

## MIFF announces record-breaking program and the premiere of Tarantino's *Once Upon a Time...in Hollywood*

### Media Contacts

Tiki Menegola  
E tiki@commonstate.co  
M (+61) 467 227 822

Luke McKinnon  
E luke@commonstate.co  
M (+61) 408 640 329

MIFF 2019 Media Centre



Once Upon a Time...in Hollywood

Celebrating its 68<sup>th</sup> year, the Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) today unveiled its 2019 program – the largest in its history. Featuring **259** feature films, **123** shorts and **16** virtual reality experiences, MIFF 2019 will include **31** world premieres and **160** Australian premieres over **18** electrifying days of cinema.

Unveiling his first program as MIFF's Artistic Director, Al Cossar said:

"I am absolutely thrilled to share my first festival with Melbourne in 2019. Rich in its diversity, this program is a true celebration of cinema: promising countless adventures into the kinds of places and people, ideas and experiences that you won't find at your local multiplex. With titles from 78 countries, MIFF 2019 gives you the world on film; and as one of the world's largest showcases of Australian filmmaking, it's a chance for audiences to celebrate our own stories, too."

In a coup for the festival, MIFF will be the first place that Melburnians can watch the year's most anticipated film – Quentin Tarantino's *Once Upon a Time...in Hollywood* – as it premieres on the festival's opening weekend.

A love letter to, and elegy for, the Golden Age of American movie-making, as well as a long overdue feature double bill for **Leonardo DiCaprio** and **Brad Pitt**, *Once Upon a Time...in Hollywood* sees the pair co-starring as ageing TV actor and wannabe movie star Rick Dalton (DiCaprio) and his stunt double/driver/best friend Cliff Booth (Pitt).

Featuring a brilliant supporting cast that includes Australia's **Margot Robbie** and **Damon Herriman**, alongside **Al Pacino**, **Kurt Russell**, **Timothy Olyphant**, **Dakota Fanning**, **Damien Lewis**, and **Luke Perry** (in his final big-screen role), *Once Upon a Time...in Hollywood* will screen on 35mm at the iconic Astor Theatre to make the most of its stunning celluloid texture.

Having already announced three of its four Gala event films – including the opening night screening of the extraordinary Adam Goodes documentary, *The Australian Dream* – the festival will conclude with the Closing Night Gala screening of director **Lulu Wang's** acclaimed *The Farewell*.

Recipient of the Sundance Institute's Vanguard Award in honour of its innovation, originality and independent spirit, *The Farewell* expands upon a true story Wang previously revealed on NPR's *This American Life*.

Based on an actual lie, the film follows Chinese-born, US-raised Billi (**Awkwafina**), who returns to Changchun to find that although the whole family knows its beloved matriarch, Nai Nai, has been given mere weeks to live, they've decided to keep Nai Nai in the dark about it. Funny, heart-warming and achingly honest, *The Farewell* is both deeply heartfelt and delightfully wry.



MIFF 2019 offers audiences the chance to see, hear and experience cinema like never before thanks to a diverse program that goes beyond the big screen to include captivating cross pollinations with iconic names from the music world and a dedicated virtual reality program along with an investigation into the impact of the online sphere on humans; a timely focus on films that explore the environmental concerns of our age; a movie marathon dedicated to Jeff Goldblum; and much, much more.

### HEADLINERS PROGRAM

Reflecting another extraordinary year of filmmaking, this year's Headliners program represents the most storied films in international and local cinema:

A dual award winner at the 2018 Venice Film Festival, Jennifer Kent's *The Nightingale* pulls no punches in its brutal depiction of life in colonial Tasmania – in particular, the lives of women and Indigenous Australians. With extraordinary performances from Irish actor Aisling Franciosi (*Game of Thrones*) and Elcho Island's Baykali Ganambarr (who won Venice's Marcello Mastroianni Award for Best Young Actor), *The Nightingale* is an essential, if unsettling, cinematic experience.

Winner of the Best Director prize at Cannes, *Young Ahmed* comes from two-time Palme d'Or-winning filmmakers Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne and tells the provocative but ultimately tender tale of an Islamic teenager who falls under the influence of an extremist.

In *Matthias & Maxime*, French-Canadian auteur Xavier Dolan returns with a funny, tense and heartfelt love story about two childhood best friends coming to terms with their secret feelings for each other; while tensions between violent cops and neighbourhood youth explode in director Ladj Ly's Cannes Jury Prize-winning *Les Misérables*, which brings the spirit of Victor Hugo to the cultural skirmishes of the Parisian suburbs.

Filtering today's bleak political reality through a scathingly satirical lens, provocateur Chris Morris (*Four Lions*, MIFF 2010) takes inspiration from a hundred true stories in the Anna Kendrick-starring counter-terrorism farce, *The Day Shall Come*.

Acclaimed and adored director Pedro Almodóvar reunites with actors Antonio Banderas (who won the Cannes Best Actor prize for the role) and Penelope Cruz for *Pain and Glory*, Almodóvar's vibrant, provocative and nostalgic homage to an endlessly fascinating topic: himself.

Winner of Best Screenplay and the Queer Palm at this year's Cannes, *Girlhood* director Céline Sciamma's *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* depicts a beautifully calibrated, incandescent romance between a painter and her subject. Working from a deceptively simple narrative, Sciamma tightens the emotional screws with devastating precision as she explores her characters' emotionally overwhelming relationship with heartbreaking clarity.

Elsewhere in the Headliners program, a mythological Brazilian town falls under attack from invading forces in *Bacurau* – an explosive, Cannes Jury Prize-winning genre cocktail of sci-fi Western and action-packed colonial allegory from the directors Kleber Mendonça Filho (*Aquarius*) and Juliano Dornelles.

Sharing *Bacurau*'s visceral quality, renowned Chinese auteur Diao Yi'nan returns with *The Wild Goose Lake* – the follow up to his Berlin-winning hit *Black Coal, Thin Ice* (MIFF 2014). Reimagining film noir for the seedy underbelly of China's "second-tier" suburbs, Yi'nan plunges the audience back into the treacherous, dimly-lit terrain of his nation's modern gangland.

*The Dead Don't Die* sees Jim Jarmusch reunite with Adam Driver, Bill Murray, Tilda Swinton and an all-star cast for his Cannes-opening, deadpan take on zombie comedy that simmers with the terror of the present.

Rounding out the Headliners program is *Sorry We Missed You* – director Ken Loach's wrenching tale of the way we live now; a family drama about how the gig economy undermines the very people it promises to save.



## AUSTRALIAN HIGHLIGHTS

In *White Light*, fearless Australian artist, activist and documentary maker George Gittoes reports from the epicentre of America's gun violence catastrophe: South Side Chicago. A first-hand account of the people and politics animating America's bloodiest battlefield, *White Light* sees Gittoes bring his trademark humanity and cinematographic verve to the streets of Chicago, once again staking his claim as our most clear-eyed and compassionate documentary filmmaker.

Trailblazing drama *Kairos* will have its world premiere at the festival. *Kairos* sees one of the breakout stars of *Down Under* (MIFF 2016), Chris Bunton – who also appears in MIFF's 2019 Centrepiece Gala film, *Little Monsters* – pack a formidable punch in a rare local film that places both a performer and a character with Down syndrome at its centre; while high school and hook-up apps go hand-in-hand in *Sequin in a Blue Room* – an adventurous exploration of technology and young sexuality from recent AFTRS graduate Samuel Van Grinsven .

Starring Tiriela Mora (*The Castle*) and Elly Chatfield (*Australia*), *Smoke Between Trees* is the sensitive and emotionally rich story of a broken man whose life is forever changed when he's reunited with his grandson. Tracing an intimate and sensitive arc of interpersonal relationships, *Smoke Between Trees* from director Michael Joy (*Men's Group*) sketches a broader picture of family, race, cultural resilience and love, offering a sympathetic and captivating portrait of a devastated man putting himself back together again

An intimate and uplifting drama, *Emu Runner* is the result of a 15-year collaboration between first-time Australian director Imogen Thomas and the people of Brewarrina in New South Wales. From its eye-catching landscape, to its tender narrative, to the charismatic performance from newcomer Rhae-Kye Waites as Gem, *Emu Runner* is a standout local drama for all ages.

*Morgana* is the story of Morgana Muses – a woman who in her late forties was an unhappy housewife in Albury, but by 50 had established herself as a feminist pornography icon. In a documentary as lively as its subject, co-directors Isabel Peppard and Josie Hess celebrate Morgana's late-in-life calling, journeying from regional Victoria to Berlin's BDSM scene to tell her unique and empowering story.

In another absorbing female-focused documentary, *Martha: A Picture Story* sees filmmaker Selina Miles illuminate the life of intrepid American photojournalist Martha Cooper, a remarkable figure known for her trailblazing documentation of street art and graffiti culture. Rocketing through Berlin, New York and Baltimore, the film sees Cooper's adventures come to life with rich archival footage, tales from subjects and peers, and through her own electrifying photos.

Outback zombies, supernatural housing projects, female revenge, sleep deprivation and Gothic spookiness electrify in *Dark Place* – a twisted horror anthology from five up-and-coming Indigenous filmmakers. Produced by Majhid Heath (Warwick Thornton's *The Darkside*), *Dark Place* explores contemporary Indigenous ideas via the expressive medium of fantasy/horror – with deliciously entertaining results.

## MIFF PREMIERE FUND

Topping-off MIFF's Australian line-up are seven previously-announced premieres from the MIFF Premiere Fund, with four of them being directorial debuts from alumni of the MIFF Accelerator Lab: Jayden Stevens' *A Family*; Maziar Lahooti's *Below*; Rodd Rathjen's *Buoyancy* (the first Premiere Fund film to screen as part of the MIFF Headliners strand); and MIFF 2019 Family Gala *H is for Happiness* from John Sheedy. The other three premieres are: Paul Ireland's *Measure for Measure*; Hylton Shaw and Samantha Dinning's *No Time For Quiet*; and Serge Ou's *Iron Fists & Kung Fu Kicks*, which ties-in with a Shaw Brothers' double feature in the program.



## INTERNATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Showcasing MIFF's commitment to unearthing the best of global cinema – and presenting a record slate of **44 films direct from Cannes** – this year's international highlights include:

**Alice** – French-Australian filmmaker Josephine Mackerras's SXSW Grand Jury Prize-winning story of one woman's empowerment. Sensitively destigmatising common ideas about sex work, Mackerras' understated and unadorned feature debut is striking for its un-sensationalised representation of the industry and welcome lack of melodrama.

Seven years after *Spring Breakers*, Harmony Korine heads back to the beach with **The Beach Bum**. Reuniting with cinematographer Benoît Debie (*Climax*, MIFF 2018), Korine serves up another slice of neon-hued debauchery: trading gun-toting college co-eds for a bongo-playing, bong-smoking free spirit by the name of Moondog – a role Matthew McConaughey was born to play.

The astonishing **Vai** sees eight different female directors from eight separate Pacific Island nations celebrate Indigenous resilience and creativity through the life of one extraordinary woman. This ambitious film makes breathtaking use of the natural environment of the Pacific region, but most importantly, *Vai* gives Pasifika filmmakers control of their own stories. The result is a bold, beautiful showcase of often hidden and misunderstood communities and the complex lives that exist within them.

Winner of UNESCO's Cultural Diversity Award at the 2018 Asia Pacific Screen Awards, Indonesian auteur Garin Nugroho's **Memories of My Body** dances through gender stereotypes, societal oppression and his homeland's recent political history. Inspired by the life of dancer Rianto, who narrates the film as himself, *Memories of My Body* is both a sensitive rite-of-passage drama and a tribute to the cathartic power of artistic expression.

With a star-studded cast that includes Olivia Colman and Walton Goggins, **Them That Follow** examines an overtly religious Pentecostal society that has cut itself off from the rest of the world. The feature debut from writer/director duo Britt Poulton and Dan Madison Savage, *Them That Follow* is a slow-burning, deeply empathetic thriller driven by outstanding performances.

## DOCUMENTARY HIGHLIGHTS

Hallmarked by its geographic and directorial breadth, the 2019 documentary slate shines a light on some of the most important stories of our time.

Winner of both the Grand Jury and Audience Award for Best Documentary at SXSW as well as the Cannes L'Œil D'Or for Documentary, **For Sama** is a documentary of savage power and immediacy.

When the Arab Spring came to Aleppo in 2012, director Waad al-Kateab was one of the first on the street. Then a 20-year-old student and amateur filmmaker, she first began documenting the protests and later, as the Assad government moved in to crush them, she chronicled the grievous and prolonged urban war that followed. The result is an unflinching account of the horrors of war and a gripping insight into life as a woman, wife and mother in the middle of the 21st century's most brutal war zone.

In **Midnight Family** we meet a family cruising the streets of Mexico City to make a living as unregistered paramedics. Directed by Luke Lorentzen, *Midnight Family* is an intense, frenetic and eye-opening documentary, which won Best Documentary at the Hong Kong and Guadalajara film festivals, and Sundance's Special Jury Award for cinematography.

In 1988, Merata Mita was the first Maori woman to write and (solo) direct a narrative feature film in New Zealand. In 2019, she remains the only Maori woman to do so. **Merata: How Mum Decolonised the Screen** is her story, as told by her youngest son.

For lovers of sports-focused documentaries, **Maiden** tells the story of Brit Tracey Edwards, who at age 24 made history by skipping the first all-female crew in the Whitbread Round the World yacht race, overcoming all the odds to triumphantly navigate their way around the world.

For more than 30 years, Marion Stokes recorded everything on her TV: every single minute of every channel in America, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. But who was Marion Stokes and why did she dedicate her life to something so utterly obsessive? **Recorder: The Marion Stokes Project** is documentarian Matt Wolf's fascinating attempt to answer that question.

## MUSIC ON FILM

This always-popular programming strand ventures backstage to deliver stories from the international music landscape – featuring names both almighty and unlikely.

Making its Australian premiere at MIFF, **Wu Tang Clan: Of Mics and Men** has been described as “one of the best music docu-series in a very long time, a piece of work that doesn't just relay the chronological facts of the band's existence but translates their art and fully conveys their cultural importance.”

After more than five decades in the music industry, rock star Suzi Quatro looks back on her pioneering career in the world premiere of **Suzie Q**. Directed by filmmaker Liam Firmager, the film is an intimate exploration of a woman who has shone bright, rocked hard, confronted her ego, remained resilient and, while not receiving recognition in her birth country, continued to pack out venues across the globe, including in Australia.

Winner of Best Documentary at the UK's National Music Awards, **Bros: After the Screaming Stops** follows the reunion of identical twins Matt and Luke Goss (of almost forgotten 80s boyband Bros) 28 years after they split, professionally and personally. Thanks to its fascinating tragicomic stars, this remarkably candid and clever pop doc plays as if scripted by Christopher Guest or Steve Coogan.

46 years after it was performed, the glorious Aretha Franklin concert documentary **Amazing Grace** emerges in all its splendid glory. In 1972, aged 29 and at her Grammy-winning peak, Franklin recorded a live album at the New Temple Missionary Baptist Church in Los Angeles. Director Sydney Pollack, then a talented up-and-comer, was there to document Franklin's musical homecoming. As *Rolling Stone* exclaimed: “It's the closest thing to witnessing a miracle.”

## ENVIRONMENTAL FILMS

Curated exclusively for this year's festival, MIFF's Environmental Films strand explores some of the most intensely pressing subject matter of our time.

In **Aquarela**, boundary-pushing documentary maker Viktor Kossakovsky turns his unparalleled cinematic eye to the most fundamental of all subjects: water; while **Watson** follows Sea Shepherd co-founder Captain Paul Watson. Helmed by producer-turned-director Lesley Chilcott (*An Inconvenient Truth*, MIFF 2006), **Watson** is a critical record of the tireless crusader's activism, and of his decades-long battle to protect the oceans and their wildlife – whatever the cost.

A multiple award-winner at Sundance, **Honeyland** is a visually sumptuous look at the endangered tradition of Macedonian wild beekeeping, the tenacious woman keeping it alive and the powerful environmental message her efforts have for us all, from debutant documentarians Ljubomir Stefanov and Tamara Kotevska.

In a similar vein, **The Biggest Little Farm** documents the journey of thirty-something married couple John and Molly Chester (a cinematographer and pastry chef/food blogger, respectively) who knew nothing about agriculture when they ambitiously decided to start a biodiverse farm on depleted land an hour's drive from Los Angeles.

## THE WORLD ONLINE

A special programming strand for 2019, The World Online explores the films and filmmakers who are taking the internet – and those using it – as the starting point for a conversation on how the online world is pervading and influencing our daily lives and shaping our collective future.

Winner of this year's Sundance Film Festival Breakthrough Filmmaker award, director Liza Mandelup's **Jawline** follows Tennessee teen Austyn Tester, as he chases his version of the American dream, one like and livestream at a time; while **Picture Character** is the fascinating inside story of emojis, the world's favourite constructed language and the mysterious Silicon Valley organisation that approves them.

In 2017, over 400 million everyday Chinese “anchors” were regularly sharing every moment from their “studios” (homes, offices, classrooms etc) through video live-streaming sites. Then the government began shutting it all down. Composed entirely from footage sifted out of hundreds of hours of pre-censorship streams, **Present.Perfect** is both a time capsule from another era and a remarkably pertinent commentary on contemporary Chinese society.

When it came to pinpointing the terrible cause of the MH17 catastrophe, unmasking ‘Unite the Right’ white supremacist attackers, and exposing the secret agents who poisoned the Skripals, it wasn't *The New York Times* but independent citizen journalism website **Bellingcat**, the home of online investigation. Led by stay-at-home dad Eliot Higgins, these armchair sleuths might just be the future of investigative journalism. **Bellingcat: Truth in a Post-Truth World** tells their story.



## LVR AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Alongside the festival's key music events – The Film Music of Nick Cave and Warren Ellis, Hear My Eyes fronted by Sampa the Great, and Thurston Moore plays Maya Deren – MIFF is set to deliver a raft of multi-sensory events this year.

In a treat for Melbourne foodies, MIFF has partnered with iconic laneway eatery Supernormal for two food-and-film experiences. Offered across two sittings, the events will offer a five-course banquet created in response to two selected films: *We Are Little Zombies* and *Long Day's Journey into Night*, which will screen following the meal.

MIFF's overnight marathon returns in 2019 – and this year it's going full Goldblum! Before he became the internet's boyfriend, Jeffrey Lynn Goldblum was that delightfully weird actor you loved from that little film *Independence Day*. Or *The Fly*. Or *Earth Girls Are Easy*...Offbeat, quirky and endearingly flirty, there's plenty to love about Jeff. Screening at The Astor, MIFF's much-anticipated *Goldblum Marathon* offers audiences over 12 hours of straight-up Goldblum gold.

Screening at IMAX, *Australia: The Wild Top End* takes audiences on a visually stunning journey through one of the most remote areas on the planet: far Northern Australia. Narrated by Indigenous elder Balang T E Lewis, this inspiring documentary will take you on an adventure to explore the culture and wildlife of Australia's remote wild north, where the oldest surviving human culture has lived for over 50,000 years.

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.

Screening 16 titles from 11 countries, the VR program includes ground-breaking new 3D experience, *The Waiting Room* by Molly Reynolds, Rolf de Heer and Mark Eland; director Darren Emerson's *Common Ground*, which takes the medium of VR to extraordinary new levels as it explores South London's notorious Aylesbury Estate; *Gymnasia*, a dark, twisted fantasy from Emmy-winning studio Felix & Paul; and *Future Dreaming*, a film that draws inspiration from Dreamtime stories and practices, with four young Aboriginal Australians guiding audiences on an immersive journey through their visionary futures.

## DIRECTORS IN FOCUS

Alongside regular programming strands including Animation, Experimentations, Night Shift, Restorations, Shorts and Talks, the 2019 festival will shine a forensic light on three of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century's most important filmmakers: pioneering punk film director **Penelope Spheeris**; eminent Polish auteur **Agnieszka Holland**; and the distinctively brilliant **Peter Strickland**, who has collaborated with the festival team by personally selecting some of his filmic influences and inspirations as part of his retrospective program.

Presenting an oeuvre of each director's filmography, the programs will treat audiences to a selection of films from each director, including Spheeris' *The Boys Next Door* and *Suburbia*, Holland's *Europa Europa* and *In Darkness*, and Strickland's *The Duke of Burgundy* and *In Fabric*.

## 2019 AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Introduced in 2017, MIFF's Ambassador Program presents an incredible lineup in 2019. Designed to help audiences navigate the festival's vast wealth of cinema. This year our ambassadors come from the creative fields of food, art, music and cinema. They include chef **Ben Shewry**, street artist **Rone**, musician **Remi** and actors **Megan Hajjar**, **Thomas Cocquerel**, **Gyton Grantley**, **Joel Jackson**, **Anna McGahan** and **Lily Sullivan**.

Throughout the festival, ambassadors will join audiences to share their recommendations and take part in Q&As, introductions and observations – elevating the MIFF experience to be more informative, more interactive and more entertaining.



The Farewell

## 2019 PROGRAM STRANDS

- *Galas*
- *Special Events*
- *Headliners*
- *Australian Films*
- *International – Asia Pacific*
- *International – Europe*
- *International – Latin America*
- *International – Middle East & Africa*
- *International – North America*
- *Music on Film*
- *Documentaries*
- *Documentary Visions*
- *Environmental Documentaries*
- *The World Online*
- *Experimentations*
- *Restorations*
- *Director in Focus: Agnieszka Holland*
- *Director in Focus: Penelope Spheeris*
- *Director in Focus: Peter Strickland*
- *Night Shift*
- *Virtual Reality*
- *Shorts*
- *Animation*
- *Schools*
- *Talks*

---

## NOTES TO EDITORS

- 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.
- 

## ASSETS

Images and synopses available via our Media Centre, [here](#).