

Melbourne International Film Festival

2019 Year in Review



Melbourne International Film Festival
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Photo: Pheobe Powell



Photo: Aaron Morris & Tony Zotto

In 2019, the Melbourne International Film Festival once again broke records and delivered a world-class program of the best local, national and global cinema across an 18-day celebration of filmmaking and film culture in all its forms.

The oldest and largest film festival in the Southern Hemisphere, MIFF is a Melbourne cultural icon, taking over the heart of the city every winter with screenings, premieres, galas, talks and events that showcase the breadth and depth of the city's passion for and commitment to cinema.

In its 68th year, the festival screened films from 75 countries in 67 languages, showing audiences another side of film - from pioneering avant-garde silent films to the very latest in virtual reality, from three-minute shorts to a 14-hour multi-genre experiment in cinematic storytelling!

Across locations ranging from restored picture palaces to museums and multiplexes throughout the CBD and beyond, veteran cinephiles and first-time festival goers alike gathered to be the first to see dozens of world premieres and hundreds of thrilling, challenging, insightful, moving and exciting films from all over the globe.

MIFF 2019's program of 386 films over 555 sessions, which was seen by 190,000 attendees, would not be possible without the support of our highly valued partners in government, industry, media and more, our Members and Premium Members, the tireless efforts and passions of our dedicated staff, and the amazing enthusiasm of the MIFF Volunteers, who donated more than 15,000 hours of time to the festival.

Thank you for joining with us to make MIFF 2019 such an outstanding success. We look forward to continuing our productive partnerships with you in the future.

Al Cossar
Artistic Director

Victoria Pope
General Manager

MIFF at a glance

18
days

555
sessions

386
films

75
countries

67
languages

31
world premieres

160
Australian premieres

63
Australian films

143
female and non-binary directors

160
special guests

166
sold out sessions

\$63m
publicity campaign

\$1.5M
marketing campaign

\$12.1M
economic impact

191K
attendance

2.2K
members



Festival Program

Screening an impressively diverse range of films – from 75 countries in 67 languages – the 68th MIFF once again brought the world to Melbourne.

Spearheading the program was the Headliners section, featuring the most anticipated, A-list festival hits and award winners from around the globe, including 43 films direct from the Cannes Film Festival.

The festival continued to demonstrate its commitment to and engagement with the local industry, screening more than 60 Australian feature films, shorts, VR experiences and TV series, over 30 of which were in world premiere, including six of the seven MIFF Premiere Fund films.

Gala Events

The Opening Night Gala world premiere of *The Australian Dream*, written by Stan Grant, was attended by over 2,200 people, including the film's subject, Adam Goodes.

The Centrepiece Gala Australian premiere of Abe Forsythe's zom-com *Little Monsters* was attended by Forsythe and cast members Alexander England and Kat Stewart.

The MIFF Family Gala (previously known as the Kids' Gala) featured the sold-out world premiere of MIFF Accelerator Lab alumnus John Sheedy's feature debut, *H is for Happiness*, a MIFF Premiere Fund-supported film. Sheedy and stars Joel Jackson (a MIFF Ambassador), Emma Booth and newcomer Daisy Axon walked the red carpet, along with Blossom the miniature horse.

The Closing Night Gala featured the Australian premiere of American director Lulu Wang's *The Farewell*. Wang and cast member Diana Lin were in attendance as guests of the festival.

Special Events

MIFF 2019 featured one of the biggest suites of special events in the festival's history, including:

- five MIFF Premiere Fund Premium Events
- four gala screenings including MIFF's first open captioned gala
- three MIFF x Music events:
 - *Hear My Eyes: Girlhood* with a live score by Sampa The Great
 - Thurston Moore playing original scores to the films of Maya Deren
 - *The Film Music of Nick Cave and Warren Ellis* with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra
- two MIFF + Supernormal food and film experiences
- the third epic overnight movie marathon – this year dedicated to Jeff Goldblum
- a Shaw Brothers double feature
- the Australian premiere of Quentin Tarantino's *Once Upon a Time... In Hollywood*
- two evenings of Fulldome programming at Scienceworks' Planetarium
- the world premiere of *Australia: The Wild Top End 3D* at IMAX



Photo: Zan Wimberley



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Supporting Local Talent

MIFF is the world's biggest showcase of Australian talent, with over 60 local films screening in 2019, across shorts, features and VR. This array of films told the Australian story via documentaries, drama, thriller, comedy, and award-winning queer cinema, including two Australian films in languages other than English.

Australian films clearly resonate with our audiences too, with almost half of the Audience Award top 20 (nine films) being locally made.

First Peoples

MIFF has a proud history of supporting Indigenous Australian and other First Peoples' films and filmmakers. 18 First Peoples' led or themed projects screened at MIFF 2019, including ten features, seven shorts and one VR work.

MIFF's 2019 Opening Night Gala film, *The Australian Dream*, was the world premiere of the anti-racism documentary about 2014 Australian of the Year, Adam Goodes. *The Australian Dream* was seen by more than 5,000 people during the festival and won MIFF's Audience Award for Best Feature Documentary. The documentary is the best attended film in MIFF's history.

MIFF annually engages the traditional custodians of Melbourne as consultants and to conduct numerous ceremonies within the program.

In 2019, MIFF and the City of Melbourne piloted an audience development program to remove the barriers of attendance for indigenous Australians and marginalised youth from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The project delivered a model of engagement for future festivals.

Women In Film

The festival featured the work of 143 women and non-binary directors, including Lulu Wang, who directed MIFF's Closing Night Gala film, *The Farewell*, and Céline Sciamma, director of the MIFF Audience Award for Narrative Feature, *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*.

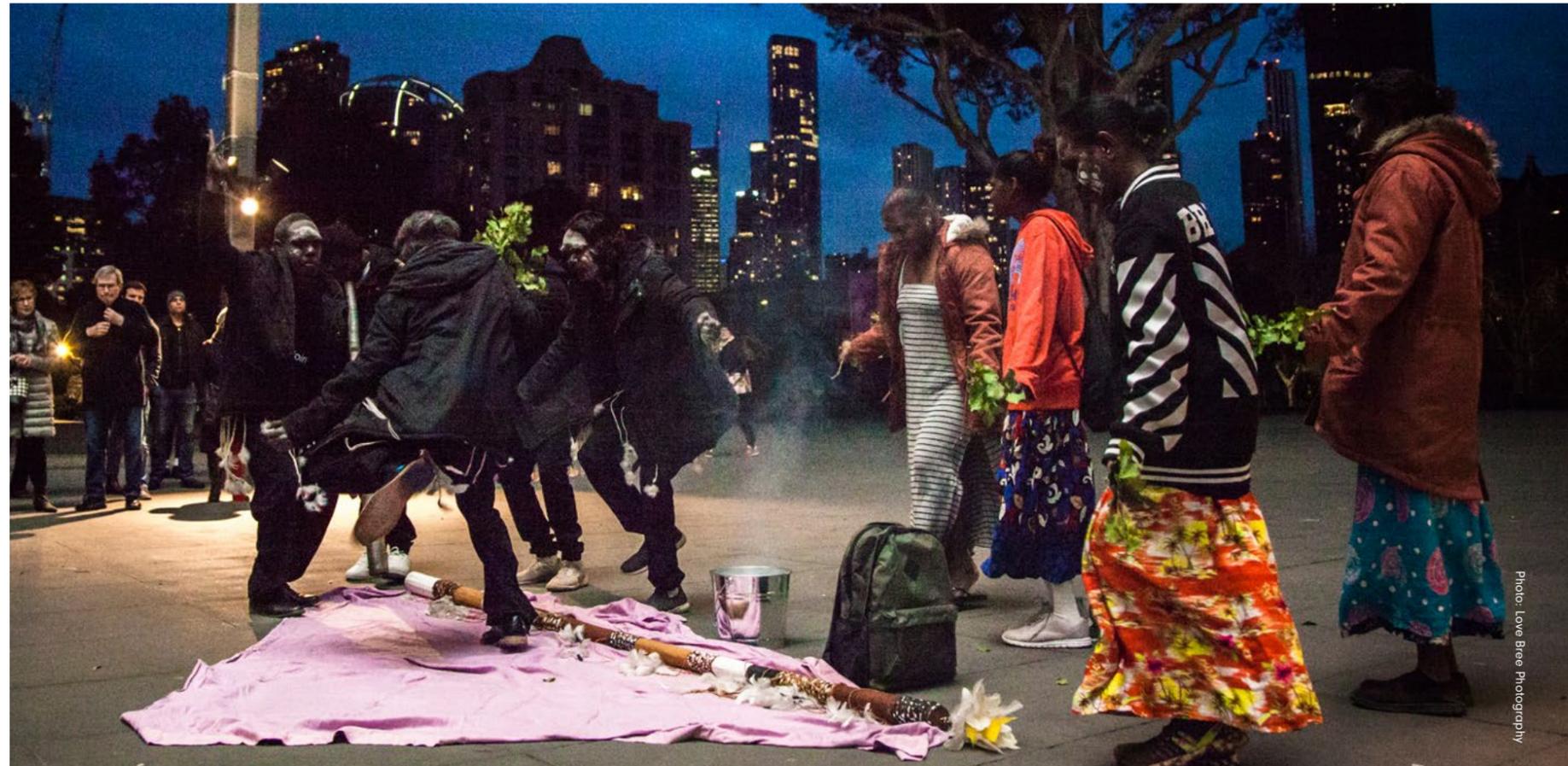


Photo: Love Bree Photography



Photo: Zan Wimberley

MIFF Premiere Fund

The MIFF Premiere Fund offers minority co-financing to new Australian theatrical feature films (narrative and documentary) that then premiere at MIFF. The fund has invested in 70 projects in its 12-year history, deepening MIFF's relationship with local filmmaking talent and building a suite of quality Australian content for the festival and beyond.

In 2019, MIFF Premiere Fund-supported films *A Family*, *Below*, *Buoyancy*, *H is for Happiness*, *Iron Fists and Kung Fu Kicks*, *Measure for Measure* and *No Time for Quiet* all enjoyed their premieres at MIFF, while *H is for Happiness*, *Buoyancy* and *No Time for Quiet* were voted by MIFF audiences in the top-ten most popular films.

Additionally, *Below*, *Buoyancy*, *H is for Happiness* and *A Family* were the feature debuts of alumni from the Accelerator Lab emerging director program, which is part of the MIFF suite of industry programs including the 37°South Market.

MIFF Talks

In 2019, MIFF continued to present a series of free and ticketed panel and conversation events within the MIFF Talks series. These events were designed to complement and expand on the themes, ideas and talent attached to various films in this year's program, involving a variety of local and international guests – including UK director Peter Strickland, musician Thurston Moore, Australian filmmaker Bruce Beresford, film academic Barbara Creed and more.

VR

Virtual Reality returned to MIFF in 2019 to present 16 local and international narrative, documentary and animated immersive experiences from Australia and around the world. For the first time, MIFF partnered with Arts House for three of these VR experiences focused on experimentation, new technologies and untold stories.

MIFF Shorts

The MIFF Shorts program, now in its 58th year, is one of the most highly regarded and long-standing short-film competitions in the Asia-Pacific region and attracts the best short films from around the world – this year including 10 direct from Cannes, and 14 in world premiere.

More than 2,000 short films were considered for the 2019 festival, with more than 100 selected to screen in competition and compete for a total cash prize pool of \$56,000, thanks to MIFF's Shorts Awards partners. We also introduced a new award for Cinematography in a Short Film, bringing the total number of awards to eight.

MIFF Schools

MIFF Schools is an initiative to enrich the cinema experience for younger viewers. This year the program was chosen with a view to presenting high-quality, diverse films in some of the languages commonly taught in Victorian schools: French, German, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin, Spanish and English. The films were scheduled on weekdays to accommodate school-group bookings, while also being available to the general public. Supporting teaching materials were developed to enhance the educational experience.



Photo: Zan Wimberley

Critics Campus

Now in its sixth edition, Critics Campus is MIFF's intensive week-long lab of panels, workshops, mentoring and writing, designed to provide emerging Australian screen critics a unique platform to nurture their talent in a live festival setting. This year's Critics Campus program recruited eight diverse and emerging screen critics from across the country, pairing them for a week of mentoring with three highly regarded international critics and five of the best Australian critics from prominent and respected media outlets.

This year's mentors include two highly esteemed and widely loved international critics: Ela Bittencourt, a Sao Paulo-based critic and festival curator who writes across *Sight & Sound*, *Artforum*, *Film Comment*, *The Hollywood Reporter* and many others; and London's Charlie Lyne, a critic for *The Guardian*, the BBC, and *Sight & Sound*.

2019's local mentors were Dee Jefferson, the Arts Editor for ABC online; Fiona Williams, Managing Editor of SBS Movies; César Albarrán-Torres, Editor of *Senses of Cinema*; Lesley Chow, Associate Editor of *Bright Lights Film Journal* and contributor to Salon and CNN; and Philippa Hawker, film writer for *The Australian*.

An Accessible Festival

In 2019, MIFF improved the scope and quality of our offerings to people living with a disability. Some 12 feature films screened with open captions, including the Centrepiece Gala. This was the first time a MIFF Gala Film has screened with open captions and it was well attended by the deaf and hard of hearing community. MIFF provided Auslan Interpreters at a selection of talks and special events during the festival and all introductions and Q&As at our captioned screenings.

Audio descriptions were provided to accompany 12 feature films across 14 sessions. In addition, the festival continues to present the Best MIFF Shorts with open captions and audio-descriptions, an initiative that commenced in 2018. All MIFF cinema venues provide hearing loops and/or other assistive listening technology. Funding provided by the MIFF Premiere Fund is contingent on films being supplied with fully descriptive open captions and audio descriptions. Companion Cards were accepted across the full program, 10 out of 11 screening venues were wheelchair accessible, 117 feature films and 47 short films were screened with 100% subtitled dialogue and guide dogs and assistance dogs were welcomed across all MIFF cinemas.

A Sustainable Festival

Over 90% of MIFF ticketing is paperless and digital placements were used wherever possible across the 2019 marketing campaign, while the majority of printed components were made to be re-used in future years to minimise waste. MIFF 2019 saw a marked increase in the delivery of films via online methods versus shipping physical materials. MIFF seeks to be as sustainable as possible in its office and festival activities and prioritises the use of venues and suppliers that practice environmental sustainability.

Every effort was made to eliminate single use plastic and disposables across the festival. Bio-plastic reusable or compostable cups were used to serve wine in most venues, and no plastic straws or balloons were used at MIFF events. Lighting and native greenery were used to theme the Plenary foyer for the Opening Night Gala. This approach extended to the Family Gala, where reusable decorations and low impact activities were chosen. Opening night catering was produced from Victorian ingredients and featured Australian native ingredients, while usable food waste was provided to Second Bite.

Travelling Film Showcase

MIFF's Travelling Film Showcase once again toured regional Victoria, stopping at eight towns between August and October with a series of weekend screenings comprising the seven MIFF Premiere Fund-supported films, as well as international narrative films *American Woman*, *Happy New Year*, *Colin Burstead*, *Vai* and local documentary *In My Blood It Runs*.



Photo: Zan Wimberley

Audience

191K
total
attendance

59%
female

35%
under
35 years

18%
speak a language
other than English at home

35%
earn over
\$100,000 annually

58%
are employed on a
full-time or part-time basis

72%
have a bachelor's
degree or higher

2.2K
Members

69%
attended 3 or more
screenings at MIFF 2019

86%
of attendees described
MIFF as 'good' or 'excellent'

80%
of MIFF's audience identify with essence,
stimulation or expression culture segments

89%
of attendees said they were 'likely' or
'very likely' to attend MIFF in the future

80K
Widescreen eNews
subscribers

69K
Facebook
followers

52K
Twitter
followers

16.8K
Instagram
followers

16.5K
YouTube
subscribers

1.2M
YouTube
views

450K
website
sessions

272K
unique
website users

332K
app
downloads

110,000
printed Festival programs
inserted into Spectrum in The Age

50,000
copies circulated via MIFF venues,
street and café distribution

3,789
media breaks

Loyal, confident, sophisticated, social,
expressive and culturally engaged

Strongest positive advocacy is
amongst the under 35 segments (NPS +72)