

MIFF ANNOUNCES RECORD SLATE OF PREMIERE FUND FILMS FOR 2019 FESTIVAL

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MIFF 2019 Media Centre



The **MIFF Premiere Fund** delivers seven world and Australian premieres to the 68th Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF), including Paul Ireland's gritty reimagining of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* starring **Hugo Weaving** and **Maziar Lahooti's** highly anticipated directorial debut, *Below*.

The Premiere Fund, which provides minority co-financing to new Australian quality theatrical (narrative and documentary) feature films that then premiere at MIFF, has invested in more than 70 projects including the MIFF 2019 slate. Four of this year's suite of Premiere Fund films have also been directed by alumni of the **MIFF Accelerator Lab** for emerging screen directors, including: **John Sheedy**, **Jayden Stevens**, **Rodd Rathjen** and **Maziar Lahooti**.

Reimagining the Bard's play about morality, mercy and justice into a topical tale of love and loyalty, Ireland and his co-writer, the late **Damian Hill** (*West of Sunshine*, MIFF 2018), have crafted a touching story about a young Muslim woman, Jaiwara, who falls for a non-Muslim musician, Claudio.

Ireland's film takes audiences on an emotional, action-packed ride, with a beautifully-shot Melbourne as the backdrop. As Jaiwara, **Megan Hajar** is luminous. **Harrison Gilbertson** (*My Mistress*, MIFF Premiere Fund 2014), **Fayssal Bazzi** (*The Merger*, MIFF 2018) and **Daniel Henshall** (*Acute Misfortune*, MIFF Premiere Fund 2018) join **Hugo Weaving** in a diverse ensemble that also includes **Doris Younane** and **Mark Leonard Winter** in fervently penetrating performance as Angelo.

In *Below*, **Ryan Corr** (*Holding the Man*) and **Anthony LaPaglia** (*Balibo*) star alongside **Phoenix Raei** (*The Heights*), **Alison Whyte** (*The Kettering Incident*), **Morgana O'Reilly** (*Offspring*) and **Zenia Star** (*The Merger*) in **Maziar Lahooti's** pitch-black comedy. A unique, and uniquely provocative take on Australia's controversial asylum-seeker detention system, *Below* is a film that's bound to get audiences talking.

Accelerator Lab alumnus director **Rodd Rathjen's** *Buoyancy* has its international premiere at MIFF following its world premiere at this year's Berlin International Film Festival where it was hailed a "terse minimalist thriller" for its portrayal of a Cambodian boy's enslavement on a Thai fishing trawler. Stunningly shot by cinematographer **Michael Latham** (*Island of the Hungry Ghosts* and *Strange Colours*, MIFF 2018), *Buoyancy* was filmed on location in Cambodia with a cast of non-actors who lend the work a vérité feel that underscores the real-life urgency of its message.

Featuring appearances from rock sensation **Courtney Barnett**, local punk trio **Cable Ties** and Sikh-Australian slam poet **Sukhjit Khalsa**, *No Time for Quiet*, from directors **Hylton Shaw** and **Samantha Dinning**, joins a group of girls and gender-diverse youths as they discover the empowering strength of music through a GIRLS ROCK! camp in Melbourne. Produced by **Pip Campey** (*Bastardy*, MIFF Premiere Fund 2008), *No Time for Quiet* offers a remarkable insight into contemporary teenage lives, and an optimistic message of inclusion and acceptance.

From Hong Kong to Hollywood, the Shaw Brothers to *The Matrix*, Kung Fu films have been busting box offices and breaking barriers since the 1960s. *Iron Fists & Kung Fu Kicks* is the wild story of how the way of the dragon became a global phenomenon. Directed by **Serge Ou** and produced by Veronica Fury (*Electric Boogaloo: The Wild, Untold Story of Cannon Films*, MIFF Premiere Fund 2014), *Iron Fists & Kung Fu Kicks* features **Bruce Lee**, **Jackie Chan**, **Cheng Pei-pei**, **Cynthia Rothrock**, **Jessica Henwick** and Australian stuntman **Richard Norton** (*Mad Max: Fury Road*), in a sweeping kick of action-packed moviemaking mayhem that uncovers how Kung Fu movies spread from Hong Kong to Hollywood.

Deadpan to its core, *A Family* is an offbeat comedy that ventures into the home of a lonely man who hires actors to play his parents, brother and sister. The feature-film debut from MIFF Accelerator Lab alumus **Jayden Stevens** (*Between Trees*, MIFF 2014), *A Family* is set and shot in Ukraine with a Ukrainian cast, producing an Australian film with a decidedly East European bent to its humour, a kind of low-key derangement that grows funnier as it gets weirder.

Rounding out this year's group of Premiere Fund films is director **John Sheedy's** *H is for Happiness*. The story of a relentlessly optimistic and hilariously forthright girl who hatches a variety of outlandish schemes to make her fractured family happy again. This charming adaptation of award-winning novel *My Life as an Alphabet* stars **Miriam Margolyes** (*Harry Potter*), **Emma Booth** (*Hounds of Love*), **Richard Roxburgh** (*Rake*), **Deborah Mailman** (*The Sapphires*) and **Joel Jackson** (*Jungle*) alongside scene-stealing performances by newcomers **Daisy Axon** and **Wesley Patten**.

"The Premiere Fund champions stories that need telling and we are so proud of this year's slate of wonderfully diverse and inclusive premieres," said MIFF Premiere Fund Executive Producer **Mark Woods**. "With a record number of films on the slate this year, we take our hats off to the talented filmmakers that we have the privilege of working with and we look forward to the Fund continuing to play its part in supporting quality new Australian cinema."

THE COMPLETE LIST OF 2019 PREMIERE FUND TITLES:

- A Family
- Below
- Buoyancy
- H is for Happiness
- Iron Fists and Kung Fu Kicks
- Measure for Measure
- No Time for Quiet

NOTES TO EDITOR

- The 2019 Melbourne International Film Festival runs 1–18 August.
- *H is for Happiness* Family Gala tickets on sale now.
- General public tickets are on sale Friday 12 July.
- For more information on the MIFF Premiere Fund slate and background, visit www.miff.com.au/premierfund
- Pick up a copy of the printed guide in *The Age* on Saturday 13 July.
- Visit www.miff.com.au to explore the full program.

MEDIA CENTRE

Download hi-res images and film synopses [here](#)

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