

BACK IN CINEMAS AND CELEBRATING 70 YEARS, MIFF UNVEILS OPENING AND CLOSING NIGHT FILMS AND FIRST LOOK AT 2022 PROGRAM, INCLUDING PREMIERE FUND LINE-UP

Press Release

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In its platinum anniversary year, the Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) will celebrate in style, returning to cinemas from **4-21 August** with an expansive program of acclaimed international cinema, local World Premieres and a ready-made Australian classic set to debut at the **Opening Night Gala**.

Founded in 1952, MIFF is one of the world’s longest running film festivals and is an enduring icon of the Southern Hemisphere’s cultural calendar. Returning to metro, regional and suburban cinemas, and at-home streaming, the festival’s 70th edition features the launch of MIFF’s much-anticipated Film Competition program and showcases a series of special events, talks, performances, commissioned works and screenings – all of which will highlight and honour this important milestone through the lens of Melbourne’s own history on the silver screen.

MIFF’s 70th festival will commence with the World Premiere of the **MIFF Premiere Fund**-supported ***Of an Age***, a tender coming-of-age feature about youth and love from rising Australian filmmaker, and MIFF Accelerator Lab alumnus, **Goran Stolevski** (*Would You Look at Her*, MIFF 2018; *You Deserve Everything*, MIFF 2016) who was named one of *Variety*’s ‘10 Directors to Watch’ for 2022.

Set and shot in Melbourne, ***Of an Age*** depicts the brief, but lingering, romance between two young men – **Elias Anton** (*Barracuda*) and **Thom Green** (*Dance Academy*) – over the course of one sweltering summer’s day in 1999. Distinctly Australian, funny and heartfelt, the film captures the hinterland of outer suburbia and the crossroads of desire and big dreams in teenage years – not to mention lip-biting moments of attraction and anticipation that, especially with Anton’s and Green’s unforgettable portrayals, will leave audiences pining.

“Goran Stolevski is having an extraordinary 2022, emerging as a major voice within world cinema from right here in Melbourne,” said **MIFF Artistic Director Al Cossar**. “*Of an Age* will make audiences swoon, yes – but it will also make them sit up and take notice. We’re so thrilled that MIFF’s return to cinemas will be marked with this incredible, moving, Melbourne story of love and longing.”

Stolevski voiced his excitement for having his Melbourne made film opening this year’s festival: “Watching movies at MIFF has been a holy winter ritual since I was literally a child. It’s what kept me going, in fact, for two decades, through many tricky periods as a writer-director. To have my film premiere – on Opening Night, no less – is the thrill of a lifetime.”

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After 18-days of world-class cinema, MIFF's **Closing Night Gala** will feature the Australian premiere of *Clean* – the inspirational story of how 'trauma cleaner' **Sandra Pankhurst** responded to an unseen world with radical kindness.

Premiering to acclaim at this year's SXSW, **Lachlan McLeod's** riveting feature documentary celebrates the compassion and resilience of its endearingly plain-spoken subject. Throughout, Pankhurst's personal story – one of abuse, neglect, abandonment but ultimately survival – anchors the film. Undergoing a gender transition in the 1980s, Pankhurst has lived many lives: survivor of childhood abuse, suburban parent, drag queen, sex worker, funeral director, business owner, and motivational speaker. Generous and formidable since day one, hers was a life to be reckoned with. When asked how she'd like to be remembered, she simply replied: "As a kind human being; nothing more, nothing less" – in *Clean*, she shows the true value of exactly that.

From **4-21 August**, MIFF returns with a full cinema season for the first time since 2019; across an expanded footprint, the Festival will host screenings in Melbourne's CBD and suburban sites, as well as through regional Victoria. Beyond cinemas, **MIFF Play**, the festival's online streaming platform, will also return with a selection of films from the 2022 program available nationally from **11-28 August**.

With two unique Australian films book-ending the festival, which also features a bumper Premiere Fund slate, MIFF's 70th program is brimming with acclaimed international festival releases, discoverable gems, enlightening documentaries and award-winning films. Ahead of the full program announcement on **Tuesday 12 July**, a snapshot of this year's eagerly-awaited program has been revealed:

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PREMIERE FUND FILMS

The MIFF Opening Night World Premiere of **Goran Stolevski's** *Of an Age*, is one of ten **MIFF Premiere Fund**-supported films debuting at this year's festival. Continuing the Premiere Fund's focus on "stories that need telling," key themes in this year's slate include environmentalism and sustainability, the housing crisis, diversity, inclusion, coming-of-age, and the desire for human connection, as well as CALD, LGBTQ+ and First Nations issues. Some 50% of this year's slate have female directors, a third of the films significantly feature languages other than English, and 40% are directed by MIFF **Accelerator Lab** alumni.

In *Greenhouse by Joost*, zero-waste pioneer **Joost Bakker**, with the help of esteemed chefs **Matt Stone** and **Jo Barrett**, embarks on a journey to devise, design and develop a self-sufficient, eco-friendly residence like no other. Prolific television documentary maker Bruce Permezel makes his big-screen debut, alongside co-director Rhian Skirving (*Off Country*, MIFF Premiere Fund 2021; *Rock n Roll Nerd*, MIFF Premiere Fund 2008), as he follows Joost's Future Food System's journey from conception to exhilarating completion at Melbourne's Federation Square (where it still stands).

A young Tasmanian activist follows in the literal footsteps of his late father who in the 1980s fought to save the pristine Franklin River wilderness in feature documentary **Franklin**. Featuring former Greens leader Bob Brown, historian Auntie Patsy Cameron, entrepreneur Dick Smith, and narrated by **Hugo Weaving**, **Franklin** is a rousing political and personal story of resistance, legacy and the power of the people from Accelerator Lab alumnus **Kasimir Burgess** (*The Leunig Fragments*, MIFF 2019; *Fell*, MIFF 2014).

As Australia's egalitarian dream fades and its housing crisis deepens, the **Margot Robbie**-narrated feature documentary **Under Cover** is a simultaneously shocking and yet deeply empathic exploration — by *The Coming Back Out Ball Movie* (MIFF Premiere Fund, 2018) director **Sue Thomson** — of the fastest-growing social group facing homelessness: women aged over 55.

The delightfully hyper-intimate new feature from director **Sari Braithwaite** (*[CENSORED]*, MIFF 2018) invites audiences to share the mundane and the magnificent with a neurodiverse, working-class family in outer-suburban Queensland. A masterclass in slice-of-life documentary, **Because We Have Each Other** is a gentle and wondrous portrait of a family finding joy and stability in one another as they face a future of immense change.

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The bewitching second feature from Accelerator Lab alumna **Alena Lodkina** (*Strange Colours*, MIFF 2018), **Petrol** follows an idealistic film student as she is drawn into an enigmatic performance artist's shadowy world. Visually commanding and as singular as her debut feature, **Petrol** presents an otherworldly version of twenty-something life in Melbourne, complete with share-houses, mysterious substances, deep conversations and the occult.

Selected for the Berlinale's Generation Kplus program, **Moja Vesna** is a moving depiction of an outer-Melbourne immigrant family falling apart and staying together in the wake of insurmountable grief. In this Australian-Slovenian co-production, debut feature director **Sara Kern** produces a stirring portrayal of familial strength, featuring newcomer **Loti Kovačič** with **Claudia Karvan** in support.

The Breakfast Club meets the outback in **Sweet As**, an uplifting coming-of-age story with postcard-perfect shots of remote Western Australia and a road-trip-worthy soundtrack featuring all-Indigenous artists. Starring Aboriginal luminaries **Tasma Walton** (*Mystery Road*, *Cleverman*) and **Mark Coles Smith** (*Last Cab to Darwin*) and a magnetic **Shantae Barnes-Cowan** (*Total Control*, *Firebite*) in the lead, Nyal Nyal / Yawaru director, and MIFF Accelerator Lab alumna, *Jub Clerc*'s feature debut is an effervescent story of personal growth, acceptance and the journey towards finding oneself.

Richard Crawley always fancied himself a filmmaker, capturing every minute and milestone of his family's quiet but loving life in Port Fairy, only to never do anything with it. Enter his son, debut filmmaker **James Crawley**, who sets out to make the documentary his father never could in **Volcano Man**, a raw and revealing study of loss, failed dreams and Richard Crawley's very special zest for life.

Rounding out the Premiere Fund's 2022 offering is **Senses of Cinema**, a timely archival treasure trove chronicling the rise and role of Melbourne and Sydney filmmaking cooperatives in the 1960s and 1970s. From co-directors **John Hughes** (*Indonesia Calling*, MIFF Premiere Fund 2009) and **Tom Zubrycki** (*Ablaze*, MIFF Premiere Fund 2021), **Senses of Cinema** explores the change-making experimental cinema emanating from these cooperatives against a backdrop of civil rights activism, gender equality struggles and the Vietnam War, and features interviews with the likes of Phillip Noyce, Jan Chapman and Gillian Armstrong.

INTERNATIONAL FEATURES

Making its Australian premiere at the 2022 festival, **Reflection** is the tale of one man's experience of war and the ensuing personal fallout in post-Maidan Ukraine. Nominated for Venice's Golden Lion, **Reflection** is **Valentyn Vasyanovych**'s exquisite follow-up to the award-winning *Atlantis* (MIFF 2020) and features a portrayal of subtle power from lead actor **Roman Lutskyi**.

Feted at Cinéma du Réel and Rotterdam – as only the second Australian title to ever vie for the Tiger Award) – Australian docu-drama, **The Plains**, is a road movie that unfolds on its own unique existential path. This hypnotic, wholly original feature debut from **David Easta** is a fascinating look at the rhythms of daily life and our unexpected moments of connection.

Winner of the 2022 Golden Bear for Best Film, **Alcarràs**, is a bittersweet, sun-drenched paean to family and tradition in the face of upheaval. Catalanian writer/director **Carla Simón** (*Summer 1993*) employs a non-professional cast in this semi-fictionalised tale of a family facing eviction from the orchard they've lovingly tended for generations.

In his latest provocation, **Dual**, satire master **Riley Stearns** (*The Art of Self-Defense* MIFF 2019) asks: if you had to duel your own clone to the death, would you win? **Karen Gillan** (*Jumanji, Guardians of the Galaxy*) doubles down on her action-cinema credentials to offer two delightfully different performances as protagonist Sarah and her clone. Veritable comedic support is lent by **Aaron Paul** (*Breaking Bad*) as madcap sensei Trent who trains Sarah as she prepares to fight herself.

Director **Paz Encina** (Paraguayan Hammock) immersed herself to make **Eami**, an audiovisual collage merging the imagery and soundscapes of the Gran Chaco with heartbreaking testimonies from the Ayoreo-Totobiegosode people. Having been awarded the IFFR 2022's Tiger Award, **Eami** is a stunning dreamlike elegy for a people at risk of losing their entire world to disease, destruction and deforestation.

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Aubrey Plaza gives a career-best performance in **Emily the Criminal**, a gripping thriller that walks a vanishingly thin line between nail-biting genre film and something much more gritty and realistic. Garnering some early comparisons to Nicolas Winding Refn's *Drive* and the Safdie brothers, **John Patton Ford**'s satisfyingly taut debut simmers with frustration and rage.

In **Il Buco**, multi-award-winning artist and filmmaker **Michelangelo Frammartino** (*Le Quattro Volte*) restages the descent of a team of Italian spelunkers who set out to chart the darkness of the Bifurto Abyss in the 1960s. The nearly wordless 2021 Venice competition's Special Jury Prize winner features luscious images from Swiss master cinematographer **Renato Berta** in a poetic feast for the senses.

Starring a bewitching **Jeon Jong-seo** (*Burning*), Iranian American director **Ana Lily Amirpour**'s new film explodes onto the screen with her trademark bold visual stylings and twists on genre. In **Mona Lisa and the Blood Moon** we join a telekinetic young woman on a wild and bloody trip to New Orleans in this subversive horror-comedy from the director of *A Girl Walks Home at Night*.

South Korean auteur and festival fave **Hong Sang-soo** (*On the Beach at Night Alone*) reunites with muse **Kim Min-Hee** (*No Blood No Tears*) for another casually evocative tale of chance encounters. Taking home the Berlinale's Silver Bear Grand Jury Prize, **The Novelist's Film**, was once again written, directed, shot, edited and soundtracked by one-man powerhouse, Hong, and delivers his signature winding storylines and musings on art, drinking and noodles.

Alongside her directorial debut (*Jane by Charlotte*) also screening at the festival, **Charlotte Gainsbourg** plays the recently divorced and cash-strapped Elisabeth as she embarks on a years-long journey of self-discovery in **The Passengers of the Night**. With a period-appropriate soundtrack that features local heroes The Go-Betweens, **Mikhaël Hers**'s (*Amanda*) nostalgic and quietly uplifting narrative is a languidly charming testament to the power of time to heal all wounds.

Still waters run deep in this rousing Gaelic-language story of love and loss set in 1980s Ireland, awarded the Berlinale's Generation Kplus Grand Prix for Best Film. Written and directed by rising talent **Colm Bairéad**, and featuring a star-making performance from young **Catherine Clinch**, *The Quiet Girl* also subsequently won Best Irish Feature at the Dublin International Film Festival as well as eight awards – including Best Film, Best Director and Best Actress – at the Irish Film & Television Awards.

Acclaimed Austrian master of discomfort **Ulrich Seidl** returns with his first narrative feature in nine years: **Rimini**. In the gloomy winter off-season of an Italian seaside resort town, ageing crooner Richie Bravo (fearlessly played by Seidl regular **Michael Thomas**) sings saccharine ballads while selling sex to his elderly fans. But Richie's bravado can't shield him from the realities of life in this riveting and relentless character study.

Setting out to deliver “the most unpleasant experience for an audience, ever”, director **Christian Tafdrup** crafts a diabolical tale that morphs from a satire on middle-class manners into a menacing psychological thriller. Having first met while on vacation in Tuscany, a Danish family are invited to visit the home of their new friends in rural Netherlands for a weekend getaway. Warm welcomes are soon revealed to be something more twisted as the Danish family later find themselves unable to leave in **Speak No Evil**.

The first feature film in eight long years from Israeli director **Ari Folman** (*Waltz with Bashir*), ***Where Is Anne Frank*** approaches the famous Holocaust diary from the perspective of Kitty (voiced by *Bridgerton's* **Ruby Stokes**), the imaginary girl to whom Anne addressed her correspondence. In this wondrous retelling, Anne's world is depicted through a masterful blend of hand-drawn and stop-motion animation, with Folman placing the diarist's much-mythologised writing into dialogue with the present-day refugee crisis.



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DOCUMENTARY HIGHLIGHTS

Prior to the Closing Night premiere of the extraordinary story of **Sandra Pankhurst** and her trauma cleaning triumphs in ***Clean***, the 2022 roster includes an extensive and enlightening showcase of documentary films.

Designed to be lost to time, British director **Charlie Shackleton's** (*Fear Itself, Beyond Clueless*) new feature, ***The Afterlight***, exists as a single 35mm print, a living document that erodes every time it screens. This Australian premiere is made up of film fragments and features a cast of performers who are themselves no longer alive – an ensemble of ghostly figures that come to question the nature of permanence in an age of endless, disposable content.

In an Australian premiere, **Charlotte Gainsbourg's** ***Jane by Charlotte***, is a quietly revelatory portrait of her mother, the renowned **Jane Birkin**. With Jane herself having previously directed a documentary about her husband **Serge Gainsbourg** (*Souvenirs of Serge*), the younger Gainsbourg – making her directorial debut – now follows in Birkin's footsteps, sharing an intimate snapshot of the life of the celebrated singer, actor and fashion icon.

Winner of an Audience Award and the Festival Favourite Award at this year's Sundance (where politics demanded secrecy before its World Premiere), ***Navalny*** follows Vladimir Putin's political rival as he investigates a state-sponsored poisoning: his own. From Canadian documentarian **Daniel Roher**, ***Navalny*** is at once a taut conspiracy thriller and a blazingly urgent glimpse at the very real risks faced by those opposing the Putin regime.

For more than two years, acclaimed Polish documentarian **Paweł Łoziński** (*You Have No Idea How Much I Love You*) pointed a camera at eight square metres of pavement below his Warsaw apartment; rather than venturing out to find a worthy subject, he waited for the world to come to him. The result, ***The Balcony Movie*** (named winner of Locarno 2021's Semaine de la Critique Grand Prix) documents his observations and interactions with various passers-by as Łoziński finds wonder and wisdom in the everyday from two floors up.

With ***Fire of Love***, director **Sara Dosa** (*The Seer and the Unseen*) pulls together mind-boggling footage captured by French volcanologists Katia and Maurice Krafft (whom some may recall from their cameo in Werner Herzog's *Into the Inferno*) to produce a tender part-romance, part-PSA on the dangers of ignoring scientific warnings. Enhanced by **Miranda July's** lyrical narration and a score by **Air's Nicolas Godin**, Dosa and her Sundance award-winning editors have constructed a love story written in lava.

Music lovers will queue for **Meet Me in the Bathroom**, a euphoric ode to New York's aughts rock renaissance with never-before-seen archival footage featuring the likes of The Strokes' Albert Hammond Jr, Yeah Yeah Yeahs' Karen O, TV on the Radio's Tunde Adebimpe and LCD Soundsystem's James Murphy. Following their LCD Soundsystem documentary *Shut Up and Play the Hits*, directors **Dylan Southern** and **Will Lovelace** take us on a journey back to the era of mopy hair, sprayed-on denim and artists so cool you wouldn't have heard of them.

Legendary structuralist filmmaker **James Benning** repurposes the title of his 1975 conceptual work, ***The United States of America***, in this updated survey of his homeland. Shot during the pandemic, it tours the country in an ostensibly simple, quietly mischievous landscape work that invites the audience to reflect on the impact of human action across lineages of place.

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MIFF FILM COMPETITION

2022 will also herald the introduction of the Southern Hemisphere's richest feature film competition, with the debut of the inaugural **MIFF Film Competition**.

This exciting new addition to the MIFF roster will celebrate bold directorial voices and emerging filmmakers, with films initially awarded across three categories. Up to 10 films will be selected to be in official competition for the flagship **Best Film Award**, presided over by a jury of prominent international and Australian festival guests, of A\$140,000 (approx. US\$100,000) supported by the Victorian Government through **VicScreen**.

An outstanding Australian creative will be recognised with the presentation of the **Australian Innovation Prize**, awarded to an individual local talent from across a range of eligible filmmaking roles such as director, technical or creative lead, and cinema craft. Additionally, 2022 brings the return of the **MIFF Audience Award**.

MIFF XR

Bear witness to the possible futures of the planet's oldest tropical rainforest in ***Gondwana***, a world-first durational VR installation, arriving direct from Sundance and SXSW.

Australia's own **Emma Roberts** and **Ben Andrews'** VR experience inserts users among the ancient trees, rare animals and precious flora of the Daintree. Every 14 minutes, the environment jumps forward in time by one year – heading towards a speculative 2090 – and the longer audiences stay within ***Gondwana***, the more resilient the forest becomes.

Screening over 48 hours at ACMI, the absorbing and contemplative ***Gondwana*** is a quiet meditation on time, change and climate action in an irreplaceable ecosystem.

The previously announced **MIFF XR Commission, *Line-Up***, will accompany audiences throughout their festival experience this August. As imagined by local artists and long-time collaborators, **Isobel Knowles** and **Van Sowerwine**, MIFF attendees can meet and interact with animated cinema-going fruit bats in the queue, across festival locations and online, and learn more about the festival's storied history. Supported and developed by artist and philanthropist **Ling Ang**, the Commission is an Extended Reality program that reflects and represents the very best of emergent 360° and interactive filmmaking.

SPECIAL EVENTS

In a special collaboration with **Orchestra Victoria**, ***Sounds of the Screen: Movie Music Across Victorian Landscapes*** will offer a panorama of some of Victoria's most iconic films through the scores that helped bring them to life. Across two acts at Hamer Hall, Orchestra Victoria will perform an exciting repertoire of exquisite film scores from the likes of *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, *The Railway Man*, *Mad Max*, *Noise*, *The Dressmaker* and *The Legends of the Guardians*.

– ENDS –



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AT A GLANCE: FIRST GLANCE TITLES

- Alcarràs (Spain)
- Because We Have Each Other (Premiere Fund, Australia)
- Clean (Australia)
- Dual (USA)
- Eami (Paraguay, Argentina)
- Emily the Criminal (USA)
- Fire of Love (USA, Canada)
- Franklin (Premiere Fund, Australia)
- Gondwana (MIFF XR, Australia)
- Greenhouse (Premiere Fund, Australia)
- Il Buco (Italy, France, Germany)
- Jane by Charlotte (France)
- Meet Me in the Bathroom (UK)
- Moja Vesna (Premiere Fund, Australia)
- Mona Lisa and the Blood Moon (USA)
- Navalny (USA)
- Of an Age (Premiere Fund, Australia)
- Petrol (Premiere Fund, Australia)
- Reflection (Ukraine)
- Rimini (Austria, France, Germany)
- Senses of Cinema (Premiere Fund, Australia)
- Speak No Evil (Denmark, Netherlands)
- Sweet As (Premiere Fund, Australia)
- The Afterlight (UK)
- The Balcony Movie (Poland)
- The Novelist's Film (South Korea)
- The Passengers of the Night (France)
- The Plains (Australia)
- The Quiet Girl (Ireland)
- The United States of America (USA)
- Under Cover (Premiere Fund, Australia)
- Volcano Man (Premiere Fund, Australia)
- Where is Anne Frank (Belgium)

CBD, SUBURBAN & REGIONAL VENUES

- ACMI
- The Capitol
- Forum Melbourne
- Hoyts Melbourne Central
- IMAX
- Kino Cinema
- Cinema Nova
- The Astor, St Kilda
- Lido Cinemas, Hawthorn
- Pentridge Cinema, Coburg
- Sun Theatre, Yarraville
- Capitol Cinema, Warrnambool
- Paramount Cinemas, Echuca
- Peninsula Cinemas, Sorrento
- Star Cinema, Bendigo
- Sun Cinema, Bairnsdale
- Sun Cinema, Bright
- The Pivotonian Cinema, Geelong
- Theatre Royal, Castlemaine
- Wallis Cinemas, Mildura

NOTES TO EDITOR

- The 2022 Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) runs from 4 – 28 August
- This is the 70th MIFF event
- In cinemas from 4 – 21 August
- MIFF Play, the festival's online streaming platform, from 11 – 28 August
- MIFF's suburban and regional Victorian screenings run from 12 – 21 August Tickets to the Opening Night screening of *Of an Age* and *Sounds of the Screen: Movie Music Across Victorian Landscapes* are on sale from 2pm, Thursday 9 June via miff.com.au
- Focusing on “Stories that need telling,” the MIFF Premiere Fund provides minority co-financing to new Australian (narrative and documentary) feature films that then premiere at MIFF. Funded by the Victorian State Government since 2007, the MIFF Premiere Fund has supported more than 90 projects. Highlights reel, [here](#)
- Audiences are encouraged to plan ahead, with MIFF Passes and MIFF Memberships available for purchase now via miff.com.au/tickets
- The full program will be announced Tuesday 12 July
- MIFF Members exclusive pre-sale window runs from 13 – 14 July
- Tickets are on sale to the General Public on 15 July

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