

MIFF 68 ½ – STAY HOME. SEE THE WORLD

Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) today embarks on its new 17-day cinematic journey, MIFF 68 ½ – the 2020 online iteration that will see Australia's oldest and most prestigious film festival made available to audiences right around Australia for the very first time.

Streaming more than 110 films – spanning 44 shorts, 12 world premieres and 82 Australian premieres – the festival's expansive program features online talks, Q&As, activations and free film program – with special surprise screenings, virtual events and performances set to be announced across the three-week Festival.

Tonight's Opening Night will be marked by the Australian premiere of US auteur Kelly Reichardt's **First Cow**. Starring John Magarro, alongside Australian expat Orion Lee, this big-hearted, character-driven story of friendship is a contemplative interrogation of the country's foundational mythology, true to Reichardt's singular style.

A contemporary reimagining of *Peter Pan* set in the American south, **Wendy** is US filmmaker Benh Zeitlin's long-awaited follow-up to *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, screening as the festival's Centrepiece Film.

Closing Night sees Oscar-nominated Chilean director *du jour* Pablo Larraín's *Ema*. A delirium-inducing dance drama sound-tracked by celebrated Chilean American composer **Nicolas Jaar**, starring Gael García Bernal and striking newcomer Mariana Di Girolamo.

Festival ticket holders will also have access to bonus content, including virtual Q&As, which will be headlined by some of the program's brightest filmmaking minds, including Kelly Reichardt (**First Cow**), Benh Zeitlin (**Wendy**) and Pablo Larraín (*Ema*). Elsewhere in the program, *Parks and Recreation* star Aubrey Plaza will take audiences on the journey of making her devious psychodrama **Black Bear**, whilst legendary documentary director **Steve James** (*Hoop Dreams*) will speak to his new project, **City So Real**.

Talks

In collaboration with The Wheeler Centre, and presented by the University of Melbourne, MIFF hosts a series of thought-provoking talks and panel discussions with filmmakers, experts and creatives. Taking place throughout the festival, MIFF Talks includes **Stories from The Leadership: Women in STEM** featuring Dr Samantha Grover and scientists Fern Hames and Songqiao Yao hosted by *RN Science Friction* host and journalist Natasha Mitchell.

Right Here, Right Now: Movements & Activism On Screen brings together MIFF Ambassador, poet and performer **Steven Oliver** (*MIFF 2020 ambassador*); director of Netflix's Local Originals (Aus), **Minh Luu**; US filmmaker and *Coded Bias* director **Shalini Kantayya**; and ABC host **Larissa Behrendt** discuss what it's like to try and capture current movements, protests and political shifts on screen.

Recorded live, the festival will present a special MIFF-inspired episode of **Art of the Score** – the podcast that aims to explore some of the greatest soundtracks of all time. They'll dive into the film music of the late Academy Award-winning composer **Jóhann Jóhannsson**, concentrating on two of his scores: the mainstream sci-fi hit **Arrival** and the experimental **Last and First Men** – the final score Jóhannsson wrote before his death.

Celebrating the 30th anniversary of beloved Australian black comedy *Death in Brunswick*, John Sheedy (*H is for Happiness*, *MIFF 2020 ambassador*) directs a table read of the film's original script with an all-new cast and special surprises.

NOTES TO EDITORS

- MIFF 68½ streams across Australia from Thursday 6 to Sunday 23 August.
- A digital showcase of over 60 features, 44 shorts, talks, Q&As, events and activations.
- Standard screening sessions commence at 11.00am AEST on Friday 7 August.
- Explore the program and purchase tickets at miff.com.au

Images and further information can be found at the [MIFF Media Centre](http://miff.com.au).

Media Contacts:

Tiki Menegola | tiki@commonstate.co | 0467 227 822

Jadan Carroll | jadan@commonstate.co | 0405 818 120