part, Wentong is divorced, so his own daughter is under the care of his withering sister. But when word comes that Dad may be living in the seaside town of Beidaihe, a healing opportunity appears – especially if Wentong can channel the spontaneity of his younger photographer colleague.

This lilting gem from novelist turned filmmaker Zhang Lu (*A Quiet Dream*, MIFF 2017) deftly folds a complicated history into a deceptively simple tale of lost souls making their way back to the centre.

144 MINS



The Breaking Ice

Dir. Anthony Chen China

The French New Wave lives on in this luminous Gen Z love triangle from *Wet Season* (MIFF 2020) and *Ilo Ilo* (MIFF 2013) director Anthony Chen.

Nerdy, depressed Shanghai financier Haofeng is visiting wintry Yanji, on China's North Korean border, for a friend's wedding. When he loses his phone and misses his flight home, effervescent local tour guide Nana invites him to spend the long weekend with her ... and her friend Xiao, who nurtures a hopeless crush on Nana. Over several playful days and soju-fuelled nights, the trio let their guards down. Can a shared adventure melt their chilled hearts, or will it simply bring the sadness they've been hiding to the fore?

Chen (*Drift*, MIFF 2023) thrilled Cannes audiences with this intimate and self-consciously cinematic valentine to the French *nouvelle vague*.

97 MINS MIFF GUEST



Bad Behaviour

Dir. Alice Englert New Zealand

Jennifer Connelly and Ben Whishaw star in this blackly comic debut about a former child star who attends a spiritual retreat in search of enlightenment and filial reconciliation.

Oregon's Loveland Ranch promises spiritual healing under the guidance of guru Elon Bello. Lucy, who had acting success when she was younger, submits herself to the semi-silent environment as a welcome change from her professional troubles – and from her difficulties with her daughter Dylan. Off-grid, Lucy hopes she'll find the peace and validation she's paid good money for. Unfortunately for her, so do all the other egocentric attendees.

Connelly (*Noah; Requiem for a Dream*) and Whishaw (*Passages*, MIFF 2023) drive this whip-smart film from actor turned director Alice Englert (*You Won't Be Alone*, MIFF 2022).

109 MINS MIFF GUEST



Kayo Kayo Colour?

Dir. Shahrukhkhan Chavada India

Naturalistic and brimming with empathy, this debut drama unfolds over 24 hours in a marginalised Muslim community in India.

In the slums of Ahmedabad, a working-class Muslim family go about their quotidian routines. For Raziya, the days revolve around chores and childcare. Her son Faiz chases chickens in the street, while her daughter Ruba plays quietly indoors. Meanwhile, her unemployed husband Razzak wants to buy an autorickshaw to secure financial autonomy and alter the family's fate.

Kayo Kayo Colour? is a striking portrait of a religious minority rarely depicted in Indian cinema. With a humane gaze reminiscent of Hirokazu Kore-eda, Shahrukhkhan Chavada depicts the family's toil with marked restraint, allowing activities to illuminate how politics governs day-to-day existence.

96 MINS MIFF PLAY



Stonewalling

Dir. Huang Ji, Ryuji Otsuka Japan

A Gen Z woman contends with shifting cultural values and the one-child policy's lasting impacts to understand her place in the world.

Lynn prefers to stand at the peripheries rather than charge through with abandon. She reluctantly learns English after being goaded by her TikTok boyfriend, flails in pursuit of a career as a flight attendant and considers a side hustle via a sketchy egg-donor program for moneyed-up couples. But when she becomes pregnant herself, she is forced to re-evaluate her life.

Stonewalling is set in what directors Huang Ji and Ryuji Otsuka describe as a "post-TikTok China". Yao Honggui's transcendent portrayal of a person pushed to take control of her own fate garnered the Best Actress award at the Hong Kong International Film Festival.

148 MINS



Walk Up

Dir. Hong Sang-soo South Korea

Telling four stories (or maybe just one) over four storeys, Hong Sang-soo's latest MIFF entry is a shrewdly structured chamber play set within a single building.

Film director Byung-soo takes his estranged daughter to meet his old friend Ms Kim, who is well regarded in the field she wants to pursue. Ms Kim owns and works in a building with four floors and, after much booze-soaked chat, offers to rent out a soon-to-be-vacated flat to Byung-soo. He accepts, time jumps forward (or sideways – it's deliberately unclear) and the film's action moves up a floor. The higher up we go, the lower our protagonist falls ...

Operating on multiple levels – literally and figuratively – Hong's 28th feature in 26 years is a spirited, slippery, funny and ever so curious joy.

97 MINS



Sand

Dir. Visakesa Chandrasekaram Sri Lanka

The hauntings of the Sri Lankan Civil War are explored with quiet, incisive force in this Rotterdam Special Jury Prize winner.

In the aftermath of the conflict between the Sinhalese majority and the Sri Lankan Tamil minority, Rudran returns to his village in the Northern Province. A former Tamil liberation militant, he faces trial for terrorism but is released on bail. After five years apart, he is reunited with his ageing mother, who communes with mystical forces to find the fellow villagers who went missing during the upheaval. Rudran is on a somewhat similar quest: he is searching for his long-lost love, who has not been seen since fleeing to a refugee camp.

Directed by lawyer, academic and artist Visakesa Chandrasekaram, *Sand* is a meditative, otherworldly portrait of lives irreparably wounded by war.

100 MINS MIFF GUEST



Shut Eye

Dir. Tom Levesque New Zealand

A disconnected young woman becomes dangerously obsessed with an ASMR streamer in this disorientating, distinctive debut.

Scraping by in a thankless job and suffering from chronic insomnia, lonely Sierra turns to the online world of ASMR, where she meets Kate, a streamer whose soothing voice quickly becomes her virtual companion. When the two women meet in person, they discover there's chemistry beyond the virtual. It's not long before Sierra becomes increasingly fixated on Kate – which only intensifies when she feels their relationship is threatened.

Featuring charismatic, opposites-attract performances from newcomers Millie Van Kol and Sarah May, this refreshingly innovative micro-budget debut bottles up the anxious energy of our socially isolated era.

92 MINS MIFF GUEST



Stone Turtle

Dir. Woo Ming Jin Malaysia, Indonesia

The supernatural encroaches on a woman's simple existence in this FIPRESCI Prize-winning tale of folklore, deception and retribution.

Zahara is a refugee who now calls an isolated Malaysian island home. She sells turtle eggs and looks after her 10-year-old niece, whose mother was slain as part of an honour-killing ceremony. When their unexceptional life is interrupted by a mysterious stranger who claims he's doing research on the area's ecosystem, a mystical loop of violence and deceit ensues.

Regarded as Woo Ming Jin's (*Girl in the Water*, MIFF 2012) long-awaited return to arthouse, this engrossing tale is the first Malay-language feature to screen in competition at Locarno and includes hand-drawn animation by Studio Ghibli alum Paul Williams illustrating the island's myth of a stone turtle.

91 MINS MIFF PLAY



Absence

Dir. Wu Lang China

Lee Kang-sheng brings undeniable star power to this pensive story of a man finding himself in a world that has left him behind.

Released from jail after 10 years, Han Jianguy returns home to Hainan. Much has changed, but in a coastal barber shop he finds his former flame, Su Hong, and her young daughter – who might be his. Like many on the island, Hong scrambles to find a foothold among the skyscrapers that have altered the landscape, and in Jianguy she finds a solution: as a local, he can buy housing; he's also working for property tycoon Kai. But when Kai's latest development fails, the makeshift family take matters into their own hands.

A meticulously restrained study of unbridled urbanisation and the human toll taken when all that steel and concrete is left to rot before it's even complete.

100 MINS



Remembering Every Night

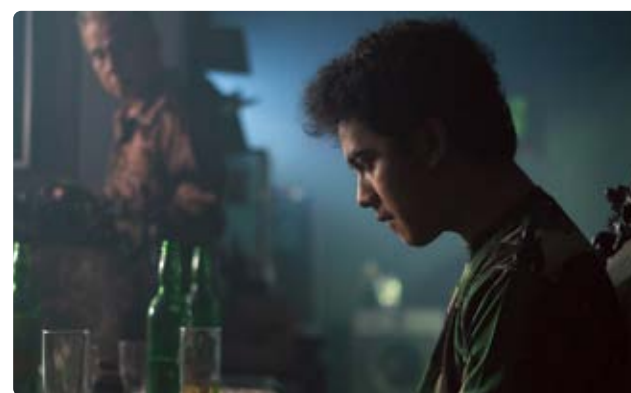
Dir. Yui Kiyohara Japan

Get lost with three women wandering a town on Tokyo's outskirts, whose discombobulating architecture mirrors the vastness of life.

Why are we here and where do we need to be? That's the question hanging unspoken over Yui Kiyohara's haunting follow-up to *Our House* (MIFF 2018). A uni student grieving the death of a friend explores the uniquely uniform streets of Tama New Town. Separately, a gas company's meter inspector helps an old man find his way home, and another woman follows a lost memory caught for eternity in a postcard. As we discover, there are ties that bind these roaming souls even as their paths do not cross.

Remembering Every Night is a deeply personal work that distills the profound, inherently magical ephemerality of the everyday.

116 MINS



Autobiography

Dir. Makbul Mubarak Indonesia, France, Singapore, Poland, Germany, Qatar

In this chilling political coming-of-age film, a young housekeeper is drawn into the sinister orbit of his influential boss.

In this film that won Best Screenplay at the Asia Pacific Screen Awards, Adelaide's Feature Film Award and a Venice FIPRESCI Prize, Rakib is a fourth-generation servant for the family of Purna, a retired army general who has come back to his rural Indonesian hometown to run for office. With his father in prison and his brother abroad, lonesome Rakib grows enchanted by his employer, who transforms into a mentor and father figure. When a campaign poster of Purna is found vandalised, Rakib jumps at the chance to find the offender, triggering a wave of violent, corrupt acts through which innocence is extinguished and the country's brutal history is laid bare.

115 MINS MIFF PLAY

Africa & Middle East

Be swept up by MIFF 2023's stories from Africa and the Middle East, including a Teddy Award-winning queer gem, Jordan's first ever Cannes entry, and the latest from Jafar Panahi and Mani Haghighi.



No Bears

Dir. Jafar Panahi Iran

PRESENTED BY

SBS ONDEMAND

In this gripping blend of fact and fiction, revered Iranian auteur Jafar Panahi (*3 Faces*, MIFF 2018) decides whether to cross a line for his beliefs.

Panahi has ostensibly been making a docudrama about a Turkish couple procuring fake passports to cross the border into Europe. He directs them remotely beyond the Iranian border he himself cannot cross – he still faces house arrest for his filmmaking – but ponders whether to transgress his home country's limits. Meanwhile, the previously fawning villagers who have hosted him are growing suspicious. And are there really bears out there in the dark? Moments of profound and painful symbolism abound in this soul-achingly metatextual drama, which was awarded a Venice Special Jury Prize.

107 MINS



Inshallah a Boy

Dir. Amjad Al Rasheed Jordan, France, Saudi Arabia, Qatar

The first Jordanian film to screen at Cannes takes ferocious aim at the country's ingrained misogyny.

After the death of her husband, Nawal faces an even more wrenching loss. Her brother-in-law Rifqi argues he now owns the modest Amman apartment where she and her young daughter Nora live – and which Nawal's own money helped buy – because in Jordan's Sharia-derived legal tradition, only a son can inherit property. If Nawal loses her home, she'll also lose custody of Nora to Rifqi. As the dismayed widow learns the extent of her spouse's debts and infidelities, she decides to stall Rifqi's legal proceedings by faking a pregnancy. God willing, she'll birth the courage to determine her own fate.

113 MINS VIEWER ADVICE: STRONG IMPACT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE THEMES



Omen

Dir. Baloji Belgium, Netherlands, Congo

Four Congolese people accused of practising sorcery forge very different spiritual paths in this electrifying cinematic mixtape that won the Un Certain Regard New Voice Prize at Cannes.

Belgium-based Koffi brings his pregnant fiancée to visit his home country, Congo, hoping to reconnect with his family. Sadly, his mother still believes his port-wine birthmark is a sign of evil. Meanwhile, Koffi's younger sister Tshala is torn between her liberated sexuality and her ambivalent pull towards traditional spirituality. And tutu-wearing gangster Paco has embraced and even monetised the sorcery stigma – as he grieves his sister's death, he makes psychedelic voyages into the spirit realm.

90 MINS

Director in Focus Safi Faye

Discover the rarely screened but ground-breaking works of the late Safi Faye and her keen ethnographic lens, on her journey from actress, to first Sub-Saharan African woman to direct a commercially distributed film, to being lauded at Cannes.



Little by Little

Dir. Jean Rouch France, Niger

In her first foray into cinema, Safi Faye acts in Jean Rouch's 1970 comedy about two Nigerien entrepreneurs whose research trip to Paris becomes a sharp lesson in 'reverse ethnography'.

Damouré Zika and Lam Ibrahim Dia, who have an import-export business in Niger, learn of a competitor's plans to construct a multistorey building in the capital. Viewing it as a symbol of capitalistic success, they travel to Paris to gather ideas for their own building but quickly become bemused by the eccentricities of the French and their way of life.

The satirical *Little by Little* displays Rouch's distinct ethno-fiction approach to filmmaking, including his close collaboration with his friends and subjects. Among them was Faye, who went on to study both ethnology and cinema.

92 MINS



Letter From My Village

Dir. Safi Faye Senegal

This trailblazing 1975 work – the first feature made by a woman from Sub-Saharan Africa – sets a story of love and land against a postcolonial backdrop.

Forced by French decrees to harvest peanuts rather than their usual rice, farmers in a remote Senegalese community lament the effects of this shift on their soil and livelihoods. Left with few opportunities amid an ongoing drought, Ngor journeys to the capital to find the money he needs to marry his fiancée. But with every step he takes through Dakar's crowded streets and every fellow jobseeker he meets, his longing for his village increases.

An emotive ode to the very country that banned it upon release, this transgressive film received multiple accolades at the 1976 Berlinale.

90 MINS



Terrestrial Verses

Dir. Ali Asgari, Alireza Khatami Iran

This series of formally daring vignettes about the absurdity and menace of state control in Iran is laced with both scathing irony and glimmers of hope.

Taking its title from a work by Iranian iconoclast Forugh Farrokhzad, *Terrestrial Verses* captures the plight of ordinary Iranians navigating the indignities – and absurdities – of the country's religious and bureaucratic institutions. Cycling from birth to death, its vignettes begin with a controversy over the naming of an infant and move through stories of everyday people facing off against the system, from a frustrated, politically censored filmmaker to a teenager who confronts her school after being caught with a boy on a motorcycle.

77 MINS



Deserts

Dir. Faouzi Bensaïdi France, Germany, Morocco, Belgium

Two debt collectors face the absurdity of their jobs while dwarfed by the majestic Moroccan desert.

Mehdi and Hamid drive from town to town attempting to extract loan payments from poverty-stricken villagers. In the beginning, this fruitless task leads to nothing but hysterical and ridiculous misadventures. But when they cross paths with an enigmatic handcuffed stranger, they find themselves on a mystical and unnerving path involving captivity and ill-fated romance.

Director Faouzi Bensaïdi (*A Thousand Months*, MIFF 2003), who graced screens with supporting roles in *It Must Be Heaven* (MIFF 2019) and *Sofia* (MIFF 2018), blends the allegorical and the farcical in this work of existential flair and bleak beauty.

123 MINS VIEWER ADVICE: DEPICTIONS OF VIOLENCE TOWARDS ANIMALS



All the Colours of the World Are Between Black and White

Dir. Babatunde Apalowo Nigeria

Love seeps through the cracks in this touching tale of same-sex desire in Nigeria, which won the Berlinale's Teddy Award.

Bambino, a working-class delivery driver, lives in a country where homosexual relations are punishable with a jail sentence of up to 14 years. When he meets well-off photographer Bawa, a frisson develops that might lead to something more – a fact complicated by Bambino's female neighbour's own erotic desires for him. Consumed by a longing he can't explain, Bambino isolates himself from Bawa, and the two men must figure out if their yearning and passion are stronger than the social structures that keep them at bay.

93 MINS MIFF PLAY



Subtraction

Dir. Mani Haghighi Iran, France

A husband and wife get mixed up with their doppelgangers in Mani Haghighi's (*Pig*, MIFF 2018) Hitchcockian thriller starring Taraneh Alidoosti (*The Salesman*, MIFF 2016) and Navid Mohammadzadeh (*Lella's Brothers*, MIFF 2022).

Driving instructor Farzaneh spies on a person who appears to be her husband, Jalal, heading towards the upmarket residence of another woman. Jalal claims to have been out of town but Farzaneh isn't placated, so she enlists the help of her father-in-law, who is stunned to discover a man identical to Jalal ... with a wife who's a dead ringer for Farzaneh. Existing on opposite ends of Tehran's socio-economic spectrum, the couples soon find their lives intertwined in unexpected ways.

107 MINS



Hounds

Dir. Kamal Lazraq Morocco, France, Belgium, Qatar, Saudi Arabia

Bringing echoes of the Coen brothers and Quentin Tarantino to the mean streets of Morocco, this Cannes Un Certain Regard Jury Prize winner is not the Casablanca you think you know.

Kamal Lazraq's feature debut is an audacious noir thriller with an occasional undercurrent of farce. Hassan and Issam will do whatever it takes to stay alive – even if it means abducting the rival of a local crime boss. But then they accidentally kill their prisoner midway through the job. Father and son need to get rid of the body, and fast, but deeply spiritual Hassan is keen to follow Islamic burial customs. Issam, meanwhile, just wants to survive the night and the various crooks coming their way.

94 MINS VIEWER ADVICE: DEPICTIONS OF VIOLENCE TOWARDS ANIMALS



Tommy Guns

Dir. Carlos Conceição Portugal, France, Angola

An extraordinary fable about the brutal scars of colonialism, whose genre twists and turns give new meaning to 'the horror of war'.

It's 1974 and the southern African country of Angola is in the final throes of its war for independence. A young woman from a local tribe encounters a Portuguese soldier in the forest, learning about both love and loss in the process. Elsewhere, within the confines of a seemingly infinite wall, a platoon of young Portuguese soldiers is put through arduous training manoeuvres by a sadistic colonel as they await justice for 400 years of violent rule. Gradually, these enigmatic threads weave reality, symbolism and the supernatural together into an enveloping, ever-shifting horror-fantasia.

119 MINS MIFF PLAY MIFF GUEST



Come and Work

Dir. Safi Faye Senegal

The first ever African film to screen at Cannes, this account of village life is a profound meditation on time, memory and community.

In the Senegalese village of Fad'jal, cultural knowledge is transmitted orally at the foot of an 800-year-old baobab tree. Among myriad conversations, elders and youth discuss their difficulties tending to the land. Meanwhile, French-speaking children at the local school recite details of the history of France, a country far removed from their everyday experiences.

Premiering at Cannes in 1979 and blending documentary, fictionalisations and oral folklore, *Come and Work* is a form-defying expression of political activism, placing French and Senegalese culture in conversation with each other and reinforcing Safi Faye's position as a vital voice in cinema.

113 MINS



I, Your Mother

Dir. Safi Faye West Germany, Senegal

"When will you return?" This haunting question – familiar to many an expat – is asked of a Senegalese student in West Berlin.

In Safi Faye's 1980 treasure created for broadcast on German television, young student Moussa finds himself drifting – often alone – in Berlin, working odd jobs to send money, clothes and more, as demanded in letters from back home. But where does his heart lie? "Sooner or later, I'll return to where my other self is."

Drawing on her brief time in Germany during a period of considerable cultural and political upheaval, this fascinatingly fluid work reveals Faye's rich sense of self, blurring the lines of fact, fiction and form in ways that only deepen our connection to the truth

59 MINS SCREENS WITH SELBÉ: ONE AMONG MANY (32 MINS)



Mossane

Dir. Safi Faye Senegal

In a rare work of pure fiction for Safi Faye, drawing from a Wolof legend, a teenager brings disaster to her village after defying an arranged marriage.

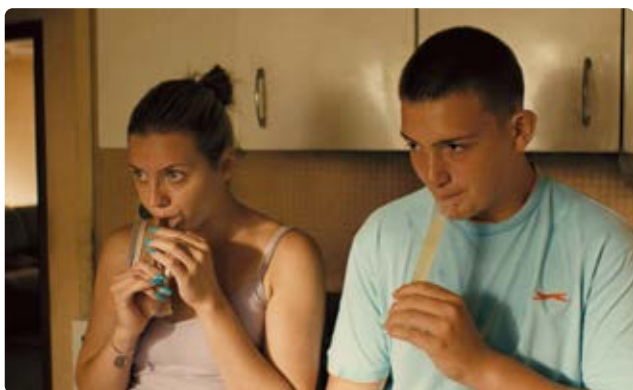
Mossane is a defiant 14-year-old beauty from a rural Serer village. She's in love with Fara, a penniless student, but is betrothed to Diogoye, a wealthy man who works abroad for a French conglomerate. On her wedding day, torn between tradition and her dreams, Mossane refuses to marry Diogoye and instead escapes, leading to tragic consequences for her townsfolk.

Completed in 1990 but not released until 1996, *Mossane* bowed to acclaim in Un Certain Regard at Cannes and is a moving account of resistance – one that gives powerful, unprecedented voice to Senegalese women.

106 MINS

Europe & UK

Indulge in European cinema's very best – from the latest by Christian Petzold and Ira Sachs, to the winner of Sundance's top World Cinema prize, to explorations of gender, genre and generations.



It's Raining in the House

Dir. Paloma Sermon-Daï Belgium, France

Winner of the French Touch Prize of the Jury at Cannes Critics' Week, this coming-of-age drama is a stirring social-realist fiction debut.

Seventeen-year-old Purdey and her brother Makenzy live in Belgium's Wallonia province. They spend their days swimming at the lake, a local haven for tourists and economic climbers, and avoiding their struggles at home: an erratic and absent mother, poverty, and the escalating spectre of adulthood. Confronted with the realities of pursuing her dreams or supporting her family through hard times, Purdey fantasises about a better life away from this society where her plight is becoming more and more common.

An eye-opening narrative breakthrough from an exciting directorial talent with echoes of the Dardennes and Ursula Meier (*Sister*, MIFF 2012).

86 MINS



Afire

Dir. Christian Petzold Germany

In Christian Petzold's Silver Bear Grand Jury Prize-winning drama, a summer getaway on Germany's Baltic coast unravels against the backdrop of looming wildfires.

Leon escapes to the coast to work on his second novel, joined by his friend Felix, who has grand plans for his art-school portfolio. Expecting solitude, they're instead met with company in the form of bubbly Nadja – played by Petzold favourite Paula Beer (*Undine*, MIFF 2021) – who invites her local lover over in the evenings. As wildfires threaten to encroach on their languid retreat, so too do the suffocating pressures of creative unrest and social insecurity bear down on Leon's malaise. Group dynamics shift, attraction builds and, all the while, a sense of foreboding hangs around like a cloud of smoke.

102 MINS



Blue Jean

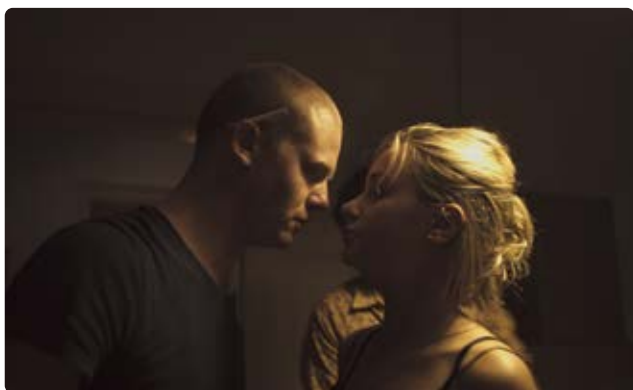
Dir. Georgia Oakley UK

This multi-award-winning debut is an intimate, deeply felt portrait of a lesbian teacher living a double life in Thatcher's England.

Jean teaches physical education at a secondary school in the north-east of England. She lives with her girlfriend Viv and hangs out with her friends at the local gay bar, but isn't 'out' at work. It's 1988 and the government has just passed Section 28 – legislation prohibiting the "promotion of sexuality" – which threatens to push Jean even further into the closet. When the arrival of a new student, Lois, escalates tensions at home and at work, Jean must confront the kind of person she wants to be.

Winner of four British Independent Film Awards, *Blue Jean* is a searing reminder of the need for continuing vigilance in the face of fear and hostility.

97 MINS



One Last Evening

Dir. Lukas Nathrath Germany

Moving cities is the perfect excuse to throw a party ... and unpack some awkward home truths.

Clemens and Lisa are moving from Hanover to Berlin as Lisa's medical career takes off. For Clemens, who's lost in a depressive slump, it's a desperately needed fresh start. On their last evening in town, the pair host a housecooling dinner at their apartment. Of course, some guests don't show, while others bring their own problems – and a few unexpected strangers add to the chaos. Over one sultry summer night, fuelled by booze and surrounded by packing boxes, old wounds tear open and secrets emerge.

Lukas Nathrath won a Locarno Pro First Look award for his debut feature – a naturalistic dramedy summoning the sense of anxiety at the cusp of maturity.

91 MINS MIFF PLAY VIEWER ADVICE: CONTAINS STROBOSCOPIC IMAGERY; STRONG IMPACT THEMES



Creature

Dir. Asif Kapadia UK

Oscar-winning *Amy* and *Senna* (MIFF 2011) director Asif Kapadia fuses horror and expressionistic dance in this spellbinding ballet inspired by *Woyzeck* and *Frankenstein*.

On a remote Arctic research station, a creature (played by the English National Ballet's principal dancer Jeffrey Cirio) is enlisted into a military program that subjects him to sinister experiments. Amid this turmoil, he finds himself enamoured with a cleaner, the only person who shows him kindness; together, they dream of escape from their dystopian surrounds.

Originally conceived for the stage by award-winning choreographer Akram Khan, *Creature* is a deft, dialogue-free performance of pure movement.

87 MINS



20,000 Species of Bees

Dir. Estibaliz Urresola Solaguren Spain

Featuring a Berlinale award-winning lead performance from nine-year-old Sofia Otero, *20,000 Species of Bees* is an empathetic exploration of gender and generations.

"How come you know who you are and I don't?" asks Lucia, who was given the traditionally male name of 'Aitor' at birth. Her mother, who is going through a divorce, fumbles as she comes to terms with her child's identity, while Lucia's grandmother is severe not just with her but with her mother's struggles. With great-aunt Lourdes, the local beekeeper, however, Lucia eventually finds friendship and acceptance.

Basque director Estibaliz Urresola Solaguren's debut feature is a tender film about the trans experience that unfolds with a warm, serene grace.

125 MINS MIFF PLAY



Lost Country

Dir. Vladimir Perišić France, Serbia, Croatia, Luxembourg

In this tense coming-of-age drama direct from Cannes Critics' Week, a teenage boy confronts the political injustice upheld by his mother.

It's 1996 and the streets of Belgrade are filled with student protesters denouncing Slobodan Milošević, whose autocratic regime has been one of suppression and cruelty. But while his friends have rallied to the cause, 15-year-old Stefan is torn: his sophisticated and attentive mother, Marklena, is a spokesperson for the government, frequently appearing on television to dismiss claims of violence and voting schemes. Schisms start to appear, threatening Stefan's bonds with both his peers and his family.

Vladimir Perišić's first film in 13 years sees Jasna Đuričić (*Quo Vadis, Aida?*, MIFF 2021) intricately embody Marklena's duality as loving mother and fascist supporter.

98 MINS VIEWER ADVICE: STRONG IMPACT THEMES



Scrapper

Dir. Charlotte Regan UK

A grieving girl connects with her estranged father in this Sundance World Cinema Grand Jury Prize-winning debut.

Twelve-year-old Georgie lives alone in an East London council flat. Following the death of her mother, she has avoided eviction by convincing the authorities she's being cared for by an uncle called "Winston Churchill". But things get complicated when her dad, Jason – played by Harris Dickinson (*Triangle of Sadness*, MIFF 2022; *Beach Rats*, MIFF 2017) – reappears after over a decade away. Behaving with the immaturity of someone closer to her age, Jason is out of his depth and unwelcome until he and Georgie realise how alike they are.

Charlotte Regan's energetic debut feature depicts coming of age with stinging frankness but tempers it with whimsy, wit and even magic realism.

84 MINS



Medusa Deluxe

Dir. Thomas Hardiman UK

Scissors out! Someone literally slays at a hairdressing competition in this exuberant one-take murder mystery.

News spreads rapidly through a studio where stylists and their models are prepping to compete. Mosca, the stylist to beat, has been found dead – and scalped! But whodunnit? Mosca's husband Angel? Bequiffed event organiser Rene, who's also Mosca's ex? Maybe it was Cleve, who's bitching to serene frenemy Divine. Is Kendra just here for the tea? And what about that security guard who's always borrowing wet wipes to clean blood off the lockers ... As befits its story, *Medusa Deluxe* is a showcase for technical flair, with onscreen looks by hair superstar Eugene Souleiman (who has worked with Björk and Lady Gaga) and spectacular cinematography by Robbie Ryan (*The Favourite*).

101 MINS



Passages

Dir. Ira Sachs France

Love Is Strange (MIFF 2014) director Ira Sachs embraces the art of French cinema in this queer musing on a complicated relationship.

Fast-rising star Franz Rogowski (who also appears in this year's Bright Horizons contender *Disco Boy*) plays Tomas, an impetuous Fassbinder-like director who has fallen into a funk with his husband (charmingly played by Ben Whishaw, also in MIFF 2023's *Bad Behaviour*). When magnetic schoolteacher Agathe (*Blue Is the Warmest Colour*'s Adèle Exarchopoulos) catches Tomas's roving eye on the dance floor, things get emotionally messy.

Sachs and regular co-writer Mauricio Zacharias lean into the French New Wave's steamiest tropes in this tempestuous love triangle that brews within the Paris indie film scene, handsomely lensed by Josée Deshaies (*Saint Laurent*).

91 MINS



Femme

Dir. Sam H. Freeman, Ng Choon Ping UK

After being attacked outside a London nightclub, a drag queen decides to turn the tables in this Hitchcockian queer noir.

Nathan Stewart-Jarrett (*Candyman*) dazzles in this electrifying film as Jules, a talented drag performer who transforms into the mighty Aphrodite Banks on stage. After being assaulted on the street by aggressive drug dealer Preston – played by George MacKay (*True History of the Kelly Gang*) – Jules's confidence is shattered. But later, when he unexpectedly catches Preston's roving eye in a gay sauna, Jules senses a twisted opportunity to challenge his abuser.

Sam H. Freeman and Ng Choon Ping's exhilarating debut feature toys with the passive weakness often associated with the 'femme' label to critique homophobia, hyper-masculinity and repression.

99 MINS VIEWER ADVICE: HIGH IMPACT THEMES, SEXUAL VIOLENCE



Blackbird Blackbird Blackberry

Dir. Elene Naveriani Georgia

A charming character study about love, liberty and the pursuit of forbidden fruit, set in the Georgian countryside.

Shopkeeper Etero is approaching middle age with her autonomy and her virginity intact. After a near-death experience while picking blackberries, she begins a passionate love affair with a local man and is faced with a familiar conundrum: whether to maintain her hard-won freedom or succumb to the possibility of imperfect coupledom. "If marriage and dicks brought happiness," Etero snaps at a would-be suitor, "many women would be happy."

Premiering at Cannes Directors' Fortnight, Georgian filmmaker Elene Naveriani's third feature is a complex portrait of late-life desire that depicts its ageing protagonist's sensuality without sentimentality or cliché.

110 MINS



Drift

Dir. Anthony Chen France, UK, Greece, Singapore

Cynthia Erivo and Alia Shawkat shine in the emotionally stirring new work from Anthony Chen (*Wet Season*, MIFF 2020; *Ilo Ilo*, MIFF 2013), which explores how friendship and connection can salve the traumas of the past.

Jacqueline spends her days trying to disappear from the sight of vacationing Europeans on a picturesque Greek beach – all the better with which to steal leftover food from restaurants. When questioned, she claims to be a tourist, a story lent weight by her crisp British accent. But when she meets effervescent American tour guide Callie, Jacqueline's walls start to come down, and in each other these two scarred women find a restorative solace.

Making his English-language debut, Chen (*The Breaking Ice*, MIFF 2023) delivers a remarkable and unconventional refugee story.

93 MINS MIFF GUEST

North America

Enjoy North American storytelling, including tales of technology and love, a Frederick Wiseman fiction, and films starring Rachel Sennott, Michael Cera, Mark Duplass, Sigourney Weaver and Eugenio Derbez.



The Nature of Love

Dir. Monia Chokri Canada, France

PRESENTED BY
CANADA NOW

In this Cannes Un Certain Regard comedy, the ineffability of romance is put to the test by an unfaithful married philosopher.

Forty-year-old Sophia is a university lecturer with expertise in the philosophy of love, but her marriage to a fellow academic, while comfortable, has grown bloodless and dull. Then she meets Sylvain, the hulking, hirsute builder in charge of renovating their lake cabin. Passion overrides all of Sophia's intellectualism but brings up a host of questions about compatibility, desire and what we ultimately look for in a partner.

In her deft third feature, Canadian actor turned director Monia Chokri (*A Brother's Love*, MIFF 2019) subverts some of the more schmaltzy tropes of the rom-com to craft something far more probing and perceptive.

111 MINS



I Used to Be Funny

Dir. Ally Pankiw Canada

PRESENTED BY
CANADA NOW

Rachel Sennott (*Bodies Bodies Bodies*, MIFF 2022; *Shiva Baby*, MIFF 2020) shines in this formally ambitious portrait of a stand-up comedian battling PTSD.

Three years ago, Sam was breaking out as a Toronto stand-up comedian while working part-time as an au pair. Now, something deeply traumatic has left her numb and isolated. Rebuffing the kindness of her fellow-comic housemates, she struggles to even shower, let alone write jokes and brave the stage. But when Brooke, the girl Sam once nannied, goes missing at age 14, Sam feels compelled to get involved in the search.

Gracefully playing a survivor, Sennott reveals the dramatic flipside of her lauded comedic talent in the imaginative and compassionate big-screen debut from TV comedy director Ally Pankiw (*The Great*; *Feel Good*; *Shrill*).

105 MINS



BlackBerry

Dir. Matt Johnson Canada

The genius and hubris of the tech industry collide in this entertaining account of the dramatic rise and fall of the world's first smartphone.

It was the product that would revolutionise the way we lived. Years before the iPhone, Canadian innovator Mike Lazaridis (played by comic mainstay Jay Baruchel) teamed up with cutthroat entrepreneur Jim Balsillie (*It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia's* Glenn Howerton) to bring the world a mobile phone that would also allow users to – you won't believe this – send and receive emails. Like a blend of *The Social Network* and *The Office*, the latest feature from mock-documentary specialist Matt Johnson (*Operation Avalanche*, MIFF 2016; *The Dirties*, MIFF 2014) reimagines the meetings, schemes, pipe dreams and pizza boxes that gave rise to the titular tech sensation.

122 MINS



A Couple

Dir. Frederick Wiseman France, USA

Frederick Wiseman's third foray into dramatic features centres on Sophia Tolstoy's complicated marriage to her novelist husband.

Unfolding as a series of to-camera addresses, *A Couple* follows Sophia as she wanders through a sprawling garden in Belle-Île, France, and muses on her marriage. Her husband Leo sees himself, above all else, as a writer – to the detriment of his role as a partner and father. Wed when she was 18 and he twice her age, the couple subsist in a union underpinned by his rage and demands, and her solace and suffering.

Co-writing the screenplay with Nathalie Boutefeu (who plays Sophia), Wiseman here documents a different kind of institution: marriage, using the words of a woman long relegated to the shadows.

64 MINS MIFF PLAY



The Adults

Dir. Dustin Guy Defa USA

Siblings can drive us to the edge. This visceral car crash of love and fury revs this American indie vehicle led by Michael Cera.

Reuniting with director Dustin Guy Defa (*Person to Person*, MIFF 2017) for this poignant family dramedy, Cera (*Cryptozoo*, MIFF 2021) plays awkward thirtysomething Eric. Returning to his hometown after a long absence, Eric initially plans a brief trip, but his schedule unspools between awkward reconnections with his sisters – the cranky Rachel and the enthusiastic but rudderless Maggie – and increasingly competitive poker games with old acquaintances.

Cera is joined by Hannah Gross (*Stinking Heaven*, MIFF 2015) and Sophia Lillis (*I Am Not Okay With This*) in this slow-burn heartwarmer with hilariously vicious cartoon-voiced fights and one particularly unforgettable interpretive-dance breakout.

91 MINS



How to Blow Up a Pipeline

Dir. Daniel Goldhaber USA

The stakes are high but the cost of sitting idle is higher for a group of environmental activists banding together to disrupt the oil industry.

Eight young Americans hatch a plan to detonate explosives in the Texan desert to destroy an oil pipeline, with hopes of sending shockwaves through the fossil-fuel industry. Brought together by their compulsion to act, each member has their own catalyst: from sustained health issues sparked by toxic chemicals, to compulsory acquisition of farmland for an oil pipeline, to the loss of a parent from a heatwave. Will the escalating pressure and their competing motivations ultimately mar their mission?

Playing out like the most thrilling of heist movies, this film is, at its core, a rousing journey into the fiery beating heart of the climate-justice movement.

99 MINS



Fairyland

Dir. Andrew Durham USA

This Sofia Coppola–produced drama explores the intricacies of a father–daughter bond blossoming amid the AIDS crisis.

After the sudden death of his wife, Steve and his two-year-old daughter Alysia decamp to the gay bohemia of the Haight-Ashbury district in the 70s. What follows is a twin coming of age. Alysia grows up into a rebellious teen, while Steve enmeshes himself in the city's queer counterculture. When AIDS begins to surface, their ever-shifting relationship is turned on its head.

First-time Australian writer/director Andrew Durham's searing portrait features powerfully understated performances from Scoot McNairy (*Monsters*, MIFF 2010) and Emilia Jones (*CODA*, MIFF 2021), who act alongside Geena Davis, Adam Lambert, Maria Bakalova (*Bodies Bodies Bodies*, MIFF 2022) and Cody Fern (*American Horror Story*).

114 MINS



Biosphere

Dir. Mel Eslyn USA

Spoiler alert: humanity destroyed itself. How will the last two men standing – played by Mark Duplass (*The Morning Show*, *Language Lessons*, MIFF 2021) and Sterling K. Brown (*This Is Us*) – ensure the survival of the species?

Billy is the president of the USA, except there ... isn't much left to oversee, given that a terrible incident has presumably wiped out the planet's entire population. So, now, he spends his days playing *Super Mario Bros.* in the fishbowl-like complex built for him by Ray, his scientist best mate and only companion. Surrounded by uncertainty and in such close quarters, something is bound to happen.

Co-written by Duplass, Mel Eslyn's feature directorial debut is a kooky, uproariously funny buddy comedy with a heart of darkness.

106 MINS



Shortcomings

Dir. Randall Park USA

First-time director Randall Park (*Fresh off the Boat*, *Always Be My Maybe*) takes on social mores with this fresh and fun misanthropic comedy.

Ben is frustrated that a movie like *Crazy Rich Asians* has 'solved' Hollywood's representation problems. He's also a crank whose superiority of personal taste doesn't endear him to his friends. After a break-up, Ben flounders: the cinema he manages fails, his screenplays go unwritten and his new bisexual boo delivers harsh truths about race, sex and growing up.

Starring Justin H. Min (*After Yang*, *The Umbrella Academy*), comedian Sherry Cola, Disney star Debby Ryan and Stephanie Hsu (*Everything Everywhere All at Once*) in a hilarious cameo, *Shortcomings* offers a laser-focused skewering of the art and festival worlds that will make you squirm with relatability when you're not guffawing.

92 MINS



Radical

Dir. Christopher Zalla Mexico

CODA (MIFF 2021) scene-stealer Eugenio Derbez leads this luminous Sundance Festival Favorite Award winner about an inspiring teacher.

After charming audiences as the big-hearted choir leader in Oscar Best Picture winner *CODA*, Derbez returns to play another life-changing educator. This time, the beloved Mexican superstar plays Sergio, a man determined to usher the adorable kids in his classroom into better lives beyond the poverty and cartel-driven violence racking their city, Matamoros, on the US border. This feel-good film based on Sergio Juarez Correa's real-world story follows in the footsteps of classics of the genre – including *To Sir With Love*, *Dead Poets Society* and *Dangerous Minds*. But Zalla's sincere direction and Derbez's impeccable performance create an unforgettable tale all its own.

125 MINS



Fremont

Dir. Babak Jalali USA

With a laconic Jarmuschian vibe, *Fremont* is a heartfelt comedic ode to the immigrant experience.

Afghan refugee Donya once worked as a translator for the US Army in Kabul, but was evacuated to California when the Taliban took over. Now, she works in a fortune-cookie assembly line and jokes with her therapist about her social calendar – which consists of watching soap operas while dining alone in an empty restaurant. Plagued by survivor's guilt, Donya is given a chance to write herself a new life following an unexpected promotion.

With *Fremont*, Babak Jalali (*Radio Dreams*, MIFF 2016) has created a wistful character comedy that, with real-life Afghan refugee Anaita Wali Zada's extraordinary performance, is both wryly funny and poignantly melancholic.

88 MINS MIFF GUEST



Riddle of Fire

Dir. Weston Razooli USA

Direct from Cannes comes a charming, lo-fi fantasy caper for adults and children alike that's destined for cult status.

Hazel, his brother Jodie and their friend Alice want to spend the day gaming, but Hazel and Jodie's mother insists they must first fetch her a blueberry pie. What seems like a simple errand becomes a monumental quest across the North American West, setting off a wild tale with as many obstacles as the videogame the trio *actually* wanted to play. Soon, they must face off against the Enchanted Blade Gang before they can find their way home.

Ostensibly a paean to childhood imagination, this comic odyssey is a coolly nostalgic, irreverent riff on coming-of-age and magic tropes – harking back to the golden age of kids' adventure films like *The Goonies* and *Stand by Me*.

113 MINS MIFF PLAY



Mutt

Dir. Vuk Lungulov-Klotz USA

In this award-winning feature debut, one chaotic day sees a young trans man's past chase him as he chooses his future.

Today, Feña is picking up his Chilean dad from the airport – that is, if he can borrow a car. Feña's also reeling from an unexpected hookup with an ex. Then his sister suddenly shows up; they haven't spoken since Feña cut ties with their transphobic mum. This would be a stressful day for anyone. But for Feña, the stakes are higher: by staying true to himself, he keenly feels the risk of losing loved ones who knew him as someone else.

Drawing on his own trans identity and Chilean-Serbian background, Vuk Lungulov-Klotz has created a film that is both touchingly real and satisfyingly complex, as enabled by Lio Mehiel's charismatic lead performance.

97 MINS



Master Gardener

Dir. Paul Schrader USA

Joel Edgerton and Sigourney Weaver deliver outstanding, nuanced performances in revered filmmaker Paul Schrader's latest explosive study of male guilt and redemption.

Narvel tends the gardens of a sprawling estate; on occasion, his work branches out to servicing the grounds' owner, Norma, in more intimate ways. When the imperious Southern dowager tasks him with taking on her grand-niece as an apprentice, it sets the stage for an emotional showdown as jealousy, bigotry and history catch up with all three of them.

Following *First Reformed* (MIFF 2018) and *The Card Counter*, *Master Gardener* rounds out Schrader's informal trilogy of films about troubled masculinity and redemption – yet it's also the most optimistic film he's ever made.

111 MINS



The Maiden

Dir. Graham Foy Canada

In this exceptional debut, a supernatural discovery transfigures two teenagers' world of graffiti, grief and suburban exploration.

Colton and Kyle live in the suburbs of Calgary. When they're not swimming in the local river, they're skateboarding through empty construction sites, prattling away or daring each other with risky acts – until one act of adolescent defiance changes their lives forever. After one of them discovers a deceased classmate's diary, it becomes clear their fates are intertwined, and we learn more about these kids who struggle with isolation and loss.

Shot on 16mm with a cast of non-professionals, *The Maiden* is a melancholic, dreamy vision of adolescent liminality evoking Gus Van Sant, while its elliptical, atmospheric quality calls to mind Apichatpong Weerasethakul.

117 MINS

Latin America

Travel to Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Mexico and beyond with MIFF's selection of Latin American films, including two accounts of Indigenous resistance and the latest from Lisandro Alonso and Amat Escalante.



The Buriti Flower

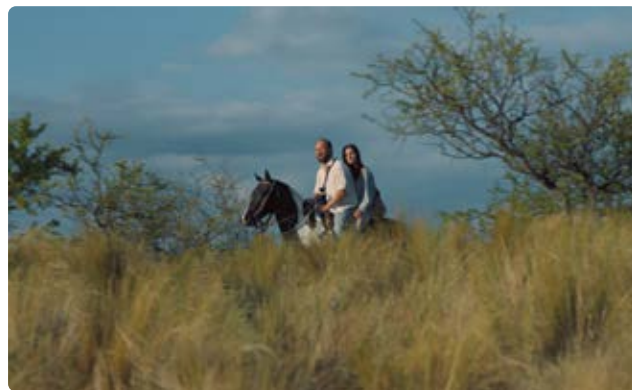
Dir. João Salaviza, Renée Nader Messora Portugal, Brazil

This blend of documentary and fiction is an intoxicating portrait of the Indigenous Krahô people and their unwavering resistance.

Young Jotât is experiencing terrifying visions in her dreams. Her mother Patpro is intent on joining a demonstration in Brasília against the Bolsonaro government's policies that promote encroaching on their territory. Meanwhile, Patpro's uncle Hyjnô acts as a protector of the Krahôlândia reservation, battling poachers and intruders. From a 1940 massacre to a 1960s military dictatorship to the peak of former president Jair Bolsonaro's reign, history repeats itself, threatening their land and their very way of life.

Winning the Cannes Un Certain Regard Ensemble Prize, *The Buriti Flower* explores the identity and customs of the Krahô people across decades.

123 MINS VIEWER ADVICE: STRONG IMPACT THEMES



The Delinquents

Dir. Rodrigo Moreno Argentina, Brazil, Luxembourg, Chile

In this gently surreal, formally bold Argentinian take on the heist film, two bumbling bandits try to buy their liberty.

After running the numbers, middle-aged teller Morán decides he'd rather raid his workplace's vault for his remaining wages – and do the requisite time – than waste his life behind a desk, subsequently recruiting his colleague Román to bury the loot in the Córdoba countryside. Money equals emancipation, but when these unlikely outlaws are loosed from the capitalist grind, they must learn how to spend their freedom.

Argentina's financial turmoil thrums in the background of this existential crime caper – the fifth fiction feature from New Argentine Cinema director Rodrigo Moreno, and his first to screen at Cannes.

189 MINS



Charcoal

Dir. Carolina Markowicz Brazil, Argentina

A Brazilian family caring for their ailing patriarch make a diabolical deal to shelter a drug don in this tense, darkly comic thriller.

Somewhere in the remote countryside outside São Paulo, Irene and Jairo are struggling to tend to their nine-year-old son and Irene's bedridden father. One day, a mysterious foreigner offers them an unusual but lucrative proposal: to put Grandpa to rest and, in his place, harbour an Argentinian drug kingpin in exile. The family reluctantly agree – throwing their lives into surreal upheaval in ways they could never have expected.

Starring Maeve Jinkings (*Neon Bull*, MIFF 2016), the feature debut from lauded short filmmaker Carolina Markowicz (*Long Distance Relationship*, MIFF 2018) is a thriller that mixes white-knuckle tension, bracing social commentary and wry gallows humour.

107 MINS

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WORLD-CLASS SHOW

FOLLOW THE GLOW

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The Face of the Jellyfish

Dir. Melisa Liebenthal Argentina

In this Kafkaesque comedy for the selfie age, a woman confronts just what makes her identity her own after her face changes overnight.

Thirtysomething Marina wakes up one morning with a different face than the one she went to bed with. She doesn't recognise herself, and neither does anyone else who knows her – including her mother and grandmother. Is she legally the same person if her features don't match those on her ID? Does she still have the same DNA? When doctors can't explain why this has happened nor offer her a solution, she sets out to rediscover who she is.

Blending live action with animation, biometric graphics and animal imagery, all held together by Inés Copertino's mesmerically eerie electronic score, this audacious film reflects on the nature of genetics, beauty and the self.

75 MINS **MIFF PLAY**



Trenque Lauquen

Dir. Laura Citarella Argentina, Germany

This dazzling rabbit hole of a film, which shares considerable DNA with cinephile Everest *La Flor* (MIFF 2019), sketches the 'before' and 'after' of a woman's mysterious disappearance.

In the small town of Trenque Lauquen, a woman named Laura goes missing. As two men in love with her haplessly search for clues, the mystery only deepens and Laura's story expands: Is it an erotic affair hidden between pages in the local library? A recollection of history's formidable feminist icons? An affectionate study of rural Argentinian life? A botanical survey of talismanic flowers? Or a supernatural puzzle that has the whole town abuzz?

Like its predecessor, this epic is bewitching, expansive (unfolding over 12 chapters across two parts) and enthralled by the possibilities of narrative.

260 MINS **MIFF PLAY**



Lost in the Night

Dir. Amat Escalante Mexico, Netherlands, Germany, Denmark

Amat Escalante's long-awaited follow-up to *The Untamed* (MIFF 2016) is a searing, stunningly visualised crime thriller that lays bare the class conflict and vice within modern Mexico.

Residents of a rural town are protesting a new mine likely to have harmful effects on their health. When Mónica, the activist leading the charge, goes missing after police shut down the protest, her son Emiliano sets out to find answers. As clues lead him to the estate of a celebrated artist and his musician wife, Emiliano must ask: where does justice end and revenge start?

Enveloped in DOP Adrian Durazo's shadowy nightscape, actor Juan Daniel García Treviño (*Robe of Gems*, MIFF 2022) plays Emiliano with intimidating resolve – the tyrannised soul through which Escalante shows us his country's wounds.

120 MINS



Sorcery

Dir. Christopher Murray Chile, Mexico, Germany

Witchcraft, revenge and Indigenous rancour swell in this atmospheric, anti-colonial bildungsroman set in 19th-century Chile.

On the remote island of Chiloé, Huilliche teenager Rosa works with her dad as domestic help for German settlers. When her father is killed by their employer over a misunderstanding and neither Church nor State come to her aid, Rosa is set on a path of mystical vengeance. Rescinding her Western faith, she becomes enmeshed with La Recta Provincia, who promise to teach her ancient magic to avenge her family and her empower native heritage.

Produced by Pablo Larrain (*Eme*, MIFF 2020) and drawing comparisons to *The Witch* and *The Nightingale* (MIFF 2019), this strikingly beautiful film is a spellbinding study of ritual, redress and defiant self-determination.

101 MINS **MIFF PLAY**



Eureka

Dir. Lisandro Alonso Argentina, France, Portugal, Germany, Mexico

Slow cinema auteur Lisandro Alonso and actor Viggo Mortensen reunite for a triptych of meditations on colonialism past and present.

Beginning almost as a parody of *Jauja* (MIFF 2014), *Eureka* reintroduces us to Mortensen and Viilbjørk Malling Agger as a father and daughter, this time in a classic black-and-white western – complete with the earlier film's Academy ratio and rounded-edge framing. Part two, shot in 1.85 and with Lynchian visual echoes, introduces us to a contemporary Lakota Sioux officer of the law on her rounds. Part three transports us to 1970s Brazil, the shift signalled by another change in aspect ratio (now 1.66) and a virtuoso, almost mythical, metamorphosis. This is Alonso's most ambitious and experimental work yet, transgressing genres and navigating temporal and geographical space.

146 MINS



Shayda

Congratulations

to all the Australian titles
selected for MIFF



Critical Condition

To celebrate the 10th edition of Critics Campus, this retrospective of forgotten gems, cult oddities and misunderstood masterpieces turns its lens on overlooked, underrated and divisive films whose reputations were resuscitated by critics.

PROGRAMMED BY LUKE GOODSSELL

Each screening will be introduced by a critic, and will be followed by a panel discussion.



Phoebe Chen is a writer and PhD candidate living in New York. Her essays and criticism have been published in *Artforum*, *The Nation*, *The New York Times Magazine* and elsewhere.



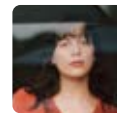
Michael Koresky is editorial director at New York's Museum of the Moving Image, where he also serves as editor of the film journal *Reverse Shot*; a freelance programmer and host for The Criterion Channel; and author of *Films of Endearment* and *Terence Davies*.



Guy Lodge is the UK film critic for industry bible *Variety*, a columnist for *The Guardian* and *The Observer*, and editor of the review site *Film of the Week*. Born and raised in South Africa, he now lives in London.



Michael Sun is a critic and essayist, and works in culture and lifestyle at *The Guardian*. His writing has been published in *The Saturday Paper*, *The Monthly*, *Sydney Review of Books*, *ABC Arts*, *Australian Book Review* and many more. He presents a weekly show on FBI Radio.



Isabella Trimboli is a critic, essayist and editor living in Melbourne. Her writing on film, literature and art has appeared in publications such as *Metrograph Journal*, *Sydney Review of Books*, *The Saturday Paper*, *The Monthly*, *Art Guide* and *The Guardian*.



Dr Kelli Weston is a film critic and programmer based in Brooklyn. Her writing has been published in *Sight and Sound*, *Film Comment*, *The Current* (Criterion) and *The Guardian*, among other publications.



Fresh Kill

Dir. Shu Lea Cheang USA

Radical lesbians, radioactive fish lips and toxic cat food collide in this avant-garde sci-fi – a transgressive landmark of anarcho-satire and queer hacktivism.

In a post-apocalyptic New York City that has become a toxic waste dump, Claire and Shareen find themselves caught in a sinister conspiracy when their young daughter eats some contaminated fish, begins to glow with a radioactive sheen and suddenly vanishes. Could it be the doing of an ominous multinational corporation waging war on the working class? Who are the chaotic cable-TV hosts hawking sex toys with baby heads? And can a sushi chef turned hacker disrupt the system and help the marginalised fight back?

80 MINS HOSTED BY PHOEBE CHEN



Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One

Dir. William Greaves USA

William Greaves's countercultural masterpiece about a beleaguered New York movie crew turns the conventions of filmmaking inside out.

Somewhere in Central Park, a pair of exasperated performers are acting out a romantic break-up scene over and over at the behest of their director (played by the actual director, Greaves). This happens while a documentary crew films a crew filming the crew, bystanders wander in and out of the shoot, and the entire project appears to be on the verge of complete chaos. At the same time, Greaves's own camera roves around this manic scene as the boundaries between performance and reality blur. Feted by the likes of Steven Soderbergh, this once little-seen cult film is now rightly regarded as one of the most innovative and influential works of self-reflexive vérité cinema.

75 MINS HOSTED BY MICHAEL KORESKY



Querelle

Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder France, Germany

Rainer Werner Fassbinder's final film is a ravishing adaptation of Jean Genet's homoerotic classic about a deadly sailor on shore leave.

The swan song for New German Cinema's enfant terrible, this dreamlike adaptation of Genet's seminal novel *Querelle of Brest* unfolds in a highly stylised, wonderfully phallic French port. There, the titular beefcake sailor (Brad Davis) decamps to a bar run by Madame Lysiane (Jeanne Moreau) and becomes embroiled in opium dealing, sex and murder. All the while, his superior, the lieutenant Seblon (Franco Nero), lurks and lusts after him.

Released in 1982 in the wake of Fassbinder's untimely death, *Querelle* has since emerged as one of his key works, admired for its bold, expressionistic design and lurid, ravishing homoeroticism.

108 MINS HOSTED BY GUY LODGE



Trouble Every Day

Dir. Claire Denis France

Claire Denis's notoriously divisive, seductively erotic horror film rises again, with Béatrice Dalle (*Betty Blue*; *Night on Earth*, MIFF 1992) and Vincent Gallo (*Buffalo 66*, MIFF 1998) in all their grisly, sensuous glory.

American doctor Shane (Gallo) arrives in Paris with his new wife, hoping to track down Léo (Denis fave Alex Descas), the physician he once worked with on a bio-prospecting mission in the tropics. Shane is afflicted with the same bloodlust as Léo's wife Coré (Dalle) – who, when not snacking on strangers in the woods, must be locked up in order to restrain her libidinous appetite.

Denis's follow-up to *Beau Travail* (MIFF 2000) received a largely hostile reception upon its release in 2002, but has since been reconsidered as a key work of the New French Extremity and a forerunner to the likes of Julia Ducournau's *Raw*.

101 MINS HOSTED BY MICHAEL SUN



Golden Eighties

Dir. Chantal Akerman Belgium, France

Chantal Akerman puts love and capitalism in the crosshairs in this funny, vibrantly coloured musical set entirely within a shopping mall.

Two shopfronts, a juice bar and a multiplex play host to romantic yearnings and intrigues: hairdresser Mado loves wayward clothes store scion Robert; Robert loves Lili, the owner of the neighbouring hair salon; and Lili is seeing gangster and sugar daddy Mr Jean. Meanwhile, Robert's mother Jeanne (Delphine Seyrig) has a visitor from the past who will plunge her contented life into disarray, and Robert's father has his eye on Lili's retail space.

Irrepressibly catchy and with a delightfully cynical sting, Akerman's pastel-coloured, MGM-inspired 1986 musical may be more playful than her masterpiece *Jeanne Dielman*, yet it's no less formally rigorous or daring.

96 MINS HOSTED BY ISABELLA TRIMBOLI



Lord Shango

Dir. Ray Marsh USA

Christianity clashes with African spiritualism when a mother summons a tribal priest to avenge her daughter in this singular, supernatural oddity of 70s Black cinema.

Billie is about to be baptised when her boyfriend Femi, an avid follower of an African religious cult, tries to intervene, and members of the Christian parish brutally drown him in a river. Racked with grief, Billie disappears. Her mother Jenny (Marlene Clark) then summons a tribal priest in a desperate bid to find her, and is drawn into a mysterious world of sorcery and esoteric belief.

Shapeshifting between horror, social drama and the occult, Ray Marsh's haunting 1975 film was released at the height of Blaxploitation cinema but defied clear-cut genre labels.

92 MINS HOSTED BY KELLI WESTON

Restorations

A program of cinematic treasures, classics and curios, newly restored to their former glory – ready to be discovered or ripe for rediscovery.



Blood

Dir. Pedro Costa Portugal

Pedro Costa's oneiric debut film declared the arrival of an essential new voice in world cinema.

When their father mysteriously disappears, sickly Nino and his older brother Vicente must contend with a legacy of violence and financial debt. Vicente's friend Clara soon joins their new family unit, and the trio take care of one another until they are threatened by the men their father owed money to and by an uncle who decides Nino would be better off with him.

Costa spent several years assisting other filmmakers before making his debut in 1989. Comprised of stirring, stark black-and-white images in studiously composed tableaux, the film reveals the extent of Costa's cinematic knowledge as well as the undeniable influence of Jacques Tourneur, Nicholas Ray and Robert Bresson.

99 MINS



Millennium Mambo

Dir. Hou Hsiao-hsien Taiwan, France

Taiwanese auteur Hou Hsiao-hsien's sensual 2001 tale of an adrift bar hostess at the turn of the millennium, now in dazzling 4K.

Vicky (a luminous Shu Qi) lives a nocturnal existence of melancholy and restlessness. She works long hours at a Taipei nightclub, while her boyfriend, the wannabe DJ Hao-Hao, terrorises her – they constantly brawl and bicker in their tiny apartment. Then she meets the much older but affectionate gangster Jack, who might hold the key to Vicky escaping her seemingly aimless life.

With indelible cinematography by Mark Lee Ping-bing (*In the Mood for Love*), the film is soaked in gorgeous neon light and set to a propulsive techno score. Mysterious and hypnotic in equal measure, *Millennium Mambo* pulls audiences into the languid days of Taipei's youth.

120 MINS **MIFF PLAY**



The Coolbaroo Club

Dir. Roger Scholes Australia

This powerhouse documentary chronicles how a haven of Indigenous dance and activism arose from segregated postwar Perth.

Nat "King" Cole, the Harlem Globetrotters and Harold Blair all walked through its doors, so why don't we know the name 'The Coolbaroo Club'? Running from 1946 to 1960, this establishment was the brainchild of returned Indigenous WWII soldiers who, facing segregation and violence, turned an unassuming community hall into Perth's only Aboriginal-run club. While it was a site for socialising and partying without the threat of discrimination, it also became a cradle for political activity: it was there that the newspaper *The Westralian Aborigine* was born, and it was also the meeting point for many activists organising for Indigenous rights.

55 MINS **MIFF PLAY** **MIFF GUEST** **VIEWER ADVICE: MAY CONTAIN IMAGES AND VOICES OF DECEASED FIRST NATIONS PERSONS**

PRESENTED BY
NATIONAL FILM
AND SOUND ARCHIVE
OF AUSTRALIA



I Heard It Through the Grapevine

Dir. Dick Fontaine USA

Civil rights pioneer James Baldwin, subject of *I Am Not Your Negro* (MIFF 2017), revisits key sites in the fight for racial equality.

An iconoclast, author, scathing intellectual and firebrand member of the civil rights movement, Baldwin has become a symbol of the US's struggle to emerge from its racist history. In this 1982 documentary, he reminisces on that very journey as he tours the towns and cities – from the Deep South to DC – that played pivotal, often violent, roles in shaping the America we know today. Assembled from Baldwin's reflections, archival footage, and then-contemporary interviews with his friends and comrades including Sterling Allen Brown, Oretta Castle Haley, Amiri Baraka and Chinua Achebe, this poignant film contemplates the painful reality of life for African Americans and remains just as relevant today.

95 MINS



Japanese Story

Dir. Sue Brooks Australia

In this multi-award-winning outback journey of discovery, Toni Collette stars as a geologist at odds with a Japanese businessman.

Sandy is head of a company that designs scientific software in Western Australia. When she's unwillingly tasked with showing a surface mine to Kyoto-based businessman Hiromitsu, who mistakes her for his driver, they clash over cultural and personality differences, and over Hiromitsu's insistence on driving farther into the unknown. It's there in the unforgiving outback that their animosity and reservations morph into intense desire.

This spellbinding character study from Melbourne director Sue Brooks (*Road to Nowhere*, MIFF 1997) is a magnificent gem of Australian cinema: propelled by romance yet realistic about life's unexpected turns.

110 MINS **MIFF GUEST**



The Munekata Sisters

Dir. Yasujiro Ozu Japan

In their quest to restore long-lost romance, two sisters learn that love's course never runs smoothly.

Mariko is in Kyoto caring for her ailing father. One day, she is startled to run into an old friend, Hiroshi, and discovers he once had feelings for her sister Setsuko that he failed to act on before moving to France. Sensing an opportunity to both connect with her taciturn sister and be rid of her quarrelsome brother-in-law, Mariko sets her heart on extricating Setsuko from a loveless marriage by rekindling this old flame. But escape isn't so easy within the strict confines of a traditional society.

This exceedingly rare gem – it's one of only three Yasujiro Ozu films shot outside of the Shochiku studio to which his name is wedded – stars Hideko Takamine, Kinuyo Tanaka and Ken Uehara.

112 MINS



With Love to the Person Next to Me

Dir. Brian McKenzie Australia

A brooding taxi driver becomes obsessed with the lives of his passengers in Brian McKenzie's forgotten Melbourne gem.

Shot primarily on the grimy streets of bayside Melbourne, this acidic and funny ode to the drifters and lonely hearts who dwell on the city's fringes stars Kym Gyngell as Wallace, a cabbie with no career prospects, no friends and a girlfriend who treats him with ambivalence. His only refuge is the cultivation of his own cider and the secret recordings he makes of his passengers (which he spends his days listening back to), but his stagnant life turns eventful when he falls in with two shady neighbours and starts a somewhat-romance with a local woman. The film generated critical and festival buzz, including winning the Locarno Prize of the Ecumenical Jury, upon its release in 1987.

98 MINS **MIFF GUEST**



Return to Reason

Dir. Man Ray USA

Man Ray's classic shorts are reimagined for their 100th anniversary alongside an ecstatic soundtrack from SQURL members Jim Jarmusch and Carter Logan.

Renowned for his iconic photography, surrealist artist Man Ray was also a trailblazer of experimental cinema. His textural rayographs came to life in his groundbreaking 1923 debut *Return to Reason*, before pioneering the "cinépoème" in *Emak Bakia* (1926), *The Starfish* (1928) and *The Mysteries of the Chateau of Dice* (1929). A century on, the prescience of his vision becomes clear in these stunning 4K restorations, presented here in a feature-length continuum. Perhaps the artist himself says it best: "What I offered to the public was ... a way of thinking as well as of seeing."

70 MINS **MIFF PLAY**



Werckmeister Harmonies

Dir. Béla Tarr, Ágnes Hranitzky Hungary

Hungarian slow-cinema master Béla Tarr finds metaphysical horror in a nascent revolution.

In a sleepy village, musicologist György has become convinced that the German baroque composer Andreas Werckmeister sent the universe askew with a harmonic system that disrupted the music of the celestial spheres. As György's ambitious ex-wife Tünde asks her young nephew János to persuade his beloved uncle to lead a concerned citizens' committee, a strange circus arrives: a taxidermy-preserved whale and its enigmatic keeper, The Prince. Crisis fills the air as a political eclipse looms, seemingly kindled by the whale's dead gaze.

Containing only 39 black-and-white shots over 145 minutes, this film of textures and moods does not lull the senses but sharpens and thrills them.

145 MINS **MIFF PLAY**

Documentaries

Truth is definitely stranger than fiction in the Documentaries strand, which presents – and probes – the many facets of real life. From famous and not-so-famous faces to spectacular and far-flung places, these films are inspiring, blood-boiling, entertaining, educational, emotional and true.



Four Daughters

Dir. Kaouther Ben Hania Tunisia, France, Germany, Saudi Arabia

In this Cannes L'Œil d'Or winner, a mother and two of her daughters are joined by actors to work through their family history and understand the other two daughters' heartbreaking choices.

Olfa Hamrouni has four children: Rahma, Ghofrane, Eya and Tayssir. In 2015, Rahma and Ghofrane left Tunisia, and their family, to join the Islamic State. In direct-to-camera interviews, all five women – with help from actors Nour Karoui and Ichraq Matar, standing in for the departed daughters – open up about their past and present, their traumas and tragedies, as a form of individual and group therapy by way of documentary.

Inspired by Abbas Kiarostami's *Close-Up* (MIFF 2003) and Lars von Trier's *Dogville*, this is an extraordinary work of cinematic catharsis and truth-telling.

107 MINS



The Mother of All Lies

Dir. Asmae El Moudir Morocco, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar

Winner of Un Certain Regard's Best Director and L'Œil d'Or at Cannes, this Moroccan documentary sets out to untangle personal and national secrets.

Asmae El Moudir suspects that the one photograph of her as a girl isn't her at all. Without a visual archive through which to document her childhood, she asks her father to help build a model of the Casablanca suburb she grew up in, which she brings to life through interviews with family members, friends and neighbours. The autobiographical portrait that emerges shows how familial and historical deceptions become intertwined, revealing how the bread riots of 1981 – in which hundreds of protesting youths were murdered by police and militia – have been effaced from official histories.

96 MINS VIEWER ADVICE: STRONG IMPACT THEMES



A Storm Foretold

Dir. Christoffer Guldbrandsen Denmark

Cartoon villain, master manipulator, traitor or true patriot? You decide in this engrossing portrait of Donald Trump's wily adviser Roger Stone.

"If you use any of that, I'll murder you." It's hard to know if this on-camera threat to Danish filmmaker Christoffer Guldbrandsen – delivered by the Trump-boosting, cigar-chomping manipulator extraordinaire Stone – is in jest or not. One thing you can be sure of is that this profile of one of US politics' most outrageous players is no-holds-barred. *A Storm Foretold* chronicles Stone's dizzying trajectory, from his scheming with the seditious Proud Boys to the explosive fallout of the closed-door machinations that allegedly led to the 6 January 2021 Capitol attack. With the spectre of Trump 2024 upon us, this tough watch may well be an essential one.

90 MINS MIFF PLAY MIFF GUEST



Paradise

Dir. Alexander Abaturov France, Switzerland

Abandoned by an indifferent government, a remote Siberian village stands united in the face of a forest fire that threatens its future.

The village of Shologon – largely populated by women, children and the elderly, and with a predominantly Indigenous population – is the last place on Earth that comes to mind when discussing global warming. But in 2021, extreme heat and drought combined to produce something unprecedented: a raging forest fire. As Shologon lies outside the Russian government's 'control zone', residents could not expect a firefighting service to come and rescue them. To save their own lives, they faced the smoke and ash and took matters into their own hands. This vital film is both a blazing warning about climate change and an account of human heroism in the face of destruction.

88 MINS MIFF PLAY



You Can Call Me Bill

Dir. Alexandre O. Philippe USA

From *Star Trek* to actual space travel, 92-year-old William Shatner has done it all. Alexandre O. Philippe (*Lynch/Oz*, MIFF 2022; *78/52*, MIFF 2017) beams us up with this touching tribute.

Whether you know him as Captain Kirk on the starship *Enterprise*, from his Emmy-winning role as Denny Crane on *Boston Legal* or as the camp beauty-pageant host of *Miss Congeniality*, Shatner's career has doubtless been an eclectic one. And that's before you get into his role as real-life astronaut aboard the *RSS First Step!* It's fair to say there are many sides to this beloved figure, and in this revelatory film, we get to see them all. Forgoing talking heads, Philippe allows his subject to muse freely, going boldly into the mind of a man who can honestly say he's seen the future and lived to talk about it.

96 MINS MIFF GUEST



The Disappearance of Shere Hite

Dir. Nicole Newnham USA

Pioneering sexologist Shere Hite is rescued from the margins of history in this fascinating portrait from Oscar-nominated documentarian Nicole Newnham.

In the 70s, the knowledge we now have about female pleasure was unknown or obscured. That was until 1976, when Hite published *The Hite Report*: an unprecedented survey on sexuality that catalogued the experiences of thousands of American women, and which remains one of the bestselling nonfiction titles of all time. But unlike those of her feminist contemporaries, Hite's colourful life and work have mysteriously vanished from cultural memory. Narrated and executive-produced by Dakota Johnson, this film unearths the story of a trailblazer who was unfairly maligned for her ideas.

118 MINS VIEWER ADVICE: STRONG IMPACT SEXUAL THEMES

MINI Selects

Inspired by its 'Big Love' attitude to life, MINI has partnered with MIFF to present a selection of films within our Documentaries strand that highlight the universality of the human condition.

Regardless of age, creed, culture, ability, gender or sexuality, we all have the power to enrich our own and others' lives.

PRESENTED BY



Invisible Beauty

Dir. Bethann Hardison, Frédéric Tcheng USA

An intimate self-portrait of iconic Black model, booking agent and fashion industry changemaker Bethann Hardison's challenge to the colourist status quo.

Hardison did more than just grace New York runways in the 1970s, spearheading representation in the homogeneous landscape of fashion. Her tireless work also involved co-founding the Black Girls Coalition in the 1980s and advocating against the sector's entrenched racism towards non-white models in the 2000s. Alongside interviewees Zendaya, Naomi Campbell, Iman and Tyson Beckford, Hardison's voice as director and subject is at the forefront of this biopic-cum-memoir.

115 MINS



The Echo

Dir. Tatiana Huezo Mexico, Germany

This double Berlinale award winner evocatively captures the joys, heartaches and rhythms of daily life in rural Mexico, as seen through the eyes of children and young women.

Tatiana Huezo (*Prayers for the Stolen*, MIFF 2022) turns the lens on Montse, Luz María and Sarahí, who live in El Eco, a tiny village in the central-highland state of Puebla. Adolescent Montse is entrusted with the care of her beloved grandmother while dreaming of escaping with her horse to Mexico City. Tween Luz María is not shielded from the hardships of farming life, nor the casual misogyny of her male kin. Meanwhile, primary school student Sarahí loves to learn – she even teaches children younger than herself.

102 MINS



Casa Susanna

Dir. Sébastien Lifshitz France, USA

Deep in the US's Catskill Mountains of the 50s and 60s sat a clandestine refuge for transgender women and cross-dressing men to experience life without fear.

Away from New York City's gay rights movement and the front-page headlines about Christine Jorgensen, Casa Susanna was an oasis. For the transgender women and self-identifying cross-dressers and female impersonators of the time – plus their wives and families, who often joined them – it was a place to come together and simply be themselves. For viewers today, watching this winner of DOC NYC's US Competition Grand Jury Prize, it was an institution that epitomised resilience.

97 MINS MIFF PLAY VIEWER ADVICE: CONTAINS DISCUSSIONS OF SUICIDE



A Still Small Voice

Dir. Luke Lorentzen USA

This Sundance US Documentary Directing Award winner is a revelatory portrait of a hospital chaplain and the people under her care during COVID.

Margaret "Mati" Engel is a chaplain-in-training at New York's prestigious Mt Sinai Hospital. It's 2020, and her work on the frontlines challenges her spiritually, emotionally and physically. During her residency, she counsels patients and their loved ones as they confront worry, grief and hope. Meanwhile, her supervisor, Reverend David Fleenor, is suffering his own crisis: he is burnt out by the conflict of undertaking care work within a corporate medical system.

93 MINS VIEWER ADVICE: STRONG IMPACT THEMES



The Tuba Thieves

Dir. Alison O'Daniel USA

Described by its maker as a "meditation on access and loss", this trailblazing film reframes cinema from a d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing perspective.

Who was stealing tubas across Californian high schools from 2011 to 2013? The answer is *not* to be found in *The Tuba Thieves*, which is interested less in petty delinquents than in the absence of sound. From this jumping-off point, director Alison O'Daniel creates a film about a type of listening untethered from the ear: the stories of Deaf woman Nyke Price and drummer Geovanny Marroquin, LA's ambient noises, John Cage's 4'33" a 1979 punk show at San Francisco's famed Deaf Club.

91 MINS MIFF PLAY



The Eternal Memory

Dir. Maite Alberdi Chile

This stirring Sundance Grand Jury Prize winner chronicles the love story of a Chilean couple navigating Alzheimer's disease.

Augusto Góngora spent the 1970s and 80s reporting on the atrocities of Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship and subsequently fought against political forgetting so that Chileans would know their history. But now, faced with an Alzheimer's diagnosis, Góngora and his devoted wife, actor and former culture minister Paulina Urrutia, must work together to preserve his memories for as long as possible. With sensitivity and humour, Maite Alberdi (*The Mole Agent*, *Tea Time*, MIFF 2015) documents the couple's new reality while probing the complexities rooted in remembrance.

85 MINS



On the Adamant

Dir. Nicolas Philibert France

Winner of the Berlinale's Golden Bear, this empathetic film invites viewers to spend time with the residents of a floating art-therapy centre in Paris.

Afloat on the Seine, the *Adamant* is an architect-designed vessel that welcomes patients seeking support for their mental health challenges. While enjoying a range of activities – sewing, painting, jam-making, even just having a coffee – they work with a team of specialists to "build it up together". With sensitivity instead of sentimentalism, director Nicolas Philibert (*Each and Every Moment*, MIFF 2019) shows the potential of creativity to temper the pain of those who are all too often hidden from public view.

109 MINS



Fledglings

Dir. Lidia Duda Poland

Three children tentatively spread their wings as they farewell their parents and enter a boarding school for students who are blind or have low vision.

Director Lidia Duda hands over the storytelling reins to expressive Zosia, sensitive Oskar and outgoing Kinga, whom we follow as they take their initial, halting steps towards conquering the sighted world: playing in the boarding school's grounds, interacting with teachers, confessing their troubles and learning to be each other's source of strength. Winner of Locarno's Marco Zucchi Award, this affecting, formally inventive documentary asks us to envisage alternative forms of understanding.

84 MINS MIFF PLAY



Milisuthando

Dir. Milisuthando Bongela South Africa, Colombia

This visually striking meditation on growing up under apartheid in South Africa is unlike any documentary memoir you've seen before.

"I have to be very careful about remembering my memories," says Milisuthando Bongela. She grew up in Transkei, a so-called 'homeland' created in the 1970s to segregate Xhosa-speaking Black people from South African citizenship. Bongela remembers a middle-class childhood protected from the violence and indignities of the divisive legislation, but as an adult, she can glimpse as a "sordid experiment" what her grandmother still mourns as a lost oasis of self-determination. How can Bongela, like so many younger South Africans, reconcile the post-apartheid freedom rhetoric with a more complex and ambivalent attitude to race and belonging?

128 MINS



Le Spectre de Boko Haram

Dir. Cyrielle Raingou Cameroon

Winner of Rotterdam's top prize, this moving documentary explores the lives of Cameroonian children at the edge of a war zone.

The Islamist militant organisation Boko Haram has terrorised villages and families in northern Cameroon since 2014, displacing over 300,000 people and causing a veritable humanitarian crisis. Focusing on three local children – mischievous brothers Mohamad and Ibrahim as well as the studious Falta – this remarkable debut homes in on the remote village of Kolofata, where the shadow of violence and the national army's war against Boko Haram loom large. With an unadorned style and considerable sensitivity, Cyrielle Raingou's observational documentary offers an affecting, quietly hopeful portrait of young lives under threat.

80 MINS



Pictures of Ghosts

Dir. Kleber Mendonça Filho Brazil

Brazil's modern master returns with a haunting tribute to the film-going experience in this Cannes-touted documentary.

Early in his latest audiovisual marvel, Kleber Mendonça Filho (*Aquarius*, MIFF 2016) shows us a photograph of a ghost. A real ghost – or so he says. But this isn't an exploration of the paranormal; instead, *Pictures of Ghosts* is at once a touchingly personal journey through the filmmaker's life and the joys of cinephilia, and an acutely observed record of the role that cinemas played in the ethico-political evolution of Brazilian society. Mixing archival footage, film clips and memoir, Mendonça charts the changes in norms around viewership and what it means when the very buildings in which we watch films crumble and become subsumed into the world around them.

93 MINS



Time Bomb Y2K

Dir. Marley McDonald, Brian Becker USA

This archival explosion relives the wild and unhinged madness of the turn of the millennium.

The Matrix was evolving cinema, robot dogs were a thing, Napster was causing music-industry chaos and wi-fi had just landed on the scene. Meanwhile, a flaw in the coding of most computers saw the technological age on the precipice of disaster. For some, it was a mere quirk of the system; for others, it was a frantic race against the clock. And then there were those who thought doomsday was just around the corner. Told entirely through archival footage – and counting Matt Damon, Busta Rhymes and the Backstreet Boys among its subjects – *Time Bomb Y2K* captures the daze, speculation, paranoia and pop-cultural fallout surrounding the arrival of the year 2000.

84 MINS MIFF GUEST



Happy Clothes: A Film About Patricia Field

Dir. Michael Selditch USA

Venture behind the pink tutu with the legendary *Sex and the City* stylist to discover the creative process that made her a New York icon.

Twenty-five years ago, Patricia Field created instantly iconic onscreen looks for *Sex and the City*. Also behind the costumes on *The Devil Wears Prada*, *Younger* and *Emily in Paris*, she's been lauded for her signature bright colours, oversized accessories, and wittily juxtaposed luxury labels and vintage finds. But Field has ruled downtown NYC since opening her boutique in 1966. For 50 years, she ran a queer paradise where drag queens and scenesters rubbed shoulders with socialites while Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat sold their designs. At 81, this luminary is still busy serving looks.

100 MINS MIFF GUEST



Art Talent Show

Dir. Tomas Bojar, Adéla Komrží Czech Republic

PRESENTED BY
The Saturday Paper

This dryly humorous, Wiseman-esque film about an esteemed Czech art school asks: who gets to decide what art is?

For the wannabe students of Prague's Academy of Fine Arts, the professors hold the future in the palms of their hands. The rigorous entrance exams see hundreds of hopefuls battle it out for a coveted spot; as they are challenged and interrogated, the conversations vary wildly from the nature of scandalous substances, to what distinguishes bisexuality from pansexuality, to the point of art today. The applicants also show off their creations, which range from questionable to sublime, while the selection panel rake them over the coals of subjectivity in deciding what is good and what is ghastly.

102 MINS MIFF PLAY



Smoke Sauna Sisterhood

Dir. Anna Hints Estonia

In the southern Estonian woods, a group of women talk and embrace the soul-cleansing power of steam in this Sundance Directing Award winner.

As the seasons change outside, in a woodland world away from men, a group of Võro women regularly gathers inside a smoke sauna to sweat and chat. No topic is off-limits – body image, dating disasters, sex, motherhood, miscarriage, menstruation, abortion, abuse – and as they share their stories, some funny, some tragic, the women forge an unbreakable bond. Anna Hints won Sundance's World Cinema Documentary Directing Award for this impressive, hypnotic work of radical intimacy. Shot almost entirely within the smoke sauna itself, the film invites us to bear witness to the women cleansing not just their bodies but their souls.

89 MINS VIEWER ADVICE: STRONG IMPACT THEMES, DISCUSSION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE



Anselm

Dir. Wim Wenders Germany

German auteur Wim Wenders's majestic portrait of compatriot, artist and friend Anselm Kiefer.

Now in his late 70s, Kiefer remains a giant of the art world. Working across painting and sculpture, he is renowned for his maximalism, unconventional materials and sombre aesthetics – plus his sometimes-controversial engagement with the themes of fascism and the Holocaust. Wenders takes us into the belly of the beast, situating Kiefer's creations in the studios where they were conceived. Shot in 3D 6K, the impasto textures and monumental scale of Kiefer's oeuvre appear tangible, shown from vantages impossible in a gallery setting. The film also provides a glimpse into the director's camaraderie with his subject, both men haunted by WWII and its effects across German society.

93 MINS



Iron Butterflies

Dir. Roman Liubiyi Ukraine, Germany

In this surreal and haunting documentary, a Ukrainian filmmaker obsessively sifts through the shrapnel of the MH17 plane crash.

When Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 was shot down over Ukrainian airspace in 2014, killing all 298 passengers on board, international investigators found a Russian missile was responsible. The highly mediated fallout included a swathe of propaganda spread by Russian authorities, who denied involvement, setting a dangerous precedent and auguring their justifications for invading Ukraine in 2022. Faced with a barrage of misinformation, director Roman Liubiyi eschews straightforward reportage for a sensorial assemblage of found and original video; the result is a moving elegy for MH17's victims and an impassioned plea for peace.

84 MINS



R21 aka Restoring Solidarity

Dir. Mohanad Yaqubi Qatar, Palestine, Belgium

This time capsule of an extraordinary unseen history is a remarkable work of documentation and preservation – both of a moment in time and of the moving image.

Throughout the 20th century, filmmakers from around the world documented the campaign for Palestinian self-determination. Most of their films had rarely, if ever, been seen until a stranger in Tokyo offered director Mohanad Yaqubi an archive of films stashed in her bedroom – they'd ended up in Japan thanks to a staunch solidarity movement, with Japanese people seeing in the Palestinian struggle echoes of their own oppression under the US following WWII. This film is a chronological collage of 20 of these films, made between 1960 and 1980, that form a cohesive message of resistance.

71 MINS MIFF PLAY VIEWER ADVICE: STRONG IMPACT THEMES



Room 999

Dir. Lubna Playoust France

David Cronenberg, Baz Luhrmann, Claire Denis and a host of major directors discuss cinema's future in this sequel to Wim Wenders's 1982 classic.

In *Room 666*, Wenders sat down at Cannes with a who's who of contemporary filmmakers, from Steven Spielberg to Jean-Luc Godard, to muse on the state of cinema – which was then experiencing something of a crisis due to the rise of home video. Thirty years later, also at Cannes, actor and director Lubna Playoust (*The French Dispatch*) gathered 30 prominent filmmakers – including Asghar Farhadi, Ruben Östlund, Lynne Ramsay and Olivier Assayas, along with Cronenberg, Luhrmann, Denis and Wenders himself – for a sequel, asking each of them to reflect on the fate of the silver screen in the age of streaming and quickly churned content.

85 MINS



Beyond Utopia

Dir. Madeleine Gavin USA

This pulse-racing nonfiction thriller, which won a Sundance Audience Award, follows the individuals risking their lives to defect from North Korea and the pastor granting them passage.

A clergyman who has helped thousands flee to safety. A mother longing to reunite with her son after a decade apart. A family of five, including an elderly grandma, on a perilous trek through rainforests and over mountains. When daily life is tyrannised by an oppressive regime, it takes courage, desperation and meticulous planning to be smuggled across borders and towards freedom. But in journeying across China, Vietnam and Laos – communist nations sympathetic to North Korea – capture is an ever-present threat, and can mean being sold for organ harvesting, subject to torture or forced to return.

115 MINS VIEWER ADVICE: STRONG IMPACT THEMES

Music on Film

Always one of MIFF's most popular programs, Music on Film presents a cine-sonic smorgasbord that thrusts the aural onto the big screen.

PRESENTED BY



Little Richard: I Am Everything

Dir. Lisa Cortés USA

A rollicking deep dive into one of rock 'n' roll's most exhilarating personalities, whose queerness was hidden in plain sight.

Born Richard Wayne Penniman, Little Richard was an iconic musician with a complicated legacy. A Black man from the US's Deep South, he was deeply religious but not heterosexual – at different points announcing and decrying his orientation. With his penchant for theatrics, he was also a pioneering performer who anticipated the wilder creative liberties of today. Yet his signature style, which coupled big hair and lavish costumes with feverish musicality and a belting voice, tore through the racial divide of American music like few others had done before. After last year's *Elvis*, now the real king of rock 'n' roll gets his big-screen moment.

101 MINS MIFF PLAY



It's Only Life After All

Dir. Alexandria Bombach USA

On Her Shoulders (MIFF 2018) director Alexandria Bombach recounts how two unassuming childhood friends became lesbian icons as folk-rock duo Indigo Girls.

To Gen X queer women, being into the Indigo Girls was basically like waving a pride flag. Listening to their uniquely poetic ballads felt like finding yourself and your community. Those same loyal fans helped make Amy Ray and Emily Saliers among the first out-and-proud musicians to go gold and platinum in the 80s and 90s – even putting a Grammy win to their name. Since the birth of their collaboration as teenagers in Decatur, Georgia, their music has expressed not just their camaraderie and mutual respect, but their commitment to LGBTQIA+ visibility and rights.

123 MINS



Louder Than You Think

Dir. Jed I. Rosenberg USA

Winner of a SXSW Audience Award, this doc traces the unlikely ascendancy of one of rock's most influential yet under-sung musicians: Pavement's Gary Young.

Young didn't know just how big of a deal the indie-rock band Pavement was until he left. Given the boot in 1993 because of his erratic behaviour, which was aided by alcoholism, he nevertheless left an almighty impression on the alternative and lo-fi scenes. From the band's earliest recording studio sessions to his much-publicised flame-out during production on their second album, Young was a one-of-a-kind talent who helped to pioneer an iconic sound but was undone by the pitfalls of fame. This is the definitive telling of both Young's and Pavement's stories; prepare to be slanted and enchanted.

90 MINS MIFF PLAY MIFF GUEST



Abebe – Butterfly Song

Dir. Rosie Jones Australia, Papua New Guinea

Discover the legacy and enduring friendship of celebrated Papuan musician Sir George Telek MBE and Not Drowning, Waving's David Bridie.

In 1986, Melbourne musician David Bridie of the groups Not Drowning, Waving and My Friend the Chocolate Cake travelled to Papua New Guinea, where he heard the heartfelt sounds of George Telek and the Moab Stringband's *'Abebe'* (*'Butterfly Song'*) on board a bus. It marked the beginning of a profound fascination with the nation and its rich culture – and of a bond with Telek that would last more than 30 years. Together, their collaboration on critically acclaimed albums and tours has helped amplify Papuan stringband sounds and languages like Tok Pisin and Kuanua outside of the country.

94 MINS MIFF PLAY MIFF GUEST



Lost Angel: The Genius of Judee Sill

Dir. Andy Brown, Brian Lindstrom USA

Why is the 1970s' most original and ethereal folk singer almost forgotten today?

Judee Sill was the first artist David Geffen signed to his label Asylum. While she was often compared to Joni Mitchell, both Sill and her music were darker and stranger – and she believed her startling blend of folk, classical and gospel was a gift from God. Critics admired her two albums, and she made fans of labelmates Graham Nash and Jackson Browne, but her music was way too ambitious for FM radio. After a failed record deal, an abusive relationship and a return to her teenage heroin addiction, Sill overdosed in 1979. Featuring contemporary artists including Weyes Blood, Fleet Foxes and Big Thief's Adrienne Lenker, this documentary celebrates this unsung musician's complicated talent.

91 MINS



Kiss the Future

Dir. Nenad Cicin-Sain USA, Ireland, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Produced by Ben Affleck and Matt Damon, this film recounts how determined local musicians banded together with U2 to offer hope to Bosnians trapped in war-torn Sarajevo.

From 1992 to 1996, Sarajevo was subjected to routine shelling bombardments and sniper attacks. But despite the ever-present danger, the city's art and music scenes carried on. Within bomb shelters and garages, disco nights sprung up, DIY punk gigs thrived and teenagers formed new bands. Then an American journalist and aid worker ingeniously asked Bono to give an interview on Bosnian TV, which led to U2 arranging live satellite link-ups with Sarajevo residents. In the siege's aftermath, the band put on a giant show in the bombed-out city for 45,000 fans – the largest gathering since the war began.

133 MINS



Squaring the Circle (The Story of Hipgnosis)

Dir. Anton Corbijn UK

Music video auteur, revered photographer and *Control* (MIFF 2007) director Anton Corbijn takes history for a spin as he demystifies the vinyl record artwork of the masters.

Travel back to the golden era of 1970s rock 'n' roll and ask, "What makes a great album cover?" Corbijn's music roots are put to exceptional use here as he explores the world of Hipgnosis, whose work graced the LPs and the gatefolds of Pink Floyd, Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin, AC/DC, Peter Gabriel and many more. From the streets of Cambridge to the displays of museums and record collections all over the world, *Squaring the Circle* goes behind the music and investigates what gave the endearing excessiveness of 70s aesthetics such a lasting legacy.

101 MINS



Mutiny in Heaven: The Birthday Party

Dir. Ian White Australia

The thrilling, debauched and frequently hilarious adventures of the legendary Melbourne post-punk band, in their own words.

In February 1980, they were Boys Next Door on the brink of stardom. But they changed their name to The Birthday Party and moved to London, then to West Berlin, writing ever scarier, sexier, angrier music and turning their gigs into antagonistic art ordeals. Offstage, things were even more chaotic. Nick Cave, Rowland S. Howard, Mick Harvey, Tracy Pew and Phill Calvert froze and starved in increasingly squalid squats, descending into addiction, psychosis, imprisonment and, worst of all, creative differences. Yet by their final gig in 1983, howling like fallen angels at St Kilda's Crystal Ballroom, The Birthday Party had achieved rock immortality.

98 MINS MIFF GUEST



Joan Baez I Am a Noise

Dir. Karen O'Connor, Miri Navasky, Maeve O'Boyle USA

Tracing her stratospheric rise, this candid portrait of the legendary folk singer and civil rights activist illuminates a rich life not without its struggles.

Joan Baez is renowned for her soulful folk tracks, but she was vocal in more ways than one: she was a champion of the civil rights movement, in part due to her friendship with Martin Luther King Jr, and participated in the 1963 March on Washington. Yet her illustrious career – which, among many other achievements, helped to launch that of Bob Dylan before their relationship gave way – overshadowed her public and private battles, including anxiety as a child and trauma therapy's confronting revelations uncovered later in life. This film is a frank portrait of an iconic artist against a backdrop of one of the most radical periods of the 20th century.

113 MINS VIEWER ADVICE: STRONG IMPACT THEMES



Ego: The Michael Gudinski Story

Dir. Paul Goldman Australia

The wild ride of maverick entrepreneur Michael Gudinski, who defied convention and revolutionised the Australian music industry over five decades.

Michael Gudinski was a music man, impresario and natural-born hustler. He repeatedly risked everything for his one obsession: Australian music. At age 19, he launched Mushroom Records and went on to sign and nurture iconic artists including Skyhooks, Split Enz, Jimmy Barnes, Paul Kelly, Hunters & Collectors, Kylie Minogue, Archie Roach and Yothu Yindi. But he wasn't content with just a label – his hunger extended to being on the road promoting legendary international acts such as Foo Fighters, Ed Sheeran, Bruce Springsteen and Sting.

111 MINS

Night Shift

MIFF rolls out the black carpet for those tempted by the provocative and the unusual, and for lovers of the outlandish, creepy and weird things that go bump in the night.



The Kingdom Exodus

Dir. Lars von Trier Denmark

Lars von Trier (*Melancholia*, MIFF 2011) revisits the wacky, disturbing world of Kingdom Hospital in his cult series's long-awaited final chapter.

The Copenhagen healthcare institute Rigshospitalet holds dark secrets: its corridors house nightmarish oddities and malevolent supernatural forces; its operating theatres reveal criminally incompetent surgeons and rabid anti-Danish sentiment. When former patient Karen somnambulates into this bizarre setting that she first encountered on her television, she discovers that not all that much has changed since 1997 – but that a new struggle between good and evil is brewing within the hospital's corridors. Over 25 years after *The Kingdom* (MIFF 1995) amassed a cult following, Danish cinema's enfant terrible returns to further the show's signature mayhem.

320 MINS



Late Night With the Devil

Dir. Colin Cairnes, Cameron Cairnes Australia

The Aussie brothers behind *100 Bloody Acres* (MIFF Premiere Fund 2012) mix frights and frivolity in recreating a '70s talk show that goes straight to hell.

Jack Delroy is a syndicated late-night talk show host craving to be the next Johnny Carson. On the one-year anniversary of his wife's death (on Halloween night, of course), he returns to the airwaves with guests including a clairvoyant, a parapsychologist and the lone survivor of a satanic cult. Unbeknown to Jack, the trio is joined by a supernatural force seeking to haunt him until a climax so diabolical it would no doubt top the primetime charts.

The King of Horror himself, Stephen King, applauded the film following its SXSW premiere: "It's absolutely brilliant," he tweeted to his 7.1 million followers. "I couldn't take my eyes off it."

92 MINS MIFF GUEST



Sleep

Dir. Jason Yu South Korea

Bong Joon-ho protégé Jason Yu's clever horror debut stars South Korean favourites Lee Sun-kyun (*Parasite*) and Jung Yu-mi (*Train to Busan*, MIFF 2016).

Newlyweds Hyun-su and Soo-jin are expecting a baby, but this may not be the only new addition to their home. One night, Hyun-su sits bolt upright in bed, declaring, "Someone's inside," before falling back asleep. Are his somnambulant speeches just night terrors? Or has a more sinister presence invaded their home, as the increasingly anxious Soo-jin fears?

Yu conjures an all-consuming atmosphere of domestic claustrophobia, and Palme d'Or-winning director Bong has called *Sleep*, which premiered in competition at Cannes Critics' Week, "the most unique horror film and the smartest debut film [he has] seen in 10 years".

99 MINS



birth/rebirth

Dir. Laura Moss USA

In this modern reimagining of *Frankenstein*, the give-and-take of motherhood is tested through a collision of grief, creation and horror.

Morgue technician Dr Rose Casper is fascinated with the dead, and with bringing them back to life. For years, she's toyed with reanimation, and is eventually given a chance to continue her experiment following the sudden death of six-year-old Lila – unbeknown to the child's mother, Celie. Soon, the weight of Celie's sadness and the prospect of her daughter's return trigger an unlikely bond between the two women, who venture into questionable morals to keep Lila 'alive'.

Laura Moss (*Fry Day*, MIFF 2017) has crafted an unconventional story of despair and motherhood, and a salve for those who seek solace in the macabre.

98 MINS



Perpetrator

Dir. Jennifer Reeder USA, France

Oozing blood, shapeshifting and a serial killer on the loose – this high school body horror is a feminist-charged frenzy, starring Alicia Silverstone.

Something peculiar is going on with 17-year-old Jonny. Experiencing simultaneous nosebleeds with her face-morphing father, she's shipped off to stay with her aunt. There, she learns more about her magical blood and shapeshifting abilities that also equip her with a form of hyper-empathy. Which is just as well, as girls at her new school are disappearing at the hands of a mask-wearing killer, and they've all been linked to the local jock.

Jennifer Reeder (*Blood Below the Skin*, MIFF 2015) harnesses her penchant for gushing blood and kooky shapeshifting to examine society's often-harmful obsession with young women's bodies.

101 MINS



It Lives Inside

Dir. Bishal Dutta USA

An ancient Hindu demon stalks an Indian-American teen between two cultures in this terrifying and original monster movie.

Desperate to assimilate in US suburbia, Samidha is keen to downplay her Indian heritage – she'd rather be called "Sam". She turns to her teacher for life advice, not her parents; she hangs out with her crush, rejecting family gatherings; and she definitely wants to avoid her childhood best friend Tamira, who's taken to wearing her hair like Sadako and carrying around a mason jar. When Tamira corners Sam in the school locker room, babbling about an ancient demon from Hindu folklore, Sam angrily smashes the jar. Bad move: now the Pishach, a nightmarish soul-devouring spirit, will start to torment her instead.

99 MINS



You'll Never Find Me

Dir. Josiah Allen, Indianna Bell Australia

An elderly caravan park resident tangles with a mysterious woman in this deliciously unpredictable horror debut from a South Australian filmmaking duo.

The only Australian selection at this year's Tribeca begins on a dark and gloomy night, when a violent thunderstorm sends two people into a tailspin of intrigue and paranoia. Soaked and seeking shelter from the rain, an enigmatic young woman arrives at the doorstep of Patrick, an eccentric old man living in a mobile home at the rear of an isolated caravan park. But what begins as an apparent safe haven for these two lonely souls gradually curdles into a nightmare of suspicion, as distrust escalates into danger, reality crumbles and an unforgettably twisted showdown awaits.

96 MINS MIFF GUEST



Godless: The Eastfield Exorcism

Dir. Nick Kozakis Australia

This rare Aussie take on the popular exorcism subgenre builds to a brutal finale you won't be able to excise from your mind.

Ron's wife Lara has been having delirious episodes; for help, he turns to Daniel, a so-called 'religious fixer'. Daniel has commodified his own cruelty and bloodlust, but so too does Ron manipulate his wife's situation for personal gain. Is Lara really possessed, or has she been hoodwinked by those with ulterior motives? As Ron now rallies their devout community behind him, the faith of all involved is brought into stark question.

Toxic masculinity, the dangers of zealotry and the hypocrisy of institutions that believe in the Devil much more readily than they would believe a woman come under fire in this bracing film.

96 MINS MIFF GUEST

Director in Focus

Argento Restored

Delight in a selection of titles by master of Italian horror Dario Argento, all lovingly restored to 4K by Cinecittà. The blood-red colour really pops, almost as much as the eyes.

PRESENTED BY



The Bird With the Crystal Plumage

Dir. Dario Argento Italy

In Dario Argento's assured and tense debut, an American expat in Rome is entangled in a serial killer's web.

Sam Dalmas is a struggling writer living abroad; he makes ends meet by writing manuals about the preservation of rare birds. One night, he walks past an art gallery and witnesses a brutal attack committed by a knife-wielding figure in a shiny black coat. Haunted by what he has seen, he decides to help the police on their hunt for the perpetrator, who has already murdered three other victims. Soon, Sam is sucked into a freakish world involving a cat-eating artist and a neurotic pimp, and becomes the killer's number-one target.

96 MINS



The Cat o' Nine Tails

Dir. Dario Argento Italy

Do murderous thoughts lurk in our very DNA? Dario Argento interrogates nature vs nurture in his suspenseful second film.

When a mysterious break-in occurs at the Terzi Institute for genetic research, the only thing amiss is the glaring lack of stolen goods. But these apparently low stakes soon escalate wildly, as someone with everything to lose begins eliminating 'loose ends'. After Franco, a blind crossword-puzzle devotee, learns that intrepid reporter Carlo is on the case, he and his young niece Lori feel compelled to pay him a visit. Can this ragtag crew spy what everyone else is missing and unmask the killer?

112 MINS



Four Flies on Grey Velvet

Dir. Dario Argento Italy

A quirky and lesser-known piece of the Italian *giallo* maestro's tapestry, and a lesson in cinematic innovation.

In Dario Argento's striking final feature in the 'Animal' trilogy, Roberto, a drummer in a rock band, is being watched by a mysterious man. He follows the shady figure into a theatre, where a struggle ensues; Roberto accidentally stabs the knife-wielding stranger. The tussle is photographed by a masked witness, who begins to torment Roberto, and soon a cast of offbeat characters – from a flamboyant detective, Roberto's wife Nina and her alluring cousin, to a friend named "God" and a parrot called "Jerk-Off" – progressively Roberto's guilt.

102 MINS



The Five Days

Dir. Dario Argento Italy

A rarely screened outlier in Dario Argento's career, this deliciously dark historical comedy follows a thief and a baker caught up in the chaos of a political uprising.

Set against the backdrop of the 1848 Italian Revolutions and inspired by real-life accounts, this politically charged action-comedy stars pop icon Adriano Celentano as a hapless thief liberated from his Milanese prison cell by a stray cannonball as the Austrian army lays siege to the city. Misadventure ensues as he crosses paths with a naive baker on the hunt for a brigand turned revolutionary and the country plunges into bleak and bloody civil unrest.

120 MINS



Deep Red

Dir. Dario Argento Italy

Hailed as one of the greatest *giallo* works ever made, this oneiric fever dream about an amateur sleuth attracted praise from *the Alfred Hitchcock* himself.

When a psychic is brutally murdered in her apartment, English jazz pianist Marcus – a resident of the same building – teams up with Gianna, an Italian tabloid journalist, to solve the murder. As the pair pursue various leads, the meat cleaver keeps swinging and more bodies begin to drop. The musician becomes a suspect, then a target. Is Marcus in over his head? Stylish and horrific in equal measure, this is an intricate, lushly visualised story of suspicion and neurosis.

127 MINS



Suspiria

Dir. Dario Argento Italy

With a title derived from the Latin phrase 'sighs from the depths', Dario Argento's most famous film is an undeniable masterwork of skin-crawling terror.

Argento's beloved classic – the first entry in his eventual 'Three Mothers' trilogy – fuses the refined and graceful movements of ballet with the bloody horror and melodrama of Italian *giallo*. Suzy is an American dance student who arrives at a prestigious academy in Germany on the same night that another pupil is violently murdered. An intrigued Suzy investigates, and after maggots rain down in the dormitory, the mystery begins to unfold – leading to more grisly killings and frightening revelations.

99 MINS



Tenebrae

Dir. Dario Argento Italy

Inspired by the director's own brush with an obsessive fan, this stylish slasher offers meta-commentary on sexism and screen violence.

American crime writer Peter Neal is greeted in Rome not only by a cavalcade of attentive journalists but by two detectives investigating a homicide. A woman's throat has been slit, mimicking a scene from his latest novel, whose pages were also stuffed in her mouth; the police have a hunch this first victim won't be the last. As the bodies pile up around Neal, they begin to suspect the true murderer may live close to home. *Tenebrae* also asks whether transgressive fantasies can be contained by a book or, indeed, a movie.

101 MINS



Phenomena

Dir. Dario Argento Italy

This oeuvre of outré, starring a then-14-year-old Jennifer Connelly, is widely regarded as one of Dario Argento's most eccentric and bizarre films.

Jennifer Corvino, the daughter of a famed American movie star, is sent to study at the Richard Wagner Academy for Girls in Switzerland. Once there, she finds herself in the path of a serial killer targeting teenage girls. Naturally, her tendency to somnambulate and her telepathic connection with maggots and flies will prove useful in solving the murders – especially after she teams up with a forensic entomologist and his chimpanzee nursemaid.

116 MINS



Opera

Dir. Dario Argento Italy

After bringing bloodshed to a ballet school in *Suspiria*, the *giallo* maestro wreaks operatic havoc on a soprano tackling a Shakespeare adaptation.

Theatre folks consider it a curse to utter the title of *Macbeth* while staging a production of Shakespeare's historical tragedy, a superstition shared by their opera colleagues. Giuseppe Verdi's reimagining of the play is similarly haunted by freak deaths and suspicious near-misses. Dario Argento embraced this spooky drama, wielding operatic flourishes for his extravagantly staged 1987 masterpiece that pits a naive young soprano understudy, thrust into the limelight, against a masked killer stalking the Parma Opera House.

107 MINS



The Black Cat

Dir. Dario Argento Italy, USA

Harvey Keitel stars in this adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's tale of obsession and violence.

Rod Usher is no stranger to the dark and gruesome; he's frequently called on by local police to document horrific crime scenes. But when his girlfriend Annabel, a violinist, brings home a black cat, Rod starts to unravel. Increasingly convinced the feline is out to get him, he commits a brutal act that propels him into a horrifying guilt-induced nightmare from which there is no return.

Part of the 1990 horror anthology *Two Evil Eyes* that Argento conceived and realised alongside George A. Romero, *The Black Cat* is a stylish, stunning take on Poe in a modern context.

60 MINS



The Phantom of the Opera

Dir. Dario Argento Italy

There's no-one better to deliver an outré rendition of the Music of the Night than an underground maestro who loves mayhem and organ music.

You probably think you know this story, but Dario Argento's version – which understands the absurdity and grotesquerie of Gaston Leroux's novel – has way more rats and telepathy. In it, an orphaned outcast who finds refuge among the rodents beneath the Opéra de Paris grows up to become a genius composer. Having seduced beautiful young opera singer Christine, he promotes her career using a combination of threats and gory sabotage. But when the aristocratic Raoul also falls for Christine, the Phantom takes this rivalry to Gothic extremes.

99 MINS



Do You Like Hitchcock?

Dir. Dario Argento Italy

If you like Hitchcock, you'll love Dario Argento's exhilarating 2005 homage to the Master of Suspense.

Giulio is a Rome film student obsessed with the work of Alfred Hitchcock. He spends his time watching movies and spying on his attractive neighbour, Sasha, who he discovers frequents the same video store as him; there, she captures Giulio's attention when she tries to borrow a Hitchcock film that is also sought by another customer. When a murder is committed in the building across from his, Giulio finds himself drawn deep into the investigation and at the centre of his own old-fashioned thrill ride.

93 MINS

Experi— mentations

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Animation

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MIFF Schools

A program to enhance students' cinema and language learning, intercultural understanding, and media-analysis skills – but also open to all 'learners', regardless of age, beyond the classroom.



Allensworth

Dir. James Benning USA

Landscape cinema titan James Benning invites us to contemplate Black history as he turns his structuralist lens on the first African American municipality in California.

Founded in 1908, the town of Allensworth was the first in California to be established and governed exclusively by African Americans. It's now largely abandoned, and its ghostly facades and surrounding rural landscape form the subjects of the latest formal meditation by Benning, who – almost as a coda to last year's sprawling interrogation of his homeland, *The United States of America* (MIFF 2022) – surveys the locale through 12 static five-minute shots, covering a year from January to December. Awarded a Feature Film Jury Special Mention at this year's Cinéma du Réel, *Allensworth* invites us to observe with both temporal distance and proximity.

65 MINS



Art College 1994

Dir. Liu Jian China

Auteurs Jia Zhang-ke (*A Touch of Sin*, MIFF 2013) and Bi Gan (*Long Day's Journey Into Night*, MIFF 2018) join the voice cast for this acerbic animated wonder about Chinese art students facing a rapidly changing world.

It's the early 90s; China is transitioning into a market economy, and Western culture is slowly piercing the country's veil of traditionalist thinking. Grungy chain-smoker Xiaojun and garrulous Rabbit, two students at the Chinese Southern Academy of Arts, are collaborating on a work – what they hope will be their 'masterpiece'. But instead, crossing paths with a bunch of other creative dreamers, they end up ruminating on the sudden influx of new, progressive ideas; the true meaning of art; ageing; their crushes; and the tragedy of being a young, tortured artist.

118 MINS



Deep Sea

Dir. Tian Xiaopeng China

Heed the call of the waves and dive headfirst into this innovative and visually resplendent Chinese animation.

Abandoned by her mother, Shenxiu is struggling with a deep sadness when she's shipped off to sea with her emotionally absent father and his new wife and child. One day, during a wild storm, Shenxiu is washed overboard. She awakens in a wondrous underwater world, where, guided by a 'hyjinx' – a mystical, shape-shifting creature she knows from her mum's songs – and accompanied by the motley crew of a subaquatic restaurant, Shenxiu embarks on an incredible odyssey to find the Eye of the Deep Sea ... and, potentially, her missing mother too.

90 MINS



Little Nicholas: Happy as Can Be

Dir. Amandine Fredon, Benjamin Massoubre France, Luxembourg

In this Annecy Best Feature-winning adaptation of France's famed *Le petit Nicolas* comic book series, a mischievous character meets his creators.

Simple line sketches and soft-hued watercolours render a Paris from a bygone era. *Little Nicholas: Happy as Can Be* astutely envisions what happens when the art meets his artists, weaving young Nicholas's escapades with the backstories of cartoonist Jean-Jacques Sempé and writer René Goscinny, who conjured his world. Blending biography and origin story, the film reveals how tales of the character's carefree youth – pranks at summer camp and being grossed out by girls – emerged from his creators' experiences of war and troubled childhoods.

82 MINS



Hello Dankness

Dir. Soda Jerk Australia

It's the end of the world as we know it and no-one feels fine in Soda Jerk's latest multi-layered cinematic remix, which sassily swipes at deepfakes and Trumpism.

Punk art filmmakers Soda Jerk (*Terror Nullius*) layer and manipulate hundreds of film samples into furiously funny narratives that comment on the burning issues that collectively keep us up at night. In *Hello Dankness*, they trace the unravelling of reality, drawing a dizzying line from the election of Donald Trump as president in 2016 through to COVID lockdowns and rampant conspiracy theories, all via snippets of *Wayne's World*, *The 'Bubs* and *American Beauty* as well as excerpts from contemporary queer art history and Reddit culture.

70 MINS MIFF GUEST



Youth (Spring)

Dir. Wang Bing China

Wang Bing (*Ta'ang*, MIFF 2016; *Alone*, MIFF 2013) documents the breakneck pace of China's garment factories.

For the workers on Happiness Road, life is anything but. This street is a microcosm of Zhili, a regional manufacturing capital 150 kilometres from Shanghai that specialises in children's clothing, where factories are mostly manned by young recruits from neighbouring provinces. Their days are soundtracked by C-pop, which they blast to drown out the whirl of industrial sewing machines, churning out wares at unfathomable speeds to meet punishing quotas. At night, they retire to dismal dormitories, too exhausted to dream of a better life.

This heartbreaking portrait of youth sacrificed to the grind of global capitalism was a rare documentary selected for the Cannes competition.

212 MINS



Gush

Dir. Fox Maxy USA

A maximalist, kaleidoscopic visual essay of hurt and healing, and a one-of-a-kind statement of bodily sovereignty.

The debut feature of award-winning Ipai Kumeayay and Payómkawichum video artist Fox Maxy builds on the energy, joy, passion and irreverence of previous shorts such as *Maat Means Land* (MIFF 2021). Compiled from over a decade's worth of personal video archives, *Gush* overflows with imagery, emotion and humour, sumptuously layered and structured in an almost musical fashion. The 'tune' it composes – unforgettable and at times unnerving – is one of transformational power, survival and celebration. Though Maxy identifies the film as 'horror', it is defiantly unlike anything you might have previously seen in that genre – or in any genre.

71 MINS MIFF PLAY VIEWER ADVICE: CONTAINS STROBOSCOPIC IMAGERY SCREENS WITH FIGHTING LOOKS DIFFERENT 2 ME NOW (11 MINS)



Conann

Dir. Bertrand Mandico France, Luxembourg, Belgium

A deliriously defiant, all-female reimagining of Conan the Barbarian that's feted to become a new cult classic.

Roaming the abyss of time and space, mutant hellhound Rainer narrates the epic tale of Conann, a mythical warrior on a demonic journey through six different incarnations – from stately queen to teenage slave, nether-realm wanderer to 90s Bronx stuntwoman. At each brutally violent stage, she is destined for death at the hands of her older self, only to be reborn in another form and era.

Director Bertrand Mandico delivers an impishly surreal riff on Robert E. Howard's mythical creation that's a world away from Arnold Schwarzenegger's oiled-up 80s rendition. And yet it manages to be even more gory, violent and gleefully camp.

105 MINS



Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman

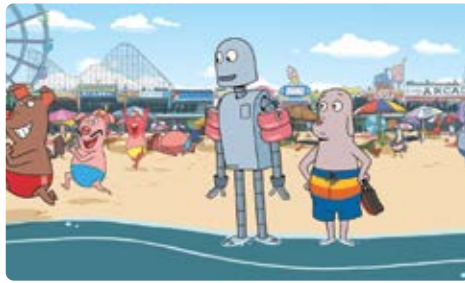
Dir. Pierre Földes France, Luxembourg, Canada, Netherlands

An enchanting take on Haruki Murakami's short stories starring a gregarious talking frog, an existential bank teller and an elusive cat.

Rattled by the 2011 earthquake, dazed insomniac Kyoko leaves her husband, joyless bank employee Komura, to confront a mysterious event from her past. This prompts Komura to drift across the country, visiting relatives and stopping by a love hotel, while his older colleague Katagiri is enlisted by a boastful anthropomorphic frog into a quest to vanquish an underground worm that threatens to unleash another catastrophe.

The sumptuous and scintillating debut feature from French composer turned filmmaker Pierre Földes was awarded Anecny's Jury Distinction.

110 MINS MIFF PLAY



Robot Dreams

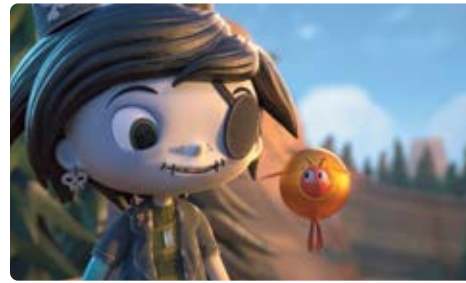
Dir. Pablo Berger Spain, France

In this beautifully bittersweet hand-drawn ode to friendship, a dog must find new meaning when misfortune separates him from his robot buddy.

In an animated alternate-reality 1980s New York City, lonely but enterprising Dog decides to build himself a companion via mail-order. In no time, Dog and his new pal Robot become inseparable, strolling around Manhattan and rollerblading in Central Park to the tune of Earth, Wind & Fire. But one day, an unforeseen incident sees Robot rusted and abandoned in the sand. Will the pair find their way back to each other?

Adapting Sara Varon's award-winning graphic novel, Pablo Berger (*Blancanieves*, MIFF 2013) uses a meticulous 2D style to depict the Big Apple and its many (animal) inhabitants.

102 MINS



Scarygirl

Dir. Ricard Cusó, Tania Vincent Australia

Anna Torv, Sam Neill, Tim Minchin and Deborah Mailman are among the stellar voice cast for this thrilling Australian animated adventure based on the popular novel and online game.

Brave young Arkie, with her hook and tentacle for hands, is on a mission. Her father – the giant octopus Blister, whose own tentacles can regenerate life – has been kidnapped at the behest of the evil scientist Dr Maybee. The scheming ruler of the City of Light wants to use Blister's powers for harm, and as darkness beckons, it's up to Arkie to save him and their idyllic peninsula.

Executive-produced by John Stevenson (*Kung Fu Panda*; *Shrek*; *Madagascar*), *Scarygirl* is an imaginative quest with a world as breathtakingly expansive as the story it contains.

90 MINS



White Plastic Sky

Dir. Tibor Bánóczki, Sarolta Szabó Hungary, Slovakia

Becoming one with nature takes a dystopian turn in this visionary rotoscoped romance.

A hundred years from now, humankind has made a desperate bargain with a degraded Earth: at the age of 50, every citizen must transform into a tree to feed the next generation. Grieving her dead son, 32-year-old Nora has volunteered for an early 'implantation' – and upon learning this, her husband Stefan embarks on a quest to save her. But when everyone's survival relies on radical symbiosis, a love like Stefan's can be seen as selfish and short-sighted. Perhaps he can no longer see the forest for one particular tree.

The ethical questions of *Soylent Green* are presented in a new light in this provocative, stunningly visualised film.

111 MINS



Neneh Superstar

Dir. Ramzi Ben Sliman France

Put on your ballet shoes for this triumphant, feel-good tale of a 12-year-old Parisian dancer who overcomes the odds of institutional prejudice.

France's historic Paris Opera Ballet School is the place to train for any aspiring dancer, and the supremely gifted and socially disadvantaged Neneh dreams of one day attending it. When she finally gets there, however, she quickly discovers that her talent might not be enough in a school where Black students are subject to a different set of rules than everyone else – and where the mysterious, legendary headmistress is committed to upholding the institution of classical "white ballet".

This uplifting drama features an irrepressible lead performance from breakout talent Oumy Bruni Garrel.

98 MINS



Paula

Dir. Florencia Wehbe Argentina, Italy

In this sensitively told drama, a teenager's battle with body image is a microcosm for the crushing weight of beauty standards on all young women.

Partly inspired by her own brushes with disordered eating, director Florencia Wehbe tells the story of Paula, who, amid the tempestuous period of adolescence, is struggling. Surrounded by the unrealistic pressures of society's beauty ideals, plus her mother's insistence on throwing her a birthday party and her older (and thinner) sister's lack of empathy, she falls into a downward spiral of starvation and purging to lose weight. Paula finds solace in the online community, with whom she engages in harmful fat-reduction methods – even when doing so means sacrificing her real-world friendships.

89 MINS



This Is Going to Be Big

Dir. Thomas Charles Hyland Australia

Peer behind the curtain as a cast of neurodivergent teens prepare to hit the stage in their school's time-travelling, John Farnham-themed musical.

Every two years, the Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Specialist School's Bullengarook campus puts on a play. For overachiever Halle, it will be an opportunity to honour her late aunt. For methodical Josh, it will be a challenge to take seriously, while wide-eyed Elyse is just happy to be involved. And for charismatic Chelsea, it will be a chance to wow an audience with her undeniable comedic skill. Six months of auditions, rehearsals and nerves will be gruelling, but everything will pay off on opening night.

Supported by the MIFF Premiere Fund, this tender film reveals the human story behind the performed one.

90 MINS MIFF PLAY



The Tunnel to Summer, the Exit of Goodbyes

Dir. Taguchi Tomohisa Japan

When the laws of time and space are turned topsy-turvy, what would you give up for one last moment with a lost love?

When Kaoru stumbles upon a strange glowing portal that appears to offer a glimpse of other worlds and alternate timelines, he jumps at the chance to reconnect with his dead sister. While he seeks to rectify his tragic past, new student Anzu's intention is to reshape her hopes and dreams for the present. Perhaps, together, they can rewrite destiny. But the Urashima Tunnel exacts a toll: you can have whatever you desire while inside, but you'll re-emerge with years shaved off your life. This coming-of-age adventure is a stunning ode to resilience.

83 MINS

MIFF Shorts

The much-loved MIFF Shorts program highlights the art of saying more with less. This year's selection includes animation, documentary, experimental, and Australian and international fiction shorts, plus special suites of works from Canada and by famed auteurs.

PRESENTED BY

CAMPARI



Accelerator Shorts 1

Bold works from emerging Australian and New Zealand filmmakers.

Including a double Berlinale-winning docufiction hybrid about Yankunytjatjara artist Derik Lynch; a Tribeca prize winner about a Tongan-Australian girl learning the intricacies of identity; and a cine-poem starring Thom Green (*Of an Age*, MIFF Premiere Fund 2022).

Films in this package: *Cold Water* (dir. Jay Perry, Shaun Perry), *Gate Crash* (dir. Paloma Schneideman), *Hafekasi* (dir. Annelise Hickey), *The Job* (dir. Tatiana Wanda Doroshenko), *Marungka Tjalatjuni (Dipped in Black)* (dir. Matthew Thorne, Derik Lynch) and *We Used to Own Houses* (dir. David Robinson-Smith).

96 MINS MIFF PLAY VIEWER ADVICE: STRONG IMPACT SUICIDE THEMES WITHIN FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES; CONTAINS STROBOSCOPIC IMAGERY



Accelerator Shorts 2

Preview the next generation of homegrown directors.

Including a Judith Wright adaptation that is the first narrative work to feature the Barada and Darumbal languages; a Sydney-awarded phantasmagoria of self-loathing and angst; and a double Flickerfest prize winner.

Films in this package: *Anu* (dir. Pulkit Arora), *Development* (dir. Rebecca Metcalf), *Earthlings* (dir. Jamie Lawrence), *Generations of Men* (dir. Joanna Joy), *Jia* (dir. Vee Shi) and *linda 4 eva* (dir. Sophie Somerville).

82 MINS MIFF PLAY



Australian Shorts

Impassioned narratives from this continent's best.

Including a 35mm-shot work emulating 60s psychological thrillers; a coming-of-age tale starring Jamie-Lynn Sigler (*The Sopranos*) and set to an eclectic 80s soundtrack; and a Torres Strait Islander tale about the longing for home, led by Bangarra Dance Theatre's Elma Kris and Waangenga Blanco.

Films in this package: *Crushing Season* (dir. James Ivor), *Fuck Me, Richard* (dir. Lucy McKendrick, Charles Polinger), *Grain of Truth* (dir. Marcus Gale), *I'm on Fire* (dir. Michael Spiccia), *Katele (Mudskipper)* (dir. John Harvey) and *Walking* (dir. Caleb Ribates).

94 MINS MIFF PLAY



Auteurs Abridged: New Shorts by Masters

Established feature directors return to the short form to play with time and experiment with structure.

From sonic triptychs to literal sketches within the frame to a whole tale of forbidden love reunited – dive into Pedro Almodóvar's highly anticipated queer western starring Pedro Pascal and Ethan Hawke; Lucrecia Martel's Venice-premiering interrogation of class, labour and gendered violence; a glimpse of Jean-Luc Godard's final work before his death; and films both scintillating and succinct from Pedro Costa and Tsai Ming-liang.

Films in this package: *As Filhas do Fogo* (dir. Pedro Costa), *Camarera de Piso* (dir. Lucrecia Martel), *Strange Way of Life* (dir. Pedro Almodóvar), *Trailer of the Film That Will Never Exist: 'Phony Wars'* (dir. Jean-Luc Godard) and *Where do you stand, Tsai Ming-liang?* (dir. Tsai Ming-liang).

95 MINS



O Canada! Shorts From the Maple-Leafed North

PRESENTED BY
CANADA NOW

An intimate kaleidoscope of stories from the best emerging filmmakers working in Canada today.

From the basement bedrooms of teen brothers to claustrophobic club bathroom stalls to the heady cabin of a stolen car – treat yourself to Toronto's Best Canadian Short winner; a Clermont-Ferrand-crowned true story of breaking free; and a tender queer exploration of autonomy, intimacy and desire.

Films in this package: *Baba* (dir. Anya Chirkova, Meran Ismailsoy), *Blond Night* (dir. Gabrielle Demers), *Invincible* (dir. Vincent René-Lortie), *Nanitic* (dir. Carol Nguyen) and *Simo* (dir. Aziz Zoromba).

97 MINS



WTF Shorts

Unfiltered and unapologetic. Not for the faint of heart.

Including a Clermont-Ferrand prize winner that satirises capitalism and fame; a Cannes-screening story of a humanoid bird's erotic awakening; and an arresting mockumentary about alien sex, lauded at Sitges.

Films in this package: *Chomp It!* (dir. Mark Chua, Li Shuen Lam), *Fairplay* (dir. Zoel Aeschbacher), *FROM.BEYOND* (dir. Fredrik S. Hana), *La Perra* (dir. Carla Melo Gampert), *Meantime* (dir. Guillaume Scaillet), *Pentola* (dir. Leo Černic) and *Sweet Juices* (dir. Will Suen, Sejon Im).

92 MINS



Animation Shorts

Forms collide in this assorted collection of visual storytelling.

Including a MIFF alum's masterpiece that won the Cannes Short Film Palme d'Or; a touching, very Melburnian queer short; and a work of Eastern European weirdness about an apartment ... that is a dog.

Films in this package: *27* (dir. Flóra Anna Buda), *Aaaah!* (dir. Osman Cerfon), *Depersonalization* (dir. Spartak Yordanov), *Dog Apartment* (dir. Priit Tender), *fur* (dir. Zhen Li), *The House of Loss* (dir. Jinkyu Jeon), *Misaligned* (dir. Marta Magnuska), *Shackle* (dir. Ainslie Henderson), *Slow Light* (dir. Katarzyna Kijek, Przemysław Adamski), *Take a Look at This Guy* (dir. Tom Oxnam) and *Tomato Kitchen* (dir. Junyi Xiao).

95 MINS



Documentary Shorts

Far-reaching, resonating subjects pulled from various corners of the world.

Including the latest work from legendary Australian filmmaker Margot Nash; a filmic mixtape of shifting aspect ratios that keeps Tanzanian film culture alive; and a Locarno prize-winning exploration of the male form from a Gen Z perspective.

Films in this package: *Apostles of Cinema* (dir. Darragh Amelia, Gertrude Malizana, Jesse Gerard Mpango, Cece Mlay), *Call Me Mommy* (dir. Tara O'Callaghan), *Gods of the Supermarket* (dir. Alberto Gonzalez Morales), *Then Comes the Body* (dir. Jacob Krupnick), *Undercurrents: Meditations on Power* (dir. Margot Nash) and *Vision of Paradise* (dir. Leonardo Pironi).

88 MINS VIEWER ADVICE: MAY CONTAIN IMAGES AND VOICES OF DECEASED FIRST NATIONS PERSONS; STRONG IMPACT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE THEMES; CONTAINS STROBOSCOPIC IMAGERY



Experimental Shorts

Unconventional cinema that tests the boundaries of form and function.

Including a form-challenging 3D journey in search of a statue of Eros; the latest from MIFF 2022's Best Experimental Short winner, nominated for the Cannes Queer Palm; and an autofictional retelling of a Buddhist folktale.

Films in this package: *After Work* (dir. Céline Condorelli, Ben Rivers), *Blinded by Centuries* (dir. Mai Parinda), *Cave Painting* (dir. Siegfried A. Fruhauf), *Geometry of Faith* (dir. Sabina Maselli), *Grandma Galya and Grandpa Arkadiy* (dir. Anna Kipervaser), *Laberint Sequences* (dir. Blake Williams), *Lotus-Eyed Girl* (dir. Rajee Samarasinghe), *Mast-del* (dir. Maryam Tafakory) and *This Is Not Here* (dir. Charlotte Mungomery).

106 MINS VIEWER ADVICE: CONTAINS STROBOSCOPIC IMAGERY



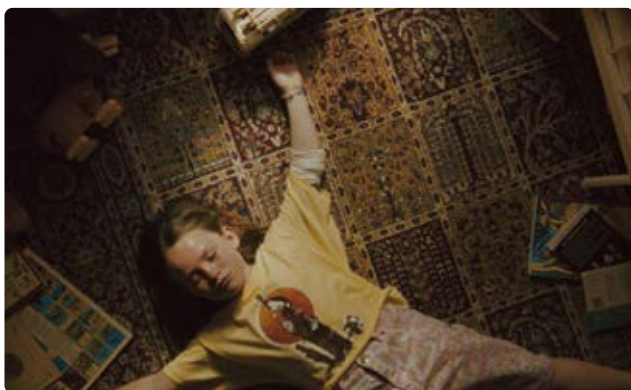
International Shorts 1

Remarkable short-form favourites from Cannes, Venice, Locarno and more.

Including a deftly menacing Mongolian tale that won Best Short Film at Toronto and at Venice; a refugee story lauded at Cannes Critics' Week; and a Locarno award-winning tale of sweet, sweet, taking-the-low-road revenge.

Films in this package: *48 Hours* (dir. Azadeh Moussavi), *Big Bang* (dir. Carlos Segundo), *I Promise You Paradise* (dir. Morad Mostafa), *Junglefowl* (dir. Kalainithan Kalaichelvan) and *Snow in September* (dir. Lkhagvadulam (Dulmaa) Purev-Ochir).

96 MINS



International Shorts 2

An awarded and acclaimed cornucopia from directors known and new.

Including a Rotterdam-crowned portrait of shared uncertainty; a dizzying Sundance award winner that collides virtual and real-world violence; and a heart-stoppingly sharp indictment of the US healthcare system.

Films in this package: *AIEN0089* (dir. Valeria Hofmann), *Endless Sea* (dir. Sam Shainberg), *Heat Spell* (dir. Marie-Pier Dupuis), *Human Nature* (dir. Mónica Lima) and *The Silent Ones* (dir. Basile Vuillemin).

99 MINS

MIFF SHORTS AWARDS 2023

PRESENTED BY

CAMPARI

One of the most highly regarded short-film competitions in both the Asia Pacific region and the Southern Hemisphere, now in its 62nd year.

The MIFF Shorts Awards are Academy Awards accredited. The 2023 winners of the Best Short Film, Best Australian Short Film, Best Documentary Short Film and Best Animation Short Film awards are eligible to submit their films for the 96th Academy Awards in 2024.

VENUE PARTNER

acmi

MIFF Shorts Awards 2023 Jury



Alena Lodkina is a Russian-born Australian filmmaker whose feature films include *Strange Colours* (2017) and *Petrol* (MIFF Premiere Fund 2022). She also writes about film, and her fiction and documentary short films have played internationally.



Kate ten Buuren is a Taungurung curator, artist and writer working on Kulin Country. Her interest in contemporary visual art, film and oral traditions is grounded in self-determination, self-representation and the power of knowing one another.



Virginia Whitwell is Head of Production and Partner at Good Thing Productions. Over a 25-year career, she has worked all over the world and has produced many award-winning scripted and factual projects including *Nitram*, *Nude Tuesday*, *The Australian Dream* and *2040*.

Best MIFF Shorts

A collection of the best short films from the festival, as chosen by the MIFF Shorts Awards jury and the MIFF Shorts programmers.

Films will be announced during the festival.

MIFF PLAY

MIFF XR

MIFF's program of extended reality (XR) experiences – spanning virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR) and mixed reality (MR) – rewrite the frontiers of storytelling through total audiovisual immersion.

Phase One 8–15 August



Turbulence: Jamais Vu

Dir. Ben Joseph Andrews Australia

From the team behind epic environmental VR installation *Gondwana* (MIFF 2022) comes an intimate experience of (mis)perception.

Director Ben Joseph Andrews suffers from a chronic vestibular condition characterised by destabilising episodes of dizziness or imbalance, whose symptoms can last anywhere from a few minutes to a few days (or longer). Unlike his and producer Emma Roberts's earlier work *Gondwana* – which speculates on the endangered future of the Daintree rainforest – *Turbulence: Jamais Vu* reimagines the medium on a personal scale, taking form as an essayistic exploration of an invisible illness.

10 MINS



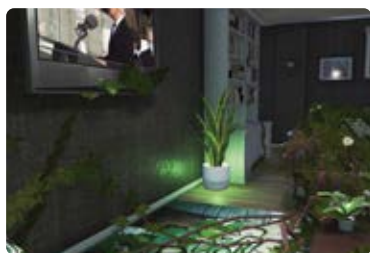
From the Main Square

Dir. Pedro Harres Germany

This multi-award-winning interactive VR experience shows the rise and fall of an entire civilisation.

The town square is traditionally a meeting place for its inhabitants – a crossroads of stories, commerce and civic life. But in this VR work, which has won awards at Venice, Annecy and NewImages, it's also where the forces of history converge, as a small village is gradually overtaken by a military dictatorship. Participants bear witness to the steady march of so-called progress, rendered in immersive 360-degree animation, where economic advancement brings with it increasingly bloody battles over faith, place and power.

19 MINS



I Took a Lethal Dose of Herbs

Dir. Yvette Granata USA

A harrowing yet hypnotic true story from the frontline of North America's abortion debates, told through hallucinatory episodes.

A former pro-life activist who once protested outside abortion clinics finds herself on the other side of the picket. Viewers are plunged into the warped worldview of a mother experiencing post-partum psychosis, who believes her baby is a demon. Later, determined to terminate a new unexpected pregnancy, she ingests the titular herbs and is swept up in a reality-bending trance. This unsettling yet utterly gripping work is based on an anonymous woman's experience narrated on a subreddit.

19 MINS



Limbotopia in VR

Dir. Hsieh Wen-Yee Taiwan

First-time director Hsieh Wen-Yee presents a surreal trip through a post-apocalyptic Taiwan.

'Limbotopia' refers to an imagined world where time seems to stand still: a static and often hopeless present, suspended between the poles of utopia and dystopia. After an environmental crisis in contemporary Taiwan, participants become passengers journeying through one such monochromatic eternity, submerged in phantasmagorical animations merging the microscopic and the monumental.

Premiering at Tribeca, this immersive 360-degree VR experience seems to defy the laws of gravity and perspective.

25 MINS



Lou

Dir. Martine Asselin, Annick Daigneault UK

An unprecedented and enlightening chance to witness the world through an autistic child's eyes.

Step into the shoes of Lou, a child on the autism spectrum who's learning how to cope with an overwhelming world. Across two chapters and time periods – one when Lou, as a child, is at a friend's birthday party, and another on the first day of high school – we experience Lou's individual needs, challenges and frustrations.

Based on the real-life stories of autistic people and inspired by directors Martine Asselin and Annick Daigneault's own children, this work celebrates the uniqueness of neurodivergent perspectives.

27 MINS



The Man Who Couldn't Leave

Dir. Chen Singing Taiwan

The winner of Venice's Best Immersive Experience award remembers Taiwan's political detainees.

During the White Terror of the 1950s, a period of martial law in Taiwan after the authoritarian Kuomintang government was exiled there from mainland China, Green Island became a prison for political dissidents. Using 360-degree VR to submerge viewers within the jail's walls, director Chen Singing draws on archival documents to commemorate those affected, honouring the hopes, sacrifices and suffering of preceding generations. We follow former prisoner A-Kuen as he wanders through a 'wax museum' of memory, where figures come to life and tell their stories.

35 MINS

MIFF XR at ACMI

The first phase of the MIFF XR program presents eight different award-winning works from across the globe.

Over MIFF's final four days, the second phase unveils Darren Emerson's *In Pursuit of Repetitive Beats*, in an exciting partnership with Now or Never.

VENUE PARTNER

acmi

MIFF XR is presented at ACMI's Swinburne Studio.

All experiences must be individually booked via the MIFF website or at the ACMI Box Office.

Booking ahead is recommended as capacity is strictly limited.

Phase Two 17–20 August

CO-PRESENTED WITH

NOW OR NEVER



In Pursuit of Repetitive Beats

Dir. Darren Emerson UK

Hit the town and seek out the next illegal rave in this euphoric, multisensory joyride about the 1980s Acid House movement.

In the 80s, Coventry became the epicentre of the UK rave scene, attracting countless young people on weekend pilgrimages to the Midlands area. But their energy is matched by the police's staunch attempts to quell their raucous parties. In the latest experience from famed VR filmmaker Darren Emerson (*Common Ground*, MIFF 2019; *Invisible*, MIFF 2016), you're thrust into the commotion, heart pumping with trepidation and excitement as you explore secret party

locations – warehouses, woodlands, disused buildings, empty fields – and interact with memorabilia along the way.

With an extraordinary eye for historical detail, Emerson weaves 3D modelling, volumetric capture and animation with firsthand accounts from legendary ravers and iconic songs by Orbital, Joey Beltram and Neal Howard. But these parties combined revelry with rebellion: they birthed a community for youth from all classes and backgrounds who, during the Thatcher years, felt alienated and out of place. Winner of IDFA's DocLab Award for Immersive Non-Fiction, *In Pursuit of Repetitive Beats* is a visceral, ecstatic ode to a time when what mattered most was chasing that next dance-floor high.

35 MINS



Stay Alive, My Son (Chapters 1 & 2)

Dir. Victoria Bousis Greece, USA

A quest for personal and national healing, based on the experiences of a Khmer Rouge survivor.

When Pin Yathay and his wife fled a forced labour camp in Cambodia, they left behind their six-year-old son Nwath, who was too ill to make the perilous journey to Thailand. Yathay's courageous determination to reunite his family – and to find justice for his country, later testifying at a United Nations Special Tribunal – touched readers worldwide when he published his acclaimed memoir in 1987. This interactive VR work invites us to experience Yathay's story, and Cambodia's tragic history, firsthand.

55 MINS



Surfacing

Dir. Rossella Schillaci Italy, Portugal

An immersive fairytale whose everyday heroes are mothers and children in Italian prisons.

When Italian women are incarcerated, they are permitted to keep their children with them in prison until they reach the age of 10. Often shot from a child's vantage point, *Surfacing* uses 360-degree VR to envelop viewers in these families' restricted worlds, where their imaginations are still free. Director Rosella Schillaci made the work in collaboration with her subjects, who share their intimate impressions of life behind bars. Surreal animations depict their memories and dreams, which are blended with live-action footage of their confined realities.

21 MINS



MIFF NEEDS YOUR LOVE



***THIS
IS YOUR
CUE**

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all those who have taken their cue and shown their love for MIFF this year by making a donation, becoming a Member or joining the MIFF Circle. The festival belongs to you – the filmmakers and film lovers of Melbourne.

The generous support from our community is integral to our success as Australia's premier film event, and it's never too late to get involved!

Protect your favourite festival. Join and donate today.

All gifts above \$2 are tax-deductible.

miff.com.au/donate

MIFF Talks

Go beyond the screen and get closer to the themes, ideas and talent of the 2023 festival through MIFF's engaging panel and conversation events.

PRESENTED BY



In Conversation: Celine Song's *Past Lives* The Wheeler Centre

Spend an hour with director Celine Song (USA), whose debut feature *Past Lives* is one of the most celebrated and talked-about of the year.

Song will discuss her approach to work and the intimate intricacies of this film, which stars Greta Lee (*Russian Doll*), Teo Yoo (*Decision to Leave*, MIFF 2022) and John Mangaro (*First Cow*, MIFF 2020).

Power Shift: The Future of Seeing ACMI

A panel of academics, filmmakers and screen practitioners delve into some of the major recent changes in the industry. They will explore the emerging currents of evolution within the screen world; how the ethics of power are intertwined with inclusivity, virtual production and AI; and just what this may mean for both emerging and established creatives.

Elsewhere in the 2023 MIFF Talks program, you can look forward to discussions themed around cinema in the regions and our Bright Horizons film competition, as well as to this year's instalment of our audience-beloved Consuming Culture talk: a roundtable dedicated to what we're up to and how we're up to when it comes to watching, reading and otherwise consuming film and media, co-presented by The Wheeler Centre.

MIFF Talks events are also fantastic opportunities to spend time with our brilliant international and local festival guests.

Head to miff.com.au to find out more!

MIFF Industry

Operating with Victorian Government funding since commencing in 2007, **MIFF Industry** reinforces Melbourne's standing as a creative city and supports the Antipodean screen sector with selective-entry programs to foster creative connections and collaborations.

MIFF 37°South Market facilitates sourcing, acquisition, development and production-financing of local screen content and talent via pitches/meetings, talks, screenings and networking events.

MIFF Accelerator Lab nurtures tomorrow's top directors on the journey towards their first feature-film/longform works. Alumni include the directors of *52 Tuesdays*, *Animal Kingdom*, *Babyteeth*, *Buoyancy*, *Hi Is for Happiness*, *Hounds of Love*, *Jojo Rabbit*, *Of an Age*, *Snowtown*, *Shayda* and *Sweet As*.

While both programs are invite-only, MIFF Industry also offers a select number of Behind the Scenes ticketed sessions to the film-loving public – be they media students, screen practitioners or the curious! Discover this year's **Behind the Scenes** line-up at miffindustry.com.

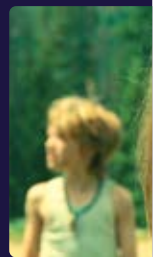
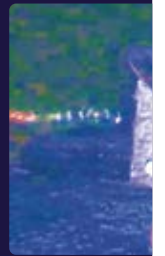
The **MIFF Premiere Fund** provides co-financing support for co-commissioning Australian 'stories that need telling' into films that then premiere at MIFF.

Managed by MIFF Industry with Victorian Government funding, the Premiere Fund has, since 2007, supported more than 95 films that have won almost 200 awards from nearly 500 nominations and secured more than 700 festival selections globally.

MIFF 2023 debuts the Premiere Fund's 15th slate, which comprises Accelerator Lab alumna Noora Niasari's *Shayda* (the seventh Premiere Fund film to open MIFF), *Australia's Open*, *Memory Film: A Filmmaker's Diary*, *The Rooster* and *This Is Going to Be Big* (head to page 17 for more details).



MIFF PLAY



Extend your festival with MIFF Play.

Showcasing a curated selection of films from our 71st edition, available to stream Australia-wide on 18–27 August.

Enjoy a range of free shorts programming, including this year's award-winners in the Best MIFF Shorts package.

Single ticket

FULL: \$15
MEMBERS: \$12.75

Bundle up and save with a MIFF Play Flexi-pass (4 films)

FULL: \$50
MEMBERS: \$45

play.miff.com.au

Regional Screenings

In 2023, MIFF continues its commitment to meeting audiences where they are. The MIFF Regional program presents a selection of this year's most anticipated titles across seven cinemas in regional Victoria.

For session times and other details, head to miff.com.au/regional-venues.

GEE LONG
CASTLEMAINE
BENDIGO
ECHUCA
WARRNAMBOOL
ROSEBUD
BRIGHT

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Regional Opening Night 11 August

Screening across all seven of MIFF 2023's regional venues, Paul Goldman's exhilarating documentary kicks off MIFF Regional.

PRESENTED BY



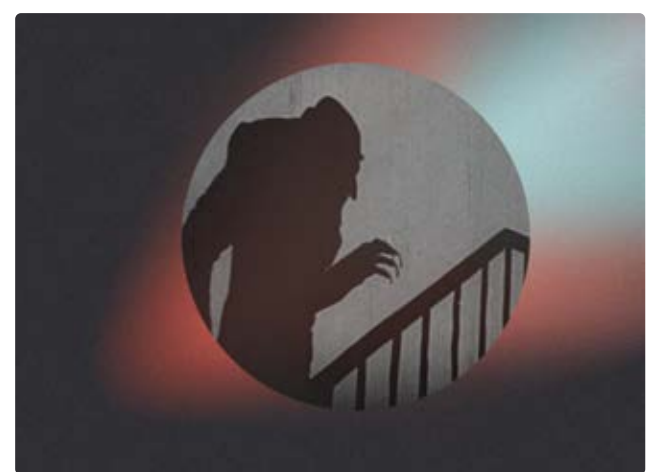
Ego: The Michael Gudinski Story

Dir. Paul Goldman Australia

The wild ride of maverick entrepreneur Michael Gudinski, who revolutionised the Australian music industry over five decades.

Helmed by director Paul Goldman (*Suburban Mayhem*, MIFF 2006) and produced by Bethany Jones (*Molly: The Real Thing*), *Ego* features personal accounts from Gudinski himself, interviews with some of the world's most influential artists, rare archival footage and an electrifying soundtrack. Tracing its subject's rise from shy son of immigrant Jewish parents to audacious international player and Australian household name, the film dives into Gudinski's psyche and unorthodox tactics, his successes and failures, and reveals the unstoppable frontman of a music empire.

111 MINS



Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror

Ulumbarra Theatre (Bendigo)

Dir. F.W. Murnau Germany
Experience F.W. Murnau's iconic 1922 vampire film brought to life by a live orchestra for one night only on 11 August.

Following award-winning, sell-out shows at the Adelaide Fringe Festival and seasons at Edinburgh Fringe (UK) and Art, Not Apart (Canberra), Rasa Daukus (piano) and Will Larsen (percussion) – the duo behind *Tess Said So* – have teamed up with Orchestra Victoria to expand their original score for Murnau's magnificently eerie, Gothic silent film.

In this unmissable event presented by MIFF, Orchestra Victoria, and Bendigo Venues and Events, a full orchestra, keyboard, electronics, and a massive labyrinth of drums,

shakers, bells, cymbals, gongs and percussion come together to create an electrifying atmosphere to accompany this 1922 German expressionist adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. An influential work of early filmmaking and the horror genre that followed, *Nosferatu* is considered a masterpiece of cinema; 101 years after its release, you're now invited to witness this thrilling silent film as it was meant to be heard.



Food and Film Experiences

Scan code for booking information
miff.com.au/food-film



Melbourne's best restaurants and bars are walking distance from MIFF, making for a whole night out. Fire up the group chat, book your tickets and reserve a table at one of our favourite restaurants.

Limited tickets available to our film and dining experiences, with thanks to our favourite restaurants and hospitality partners.

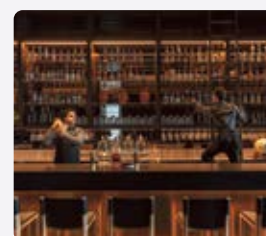


La Madonna Anatomy of a Fall 5 August

CHAMPAGNE TASTING +
FILM SCREENING

Bristling with emotional depth, this Palme d'Or-winning courtroom drama puts the complexities of a relationship on trial.

La Madonna's menu blends culinary artistry and the artisanal, serving food that is both challenging and comforting. In this French courtroom drama, which won the top prize at Cannes, a couple's failed marriage is put on trial – a story that emphasises the solace and struggles of companionship.



LA MADONNA
BAR RESTAURANT

LA MADONNA
80 Collins Street,
Melbourne



Victoria by Farmer's Daughters The Rooster 12 August

DINNER + FILM SCREENING

Hugo Weaving and Phoenix Raei play a hermit and a cop who form an unlikely connection amid crisis in this wonderfully weird sucker-punch of tenderness.

Aligning with Victoria by Farmer's Daughters' focus on regional produce and food culture, this Australian film is set entirely within Castlemaine and nearby surrounds. It shows off the Victorian countryside and highlights the beauty of the landscape and living off the land.



VICTORIA
BY FARMER'S DAUGHTERS

VICTORIA
BY FARMER'S
DAUGHTERS
Fed Square,
Melbourne



Cumulus Inc. Past Lives 13 August

FILM SCREENING + DINNER

What if the lover who never was is "the one"? This swooning romance follows a Korean woman whose heart is torn by the road not taken.

Matching Cumulus Inc.'s classy menu and ever-changing seasonal menu, this film by a breakthrough Korean-Canadian director is a contemporary but classic film about love, relationships and the passage of time – celebrating both the old and the new.



CUMULUS INC.

CUMULUS INC.
45 Flinders Lane,
Melbourne



ARU The Shadowless Tower 17 August

FILM SCREENING + DINNER

This beguiling tale of a middle-aged man who's lost his bearings doubles as a charming meditation on the frayed bonds of family.

This Chinese film's protagonist is a food critic who spends time with the proprietor of a humbler restaurant, discussing changing flavours and tastes of the locals. While ARU's menu blends native Australian ingredients and modern Asian flavours, these characters' discussions gravitate around Chinese cuisine and culture.



ARU

ARU
268 Little Collins
Street, Melbourne



HERO Showing Up 20 August

FILM SCREENING + LUNCH

A film as much an ode to the daily creative grind as it is to the creative partnership between director Kelly Reichardt and actor Michelle Williams.

Located within ACMI at Fed Square, HERO is grounded on the intersection between film, food and art. In turn, this US film celebrates the working life of an artist, and *First Cow* (MIFF 2020) director Kelly Reichardt is nothing other than a contemporary filmmaking hero who forges her own creative path.



HERO

HERO
Fed Square,
Melbourne

CHAMPAGNE
DUPERREY



champagneduperrey.com

AVAILABLE AT



Get the facts DrinkWise.org.au

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Encore Screenings & Late Announcements

Check the website for up-to-date information, including late additions to the MIFF 2023 program.

Schedule your festival

The complete MIFF 2023 program schedule grid is available online.

Save a shortlist, compare session times and schedule your festival at miff.com.au.

Accessibility

Access at MIFF is delivered across three categories – Physical, Communication and Sensory. All other equity-focused offerings are presented under the category Inclusion.

Physical Access

Venue Information

Detailed venue information for each screening venue at MIFF this year is available on the MIFF website.



Step-Free and Wheelchair Accessibility

All metropolitan venues at MIFF 2023 have step-free access, are wheelchair-accessible and have accessible seating. Options such as aisle seats or seats close to an exit are also available.



Guide Dogs and Assistance Dogs

Guide dogs and assistance animals are welcome in all venues at MIFF.

Communication Access



Open Captions

Select sessions at MIFF will screen with Open Captions. Open Captioned screenings display captions that dictate any spoken dialogue, music or sound effect in the film and are shown on the screen for the duration of the film.



Audio Description

Select sessions at MIFF will screen with an Audio Description (AD) track. This service provides additional narration and commentary that aims to describe the visual content of the film, thereby offering additional information about the film through sound. AD units will be available for collection at the venue.



Hearing Loop

At select MIFF venues this year, a Hearing Loop is provided. Patrons can tune in using their own hearing-aid device for amplified film sound directly into the ear.



Assistive Listening

At select MIFF venues this year, Assistive Listening (AL) is available. This service provides an amplified version of the film's sound through a device with headphones. AL units will be available for collection at the venue.



Auslan-Interpreted Events

To engage a wider audience for MIFF's program of films and events, Auslan interpreters will be present at a selection of Talks, introductions, Q&As and special events throughout the festival.



100% Subtitled

Many films screening at MIFF are subtitled and without any spoken English language, including some films that are silent or that have no dialogue.

Sensory Access



Sensory Friendly Screenings

MIFF will run Sensory Friendly Screenings at select sessions this year. Sensory Friendly Screenings are designed to make the cinema experience accessible and are for anyone who would benefit from a more relaxed environment. This can include but is not limited to neurodivergent people who experience sensory processing differences (autistic people, ADHD people), people with learning disabilities, people with dementia as well as those living with anxiety or who have experienced trauma.

Inclusion



Crybaby Sessions

MIFF is offering select Crybaby Sessions this year, catering for parents and carers with babies and toddlers who wish to enjoy the festival in a bub-friendly environment.



MIFF Play

MIFF Play offers an alternative to in-cinema sessions for select films and allows viewers to enjoy quality film experiences at home. Select access services are available for films screening on MIFF Play.

To view all in-cinema and MIFF Play sessions with accessible services and to filter the program by specific services, visit the MIFF website or use the MIFF 2023 App.

For more detailed information about Access at MIFF 2023, visit miff.com.au/access.

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MIFF STAFF

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Amanda Sole Finance Manager

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Kate Jinx Programmer
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Roan Johnson Guest Services Manager
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Systems & Ticketing

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Ida Talbäck Events Coordinator
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Scott Joblin Industry Programs Officer
Andrew Goode Industry Programs Coordinator
Anthoula Ververis Industry Projects Coordinator
Claudia Nankervis Industry Programs Administrator
George Samios Industry Programs Assistant Administrator

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Jadan Carroll
Alice Lewinsky
Caitlyn Miles
Leigh-Anne Ramirez

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Erfan Behzadnia
Becky Blechyndia
Jasper Caverly
Lesley Chow
Theodoric Chung
Chelsea Daniel
Lucy Davidson
Caroline Doering
Tess Flynn
Andy Huang
Yilin Jiang
Michelle Keating
Jessica Luu
Natalie May
Jack McCulloch
Jemima McGrath
Simon Norton
Tim O'Farrell
Donovan Renn
Neil Salmon
Natalia Sepulveda
Jessica Seychell
Louise Sheedy
Jessaa Shields
Nikhil Sobti
Jeremy Teh
Candice Vitug
Aleks Vujcic
Alexandra Walker
Alison Webber

Feature Film

Klari Agar
Brian Brown
Matthew Burns
Michael Campi
Joshua Castillo
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Santilla Chingaipe
Trevor Bryan Cotton
Lisa Daniel
Yask Desai
Alexandra Heller-Nicholas
Digby Houghton
Matthew Jordan
Ronan Lobo
Kim Munro
Megan Ng
Sophia Petropoulos

XR

Paul Jeffery
Callum Stewart
Yale Teo

PUBLICATIONS TEAM

Writers

Mel Campbell
Joanna Di Mattia
Glenn Charlie Dunks
David Heslin
Luke Goodsell
Tilly Graovac
Rebecca Harkins-Cross
Stephen A. Russell
Melanie Sheridan
Isabella Trimboli

Proofreaders

Mel Campbell
David Heslin

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Key imagery courtesy of the films *Afire*, *Hafekasi* and *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*



A MOMENT OF ETERNITY

It's more than just 24 frames flickering every second. More than an epic retelling of our collective past or an exploration of our possible futures. Each new masterpiece questions our deepest nature and fuels our highest aspirations. It's a testament to what truly moves us, an invitation to always aim higher, and a legacy perpetually reinvented. **It's cinema.**

#Perpetual



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