

# MIFF announces three premiere galas and the return of Melbourne's iconic Capitol Theatre.

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MIFF 2019 Media Centre



The Australian Dream

Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) has today revealed the first suite of films that will shape its 2019 program. This year's festival will open with the world premiere of the much-anticipated documentary *The Australian Dream* — written by Walkley award-winning Australian journalist **Stan Grant**. Grant's moving work is a powerful exploration of race, identity and belonging as told from the perspective of champion AFL footballer and Indigenous rights activist, **Adam Goodes**.

In 2013, Goodes — a dual Brownlow Medalist and two-time premiership champion — demanded that a 13-year-old Collingwood supporter who'd called him an "ape" be removed from the ground, unwittingly prompting a ferocious national conversation about racism from which neither the AFL, nor Goodes, ever fully recovered.

"We're thrilled that *The Australian Dream* will have its World Premiere at the Melbourne International Film Festival and to share this first look with Australians," said Grant. "This is the story of Adam Goodes and a moment when Australia faced the worst in itself. But it is more than that — it is the story of a country and its history. A story of pain but, above all, hope."

Directed by BAFTA-winning documentarian **Daniel Gordon** and written by Grant (a Wiradjiri man whose 2015 viral speech in the wake of the Goodes affair has been dubbed "Australia's Martin Luther King moment"), *The Australian Dream* is Goodes' story. The film charts the former footballer's life from his pre-draft days through to his post-AFL career as an outspoken Indigenous rights activist, but its triumph lies in its potency as a searing document that exposes the nation's uneasy relationship with First Nations people while celebrating the greatness of a true Australian champion.

A co-production between Academy Award-winning **Passion Pictures** (*Searching for Sugar Man*) and Melbourne-based **Good Thing Productions**, the film examines the best and worst of Australia by thoughtfully positioning archival footage alongside illuminating interviews with the likes of Grant; politicians **Nova Peris** and **Linda Burney**; Indigenous AFL players **Michael O'Loughlin**, **Nicky Winmar** and **Gilbert McAdam**; commentators **Eddie McGuire** and **Andrew Bolt**; and of course, Goodes himself.

"*The Australian Dream* is a compelling kickstart both to our festival this year, and to a national conversation," said Al Cossar, the festival's new artistic director. "It's an accomplished piece of documentary filmmaking that tackles broader questions of who we are as a nation, together, in deeply affecting terms. It's a film for all Australians, and a film for now. We can't wait to share it with MIFF audiences."



Little Monsters

This year, MIFF will make a triumphant return to the newly refurbished Capitol Theatre, with Sydney-based director **Abe Forsythe's** (*Down Under*, MIFF '16) sweetly hilarious "zom-com" **Little Monsters** making its Australian debut at the festival's Centerpiece Gala.

Featuring Oscar winner **Lupita Nyong'o** as a ukulele-playing, zombie-slaying kindergarten teacher, alongside **Josh Gad** (*Frozen*), **Kat Stewart** (*Offspring*), **Alexander England** (*Alien: Covenant*) and **Nadia Townsend** (*Mad Max: Fury Road*), *Little Monsters* is a funny, gory, crowd-pleasing love letter to all the kindergarten teachers who help children to bloom while protecting them from being eaten by zombies.

Displaying Forsythe's signature blend of black comedy and poignant heart, *Little Monsters* wowed midnight audiences and critics alike at its Sundance world premiere, with *Collider* describing it as, "a delightfully crude, wild ride with a standout performance that continues to prove Nyong'o can do no wrong."

Completing the gala announcements is the world premiere of ***H is for Happiness*** — the festival's 2019 Family Gala film, which will screen on **11 August** at the iconic Astor Theatre.

Featuring **Miriam Margolyes**, **Emma Booth**, **Richard Roxburgh**, **Deborah Mailman** and **Joel Jackson** alongside show-stealing performances from newcomers **Daisy Axon** and **Wesley Patten**, *H is for Happiness* is a delightful adaptation of Australian author Barry Jonsberg's acclaimed young adult novel, *My Life as an Alphabet*.

Making his feature debut, **John Sheedy** (director of MIFF '17 Best Australian Short, *Mrs McCutcheon*) delivers a warm-hearted hug of a film, unafraid to tackle serious themes while remaining laugh-out-loud funny and sweetly uplifting. Supported through the MIFF Premiere Fund, *H is for Happiness* is a charming film for the whole family.

Ahead of the full program announcement on **Tuesday 9 July**, a selection of the most anticipated international and local films includes:

#### FIRST GLANCE HIGHLIGHTS

After commanding turns in psychological thrillers *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* and *Passion*, **Noomi Rapace** makes a spectacular return to the genre in the world premiere of Australian director **Kim Farrant's**, ***Angel of Mine***. Shot and set in Melbourne, the film sees Rapace joined by **Richard Roxburgh** (*H is for Happiness*, MIFF '19), **Yvonne Strahovski** (*Matching Jack*, MIFF '10) and **Luke Evans** (*High-Rise*, MIFF '16), as they bring to life Oscar-nominated *Lion* screenwriter, **Luke Davies'** complex and compelling adaption of French film *L'Empreinte*.

In ***The Art of Self Defence***, **Jesse Eisenberg** stars as a pushover accountant whose desperate bid to "man up" compels him to join an off-kilter karate studio. A wry and withering take on toxic masculinity and the price we pay for pride, *The Art of Self Defence* is the deeply accomplished sophomore effort from young gun US writer/director, **Riley Stearns**.

Director du jour **Peter Strickland** delivers MIFF the screamingly funny ***In Fabric***. Featuring an eclectic cast that includes **Sidse Babett Knudsen** (*Westworld*), cult comedians **Julian Barrett** (*The Mighty Boosh*) and **Steve Oram** (*Sightseers*, MIFF '12), and *Game of Thrones'* **Gwendoline Christie**, *In Fabric* has been wowing festival audiences all over, including at Austin's Fantastic Fest where Strickland scored the award for Best Director.

After becoming the first Japanese director to win the Short Film Grand Jury Prize at Sundance for *And So We Put the Goldfish in the Pool*, director **Makoto Nagahisa** returns with ***We Are Little Zombies***. Nagahisa has poured his lurid, ultra-paced video game-inspired aesthetic into a wild ride of loss that follows four teens numbed by tragedy who decide to form a technicolour pop-electronica band in this riotous yet emotionally trenchant feature.



We are Little Zombies

**Watergate — Or: How We Learned to Stop an Out of Control President** is Academy Award-winning director **Charles Ferguson's** (*Inside Job*) forensic investigation into the scandal that brought down a president. Bringing together historic reporting, in-depth re-enactments and new interviews with political and media powerbrokers, Ferguson's exhaustive research and unprecedented access makes **Watergate** the definitive document of the scandal and its repercussions.

In an unmissable festival-only experience, audiences are invited to settle in for 14 hours of remarkable filmmaking from iconoclastic Argentinian director, **Mariano Llinás**. Shot over a ten-year period, **La Flor** ups the ante of Llinás' 2008 *Historias extraordinarias*, taking his cinematic storytelling to unequaled new heights. *La Flor's* six parts will screen across three one-off sessions.

#### FAMOUS FACES

**Keira Knightley** leads a star-studded cast in **Official Secrets** — a true story thriller about Katharine Gun, the British secret service whistleblower who tried to stop the Iraq war. Staring alongside an incredible ensemble cast that includes, **Ralph Fiennes, Matt Smith** and **Rhys Ifans**, *Official Secrets* makes a forceful argument that “doing something is always better than doing nothing.”

**Tilda Swinton** stars alongside her daughter, **Honor Swinton Byrne**, in **Joanna Hogg's** *The Souvenir* — an intimate semi-autobiographical drama that won a Grand Jury Prize at this year's Sundance Film Festival; while a characteristically brilliant **Elijah Wood** excruciates as an insufferable moustachioed millennial battling for his estranged father's affections in horror producer **Ant Timpson's** directorial debut, *Come to Daddy*.

**Mia Wasikowska** and **Damon Herriman** star in *Judy & Punch*, a delightfully offbeat feminist update of *Punch and Judy* from director **Mirrah Foulkes**, while **Alia Shawkat** returns to MIFF screens in Australian director **Sophie Hyde's** adaptation of Emma Jane Unsworth's acclaimed novel, *Animals*.

#### A NEW HOME FOR VR

In 2019, MIFF's VR program will be extended through a bold new partnership with Arts House — Melbourne's home of contemporary performance. Focused on experimentation, new technologies and untold stories, the partnership will see MIFF and Arts House collaboratively presenting innovative and immersive new VR works during the festival.

Headlining the program is *The Waiting Room* — the groundbreaking new 3D VR experience from revered Australian filmmakers **Molly Reynolds, Rolf de Heer** and **Mark Eland**. A rumination on humanity, its creativity and its destructiveness, *The Waiting Room* will leave audiences in contemplative awe.

#### INTERNATIONAL AWARD WINNERS

The breakout hit of this year's Venice Film Festival (winning four awards), **What You Gonna Do When the World's on Fire?** is an exquisite portrait of life in New Orleans. Unfolding over the course of one sweltering summer, **Roberto Minervini's** film offers us four glimpses into the city's psyche: Judy, a recovering addict and bar owner; young brothers Ronaldo and Titus; Kevin, a proud Mardi Gras chief; and the New Black Panthers.

Winner of a Sundance Special Jury Award, **Monos** is a thrillingly original work of cinema, situated somewhere between *Lord of the Flies* and *Apocalypse Now*. Helmed by Colombian-Ecuadorian director **Alejandro Landes**, *Monos* is “part allegory for Columbia's never-ending political unrest, part a darkly twisted, reality-pushing fairy tale” that will leave audiences gasping.

**Cold Case Hammar skjöld** explores the mysterious death of UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld in a 1961 plane crash in the Congo. Plunging himself into the middle of the mystery, Danish director **Mads Brügger** uncovers an outrageous parade of revelations involving secret death squads, international spies and white supremacist militias, which earned him Sundance's World Cinema Documentary Directing Award.



The Rest

## DRAMATIC DOCUMENTARIES

Continuing the impassioned advocacy that drove 2017's *Human Flow*, art superstar **Ai Weiwei** focuses his attention on the voices, faces and bodies caught in Europe's refugee crisis in *The Rest*. Through stunning close-up portraits, *The Rest* follows individual stories that contribute to an unflinching and forthright examination of life in tents, behind barbed wire and battling against bureaucracy.

The fall of Hollywood producing titan Harvey Weinstein is told through the testimonies of the women he allegedly targeted in *Untouchable* — a powerful and damning documentary from director **Ursula Macfarlane**; while producer-turned-director **Lesley Chilcott** (*An Inconvenient Truth*, MIFF '06) turns her lens on Sea Shepherd co-founder Captain Paul Watson in *Watson*, a film that serves as a critical record of the tireless crusader's activism.

In a film devoid of humans altogether, *Aquarela* sees boundary-pushing documentary maker **Victor Kossakovsky** turn his unparalleled cinematic eye to the most fundamental of all subjects: water. A jaw-droppingly vivid collage of 96 frames-per-second, this wordless meditation explores water's capacity for both limitless creation and wholesale destruction.

Closer to home and four years after delivering MIFF audiences *Gayby Baby*, director **Maya Newell** crafts another powerful, essential portrait of Australian youth, putting the plight of the Northern Territory's Indigenous children in the spotlight with *In My Blood It Runs*.

British alt-rock superstar PJ Harvey and Irish war photojournalist Seamus Murphy set out to explore war-torn Kosovo and Afghanistan and the poor neighbourhoods of Washington DC in *A Dog Called Money* — capturing impressions, sounds and ideas that served as the catalyst for Harvey's album, *The Hope Six Demolition Project*.

## FEATURES FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

Although grounded in one woman's experience, Israeli director **Michal Aviad**'s film *Working Woman* speaks to the stories of countless women whose ambitions are thwarted by male abuses of power. Featuring an assured and measured performance by celebrated Israeli actress **Liron Ben Shlush**, this coolly observed drama presents the insidious nature of sexual harassment in the workplace with all the complexity and urgency it deserves.

In *Mr Jones*, veteran Polish director **Agnieszka Holland** unearths an essential chapter of history with her biopic about Welsh journalist Gareth Jones and his efforts to expose Soviet atrocities during the 1930s; while revered British photographer **Richard Billingham** revisits his own coming of age in a chaotic 1980s council flat in *Ray & Liz*, portraying the period with a tender, melancholy beauty full of subtle humour and pathos.

Rounding out the 2019 First Glance announcements are two extraordinary works perfectly positioned in the context of a festival. Hungarian director **Béla Tarr**'s breathtaking magnum opus, *Sátántangó*, has been restored to mark its 25th anniversary. A masterpiece of contemporary cinema, this beautiful restoration from the original 35mm negative is an absolute must-see for cinephiles.

Taiwanese auteur, and one of slow cinema's greatest talents, **Tsai Ming-liang** swaps the virtual-reality splendour of *The Deserted* (MIFF '18) for a contemplative work of close-up portraiture in *Your Face*. In his most reflective, meticulous, stripped-back film yet, Tsai captures 13 faces each training their gaze at the camera in a remarkable series of unbroken shots that intimately reveal the thoughts and feelings contained in each face.

This year MIFF will introduce **five new festival venues**, extending the festival's reach and accessibility across the inner city. Along with the return of the Capitol Theatre, new MIFF venues for 2019 include Plenary at Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, Arts House, Sofitel Melbourne on Collins Auditorium and Carlton's Cinema Nova.

Cossar said: "this year MIFF returns to take over the Melbourne CBD and beyond, as we introduce our range of new 2019 venues — some old favourites returned in brilliant new lustre, such as the Capitol Theatre, as well as a range of others primed to deliver incredible cinema in brand new settings for the festival."



### THE COMPLETE LIST OF FIRST GLANCE TITLES:

#### World Premieres —

- *Angel of Mine* (Australia)
- *H is for Happiness* (Australia)
- *The Australian Dream* (Australia / UK)

#### Australian Premieres —

- *Cold Case Hammarskjöld* (Denmark)
- *La Flor* (Argentina)
- *Little Monsters* (Australia)
- *Mr. Jones* (UK / Poland / Ukraine)
- *Official Secrets* (USA / UK)
- *The Art Of Self-Defense* (USA)
- *The Rest* (Germany)
- *Watergate* (USA)
- *Watson* (USA)
- *We Are Little Zombies* (Japan)
- *What You Gonna Do When the World's on Fire?* (Italy/USA/France)
- *Working Woman* (Israel)

#### Victorian Premieres —

- *A Dog Called Money* (Ireland / UK)
- *Animals* (UK / Ireland / Australia)
- *Aquarela* (Denmark / Germany / UK)
- *Come To Daddy* (New Zealand / Canada / Ireland / USA)
- *In Fabric* (UK)
- *In My Blood It Runs* (Australia)
- *Judy & Punch* (Australia)
- *Monos* (Colombia / Argentina / Netherlands / Germany / Sweden / Uruguay)
- *Ray & Liz* (UK)
- *Sátántangó* (Hungary / Germany / Switzerland)
- *The Souvenir* (UK)
- *The Waiting Room* (Australia)
- *Untouchable* (Taiwan)
- *Your Face* (Taiwan)

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### NOTES TO EDITOR

- The 2019 Melbourne International Film Festival runs 1–18 August.
- Opening Night, Centrepiece and Family Gala tickets on sale now.
- General public tickets are on sale Friday 12 July.
- Pick up a copy of the printed guide in *The Age* on Saturday 13 July.
- Visit [www.miff.com.au](http://www.miff.com.au) to explore the full program.

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### MEDIA KIT

Images and synopses [here](#)