

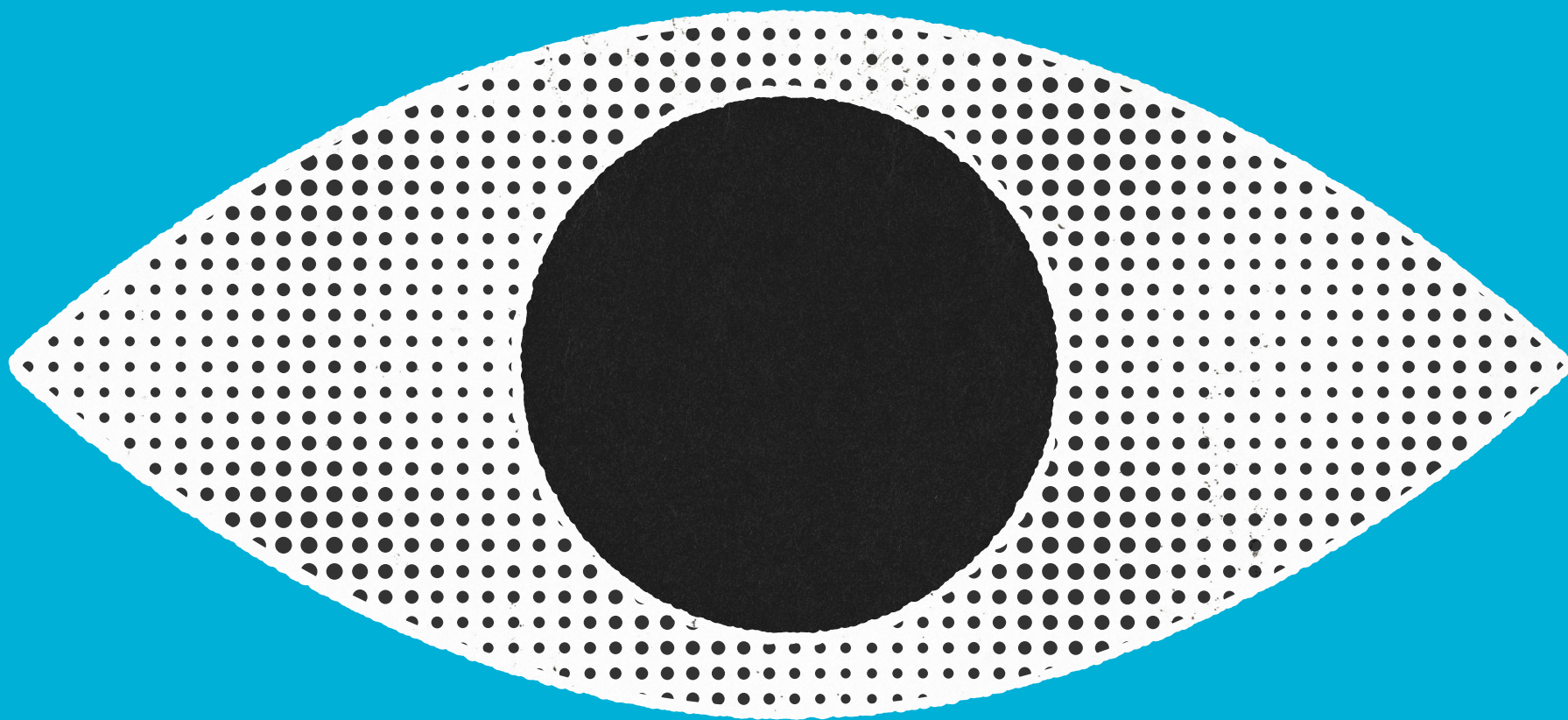
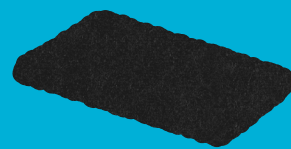
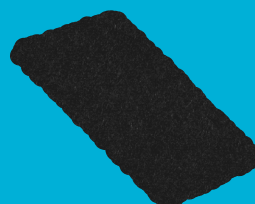
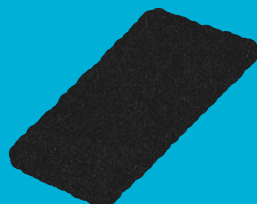
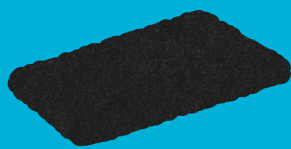
EYE

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OPENING

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CINEMA



6—23
AUGUST

MIFF

Naarm and surrounds
miff.com.au

**Melbourne
International
Film
Festival** 20
26

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MAJOR PARTNERS



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KEY SUPPLIERS



The Melbourne International Film Festival acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we live, learn and work, and pays respect to their Elders past and present, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. MIFF celebrates the history and contemporary creativity of the world's oldest living culture.

Wominjeka Welcome

We are thrilled to welcome you to the return of the Melbourne International Film Festival for 2026! When August comes around and the winter dark requires an injection of imagination, it's time for our city to head back to the cinema.

MIFF will again move you from cinematic wallflower to movie(-watching) mogul over 18 days and across more than 600 sessions – *eye-opening cinema* to meet anticipation, to offer discovery and to provide a celebration of the creativity of a world's worth of the finest filmmaking.

Our major retrospective focuses this year will show you that singular force of cinema, Ulrike Ottinger; the bold, sustained works of Argentinian visionary Lisandro Alonso (whom we are thrilled to welcome to the festival); and a celebration of all-time screen icon Kim Novak – not to mention a spotlight on Australia's Sarah Watt, a special shorts program collecting works by Mark Jenkin (alongside his new must-see *Rose of Nevada*) and a MIFF-first dedicated 3D program.

MIFF's Bright Horizons Competition remains the movie mountaintop from which to view auteurs on the ascent, presenting a 10-film line-up of first and second features competing for one of the world's richest film prizes, with filmmaker attendances from all over the world. Bright Horizons also opens the festival in 2026 with the national premiere of *Wicker*, directed by Alex Huston Fischer and Australian Eleanor Wilson: a ribald and altogether rowdy fable of a (literal) made man starring Olivia Colman and Alexander Skarsgård.

Elsewhere, there are plenty of special events joining the canon of only-at-MIFF moments. John Cameron Mitchell arrives at MIFF to present a live director's commentary, showing you *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* as you've never seen it before for its 25th anniversary, while, in the latest MIFF instalment of Hear My Eyes, Christopher Nolan's *Memento* will be musically rebuilt through a new percussive score by King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard's Michael "CAVS" Cavanagh, performed live at Hamer Hall.

Lights, camera, action – this city is ready for its annual close-up as the Melbourne International Film Festival takes centre stage again.

Step out of the winter chill and into our iconic theatres and cinemas, then spill out into our world-famous cafés, bars and restaurants to discuss recommendations and reviews.

This is a city with cinema in its DNA. We're home to the world's first feature-length film, beloved classics like *The Castle* and *Chopper*, and everything in between.

The City of Melbourne couldn't be prouder to continue that legacy through our support of MIFF –

That's just the beginning – there is so much more waiting for you in these pages and on these screens this August! MIFF will be everywhere you are in 2026: playing in metro Melbourne; across eight regional Victorian centres over two weekends via MIFF Regional; and right at your place, anywhere in Australia, presenting a selection of features and shorts via MIFF's Online season on ACMI's virtual Cinema 3.

In this day and age and news cycle, MIFF is a reminder that movies are the *all*: our dose of reality and our escape from it; an opportunity and an invitation to witness, to change, to be rearranged by the many shapes of cinema; and, most importantly, at a festival, a chance to share it all together. We'll see you at MIFF 2026!



Al Cossar
Artistic Director, MIFF

one of the longest-running film festivals in the world – and its celebration of filmmakers and storytellers from around the globe.

Congratulations to the festival organisers, filmmakers and crews. Join us by the warmth of the big screen for accessible screenings, affordable tickets and hundreds of stories to savour.



Nicholas Reece
Lord Mayor of Melbourne

Welcome to MIFF 2026.

At a time when the world can feel increasingly fragmented, cinema remains one of our most powerful ways to understand one another. We are proud to present a program that spans continents, perspectives and experiences, bringing together the year's most acclaimed films, exciting discoveries and unforgettable screen events.

As the largest film festival in the Southern Hemisphere and the world's biggest showcase of new Australian cinema, MIFF celebrates the power of storytelling to connect us, challenge us and inspire us. Alongside extraordinary international cinema, this year's program shines a spotlight on Australian filmmakers whose work reflects the creativity, ambition and diversity of our screen culture.

My congratulations and gratitude to the thousands of filmmakers, artists, craftspeople and screen professionals whose work fills this program. Every film represents years of dedication, imagination and collaboration, and we are honoured to share these stories with audiences.

Beyond the screen, MIFF continues to support the future of the industry through 37°South Market, Accelerator Lab, Critics Campus and the MIFF Premiere Fund, helping foster new talent and partnerships and bring ambitious Australian stories to audiences.

I extend my sincere thanks to our Board, team and volunteers; MIFF Circle Patrons, Ambassadors, Members and Partners; the Victorian Government through VicScreen, the Australian Government through Screen Australia and the City of Melbourne.

Most importantly, thank you to our audience. Your curiosity and passion are what make MIFF one of the world's great film festivals.



Damien Hodgkinson
Chief Executive Officer, MIFF



The Hon. Vicki Ward MP
Minister for Creative Industries

The MIFF Board and team welcome **The Hon. Linda Dessau AC CVO** and **Sigrid Thornton AO**, two esteemed individuals in our community, as our organisational Patrons.

In this role, they will champion the festival's mission and values and further strengthen MIFF's community connections.



Sigrid Thornton AO
Patron



The Hon. Linda Dessau AC CVO
Patron

Thank you to our MIFF Circle Patrons

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Westgarth Foundation
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Teresa Zolnierkiewicz
And those wishing to remain anonymous.

We're always looking for new supporters to join our incredible group.

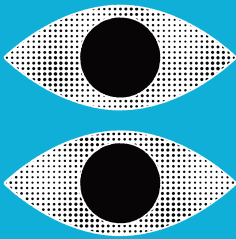
To find out more: miff.com.au/patron

MIFF Supporters
Thank you to everyone who has donated this year, including the following supporters who contributed upwards of \$250:

Paul Benveniste
Michael Campi
Sue Harper
Ben Hodson
Victoria Ponsford
And those wishing to remain anonymous.

To find out more: miff.com.au/donate

Your Guide to MIFF



In cinemas 6–23 August
Online Australia-wide 14–30 August

MIFF Box Office

03 8660 4888
boxoffice@miff.com.au

PRE-FESTIVAL	DURING THE FESTIVAL
ACMI Ticket Desk Daily: 10am–4pm	ACMI Ticket Desk Daily: 10am until 15 minutes after the last session
Call Centre Daily: 11am–4pm	Call Centre Daily: 10am–9pm

Box Offices at festival screening venues open 45 minutes prior to the first session and close 15 minutes after the start of the last session.

The expert MIFF Box Office team can help you navigate the festival from start to finish. Please treat them with kindness.

How to Book

To check the schedule and book tickets, go to the website, download the app or visit the MIFF Box Office. Sign in or complete the checkout process as a guest – we accept credit cards, Apple Pay and Google Pay.

Need help choosing a film? Check out the Film Finder and filters on our website, or see Box Office staff for recommendations.

Tickets are strictly limited – book ahead online at miff.com.au.

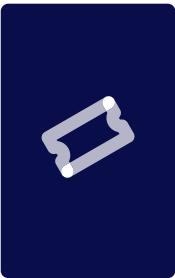
Get the 2026 MIFF App

Browse the program, watch trailers, make a shortlist and access your tickets in one place. Proudly supported by Ferve Tickets.

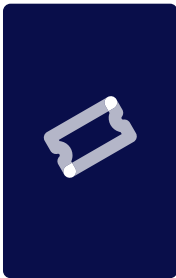


Available for iOS & Android

Tickets and Passes



Standard Admission Peak
(Monday–Friday after 4pm & weekends)
FULL: \$28.55
CONCESSION: \$25.70
MEMBERS: \$24.25



Standard Admission Off-Peak
(Monday–Friday before 4pm)
FULL: \$24.85
CONCESSION: \$22.40
MEMBERS: \$21.20



Blaktix
\$14.30



XR (Phase 1)
FULL: \$16.70
CONCESSION: \$15
MEMBERS: \$14.20
See website for Phase 2 prices.



Bright Horizons 3-Pass
See any three films in the prestigious Bright Horizons Competition at a discounted rate.
FULL: \$72.90
CONCESSION: \$65.60
MEMBERS: \$61.90



Deluxe Membership
A Deluxe Membership offers a standard MIFF Membership alongside a Festival Passport.
For full terms and conditions, visit miff.com.au/tickets.
\$700



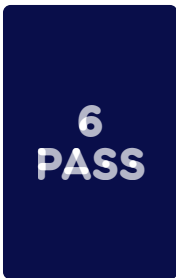
Festival Passport
Provides access to every standard session at MIFF 2026 (bookings required). Festival Passports are valid for standard in-cinema sessions only unless otherwise stated.

See more films for less with a MIFF Multipass.

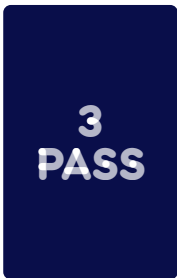
Passes can be redeemed for standard festival admissions, which you can enjoy by yourself or share with friends.



Multipass-12
The best way to see as much as you can at the cheapest rate.
FULL: \$291.30
CONCESSION: \$262.20
MEMBERS: \$247.40



Multipass-6
Maximise your MIFF experience and minimise the cost.
FULL: \$154.20
CONCESSION: \$138.80
MEMBERS: \$131



Multipass-3
Ideal if you're interested in select highlights or attending with a couple of friends.
FULL: \$81.40
CONCESSION: \$73.30
MEMBERS: \$69.20

Make planning your MIFF easy. Schedule your festival.

Save a shortlist, compare session times and plan your festival with the online schedule grid at miff.com.au.

Love MIFF? Become a MIFF Member.

MIFF Membership is your gateway to exclusive experiences, discounts and connection to Melbourne's film-loving community.

FULL: \$80
CONCESSION: \$70
U26: \$26

MIFF Member benefits include:

In-festival: Four-day festival pre-sale, discounted tickets and passes, festival partner discounts, and an invitation to Program Launch and other events.

Year-round: Free preview screenings, monthly Member newsletter, monthly giveaways, concession entry at partner cinemas, invitations to special events and more.

Widescreen

Sign up to MIFF's enews
Widescreen
miff.com.au/subscribe



* Prices include GST where applicable. Tickets or passes purchased incur a booking fee. For more information, visit miff.com.au/tickets.

Follow us for the latest news, events, giveaways, announcements and encores.

Stay connected: #MIFF2026

Access and Inclusion

Everyone has a place at MIFF. We offer a range of access services across our venues, screenings and events so that every audience member can engage and participate.

To request an access service, please email boxoffice@miff.com.au, call 03 8660 4888 or visit the MIFF Box Office in person. Get in touch with MIFF's Festival Access Coordinator via access@miff.com.au.

For more information, see [page 46](#) or visit miff.com.au/access.

Viewer Advice and Classification

MIFF details Viewer Advice for films that contain scenes and/or themes that some audiences may find sensitive. Where applicable, Viewer Advice will be prominently displayed on each film's listing on the MIFF website and app. Please refer to the Viewer Advice prior to booking your tickets.

The Australian Classification Board has granted MIFF special classifications and clearances. Except where indicated online, no-one under 18 (including infants) will be admitted to MIFF sessions. For more detailed information, visit miff.com.au/classification.

Allocated Seating

Skip the queues and choose your seat in advance. Allocated seating will be available at the following venues:

- ACMI
- Forum Melbourne
- The Capitol
- IMAX Melbourne
- Cinema Nova
- Village Cinemas Crown

Standby Queues

For sessions listed as 'standby', MIFF operates a standby queue at the venue. Patrons may be admitted up to 15 minutes after the commencement of the film. Please see a MIFF Front of House team member to be added to the queue. Admission to standby sessions is not guaranteed.

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Metro Venues

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ACMI + MIFF Box Office
Fed Square
- 2

Forum Melbourne
154 Flinders St
(cnr Flinders St & Russell St)
- 3

The Capitol
113 Swanston St
- 4

Kino Cinema
Lower Ground Level, 45 Collins St
- 5

Hoyts Melbourne Central
Level 3, cnr Swanston St & La Trobe St
- 6

IMAX Melbourne
Rathdowne St, Carlton
- 7

The Astor Theatre
1 Chapel St, St Kilda
- 8

Cinema Nova
380 Lygon St, Carlton
- 9

Village Cinemas Crown
8 Whiteman St, Southbank

Driving to MIFF?
Park smart, pay less!

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Pre-book your parking and save:
secureparking.com.au/miff

Apply the below promo codes on the booking page:

MIFFDAY26 for \$25*
Day Rate (Mon to Fri)

MIFF26 for \$16*
Night & Weekend Rate



*Terms & conditions and car park quotas apply.



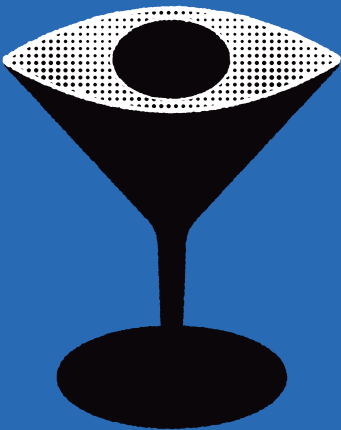
MIFF Festival Hub

OPEN DAILY FROM MIDDAY
CAMEO AT ACMI, FED SQUARE



Wax Music Lounge

OPEN DAILY UNTIL LATE
250 FLINDERS ST, MELBOURNE



Need a nightcap after
that eye-opening film?

Come down to Wax Music Lounge,
the official MIFF late-night venue.



MIFF ONLINE

Available to stream via
ACMI Cinema 3.

MIFF PREMIERE FUND

A title from this year's slate
of MIFF co-financed films.

MIFF REGIONAL

Available to view at one or more of
the festival's nine regional cinemas.

FESTIVAL GUEST

Select sessions may feature festival
guest introductions or Q&As.

Galas & Special Events

MIFF’s 74th edition is here! Join us for exclusive gala screenings, once-in-a-lifetime events and big-screen celebrations of community.

miff.com.au/special-events



Opening Night Gala Thursday 6 August

MIFF 2026 commences with an event that will get everyone talking: the Australian premiere of Eleanor Wilson and Alex Huston Fischer’s cheeky, star-studded and irresistible fable *Wicker*.

Mingle with the brightest stars of the film industry on the red carpet, enjoy a drink on arrival and settle in for one of the year’s most provocative and hilarious films.

Audiences can take in the atmosphere of the red carpet and the screening at Hoyts Melbourne Central with a film-only ticket, or book a spot at the legendary afterparty at Melbourne Town Hall with a film-and-party ticket.



Wicker
Dir. Eleanor Wilson, Alex Huston Fischer USA
Olivia Colman and Alexander Skarsgård lead this irresistible fable about a cranky fisherwoman and the sexy handwoven husband she wishes for.

In a seaside village lost to time, a fisherwoman delivers the food relied on by the townsfolk, who barely tolerate her cantankerous presence. Sick of the disdain, she commissions the local basketmaker to weave her the perfect husband, and he goes above and beyond. When you’re married to the hottest and handiest man around, however, jealousies inevitably flare up.

Adapting Ursula Wills-Jones’s 2008 short story, this Sundance-premiering twist on a period love story – directed by Australian-born Eleanor Wilson and filmmaking (as well as real-life) partner Alex Huston Fischer, and including David Michôd among its producers – is at once ingenious and charmingly irreverent. But it’s no straw-man depiction of middle-aged sexual wish fulfilment: the film uses its whimsical premise to critique small-mindedness, superstition and overzealous conservatism. Olivia Colman goes all-in for a role that recalls her fiery turn in *The Favourite*, while Alexander Skarsgård is magnetic as a creature with more humanity than his human counterparts. Capped off with transportive cinematography by Oscar winner Lol Crawley and counting Peter Dinklage, Richard E. Grant and Melbourne’s own Elizabeth Debicki among its cast, *Wicker* is a fantasy romance that asks whether we truly know our heart’s desire.

105 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST MIFF REGIONAL



Family Gala Saturday 15 August

Tayo na! Come along to MIFF’s Family Gala – a fun-filled centrepiece event for kids and adults alike – and enjoy the Australian premiere of new DreamWorks adventure *Forgotten Island*.

Forgotten Island
Dir. Joel Crawford, Januel Mercado USA
H.E.R., Liza Soberano, Manny Jacinto and Lea Salonga lend their voices to this fantastical animated tale of friendship, fearlessness and Filipino culture.

Best friends Jo and Raissa have just graduated from high school. They vow to remain close forever, even though Raissa’s about to move to the US for university. On their last night together, the girls accidentally open a portal to Nakali, a mysterious island populated by *aswangs*. The longer you stay in Nakali, the more your memories fade – so they must figure out how to get back home, fast, and also avoid the clutches of the Dreaded Manananggal.

From the studio behind *Shrek* and *How to Train Your Dragon* comes this immersive, exciting adventure in which two teenagers learn about bravery and unbreakable bonds. Steeped in Philippine mythology and rooted in the real-world friendship between Oscar-nominated directors Joel Crawford and Januel Mercado (*Puss in Boots: The Last Wish*), the film boasts a voice cast of Filipino A-listers – including H.E.R., Liza Soberano, Manny Jacinto, Dolly de Leon, Lea Salonga and Jo Koy – as well as fellow stars Dave Franco, Jenny Slate and Ronny Chieng. Brought to life with resplendent anime-inspired visuals and folk-inspired music, *Forgotten Island* reminds us that growing up doesn’t have to mean growing apart.

98 MINS

Premiere With Purpose Tuesday 11 August

MIFF’s Premiere With Purpose returns for its third year – a night dedicated to celebrating extraordinary social-impact filmmaking and the power of cinema to spark change.

This special gala brings together the city’s most inspiring leaders and changemakers for an evening where film and purpose meet. It’s a reminder of why MIFF exists: to champion bold stories, elevate urgent issues and create space for voices that need to be heard.

This year, we are proud to present the Victorian premiere of *Silenced* – a film that confronts one of the most pressing conversations of our time.

Hosted by broadcaster Jo Stanley, the evening will feature a post-screening discussion with director Selina Miles and the film team.

MIFF audiences are warmly invited to join us for this unforgettable fusion of film and purpose.



Silenced
Dir. Selina Miles Australia
Jennifer Robinson, Amber Heard and Brittany Higgins have all experienced weaponised defamation laws – but they won’t keep quiet.

In 2017, #MeToo replaced the stigma of discussing gendered violence with solidarity. The re-silencing was swift, vicious ... and legalistic. Defamation lawsuits were used to punish survivors for speaking out, and to deter journalists. Jennifer Robinson has dedicated her career to fighting against these attacks, witnessing firsthand how such actions drag survivors through ruinous legal proceedings. This incendiary exposé gives voice to experts who doggedly pursue procedural justice as well as women who’ve been caught in defamation lawfare.

97 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST MIFF REGIONAL

Armani Beauty Cinema Club Opening Night
Thursday 13 August

Armani Beauty brings its signature glow to Australia's premier cinema event. Hosted at The Capitol, the Armani Beauty Cinema Club Opening Night blends the elegance of global cinema with local prestige, offering guests an immersive evening of beauty experiences and a premium screening of MIFF Headliner *Wishful Thinking*.

PRESENTED BY
ARMANI
OFFICIAL BEAUTY PARTNER



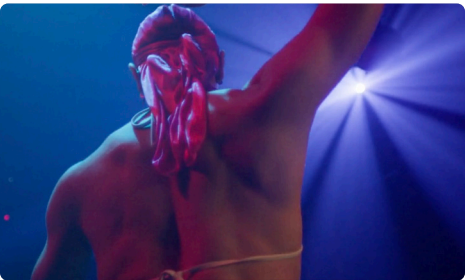
Wishful Thinking

Dir. Graham Parkes USA

This high-concept rom-com playfully questions the notion that love is the most powerful force in existence ... for better or worse.

Charlie and Julia are in love, but also fundamentally incompatible. Desperate to fix their relationship, they visit twin TikTok love gurus, whose mysterious counsel reminds the couple why they fell for each other. It also unlocks something else, with earth-shattering repercussions ... literally. Cheekily interpreting the implications of self-help hit *The Secret*, first-time feature director Graham Parkes creates a love story with a supernatural through-line as hilarious as it is horrifying. *Wishful Thinking* is a funny and insightful study of the delusion at the heart of all love: that its exhilarating highs and heartbreaking lows can change the world.

105 MINS



Sovereign Shorts

19 August

MIFF and NITV, supported by VicScreen, present four original and compelling short documentaries exploring Treaty as lived experience.

In these shorts, all from Victoria-based First Peoples writers and directors, the Wotjobaluk Nations' underdog fight for recognition is explored; a dialogue with Senator Lidia Thorpe reveals insights into the personal impact of Treaty and sovereignty; dance floors are revealed as spaces of sovereignty, connection and liberation; and we encounter the intertwined lives of three women, each embodying a different stage of First Nations hope in Victoria's fight for sovereignty.

Films in this package: *Dya (Country)* (dir. Tracey Rigney), *Protest on the Dancefloor* (dir. Talia Liddle), *Queens To The Front* (dir. Tammy Lee Rock) and *Slow Hours* (dir. Theo McMahon).

90 MINS MIFF ONLINE MIFF REGIONAL



Footy Shorts

12 August

MIFF and the AFL, supported by VicScreen, present five short documentaries centred on Australia's game.

A group of young Chinese Australian footballers come together; the first openly queer ex-AFL player steps back onto the field; a community fights for the safety and dignity of its children; a former AFLW player traces a path from her heroes to the new generation of African Australian stars; and cheer squad members prepare to face a club they haven't beaten in a decade.

Films in this package: *Carn the Chinese!* (dir. Angela How), *For the Boys* (dir. Mitchell Withers), *Invincible Spirit* (dir. Mark Thomson, David Callow), *KURA: An African AFL Story* (dir. Akec Makur Chuot, Meg Duncan) and *North Melbourne Cheer Squad* (dir. Jasper Caverly, Andrew Goode).

74 MINS MIFF ONLINE MIFF REGIONAL



John Cameron Mitchell Presents:
Hedwig and the Angry Inch
25th Anniversary
Friday 21 August

Dir. John Cameron Mitchell USA 2001

The cult-classic genderqueer musical returns with a live commentary by its talented director/star.

Hedwig is a punk singer on a quest for her other half. After a botched surgery and being abandoned in Kansas by an American soldier, she invites shy, repressed Tommy to share her rock-star dreams. When he instead steals her songs to fuel his own success, she chases his tour on low-rent gigs with her band. Award-winning director, writer, star and special guest of the festival John Cameron Mitchell joins us for an unforgettable evening of live commentary to accompany his foundational film, screening in stunning 4K.

95 MINS 4K RESTORATION FESTIVAL GUEST



Hear My Eyes: Memento
8 & 9 August

Dir. Christopher Nolan USA 2000

See Christopher Nolan's breakthrough film, complete with an all-new live score.

Before the billion-dollar blockbusters, before Batman, before *Oppenheimer*, Christopher Nolan released his second feature: *Memento*. The independent thriller quickly became a cultural phenomenon, earning Oscar nominations and introducing audiences to the narrative puzzles, fractured timelines and obsessive attention to detail that would come to define the director's work. For this special presentation, Michael "CAVS" Cavanagh of King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard reimagines the film with an all-new live score. For Nolan devotees and anyone who loves cinema that takes risks, this is a chance to revisit a cult classic, live and reimagined.

113 MINS

PRESENTED BY
HEAR MY EYES Arts Centre Melbourne



Score Kissa: Mārama
Friday 14 August

In the Listening Room of ACMI's exhibition Reverb, Score Kissa presents the haunting soundtrack to *Mārama* in a special event introduced by the composers.

Taratoa Stappard's striking debut feature *Mārama* is a chilling ghost story reckoning with the violence of British colonialism, redeploing the tropes of classic Victorian Gothic horror through a uniquely Māori lens. In this collaboration between MIFF, ACMI and APRA AMCOS, Score Kissa presents the evocative score for Stappard's film, whose MIFF screening (see p. 40) is presented with Birraranga Film Festival. Composers Karl Sölve Steven and Rob Thorne will guide audiences through the work in an intimate listening session, offering insight into their creative process and *Mārama*'s sonic world.

60 MINS



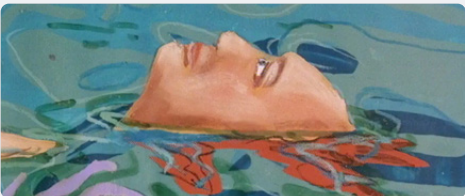
Fulldome Showcase 1 & 2
Saturday 8 August | Saturday 15 August

MIFF's program of jaw-dropping fulldome screenings at the Melbourne Planetarium is back.

Don't miss this rare opportunity to take in a truly unique cinematic experience, lying back and immersing yourself in the stereo surround sound and super high-resolution images projected onto the 180-degree hemispherical dome 'screen' above your head. Across two showcases, MIFF pairs incredible immersive experiences exploring the world around us. In the first, embark on a mesmerising odyssey into the world of trees, unveiling the breathtaking biodiversity flourishing within the woods, and explore the most southerly and remote atoll of the Cook Islands, Mangaia. In the second, take a sensory dive into a dark and enigmatic aquatic universe, and experience a sensory journey through the various states of sleep and consciousness.

74 MINS / 82 MINS

Special Focus: Sarah Watt



Small Treasures: Animations by
Sarah Watt
Sunday 9 August

Dir. Sarah Watt Australia

A tribute to the late, great writer/director's early work, followed by a panel with her collaborators.

From the cool splash of a swimming pool on a summer day to a young girl's spiritual kinship with her feathered friends, these award-winning, rarely seen animated shorts reveal Sarah Watt's wry, deeply human approach to life, love and our precious connection to the Earth.

Films in this package: *Deep Dive* (1990), *Catch of the Day* (1990), *Shark – Australia (The Web)* (1993), *Small Treasures* (1995), *Local Dive* (1998), *The Way of the Birds* (2000) and *Living With Happiness* (2001).

67 MINS



Look Both Ways
Friday 14 August

Dir. Sarah Watt Australia 2005

Winner of four AFI Awards, Watt's improbably funny tale of looming tragedy is independent Australian cinema at its off-kilter best.

An artist who paints sympathy card seascapes, Meryl (Justine Clarke) is prone to morbidly nightmarish fantasies, lovingly rendered in hand-drawn animations. When she witnesses the death of a pedestrian, the tragedy becomes the unlikely basis for a fraught romance with a photojournalist dealing with demons of his own. Two decades on, Sarah Watt's auspicious 2005 live-action debut stands as a prime and, against all odds, uplifting example of the breezily black humour that has characterised a number of Australia's most iconic films.

100 MINS



My Year Without Sex
Tuesday 18 August

Dir. Sarah Watt Australia 2009

Watt's warm and keenly funny follow-up to *Look Both Ways* offers a portal into a suburban Aussie family home rocked by a health crisis.

Natalie and Ross haven't let parenthood unduly interrupt their sex lives ... but a brain aneurysm is a different story. When Natalie wakes up in hospital, she discovers that a lot of activities are going to be off the table for a bit. Chronicling a loving, casually chaotic Melbourne household, Sarah Watt's sophomore feature was planned as the second in a proposed trilogy before she tragically passed away from cancer in 2011. Her swan song evinces a distinctive, seasoned talent taken much too soon.

96 MINS



The Way of the Birds
Storyboarding Display

From 6 August

PRESENTED BY
ACMI

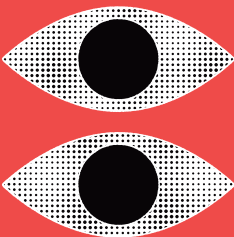
Alongside MIFF's Special Focus: Sarah Watt program, ACMI is celebrating the award-winning director, writer and animator with a behind-the-scenes look at her creative process for *The Way of the Birds* (2000). This display explores the making of Sarah Watt's hand-drawn animation, featuring original storyboards, sketches and animation cels drawn from Watt's extensive personal archive held within the ACMI Collection. In contrast to the polished perfection of today's digital animation, the intimacy of Watt's signature style reminds us how drawing brings ideas to life, expanding our perspective and bringing us closer to the world around us. Presented in ACMI's free centrepiece exhibition The Story of the Moving Image, this special presentation offers a rare glimpse into the imagination and craft of one of Australia's most distinctive filmmakers.

Bright Horizons

MIFF’s film competition, Bright Horizons, celebrates filmmakers on the ascent, featuring an extraordinary international line-up of first- and second-time filmmakers competing for one of the richest film prizes in the world – supported by VicScreen.

miff.com.au/bright-horizons

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Big Girls Don't Cry

Dir. Paloma Schneideman New Zealand

Set in a coastal New Zealand town over summer 2006, this queer coming-of-age story is a bittersweet slice of pre-smartphone-era teendom.

In the hazy days between Christmas and the new school year, 14-year-old Sid has a chance to reinvent herself for the tourists who flock to her small New Zealand beach town of Ōmaha. She dabbles in all the rebellious teenage

rites of passage, but also dips her toe into the tantalising realms of the internet. As Sid encounters strangers in chat rooms, she also captures the attention of her older sister's friend Freya, who sees the real Sid underneath all the posturing. The debut feature from writer/director Paloma Schneideman, a former MIFF Accelerator Lab participant and graduate of Jane Campion's film school program, *Big Girls Don't Cry* is a sensitive, intimate and unflinchingly honest portrayal of queer adolescence.

100 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST MIFF REGIONAL



Blue Heron

Dir. Sophy Romvari Canada, Hungary

A filmmaker sifts through old videos and memories in this emotionally devastating, multiple-award-winning coming-of-age marvel.

Eight-year-old Sasha is growing up surrounded by brothers on Vancouver Island in the 90s. The Hungarian immigrant family's attention is captured by troubled elder brother Jeremy, whose rebellious behaviour

seems like a cry for help. Years later, now a filmmaker, Sasha combs through old home videos and bittersweet memories, trying to make sense of her formative years. Earning comparisons to Charlotte Wells's beloved *Aftersun* (MIFF 2022), *Blue Heron* won the Swatch First Feature Award upon its premiere at Locarno and was crowned Best Canadian Discovery at TIFF. This hugely impressive, affecting debut feature confirms director Sophy Romvari as a major emerging voice in cinema.

90 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Elephants in the Fog

Dir. Abinash Bikram Shah Nepal, Germany, Brazil, France, Norway

This Cannes award-winning thriller set among a Nepalese third-gender community sees one matriarch choosing between duty and love.

On the fringes of the village of Thori, near a forest inhabited by wild elephants, live a community of Kinnar women united by a vow of chastity. They often perform sacred rites for the villagers, but their third-gender

status brings both reverence and ridicule. One of the Kinnar matriarchs, Pirati, has fallen for a local man and dreams of eloping with him to Delhi. But when her adoptive daughter Apsara disappears and the townsfolk refuse to help, she's faced with an impossible decision. The first Nepali feature ever selected for the Un Certain Regard section at Cannes, where it won the Jury Prize, *Elephants in the Fog* is a riveting crime saga and a robust dramatisation of threats to trans rights.

108 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



The Friend's House Is Here

Dir. Hossein Keshavarz, Maryam Ataei Iran, USA

A charismatic hangout movie and courageous act of dissent, this Sundance winner spends time with two young women trying to make art in Iran.

Hanna is a contemporary dancer who posts videos of her work online, while playwright Pari stages experimental theatre productions. In Iran, both of these acts are illegal. In Tehran's underground art

communities, they live their lives – as artists, feminists and unwed women – in defiance of an authoritarian government that is openly hostile to everything they do. Nearly four decades after Abbas Kiarostami's *Where Is the Friend's House?*, Hossein Keshavarz and Maryam Ataei deliver a playful answer. Shot in secret and smuggled out of Iran to make its Sundance premiere, the film went on to receive the festival's U.S. Dramatic Special Jury Award for Ensemble Cast.

96 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Goodbye, Cruel World

Dir. Félix de Givry France

In Cannes Critics' Week's tender, strikingly shot closing-night film, two lonely teenagers find an unlikely connection.

In a village tucked in the mountains of Normandy, 14-year-old Otto (Milo Machado-Graner, the astonishing young star of *Anatomy of a Fall*, MIFF 2023) just wants to disappear. Relentlessly persecuted by his classmates,

he writes a farewell letter, sends it out and heads to a bridge to end it all – but botches it. As everyone thinks he's dead anyway, he decides to hide out on the outskirts of town. There, he's discovered by fellow student Léna, who offers him shelter and an affection that fills his void. Machado-Graner delivers a magnetic performance as Otto, portraying his disaffection mostly through wordless gesture in this tale evoking the films of François Truffaut and Robert Bresson.

93 MINS



La Gradiva

Dir. Marine Atlan France, Italy

Simmering desires erupt among a group of teens visiting the ruins of Pompeii.

Passionate but put-upon teacher Madame Mercier shepherds 20 of her students from Paris to Naples, where they will visit the sites devastated by Mount Vesuvius two millennia prior. Being in such close quarters for an extended period heightens the high

schoolers' extant dynamics; surrounded by scenes of calamity, the teenagers confront the crises within themselves. Marine Atlan's searing feature debut dramatises the turmoil of adolescence without recycling tired tropes about caprice or rebellion. Glorious, sun-dappled cinematography enriches the film's illuminating studies of each character, while the naturalistic performances of its breakout cast bring authenticity and verve to this visionary coming-of-age tale.

145 MINS



Wicker

Dir. Eleanor Wilson, Alex Huston Fischer USA

Olivia Colman and Alexander Skarsgård lead this cheeky, star-studded fable about a fisherwoman and the sexy handwoven husband she wishes for.

In a seaside village lost to time, a fisherwoman delivers the food relied on by the townsfolk, who barely tolerate her cantankerous presence. Sick of the disdain, she commissions the local basketmaker to weave her the

perfect husband, and he goes above and beyond. When you're married to the hottest and handiest man around, however, jealousies inevitably flare up. This Sundance-premiering twist on a period love story is no straw-man depiction of middle-aged sexual wish fulfilment: the film uses its premise to critique small-mindedness, while Olivia Colman goes all-in for a role that recalls her fiery turn in *The Favourite*. *Wicker* is an irresistible fantasy romance that asks whether we truly know our heart's desire.

105 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST MIFF REGIONAL



Josephine

Dir. Beth de Araújo USA

A heartbreaking portrait of innocence lost, this acclaimed Sundance award winner is one of the most essential films of 2026.

Eight-year-old Josephine (Mason Reeves) is out running with her father in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park when she witnesses a brutal sexual assault. Her parents, Damien (Channing Tatum) and Claire (Gemma Chan),

are unsure of how to help their daughter process this experience. As a court case prosecuting the attacker draws closer, Josephine is haunted not only by the memory of what she saw but also by the presence of the perpetrator. Tatum gives a career-best performance as a wounded, disempowered father searching for answers, and Chan is similarly impressive; but it's Reeves, in her debut film, who is the real revelation, carrying the complex emotions of a devastating narrative.

114 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Sweet Milk Lake

Dir. Harvey Zielinski Australia

A young trans man adapts to a precarious new life in his estranged father's rural town.

City boy Jake is at a loose end. Unemployed, single and holed up in a granny flat behind his family home, he lives in the shadow of his cisgender twin brother Sam. On an impulse, he takes a trip to the remote country town of Sweet Milk, where his father still lives, totally unaware

that Jake has transitioned. When his dad mistakes him for Sam, an unforeseen opportunity lands in Jake's lap: to fit in as masculine in a place where nobody suspects he's trans. But how long can he hold on to his secret, and what will happen if the truth gets out? Drawing on his own experiences, debut filmmaker Harvey Zielinski also stars in the dual roles of Jake and Sam in this raw, sensitive tale about the long road to self-acceptance and the lies we feel we need to tell to fit in.

94 MINS MIFF PREMIERE FUND FESTIVAL GUEST MIFF REGIONAL



Yesterday the Eye Didn't Sleep

Dir. Rakan Mayasi Belgium, Lebanon, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia

This evocative debut is an atmospheric portrait of the patriarchal weight of Bedouin tradition.

Reem and Jawaher are two sisters who are fated to be married off to appease intertribal politics, regardless of their own desires. Gamra, another young woman, has fled her family and this traditional life in a blaze of glory. The connection to family, culture and land is strong,

but – despite the open expanses of valley surrounding them – can often feel oppressive for the women of this Lebanese Bedouin community. Showcasing sublime photography and thrumming with political subtext, Palestinian director Rakan Mayasi's Cannes-premiering first feature draws from his own grandmother's accounts of being forced into marriage at just 14. It shows a filmmaker engaged with landscape and people, alive to a sense of place.

100 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST

Headliners

Be the first to catch new works from some of the world’s most celebrated filmmakers, including Pedro Almodóvar, Valeska Grisebach, Ryūsuke Hamaguchi and Andrey Zvyagintsev.

miff.com.au/headliners



The Beloved

Dir. Rodrigo Sorogoyen Spain, France

Javier Bardem enthral as a legendary director with ambiguous intentions who casts his estranged daughter in an upcoming film. Esteban, a widely laurelled enfant terrible of global cinema, has returned to Spain to shoot a period film. He wants his daughter Emilia – whom he hasn’t seen in 30 years – to play the lead; despite having baggage around his alcoholism and aggression, she takes the part. Once together, the pair feel the heat not just of the production’s Canary Islands setting but also of the tensions that simmer between them. The plot line of the latest feature from Rodrigo Sorogoyen may evoke *Sentimental Value*, but it trades in Joachim Trier’s optimistic take on filial reconciliation for a scorching account of familial messiness. Matching Javier Bardem’s career-best performance, Victoria Luengo portrays Emilia’s guardedness with sophisticated grace.

135 MINS



Dead Man’s Wire

Dir. Gus Van Sant USA

Bill Skarsgård and Dacre Montgomery play out a hair-raising real-life hostage situation in this blackly comedic thriller from Gus Van Sant. All Tony Kirtsis (Bill Skarsgård) wants is debt forgiveness, an apology and \$5 million. The Indianapolis businessman has taken on a hefty loan only to fall behind on repayments. Convinced that he’s been duped by his mortgage brokers – a father–son duo played by Al Pacino and *Stranger Things*’ Dacre Montgomery – Tony abducts the younger man and rigs a shotgun to his head. His quest for righteous revenge soon becomes a media spectacle, eagerly watched over by national TV crews. Stalwart indie auteur Gus Van Sant harks back to landmark works of that era like Sidney Lumet’s *Dog Day Afternoon* and *Network* in his fictionalised retelling of the 1977 kidnapping of Richard Hall – a riveting tale trip-wired to a piquant social critique.

105 MINS [MIFF REGIONAL](#)



Bitter Christmas

Dir. Pedro Almodóvar Spain

Pedro Almodóvar returns with this witty, award-winning metafiction that satirises the vampiric nature of creativity. The wells of inspiration are drying up for movie director Elsa. Worse still, despite her boyfriend’s coddling, she’s as burdened by migraines as she is with her friends’ troubles. But this is merely a story; a creation of filmmaker Raúl, Elsa is the protagonist of the film that he’s struggling to complete. That spark suddenly returns when his assistant Mónica takes leave to help a friend who has just lost a child, a tragedy that becomes a plot point in his own script. How far is too far when an artist continually cribs from the experiences of others? Pedro Almodóvar’s ingenious piece of self-portraiture explodes onto the screen with his signature vivid colours, propelling an autofictional triumph that ponders art’s (mis)appropriation of life.

111 MINS



The Dreamed Adventure

Dir. Valeska Grisebach Germany, France, Bulgaria, Austria

Almost a decade after *Western*, Valeska Grisebach returns with this similarly rough-hewn, simmering tale of border-town intrigue that claimed the Cannes Jury Prize. Said has hardly been in the ostensibly sleepy Bulgarian town of Svilengrad a day when his car is stolen. Not that it appears to bother him – this rangy former local is an unruffled sort. A chance encounter reunites him with Veska, an old acquaintance who’s in town helming an archaeological dig. Her attraction to Said sees her venture dangerously deep into Svilengrad’s boozy, machismo-laden underworld. In this sprawling, arid noir, the latent threat of violence charges even minor gestures, whether it be the pouring of another drink, the lighting of a cigarette or the simple act of leaning back in a plastic lawn chair. It’s a subtly masterful work, well worth the long wait.

167 MINS



All of a Sudden

Dir. Ryūsuke Hamaguchi Belgium, France, Germany, Japan

Virginie Efira and Tao Okamoto shared Cannes Best Actress awards for their work in Ryūsuke Hamaguchi’s latest long-form opus. Marie-Lou (Virginie Efira) runs an aged-care facility on the outskirts of Paris. She’s devoted to her job and her patients, but, like many of her employees, she’s dealing with burnout. Her spirit is rekindled, however, when she meets Japanese playwright Mari (Tao Okamoto), who’s staging a theatre piece about the history of mental asylums in Italy. As they plunge headlong into all-night conversations about mortality, philosophy and capitalism, their new friendship will change both of their lives. The films of Ryūsuke Hamaguchi – often in-depth explorations of human connection fostered by theatre and workshops – operate at a distinctive register and rhythm, and his first film made outside of Japan is no exception.

196 MINS



Coward

Dir. Lukas Dhont Belgium, France, Netherlands

Lukas Dhont’s stirring latest film – which won its leads a pair of Best Actor prizes at Cannes – depicts a clandestine romance between two young men that blooms in the trenches of WWI. It’s 1916, and Pierre and Francis have been conscripted to fight on the Western Front. The former is a handsome, brawny farmer who struggles to express himself; the latter, a tailor’s son, is flamboyant and creative. Francis is enlisted to direct a theatre troupe that will entertain the soldiers, a role that includes cross-dressing as the female lead. When Pierre is tasked with assisting the troupe, collaboration evolves into something more. A testament to LGBTQIA+ resistance amid repressive circumstances, Lukas Dhont’s (*Close*, MIFF 2022) emotive drama about forbidden love on the front lines holds a mirror to the homosocial foundations of wartime camaraderie.

120 MINS



Fatherland

Dir. Paweł Pawlikowski Poland, Germany, Italy, France

Exiled author Thomas Mann tours a devastated Germany whose divisions echo his own fractured family. In 1949, Nobel laureate Thomas Mann breaks his long exile from his homeland to honour Goethe’s 200th birthday in Frankfurt, West Germany. Next, he plans to visit the city where the literary giant died: Weimar, now in the communist East. Chauffeured by his resentful daughter Erika, he crosses a country he barely recognises, where two divergent but equally compromised regimes are being installed atop the still-festering wounds of Nazism. Paweł Pawlikowski’s immaculate road trip through Germany’s cultural crossroads features masterful lead performances by Hanns Zischler and Sandra Hüller, whose brilliantly understated turn as Erika captures a breadth of emotions lurking just below the surface.

82 MINS



The Incomer

Dir. Louis Paxton UK

On a scarcely inhabited Scottish island, a visiting bureaucrat attempts to wrangle a pair of eccentric siblings in this charmingly off-kilter Sundance award-winning comedy.

Adult siblings Isla and Sandy have lived their entire lives on a remote and otherwise uninhabited Orkney island. Before he died, their father warned them about “incomers” from the mainland; thus, the siblings spend their days training to fend off invaders. But when awkward government official Daniel is dispatched to evict the pair, nothing goes quite to plan. With a keen eye for the picturesque vistas of the northern Scottish environment, Louis Paxton mines the mysterious magic of the landscape as a key part of his storytelling, hilariously brought to life by a superb cast including Gayle Rankin, Grant O’Rourke, Domhnall Gleeson and John Hannah.

102 MINS



The Man I Love

Dir. Ira Sachs USA

Rami Malek captivates as an HIV-positive man in Ira Sachs’s Cannes-competing ode to queerness and libertinism.

New York, late 1980s. Having just left hospital, vibrant theatre artist Jimmy wants to take on life itself: partying with other figures from the West Village fringe; preparing a spectacular performance for the stage; being seen and loved in every way possible. But his HIV meds don’t guarantee survival; so, when a handsome young Brit moves into the building, Jimmy proceeds with abandon. Following *Peter Hujar’s Day* (MIFF 2025), Ira Sachs crafts another stirring time capsule of queer New York, while Rami Malek brilliantly incarnates Jimmy’s audacity and the fragility beneath his bravado. More than an AIDS drama, *The Man I Love* is a story of perseverance and performativity – about the shows we put on despite the obstacles of health and the heart.

96 MINS



I Want Your Sex

Dir. Gregg Araki USA

PRESENTED BY
Letterboxd

In a rollicking return for queer provocateur Gregg Araki, a Gen Z art assistant finds wild erotic joy in submitting to his insatiable boss.

Elliot (Cooper Hoffman) starts working for debauched artist Erika Tracy (Olivia Wilde), who immediately grooms her wide-eyed young assistant as her submissive muse, awakening his nascent appetites. Dazzled by all the pleasures of kink, Elliot shares all the steamy tea with his horny gay co-worker and repressed housemate. But nine-and-a-half weeks of candy-coloured erotic mayhem later, Elliot’s in pink lingerie and in trouble with the law. Queer punk provocateur Gregg Araki titillated Sundance with this delicious dom-com that’s a raunchy blast for everyone, teasing Gen Z with the fun they’re missing while also satirising the Teen Apocalypse Trilogy auteur’s own permissive cultural sphere.

90 MINS



Minotaur

Dir. Andrey Zvyagintsev France, Germany, Latvia

The winner of the Cannes Grand Prix, Andrey Zvyagintsev’s first film in almost a decade is an immaculate, sometimes darkly funny howl of rage at the corruption of Vladimir Putin’s war-enmeshed Russia.

In the immediate wake of his nation’s invasion of Ukraine, wealthy company CEO Gleb is directed to provide cannon fodder for Russia’s war machine. As he is ‘volunteering’ men to be drafted from within his employee pool, he learns that his wife Galina is having an affair with a handsome young artist. This intersection of Gleb’s professional and private crises becomes a trigger point for a shocking showdown. After recovering from a near-fatal coma in 2021, dissident Russian director Andrey Zvyagintsev (*Loveless*, MIFF 2017) has returned with a merciless thriller for our present times – a pièce de résistance in more ways than one.

141 MINS



La Bola Negra

Dir. Javier Ambrossi, Javier Calvo Spain, France

PRESENTED BY
ARMANI
OFFICIAL BEAUTY PARTNER

Sharing the Best Director Prize at Cannes, this sublime time-hopping triptych recounts the unending fight for queer liberation.

In 1937, musician Sebastián is conscripted into the pro-Franco army; there, he meets and falls for a handsome leftist prisoner. In 1932, Carlos attempts to gain membership to an exclusive casino but is rejected due to rumours about his homosexuality. And in 2017, historian Alberto inherits a gift from his estranged grandfather that exacerbates tensions with his mother. Across the decades, these men’s stories interweave and bleed into one another, connecting in profound, unexpected ways. Inspired by Federico García Lorca’s unfinished stage play of the same name, this arrestingly poetic film challenges our notions of linear time, its dazzling collisions of image and sound coming together as palimpsests of personal and societal memory.

155 MINS



Parallel Tales

Dir. Asghar Farhadi France

Isabelle Huppert leads an all-star ensemble cast as a creatively blocked author whose voyeurism causes art and life to inter-bleed in Asghar Farhadi’s psychological drama.

Sylvie, a reclusive novelist living in squalor in Paris, struggles to get the creative juices flowing. To address this, she decides to train her telescope on the apartment across the street, where she spies two men and a woman fumbling around with sound recording equipment. Fascinated, she conjures up a melodramatic backstory and starts typing. But when a stranger enters her orbit, the lines between fantasy, fabrication and fixation begin to blur. Asghar Farhadi’s (*The Salesman*, MIFF 2016) suspenseful meta-thriller evokes Hitchcock and Coppola but deploys its own psychologically complex provocation on truth, intention and interpersonal obsession.

139 MINS



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Pressure
Dir. Anthony Maras UK, France, USA

Hours before D-Day, a meteorologist warns of brutal weather – but doesn’t predict the stormy debate he now faces to save Allied lives.

In 72 hours, Allied forces will launch a mass invasion of Normandy to recapture Europe from the Nazis. Newly arrived at HQ, Scottish meteorologist James Stagg (Andrew Scott) begs for a delay. His pioneering weather observations are predicting heavy rain and high winds that will drive boats calamitously off course. Ebullient US weatherman Irving P. Krick (Chris Messina), on the other hand, says Stagg’s just doomcasting. But the fate of the war, and the world, rests on whom General Dwight D. Eisenhower (Brendan Fraser) chooses to trust. Australian director Anthony Maras dramatises this historical turning point with moment-by-moment urgency in a grippingly cinematic adaptation of David Haig’s stage play.

100 MINS



Sheep in the Box
Dir. Hirokazu Kore-eda Japan

In Hirokazu Kore-eda’s sci-fi-inflected parable, a bereaved couple adopt an AI-powered android to deal with a tragic loss.

In a near-future Japan, REbirth has devised the ultimate remedy for grieving parents: a ‘replacement’ in the form of an anthropomorphic robot. Two years prior, an accident took architect Otone and carpenter Kensuke’s son Kakeru; when REbirth offers them a free trial, Otone doesn’t hesitate. While she becomes enamoured of the revived Kakeru, Kensuke is sceptical. Gradually, they learn that making do is not the same as moving on. Despite its sci-fi trappings, *Sheep in the Box* is, more accurately, a study of complicated families, building on director Hirokazu Kore-eda’s earlier works *Broker* (MIFF 2022) and *Shoplifters* (MIFF 2018) and raising questions about humanity, loss and the ways technology can both help and harm.

126 MINS



Queen at Sea
Dir. Lance Hammer UK

Juliette Binoche and Tom Courtenay star in this unflinchingly knotty drama about a woman and her stepfather at odds.

Amanda (Juliette Binoche) has relocated to London to be closer to her mother Leslie, who has advanced dementia. While checking on Leslie one day, Amanda walks in on her and her stepfather Martin having sex, despite medical advice stating that Leslie is no longer able to give meaningful consent. Furious, Amanda calls the police, setting in motion a chain of processes that completely upends their lives, leaving Amanda to question her decision. Delicately complex and staunchly humanist, *Queen at Sea* stands out for its exploration of disorienting ethical puzzles relating to familial responsibility and elder autonomy, plus the lingering taboo around later-in-life sexuality.

121 MINS



Wishful Thinking
Dir. Graham Parkes USA

This high-concept rom-com playfully questions the notion that love is the most powerful force in existence ... for better or worse.

Charlie and Julia are deeply in love, but are also fundamentally incompatible. Desperate to fix their relationship, they visit twin TikTok love gurus Tilly and Tilly, whose mysterious counsel reminds the couple how and why they fell for each other. It also unlocks something else, with earth-shattering repercussions ... literally. Cheekily interpreting the real-world implications of Rhonda Byrne’s self-help hit *The Secret*, first-time feature director Graham Parkes creates a wonderfully witty love story with a supernatural through-line that’s as hilarious as it is horrifying. *Wishful Thinking* is a boldly original, funny and insightful study of the wonderful delusion at the heart of all love: that its exhilarating highs and heartbreaking lows can change the world.

105 MINS

PRESENTED BY
ARMANI
OFFICIAL BEAUTY PARTNER



Rose
Dir. Markus Schleinzner Germany, Austria

Sandra Hüller’s knockout, Silver Bear–winning performance anchors this tragic folktale about a woman who poses as a male soldier in 17th-century Germany.

From the battlefields of the Thirty Years’ War, a soldier arrives in a small German village carrying a document proving his inheritance of a local farm. Facially scarred by a bullet wound, this mysterious figure proves himself to be hardworking and brave, and slowly but surely insinuates himself into the community. But the soldier has a secret: he is, in fact, a woman named Rose, masquerading as a man. When she is married off to a neighbour’s daughter, Rose’s deception is put to the test. Sandra Hüller gives a tour-de-force performance in this fascinating fictional character study taking inspiration from hundreds of historical accounts of gender transgression.

93 MINS **MIFF REGIONAL**



Yellow Letters
Dir. İlker Çatak Germany, France, Türkiye

This Golden Bear winner, from the filmmaker behind *The Teachers’ Lounge*, is a timely portrait of artists suffering persecution.

Playwright Aziz and actor Derya are a husband-and-wife pair known for their avant-garde theatre works. But when they receive menacing official government edicts labelling their work “too political”, their life begins to unravel. As the couple move from Ankara to Istanbul with their 13-year-old daughter, relationships begin to fray and ethics become compromised. The winner of the Berlin International Film Festival’s top prize – shot in Germany to preserve director İlker Çatak’s own artistic freedom, with Berlin serving as Ankara and Hamburg as Istanbul – is a timely depiction of state-administered suppression of artists and intellectuals, reflecting how authoritarian regimes erode the humanity of those under their boot.

127 MINS

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Sweet Milk Lake. Written and directed by Harvey Zielinski.
Made in Melbourne with the support of VicScreen. Photo Jane Zhang

Australia

Australia’s leading showcase of local filmmaking returns with an exciting line-up of stories from across the nation, highlighting the voices shaping contemporary Australian cinema.

miff.com.au/australia



Digby & Camille
Dir. Trevor Graham, Digby Webster Australia

In this tender, intimate and humorous documentary, a pair of inseparable lovers dream of building a life together.

Archibald Prize–selected painter Digby Webster and his girlfriend, trainee chef Camille Collins, have been mutually smitten since they first met eight years ago. Living with Down syndrome and now in their thirties, they imagine a future of wedded bliss, children and a home of their own – but more difficult truths have to be embraced first as they navigate the demands of jobs and devoted parents who tend to squeeze the brakes on their loftier ambitions. Award-winning filmmaker Trevor Graham worked closely with Webster to co-author this unique, heartwarming documentary consisting of fly-on-the-wall footage filmed over several years. A sensitive and honest portrayal of everyday life, it might just renew your faith in the power of love.

92 MINS MIFF PREMIERE FUND FESTIVAL GUEST MIFF REGIONAL



Mad Rush
Dir. Maddelin McKenna Australia

A young woman gets caught in an elaborate phone scam which sends her on a twisted odyssey through the Melbourne CBD.

Madisha’s morning couldn’t get any worse: a rootless Gen Z struggling to find her purpose in life, she’s just learned that her housemate is ditching her and is still reeling from having lost her most recent job under cloudy circumstances. So when she gets a call advising her of fraudulent activity on her bank account and urgently requesting that she withdraw all of her money in cash, Madisha is sent on a panicked pursuit that leads her to ominous alleyways, busy street corners, an alcohol-soaked house party and, perhaps, the desire to take charge of her own life. *Mad Rush* is a deeply relatable portrait of a spiky but vulnerable young woman caught in a web tightening around her, turning our city into a gritty, disorienting urban Wonderland.

76 MINS MIFF PREMIERE FUND FESTIVAL GUEST MIFF REGIONAL



Boss Cat
Dir. Genevieve Clay-Smith Australia

Desperate for independence, Sonja discovers the vibrant world of krump dancing, where she embraces expressiveness, challenges social judgement and finds her people.

When her mother suddenly dies, Sonja (played by impressive newcomer Olivia Hargroder) is thrown into tumult. Suddenly under the care of her controlling grandma and – as a young woman living with Down syndrome – constantly faced with a society that judges what she’s capable of, Sonja is keen to take charge of her own life. When a chance encounter with the charismatic Hakim (Elijah Williams) leads her to a krump class, Sonja discovers a life-changing outlet for expression. Filled with energy, enthusiasm, optimism and a gentle dose of provocation, Genevieve Clay-Smith’s debut feature is a moving, empowering, feel-good Aussie film.

99 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST MIFF REGIONAL



Guided by Horses
Dir. Sean O’Reilly Australia

Amid the breathtaking vistas of the Kimberley, an equine sanctuary helps First Nations teenagers discover reconnection and healing.

The natural beauty of Western Australia’s Kimberley region hides a shocking truth: the youth suicide rate in this remote part of the country is among the highest in the world. Pioneering Aboriginal researcher Professor Juli Coffin is seeking to change that with a unique program that pairs young people with horses, offering a culturally safe sanctuary in which they navigate their paths to adulthood, forming life-changing bonds along the way. Director Sean O’Reilly worked closely with Coffin – whose own life was once saved by a horse – to document their remarkable journeys. Full of charm, joy and gentle humour, *Guided by Horses* is an engaging reminder of where we can turn to for our inner spirit to be ignited.

76 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST MIFF REGIONAL



The Airport Chaplain
Dir. Bonnie Moir Australia

Hugo Weaving stars as a chaplain with an unorthodox approach to solving an airport’s daily crises in this compelling new drama series.

At a bustling international airport, lost people seek missed connections, while others carry personal baggage. Tobias Wallace (Hugo Weaving) shepherds them all. Scruffy, benevolent and always on call, he’ll bend rules to help passengers and workers alike. Not everybody is a fan of his methods, however: ambitious new terminal manager Mira (Shabana Azeez) has liability nightmare Tobias marked for redundancy. But as crises appear everywhere, maybe this infuriating chaplain could be Mira’s salvation. The world premiere of the first three episodes of this much-anticipated series warmly illuminates a morally complex protagonist, while his multicultural, multigenerational co-workers are portrayed by a fully booked flight of Aussie talent.

75 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Death of a Shaman
Dir. Dan Jackson Australia, Ecuador

As Ecuador erupts in protest, the custodian of a threatened way of life contemplates the future of his family line and his people.

In a village deep in the Amazon jungle, shaman Rafael Santi practises the sacred customs of his ancestors, hoping to pass his mantle on to his teenage grandson. As Ecuador’s Indigenous peoples launch a countrywide protest that takes them to the streets of Quito and into violent conflict with armed forces, Santi uses the traditional medicine of ayahuasca to seek answers from the spirit world. Australian filmmaker Dan Jackson spent over a decade developing connections with the Indigenous communities of Amazanga to tell this intimate story of one man, his family and an age-old struggle between postcolonial states and the peoples they displaced but haven’t defeated.

104 MINS MIFF PREMIERE FUND FESTIVAL GUEST MIFF REGIONAL



Hard as Puck
Dir. Isaac Elliott Australia

A motley crew of para ice hockey skaters fight to keep their sporting club on the rink in this stirring, often hilarious documentary.

The Garden Island Pirates are the best para ice hockey team in Western Australia. There’s no competition ... literally. A scrappy, mixed-gender group of amateurs, they spend much of their time negotiating volunteer committee positions and wrangling sponsorships. That all changes when three women on the team earn the opportunity to represent Australia in its first ever appearance at the Women’s World Para Ice Hockey Championships in Slovakia. The newcomers aren’t given a snowflake’s chance in hell – but that doesn’t mean they’re not about to go down swinging. An affectionate portrait of a niche sporting institution and the weird and wonderful personalities who help it scrape by, *Hard as Puck* is a laugh-out-loud edge-of-your-sled ride.

92 MINS MIFF PREMIERE FUND FESTIVAL GUEST MIFF REGIONAL



Facing the Numbers
Dir. Kieran Satour, Tyson Perkins Australia

A unique mixture of different forms of Indigenous storytelling, this vibrant documentary finds the humanity behind the statistics.

The numbers don’t lie: First Nations people are more likely to be separated from their families, be incarcerated as youths and adults, and experience police brutality. But, as *Facing the Numbers* states, “The statistics tell one story; we tell another.” Faced with the seemingly insurmountable problems of colonial power structures, systemic oppression and endemic racism, First Peoples creatives Kieran Satour and Tyson Perkins have crafted a cinematic manifesto entirely built from Indigenous perspectives, connecting to ancient traditions of oral storytelling and songlines. At once sobering and optimistic, this mesmerising documentary showcases strength and resilience in the face of deeply entrenched inequality.

70 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



The Fox
Dir. Dario Russo Australia, USA, Spain, Japan

Jai Courtney stars – and Olivia Colman and Sam Neill voice a fox and a magpie, respectively – in this absurdist black comedy about small-town duplicity and discontent.

Affable oaf Nick (Jai Courtney) cruises through life courtesy of his rich daddy's money, and his fiancée Kori (Emily Browning) has just accepted his marriage proposal. But when he discovers she's been cheating on him, everything unravels. Out hunting one day, he catches a talking fox, who tells him there's a magical pit in the forest that can fix all of his problems. Nick hatches a plan ... but they don't call foxes tricksters for nothing. Marking the feature directorial debut of *Danger 5* co-creator Dario Russo, this tale of dissatisfied couples and percipient animals – also starring Damon Herriman and Miranda Otto – deftly showcases his singular brand of dark humour.

90 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST MIFF REGIONAL



Replica
Dir. Chouwa Liang Australia, France

Like a gender-flipped *Her*, this empathetic documentary follows three women whose yearning for intimacy is met by AI partners.

Disillusioned with her romantic and professional prospects, Qin embarks on a relationship with Mr Lu, a customisable AI lover who accompanies her everywhere – including (with help from a paid cosplayer) on physical dates. Pragmatic Sonya, meanwhile, finds solace in Stephen, her virtual husband, who has even met her parents. And Muna, whose marriage has long gone sour, gets the devotion she seeks through a simulated companion on ChatGPT. Are these digital bonds just about escapism and desperation, or are they legitimate surrogates when real life falls short? Chouwa Liang's directorial debut uses the backdrop of modern China to sensitively contextualise the women's unorthodox approaches to romance.

90 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Wilderness
Dir. Martin McKenna Australia

A Melbourne doctor spiralling into full midlife crisis sets out on a primal pilgrimage into the Victorian Alps.

Allie's life seems ideal from the outside: she's a doctor, living with her teenage daughter and successful husband in an opulent home. But she's also prone to making bad decisions and picking fights with anyone who crosses her path. In the wake of a serious car accident, Allie hits the road, and is by chance reunited with her estranged friend Kaz. Travelling into increasingly remote stretches of alpine wilderness, the two women confront the pain of their past and the unspoken realities of their relationship. Set in the picturesque surrounds of Victoria's High Country, *Wilderness* is at once a midlife-crisis movie about women behaving badly and a parable about listening to the environments that surround us.

101 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



French Girls
Dir. Hyun Lee Australia

PRESENTED BY
TimeOut

An inspired act of micro-budget filmmaking, this playful gig-economy parable set in the Sydney fashion scene introduces an impressive array of new Australian talent.

Mia is floating through life: dating a small-time scammer, killing time in front of screens, working a menial job in construction. When an opportunity arises for her to exchange hi-vis for high fashion, she reluctantly falls into the world of modelling, where there's ample money, prestige, gossip ... and just as much boredom. Via a series of questionable choices and misadventures, however, she will ultimately become infamous. Korean-Australian writer/director Hyun Lee's debut feature film is a comedy about the absurdities of the fashion industry, a commentary on the construction of imagery and a film in open dialogue with the *Nouvelle Vague*.

83 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Rodeo Dreams
Dir. Rhian Skirving, W.A.M. Bleakley Australia

In rural Queensland, four determined young bull riders try to make it in one of the most dangerous sports on Earth.

The biggest bull-riding event in the Southern Hemisphere, the Mount Isa Mines Rodeo is a place where young cowboys with big dreams go to strut their stuff. Soft-spoken Donovan Rutherford is feted as a future champion; Indigenous rider Peter Gregory Jr is seeking to match his father's exploits; Camicka Anderson is trying to make it as a rare female competitor in a macho sport; and charismatic Darcy Harrison, oozing with natural talent, is a real contender – or might be, if he bothers to show up. When the 60-plus-year event enters involuntary administration, Mount Isa residents are faced with a choice: to put together a last-ditch grassroots bid to save the rodeo, or to let this institution disappear in a cloud of dust.

90 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Yesterday Island
Dir. Sam Voutas Australia

An unsuccessful writer, stuck living the same day on repeat on a subantarctic island, must find an unwitting victim to take his place.

Amos, a failed novelist with a failed marriage, arrives on a remote southern island. But his escape soon becomes a prison: he discovers he's trapped infinitely reliving the same day, complete with the same dead birds, weird board games, tinned spaghetti and unexplained murders. The only way to get off this hamster wheel is to trick someone else into replacing him, and Amos's estranged ex-wife Gemma seems the perfect candidate – but her arrival complicates things. This award-winning Australian indie comedy is a true crowdpleaser: a low-budget but exceptionally shot achievement in inventive worldbuilding that evokes Greek myth to put its own unique spin on the time-loop genre. It's a film you'll want to revisit over and over again.

90 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST MIFF REGIONAL



The Latcher
Dir. James Hunter Australia

A startling, thematically complex psychological thriller about motherhood and the monstrous clutches of grief.

American midwife Alice lives in an isolated house in rural Australia. Worn out by her job and wearied by an unspoken tragedy, she experiences waking nightmares and starts sensing an eerie presence creeping in from the shadowy bushland. As desolation overwhelms her, and with the threat inching closer, her only refuge is the very home where she lost everything. Can she vanquish her demons before they corrode what's left of her sense of self? Inspired by horror classics *Rosemary's Baby* and *Don't Look Now* as well as fairytales and folklore, MIFF Accelerator Lab alum James Hunter's feature debut uses atmosphere and symbolism to explore the repercussions of loss, silence and solitude.

80 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Whistle
Dir. Christopher Nelius Australia, USA, Spain, Japan

PRESENTED BY
The Guardian

Welcome to the Masters of Musical Whistling, where the competitors require skill, determination and a mighty wind.

The Masters of Musical Whistling celebrates whistling at an elite level. Every two years, dedicated and supremely talented whistlers converge on Hollywood to showcase their art. Contestants include superstar Molly Lewis, who features on the *Barbie* soundtrack; charismatic Spaniard Ayna; and Japanese whistling prodigy Yuki. With genuine affection and care, director Christopher Nelius documents high and low notes for competition founder Carole Anne Kaufman and her competitors, centring this community's incredible artistry through all the tears, bruised egos, heartaches and soaring joys. Funny, poignant and wonderfully weird, *Whistle* is a treat from start to finish – and, perhaps, just what the world needs right now.

84 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST MIFF REGIONAL



Yumburra
Dir. Grace McKenzie Australia

Dark Emu author Bruce Pascoe pursues sustainable farming and connection to Country in this gentle documentary portrait.

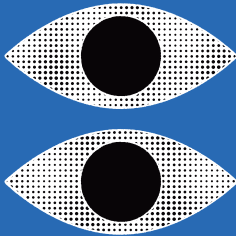
In the wake of the success – and media furore – that greeted his landmark book *Dark Emu*, Bruce Pascoe retreated to his tract of land on Yin Country in East Gippsland. Seeking to put his teachings on First Peoples agriculture into practice, Pascoe and his partner Lyn Harwood set about building infrastructure for sustainable farming, healing their strained relationship and deepening their connection to Country. Shot in observational style, *Yumburra* is at once a character study of one of Australia's great writers – and an unhurried depiction of life on the land, making a quiet, unassuming case for the lessons we can learn from elders and the environment alike.

86 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST

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Ah Girl
Dir. Ang Geck Geck Priscilla Singapore

This beautifully affecting portrayal of young sisters navigating their parents’ divorce revolves around a pair of stunning child performances.

In 1990s Singapore, seven-year-old Swee Swee – or “Ah Girl”, as her family calls her – is trying to understand what’s going on in her world. Living with her grandparents as her parents go through a separation, she’s looking out for her younger sister and searching for some sense of stability. Instead, her erratic, often-absent mother is prone to making unrealistic promises of an imagined future together, while her father – dating a string of potential new partners – is wondering if the kids should go live with an aunt and uncle in Australia. Torn between competing adults and growing increasingly curious about the world, Ah Girl begins to realise that adults can’t be relied on.

99 MINS



The Day She Returns
Dir. Hong Sang-soo South Korea

Hong Sang-soo meditates on the nature of performance in this tale of a celeb coming in from the cold.

An actor sits in a restaurant for three back-to-back interviews about her role in a new independent film, which marks her return to the screen after a 12-year hiatus – a time period that coincided with her (recently ended) marriage. As the movie star and her interlocutors chat, epiphanies emerge from the conversations and the reflective silences in between. The MIFF program would almost feel incomplete without a film from Hong Sang-soo, a master of minimalist, conversational works that mine poetry from everyday exchanges. In his 34th feature – anchored by a beguiling turn from Song Seon-mi – Hong interrogates the ways in which we modify our self-presentation for different contexts.

84 MINS



Filipiñana
Dir. Rafael Manuel Philippines

A young Filipina learns that subjugation and silence are par for the course at the golf club where she finds employment.

Having left Ilocos for Manila’s greener pastures, 17-year-old Isabel ends up on a different kind of green: working as a ‘tee girl’ for a country club. She quickly adopts a new routine teeing up balls for wealthy golfers, joining the staff to eat morsels of rice and fish while the clientele feast, and gradually growing infatuated with the doctor who runs the club. But as she discovers more about her patron and the institution to which he owes his fortune, Isabel finds herself drawn into a web of exploitation and unseen, sanitised violence. Rafael Manuel’s feature debut escalates with menace despite its languid, sun-drenched setting, whose sheen conceals how the extremely rich prey on the aspirational poor.

100 MINS



9 Temples to Heaven
Dir. Sompot Chidgasornpongse Thailand, Singapore, France, Norway

An extended family go on a religious pilgrimage and navigate dramas along the way in this deeply personal reflection on modern Thailand.

When Sakol hears an unsettling prophecy about his ageing mother’s imminent death, he springs into action. Knowing that nine is a fortuitous number in Thai culture, he bundles the same amount of family members into a mini-van to visit nine temples in one day. It’s an ambitious attempt to cultivate enough karma for “Grandma” to find a peaceful afterlife, but things don’t go as planned. As three generations of family members squabble over religion and personal responsibility, will Sakol’s faith finally be rewarded? This beautifully observed portrait of the relationship between religious tradition and capitalism is a sensitive, involving saga drawn from its director’s own experiences.

140 MINS



A Girl Unknown
Dir. Zou Jing China

A young woman comes of age and searches for her identity in the era of China’s one-child policy.

Amid the sunny splendour of 1980s coastal China, six-year-old tomboy Juan enjoys a sweet life. But soon things are thrown into flux: her widowed mother remarries, then falls pregnant. Because families are only permitted to have a single child, Juan is quickly adopted out to an older couple in the city. A decade later, against the backdrop of the changing cultural landscape of the 1990s, a now-teenage Juan looks for a place that feels like home. Zou Jing sets her beautiful, difficult drama against the real-life phenomenon of mass adoption in China. Featuring stirring performances from newcomer Cao Ruofan and Li Gengxi (*Resurrection*, MIFF 2025), *A Girl Unknown* earned acclaim on the Croisette, taking home three Cannes Critics’ Week awards.

125 MINS



Human Resource
Dir. Nawapol Thamrongrattanarit Thailand

A Bangkok HR manager keeps her pregnancy secret from both her employers and her husband in this sly study of corporate culture.

HR manager Fren is so busy navigating the complexities of her corporate role that she’s not sure if she should tell her own partner – let alone her employers – that she’s pregnant. As she screens job applicants, manages competing workplace personalities and tries to be a supportive spouse to a frustrating husband, Fren begins to wonder whether this unfeeling metropolis is a world that she even wants to bring a child into. Capturing the callousness with which large corporations treat their workers and the harsh realities awaiting anyone setting out on a new career, Nawapol Thamrongrattanarit’s film is a steely, thoughtful meditation on workplaces – and the place of work – in the age of late-stage capitalism.

122 MINS



Master
Dir. Rezwan Shahriar Sumit Bangladesh

An idealistic rural schoolteacher turns local politician – then slowly submits to the inexorable weight of corruption.

In a remote Bangladeshi community surrounded by protected woodlands, beloved schoolteacher Jahir is running in the local election. With his progressive values and gift for eloquent oration, he seems like the perfect candidate, a voice who can represent this rural community on the national level. Soon, however, his ideals come into conflict with crushing reality, as campaign donors, local thugs, shady police, petty bureaucrats and powerbrokers all lean on Jahir for favours, preferential treatment and dirty deals. Openly evoking real-life controversies, *Master* is a classical political parable that’s both local in its specifics and universal in its themes.

126 MINS



Shape of Momo
Dir. Tribenay Rai India

In this double Busan award winner, a woman’s urban feminist sensibilities place her at odds with her family’s traditional community.

After leaving her job in Delhi, 32-year-old Bishnu returns to the village in Sikkim where she grew up. She stays in the family home, joining three generations of women: her grandmother, who misses her Dubai-based son; her mother, who juggles domestic and communal pressures; and her pregnant older sister, who is avoiding her husband and in-laws. Bishnu knows she has to help them, but her progressive views clash with those of the townsfolk. Set against the breathtaking landscape of remote north-eastern India, *Shape of Momo* tackles the conflict between tradition and modernity, dramatising how ‘progress’ – seen here through the prevalence of iPads, K-pop and karaoke – can reshape a culture.

115 MINS



We Are All Strangers
Dir. Anthony Chen Singapore

The first Singaporean film to screen in the Berlinale Competition is an epic, tender tale of biological and found family.

Having finished military service, Junyang is unsure what comes next – though this doesn’t stop him from disparaging his father Boon Kiat’s humble noodle stand. Junyang’s girlfriend Lydia, a piano prodigy with university in her sights, faces her mother’s distaste for their relationship. Meanwhile, Boon Kiat grows fond of ‘beer auntie’ Bee Hwa, who peddles alcohol near his stall. As life throws one curveball after another, it’s not long before these four become deeply intertwined. Reuniting the stars of *Ilo Ilo* (MIFF 2013) and *Wet Season* (MIFF 2020), Anthony Chen’s touching and quietly thought-provoking film dramatises the yearning masked by tough exteriors and devotion for loved ones.

157 MINS

Special Focus: New Japanese Cinema



All the Lovers in the Night

Dir. Yukiko Sode Japan

Based on Mieko Kawakami’s evocative novel, this tale of two lost souls enchantingly explores loneliness and love.

Fuyuko is a solitary person of quiet routines. She rarely leaves the house, but loves taking walks late at night, when only “half the world remains”. One evening, she meets Mitsutsuka, a soft-spoken physics lecturer who’s just as reticent and fastidious as she is. Soon, they start taking walks together, sitting in cafés and talking the night away – two lonely satellites briefly, tenderly brought into shared orbit. But can their relationship survive the cold light of day? Adapting the book of the same name, Yukiko Sode takes on a gentle, beautiful story grounded in interior experience, crafting a lovely two-hander that dwells on conversation and the spaces lurking between the words we say to one another.

139 MINS



Nagi Notes

Dir. Koji Fukada Japan, France, Singapore, Philippines

This adaptation of classic Japanese play *Tokyo Notes* is a thoughtful character study set in a sublime modern art museum.

Yuri, an architect from Tokyo, arrives in regional Nagi to visit her ex-husband’s sister Yoriko, a sculptor who wants Yuri to sit for her. Staging sessions in a workshop barn on her dairy farm, Yoriko chips away at a block of camphorwood and Yuri’s guardedness, their conversation turning personal. Two boys who attend Yoriko’s art classes and workshops are fascinated by this outsider, unsure of what the relationship between the two women is. Reminiscent of the films of Éric Rohmer and Ryūsuke Hamaguchi, this latest work from Koji Fukada adapts Oriza Hirata’s 1994 theatrical production *Tokyo Notes* (which itself drew from Yasujiro Ozu’s masterpiece *Tokyo Story*). Pondering the nature of creativity, queer identity and the challenges of finding belonging amid the social strictures of Japanese society, this is a thoughtful, low-key conversation piece that’s perfect for those who like their dramas intimate and deeply human.

110 MINS



AnyMart

Dir. Yusuke Iwasaki Japan

A convenience store becomes a stage for darkly funny horror in this deadpan satire of late capitalism.

Sakai is an assistant manager at the Tokyo convenience store managed by his father, both men deadened by the rigid procedures and relentless monotony of retail. The arrival of sparky new employee Ogawa stirs something in Sakai – but it also threatens to upend the store’s delicate ecosystem, with surreal, blood-drenched results. In this auspicious feature debut, Yusuke Iwasaki – assisted by an impressive cast – mounts a strident critique of conformity in his home country and the systems that enforce it, infusing the abundant aisles of AnyMart with a creeping, comic dread before the wild escalation of the film’s riotous and unpredictable final act.

88 MINS



The Samurai and the Prisoner

Dir. Kiyoshi Kurosawa Japan

This knockout historical thriller from genre master Kiyoshi Kurosawa finds mysteries afoot in a castle’s locked rooms.

In 16th-century Japan, samurai lord Murashige Araki is barricaded inside his own fortress, awaiting an attack from powerful rival warlord Nobunaga Oda. When Nobunaga’s famously wily envoy Kanbei Kuroda arrives to deliver a warning, an enraged Murashige locks him in his dungeon. But after an unexplainable murder occurs within the castle walls, the embattled *daimyō* must turn to his prisoner, whose katana-sharp wits could help solve this crime – and navigate the other treacheries besieging Murashige. Eclectic veteran filmmaker Kiyoshi Kurosawa (*Cloud*, MIFF 2025) adds the samurai movie to his bag of tricks with this latest Cannes-premiering work, an adaptation of an award-winning novel by Honobu Yonezawa. A tale of palace intrigue told via whodunnit riddles, *The Samurai and the Prisoner* is an epic crowdpleaser drawing on the classical simplicity of mid-20th-century Japanese filmmaking.

147 MINS



Lost Land

Dir. Akio Fujimoto Japan, France, Malaysia, Germany

Winner of the Orizzonti Special Jury Prize at Venice, this groundbreaking Rohingya docufiction presents the perilous, disorienting experience of seeking asylum from a child’s-eye view.

When nine-year-old Somira and her four-year-old brother Shafi find themselves suddenly and inexplicably ripped from their lives in a Bangladeshi refugee camp, all they are told is that they are going to find an uncle in Malaysia. Thus begins an uncertain, hazardous journey over days and then weeks – over land and by sea – that will take everything the siblings have to give and then some. As the first ever film spoken entirely in Rohingya, *Lost Land* brings an intimate realism to its profound and poignant document of the human lives at the heart of a too-often-overlooked humanitarian crisis.

99 MINS



Two Seasons, Two Strangers

Dir. Sho Miyake Japan

Locarno’s Golden Leopard winner is a sublime nested tale of creativity, loneliness and making new connections.

Screenwriter Li, a Korean expat living in Japan, is hard at work on a new idea: a story of a blossoming friendship between Nagisa and Natsuo, a young woman and man who meet by chance on a quiet beach. When that story fails to connect with an audience, Li retreats to a remote inn in wintertime. There, she strikes up an unlikely friendship with the taciturn owner, Benzo, who says he rates films based on “how well they depict human sadness”. Following his impressive previous pictures *Small, Slow but Steady* and *All the Long Nights*, rising Japanese auteur Sho Miyake received Locarno’s top honour (plus an additional prize from the Junior Jury) for this tender exploration of human aches and interpersonal dynamics. Adapting two short stories from legendary 20th-century manga artist Yoshiharu Tsuge, this elusive diptych has earned comparisons to the work of MIFF mainstay Hong Sang-soo.

89 MINS

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The Diary of a Chambermaid

Dir. Radu Jude France, Romania

Romania’s premier provocateur returns with a finely wrought parable skewering the ‘good intentions’ of the bourgeoisie.

Gianina is a live-in nanny for a wealthy family in Bordeaux. One of the many Romanians who go to France seeking better economic conditions, she keeps the extravagant home shipshape, cooks the family their favourite meals and cares for their son. In the evenings, she divides her time between rehearsals for a play – specifically, a bawdy, experimental adaptation of the titular novel previously brought to screen by Jean Renoir and Luis Buñuel – and video-calling her daughter, who jealously pines for her back home. Feted at Cannes, Radu Jude’s class satire is both deeply compassionate and merciless in dramatising the sometimes absurd, often humiliating plight of migrant workers.

94 MINS



The Education of Jane Cumming

Dir. Sophie Heldman Germany, Switzerland, UK

A student accuses her teachers of a same-sex affair in this luminous drama based on a 19th-century case that scandalised Scotland.

Edinburgh, 1810: wealthy aristocrat Lady Cumming Gordon arrives at a new girls’ boarding school, wishing to enrol her illegitimate teenage granddaughter Jane. When Jane – born to an Indian mother – is bullied by her peers for her dark skin, progressive teachers Miss Pirie and Miss Woods take her under their wings. But the close bond that develops leads to complicated feelings of jealousy, and a shift in the trio’s dynamic instigates an accusation by Jane that will alter the course of the teachers’ lives. This dramatisation of the true story that inspired Lillian Hellman’s famous play *The Children’s Hour* deals frankly with the layers of intersectional power that impacted the real-life events behind it.

114 MINS



Erupcja

Dir. Pete Ohs Poland, USA

Charli cxx stars as a British tourist crisscrossing Warsaw with an old friend in this effervescent indie that’s equally roiling with emotion.

Bethany (pop music icon Charli cxx) is a London gal who’s arrived in Warsaw with her boyfriend Rob. He believes he’s in for a romantic getaway culminating in a picturesque marriage proposal, but Bethany has other ideas. She wastes no time peeling off to track down an old friend, Nel, who runs a flower shop and with whom she shares a uniquely electric connection. Through the lens of their mutual infatuation – teetering on romance – the city shimmers with party-girl possibility. Fresh from her star turn in *The Moment*, a deglammed Charli proves a magnetic screen presence in US-born director Pete Ohs’s intimate, bittersweet paean to his adoptive home – a film that bubbles with understated eruptive potential.

71 MINS



Everytime

Dir. Sandra Wollner Austria, Germany

Awarded the Cannes Un Certain Regard Prize, this indelible study of loss joins a fragmented family as they take a trip to heal and confront the past.

Ella and her daughters Jessie and Melli have booked a trip to Tenerife to take a break from their busy life in Berlin. The night before they’re due to depart, Jessie and her boyfriend Lux head out to a party, where a cocktail of alcohol and drugs leads to tragedy. One year on, the thwarted trip to the Canary Islands is reattempted, but heartache continues to reverberate beneath seemingly healed exteriors. The third feature from Sandra Wollner – shot by *Aftersun* (MIFF 2022) DOP Gregory Oke – eschews the oversimplification that often accompanies the trope of unexpected death, while newcomer Lotte Shirin Keiling impresses in embodying Melli’s almost-magical approach to coping with unthinkable loss.

119 MINS



Extra Geography

Dir. Molly Manners UK

A self-assigned summer project leads to tough lessons in life, love and friendship for a precocious pair of boarding school BFFs.

On a mission to graduate from their English boarding school and get into Oxbridge, best friends Minna and Flic set themselves an extracurricular assignment to become more “worldly”. Their goal: to fall in love with the first person they see ... and that just happens to be their totally oblivious geography teacher, Miss Delavigne (Alice Englert). *Extra Geography* is a funny, bittersweet ode to teenage-girl friendship led by remarkable performances from newcomers Galaxie Clear and Marni Duggan as Minna and Flic, whose convincingly cosy friendship is tested by the rocky terrain of adolescence – full of confusing hormones, co-dependency and competitiveness.

94 MINS



The Fence

Dir. Claire Denis France

Claire Denis returns to Africa – and to the prickly themes that have defined her oeuvre.

Overseeing a major West African construction site, Horn (Matt Dillon) has a lot on his plate: the imminent transition to new Chinese financiers; the arrival of his much younger wife (Mia McKenna-Bruce, *How to Have Sex*, MIFF 2023); and, most pressingly, the on-the-job death of a local worker. As night falls, the deceased’s brother (Isaach de Bankolé) arrives like an apparition. He demands to take possession of his sibling’s body, and won’t accept ‘no’ for an answer. Claire Denis has made a host of films sensuously and dramatically interrogating the European footprint in postcolonial Africa. Here, she adapts a 1979 play by Bernard-Marie Koltès, whose dialogue-rich scenes mount a surreal, uneasy examination of exploitation, power and posturing.

109 MINS



Flesh and Fuel

Dir. Pierre Le Gall France, Poland

A romantic spark forms between two long-haul truckers in this winner of the inaugural Queer Palm Revelation award at Cannes.

While Étienne and Bartosz both drive trucks carrying all manner of goods across Europe, they couldn’t be more different: whereas Étienne has been hardened by his experiences, gregarious Bartosz retains his zest for life despite its hardships. What was meant to be a one-off hook-up by the side of the road transforms into a profound, continent-spanning romance. There’s no dearth of works tackling the difficult pursuit of queer love, but this Cannes award winner enriches its tale of unexpected connection by exploring questions of self-acceptance, ambition and blue-collar alienation. *Flesh and Fuel* shows how love can bloom in the most unlikely places when we’re willing to take a different route.

90 MINS



Gentle Monster

Dir. Marie Kreutzer Austria, Germany, France

Léa Seydoux is riveting as a wife and mother coming to grips with the fallout when her husband is charged with a shocking crime.

When avant-garde concert pianist Lucy agrees to move her family from the city to the countryside, the goal is to provide her husband Philip with respite following a burnout-induced panic attack. Instead, the move leaves her isolated and emotionally unprepared when the police arrive to execute a search warrant on Philip’s computers. As she struggles to process her shattered new reality and to protect herself and her young son, Lucy must untangle truth from love. Director Marie Kreutzer shrewdly orients her focus around the women left to deal with the emotional aftermath of crimes men commit in this psychologically pointed exploration of shifting emotional sands, as devastating as it is vital.

114 MINS



Hen

Dir. György Pálfi Germany, Greece, Hungary

An offbeat, moving and utterly unique bird’s-eye view on the suffering of the world.

When a poultry transport driver stops his truck at a servo, a factory-farmed chicken escapes, evading a hungry fox and braving a busy highway before getting cooped up in a run-down seaside restaurant. As she repeatedly strives to find out what becomes of her eggs, she encounters a world in which hens aren’t the only creatures to be exploited. Fans of animal-centred dramas like Andrea Arnold’s *Cow* (MIFF 2021) and Jerzy Skolimowski’s *EO* (MIFF 2022) will adore this feathery fancy filmed vividly at chick’s-eye level. There are no animatronics or CGI – just set pieces that need to be seen to be believed, along with the genuine emotion that inimitable Hungarian auteur György Pálfi (*Taxidermia*, MIFF 2006) draws from an all-star flock of trained birds.

96 MINS **MIFF REGIONAL**



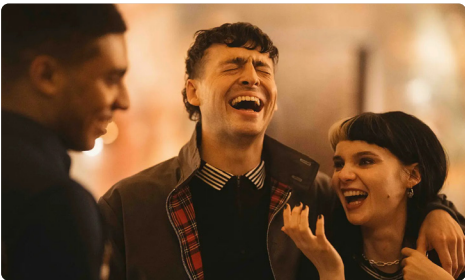
How to Divorce During the War

Dir. Andrius Blaževičius Lithuania, Luxembourg, Ireland, Czechia

A collapsing marriage collides with geopolitical catastrophe in this satirical, Sundance-awarded exploration of identity and hypocrisy.

It's 2022. In Vilnius, Lithuania, breadwinner Marija tells her unemployed filmmaker husband Vytas she wants a divorce. But they wake the next morning to the news that Russia has invaded Ukraine, and their private crisis is suddenly enveloped by a much larger political one. As Marija evicts Vytas in favour of a refugee family and Vytas moves back in with his Russophile parents, the former couple must navigate their new individualities – Are they good people? What do they stand for? – and reckon with their country's compounding existential dread. Andrius Blaževičius's timely, universally resonant film offers a masterclass in visual storytelling.

108 MINS



I See Buildings Fall Like Lightning

Dir. Clio Barnard UK

Five working-class Gen Z friends drift apart in this deeply felt study of adulthood.

Patrick, Shiv, Conor, Rian and Oli have been thick as thieves since they were kids growing up in Birmingham council towers. Now, at the end of their twenties, Shiv's a proud mum of two, her childhood sweetheart Patrick is a gig-economy courier and Oli has fallen into drug dealing. On the other side of the tracks, Conor runs his own construction firm, while Rian languishes in lonely wealth. As economic realities demolish their dreams, fissures appear in their once-unbreakable friendships. Adapting Keiran Goddard's acclaimed novel, Clio Barnard compassionately observes her young characters' dilemmas, while leads Daryl McCormack, Joe Cole, Jay Lycurgo, Lola Petticrew and Anthony Boyle deliver poignant, lived-in performances.

109 MINS



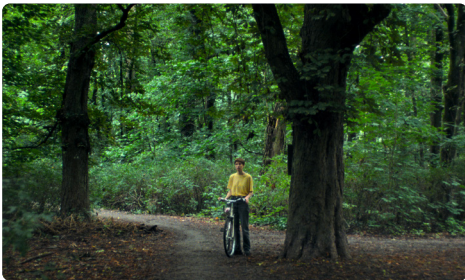
The Loneliest Man in Town

Dir. Tizza Covi, Rainer Frimmel Austria

An ageing Austrian blues musician forms the centre of this poignant tale rooted in real life.

Resembling a pompadoured, older Robert Mitchum, Al Cook has lived in the same apartment all his life. In the basement, he maintains a humble recording studio – also the site of a shrine to his musical idols, Elvis chief among them. But Al's building is under threat by developers; he is, in fact, the last remaining resident. Contemplating the upheaval to come, Al is drawn to the idea of finally visiting Memphis, the city that gave birth to the music to which he's dedicated his life. As in their previous films, directors Tizza Covi and Rainer Frimmel centre a 16mm character study on a non-professional actor whom they've invited to enact a version of themselves for their camera – in this case, a man who is beautifully, tragically out of sync with his time.

86 MINS



My Wife Cries

Dir. Angela Schanelec Germany

A middle-aged couple's marriage unravels after a car accident brings a secret to light.

At work one day, Thomas receives a call from his wife, Carla. She's been in a car accident and needs him to pick her up. Arriving at the hospital, he finds her on a park bench outside, physically unharmed but crying inconsolably. Eventually, Carla confesses something about the circumstances of the accident, leaving Thomas shattered. Angela Schanelec returns with another characteristically austere, defiantly minimalist work that's fascinated with the psychology of modern relationships but resists easy interpretation. Constructed from tableau-like sequences, each deeply attuned to the beauty of everyday life, this is the kind of filmmaking that will appeal to fans of directors like Hong Sang-soo, Aki Kaurismäki and Éric Rohmer.

93 MINS



Nino

Dir. Pauline Loquès France

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A modern riff on *Cléo from 5 to 7* that follows the weekend odyssey of a young Parisian man after receiving a surprising diagnosis.

Nino's 29th birthday weekend kicks off with a gut punch. His doctor informs him that not only does he have throat cancer, but he must also start chemotherapy on Monday. Over the course of the weekend, Nino moves through the world in a fog while life goes on as normal around him. He visits his mother, runs into an old schoolmate and attends the surprise party thrown for him by his best friend. At every turn, Nino struggles to break the news to his loved ones – because to say it out loud would make it real. Théodore Pellerin has received major plaudits for his nuanced and vulnerable performance as Nino, while writer/director Pauline Loquès also won the César for Best First Film for this sensitive, warm-hearted story.

97 MINS [MIFF ONLINE](#)



Rose of Nevada

Dir. Mark Jenkin UK

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A seaside town mysteriously returns to life in Mark Jenkin's lo-fi sci-fi meditation on memory.

Thirty years ago, fishing trawler the *Rose of Nevada* vanished off the coast of Cornwall, taking its crew with it. Their village has been in decline ever since. When the boat suddenly reappears out of the fog one day, townsfolk regard it as a good omen. A new crew is hired and heads out to sea. After a few days, they return with a full catch ... but their home isn't quite as they remember it. Shooting in 16mm on vintage Bolex cameras, Mark Jenkin uses visual and aural textures as storytelling devices, immersing viewers in uncanny realities and time loops. George MacKay and Callum Turner lend star power, but the film remains distinctly Jenkin's vision: a cinematic artefact that looks like an oil painting come to life and unfolds like a 1970s ghost story.

114 MINS [MIFF REGIONAL](#)



Strawberries

Dir. Laïla Marrakchi Morocco, France, Spain, Belgium

Two Moroccan women doing seasonal work in Spain struggle against dire labour conditions.

Hoping to make ends meet, Hasna and Meriem set sail for the Spanish province of Huelva, where they will earn 35 euros per day as strawberry pickers. The work is onerous, and their circumstances are ameliorated only by their camaraderie with their female colleagues. When extortion and sexual assault throw a wrench into those relationships, however, they must decide whether to protect their livelihoods or their dignity. Timely and eye-opening, *Strawberries* sheds light not just on the feedback loop between desperation and oppression, but also on the oblivious privilege of the societies that rely on this workforce. Nisrin Erradi is formidable as Hasna: a compelling yet flawed heroine whose combative spirit jars with her instinct to prioritise self-preservation.

103 MINS



Think Good

Dir. Géraldine Nakache France, Belgium

Grounded by authentic performances, *Think Good* is a deft psychological thriller about the insidiousness of domestic abuse.

Gil and Jacques meet young, fall head over heels and then marry quickly thanks to an unexpected pregnancy. But as the dust settles, Gil begins to understand that her relationship is dangerously toxic. Jacques is possessive and controlling: he weaponises their faith against her, isolates her from her friends and family, and repeatedly gaslights her. As the threat of physical violence escalates, Gil realises that escape may be the only way to save her life. Actor-turned-director Géraldine Nakache has crafted a vital and unsettling portrayal of coercive control, while Monia Chokri and Niels Schneider (reunited 16 years after Xavier Dolan's *Heartbeats*) pull no punches with their riveting performances.

94 MINS

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Gail Daughtry and the Celebrity Sex Pass

Dir. David Wain USA

This delightfully ludicrous farce sends a Kansas gal off on a whirlwind quest to seduce Jon Hamm.

Wholesome young Kansas hairdresser Gail (Zoey Deutch) is about to marry her perfect guy ... until they attend a Jennifer Aniston book signing and she catches him and Jen being way more than ‘friends’. Fair’s fair: now Gail gets a pass to chase her own celebrity crush, *Mad Men*’s studly Don Draper. Gail and her pal Otto head for Hollywood, gathering a ragtag band of LA helpers including talent agent Caleb, paparazzo Vincent and ex-*Mad Men* actor John Slattery. Will TV’s wonderful wizard of *ohhhs* grant Gail’s sexy wish? Wrangling retro comedy tropes since his 2001 debut *Wet Hot American Summer*, David Wain popped up at Sundance to ruin the festival’s gravitas with this determinedly silly, affectionate, surprisingly wholesome ode to a city that runs on desire.

93 MINS



Mile End Kicks

Dir. Chandler Levack Canada

Over one cool indie-sleaze summer, a self-sabotaging rising rock critic falls for two guys in the same band.

In 2011, ambitious young music critic Grace plans a summer sabbatical in Montreal, sick of getting snubbed by chin-stroking bro colleagues in Toronto. Moving in with drummer Hugo, Grace starts promoting his band Bone Patrol to impress its vain frontman Chevy, “the worst guy in Montreal” – though something slower and sweeter simmers with floppy-haired guitarist Archie. Things go off the frets as Grace’s planned 33 ½ book on Alanis Morissette’s *Jagged Little Pill* falls by the wayside, her funds run perilously low and past traumas resurface as bad choices. As Grace, Barbie Ferreira brings fierce empathy to an impulsive, sometimes exasperating but easily recognisable protagonist.

114 MINS

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Ha-Chan, Shake Your Booty!

Dir. Josef Kubota Wladyka USA

A ballroom dancer struck down by tragedy gets her feisty, flirty groove back.

Middle-aged Haru and her husband Luis are serious about ballroom, performing the rumba, tango and paso doble in competitions all over Tokyo. But after enduring a catastrophic loss, Haru loses her spark. Nine months on, her sister and her cousin decide something *must* change, so they cajole her back into the studio. Enter: sexy new dance instructor Fedir (complete with open marriage!), who might just pull Haru out of her rut. Oscar nominee Rinko Kikuchi (*Kumiko, the Treasure Hunter*, MIFF 2014) – as balletic on the dance floor as she is in her portrayal of emotional overload – delivers an affecting, multifaceted performance in this film buoyed by magnificent choreography, vibrant production design and a joyous pop soundtrack.

122 MINS



Mouse

Dir. Kelly O'Sullivan, Alex Thompson USA

The summer of 2002 changes everything for shy Arkansas teenager Minnie in this critically lauded queer coming-of-age marvel.

Minnie and Callie are chalk and cheese. Callie has her sights set on Juilliard after graduation, but Minnie hasn’t quite figured out what she wants to be yet, and has always been content cheering her best friend on from the sidelines. When a tragic accident tears their friendship apart just before the start of senior year, Minnie embarks on a close friendship with Callie’s elegant mother, Helen – a complicated dynamic that causes friction between Minnie and her own perpetually frazzled working mother, Barbara. A heartfelt and deeply humanistic portrayal of the complexities of navigating loss at any age, *Mouse* deftly shifts between wincing humour, sincerity and heartbreak.

120 MINS



Atonement

Dir. Reed Van Dyk USA, Jordan

An Iraqi mother meets a US marine, years after his squad killed her loved ones. Both suffer from the knowledge that bullets can never be un-fired.

After the US invades Iraq in 2003, Mariam Khachaturian and her family drive into a chaotic firefight involving US marines, which kills Mariam’s husband and two sons. Twelve years later, Mariam – now living in the US with her daughter – receives a request from a journalist she met in hospital after the shooting: one of the marines wants to meet her. Adapting a 2012 *New Yorker* article by Pulitzer Prize-winning combat journalist Dexter Filkins, Reed Van Dyk’s debut feature explores civilian trauma and veteran guilt as mutually inextricable violences of war. Hiam Abbass is breathtakingly restrained as Mariam, while Kenneth Branagh brings gravitas to his performance as a fictionalised Filkins.

118 MINS



The Leader

Dir. Michael Gallagher USA

A remarkable Tim Blake Nelson and Vera Farmiga are out of this world as Heaven’s Gate co-founders Marshall Applewhite and Bonnie Lu Nettles.

In 1972, Marshall Applewhite overdoses on a bottle of pills and ends up under the care of nurse Bonnie Lu Nettles, a spiritual seeker feeling empty in her personal life. The pair go on to manifest a doctrine that fuses biblical prophecy with new-age UFO utopianism, drawing other broken souls into their orbit. Their goal: to leave their weak flesh behind and ascend to the stars. The reality of their Heaven’s Gate cult was grimmer, ending in a 1997 mass suicide involving Applewhite and 38 of his followers. Driving *The Leader* is the urgent question of why – and, in answer, the film becomes both a compelling psychological study and a chilling psychological horror.

104 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



The Only Living Pickpocket in New York

Dir. Noah Segan USA

John Turturro stars as a pavement-pounding old-school thief who needs all his Big Apple savvy to save his wife from a young crypto gangster.

Harry is a veteran fingersmith with a heart of pilfered gold, and equally collegial relationships with his long-time fence Ben (Steve Buscemi) and NYPD detective Allan (Giancarlo Esposito). By day, he nimbly relieves unsuspecting New Yorkers of their valuables; by night, he cares for his ailing wife Rosie in their modest apartment. Fatefully, Harry picks the wrong mark when he swipes a crypto wallet belonging to a petulant crime family scion, whose goons threaten Rosie while Harry scours all five boroughs for the lost trinket. Subtle, charismatic veteran of the screen John Turturro owns this elegiac film that celebrates the evergreen value in human connections.

88 MINS



Chili Finger

Dir. Edd Benda, Stephen Helstad USA

A lawyer receives a cash settlement after finding a finger in her fast food – but things go sideways when the company investigates how it got there.

Jess (Judy Greer), a lawyer in a nondescript Midwestern town, is struggling, with her daughter having left for college and no money to go anywhere. Her problems seem to be solved when, at a local fast food joint, she finds a finger in her chilli bowl and a damage-controlling franchise executive offers her a \$100,000 settlement on the spot. But when the restaurant’s owner (John Goodman) hears of the payout, he smells something fishy, and puts his shady yet trusted friend Dave (Bryan Cranston) on the case. Based very loosely on a true story that took place in California in 2005, this tar-black crime comedy evokes the early works of the Coen brothers but determinedly follows its own spicy path.

100 MINS



Maddie’s Secret

Dir. John Early USA

Cult comedian John Early directs and stars as a budding foodie in this big-hearted paean to womanhood and camp TV melodramas.

Maddie’s culinary gifts impress her husband and her best friend. But at the food content-creation company where she works, she prefers to stick to washing dishes. When a video of Maddie cooking goes viral, she’s catapulted into the spotlight, but the pressure leads her to revert to a former destructive outlet: bulimia. Can she get away with peddling delectable food while secretly purging it? With visual touches recalling Douglas Sirk and John Waters, John Early’s feature directorial debut is a stunning throwback to the golden age of the made-for-TV movie. Formidable as Maddie, Early is supported by a sterling cast that includes Kate Berlant, Claudia O’Doherty and *Saturday Night Live*’s Vanessa Bayer.

98 MINS



Paradise

Dir. Jérémy Comte France, Canada, Ghana

Two lonely teenagers – one Ghanaian, the other Canadian – are unexpectedly drawn together in this compelling debut feature.

As a child, Kojo was not too fond of selling fish by the roadside with his father. After his dad disappears at sea, he fills the void by joining Accra’s shady underworld. Meanwhile, in Quebec, Tony spends his days skateboarding and loafing around with friends. He quietly pines for the father he never knew while burdening his mother, who’s dabbling in online dating. Over time, a series of serendipitous events will bring these two teens onto a collision course that will change their lives forever. Oscar-nominated director Jérémy Comte’s atmospheric and at times dreamlike film depicts the universal adolescent search for belonging with compassion and candour.

90 MINS MIFF ONLINE



Rosebush Pruning

Dir. Karim Aïnouz Italy, Germany, Spain, UK

In this carnal thriller, a star-studded cast plays an uber-rich family with questionable moral limits.

In a vast mansion in Catalonia, Ed feels stuck – not just between his brothers Jack and Robert, but also in the company of his sister Anna and their blind father. Since they moved from New York at their late matriarch's behest, their days are defined by sordid indulgence and isolation. One day, Jack brings his future bride Martha into the fold, disrupting established dynamics. In tight quarters and with everyone used to getting their way, things are bound to go off the rails. Callum Turner, Jamie Bell, Riley Keough, Elle Fanning, Tracy Letts and Pamela Anderson expertly embody Karim Aïnouz's visually lavish, conceptually audacious domestic satire, which depicts a world where the extremes of wealth and immorality are too close for comfort.

97 MINS



Sparks

Dir. Fergus Campbell USA

Small-town Nevadan teens attempt to time-travel to 1960s Paris in this charming debut that evokes the hangout spirit of the French New Wave.

After encountering an old cigarette machine that spits out a dog-eared paperback on the films of Jean-Luc Godard, teenager Cleo is convinced that her new hometown of Sparks, Nevada, could be magical. She quickly falls in with a group of local teens with whom she immediately shares her newfound obsession. When they tell Cleo about a nearby reservoir that – legend has it – contains a time-travel portal, Cleo knows exactly where she wants to go: Paris, 1960, to act in a Godard movie. If only they could figure out how to make the portal work! Recalling the early films of Richard Linklater, Gregg Araki and Wes Anderson, this coming-of-age fantasy drama blends an offbeat charm with a quietly rebellious energy.

78 MINS [MIFF ONLINE](#)



The Sun Never Sets

Dir. Joe Swanberg USA

Dakota Fanning anchors indie cinema luminary Joe Swanberg's long-awaited return: a canny and heartfelt love-triangle dramedy set in Alaska.

Wendy (Dakota Fanning) is 31 years old and happily in love with Jack (Jake Johnson), a divorcee in his forties. The only snag: she wants to have children, but he doesn't want more than the two he already has; he's also leery of getting married again. Hoping to inspire her to outgrow those particular urges, Jack proposes a six-month break in which she might dive into the Anchorage dating pool. What he hasn't accounted for is the reappearance of Wendy's handsome ex, a pilot who may prove less flighty than he once was. Suffused with the same bracing candour and wit as his earlier, lo-fi ventures, Joe Swanberg's first full-length feature in nearly a decade is captured on handsome 35mm film.

102 MINS [FESTIVAL GUEST](#)

Latin America

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Flies

Dir. Fernando Eimbcke Mexico

A closed-off curmudgeon connects with a young boy left in her care in this bittersweet charmer that won two Berlinale prizes.

Finally admitting she's in financial dire straits, elderly sourpuss Olga rents out the spare room in her Mexico City apartment to Tulio and his nine-year-old son Cristian, who need lodgings as the mum of the family receives cancer treatment at the nearby hospital. As Tulio ventures out to look for work, Olga finds herself traversing the city alone with Cristian, whose wide-eyed optimism begins to melt her frosty exterior. Shot in evocative black-and-white, this disarmingly winsome tale of two people coming together despite tragic circumstances portrays the alchemy between the resignation of old age and the curiosity of youth that, in combination, paves the way for healing.

99 MINS [MIFF REGIONAL](#)



On the Road

Dir. David Pablos Mexico

Venice 2025's Queer Lion winner follows a drifter who finds a spark with a middle-aged truck driver.

Foolhardy young Veneno makes ends meet by sleeping with drivers at truck stops in exchange for cash or drugs. When one of his clients stiff's him, he decides to hitch a ride to the other side of the country. Enter Muñeco, a hardened fortysomething trucker estranged from his wife and kids, who offers Veneno a seat in his 18-wheeler. As the men drive across northern Mexico, walls come down and feelings develop – but can the pair outrun the demons from Veneno's past when they give chase? Winning the Queer Lion at Venice as well as the festival's Orizzonti Award for Best Film, *On the Road* both fulfils and defies genre expectations with its noir-infused, violent and erotically charged tale of lust, longing and the winding road in search of connection.

93 MINS [MIFF REGIONAL](#)



Forever Your Maternal Animal

Dir. Valentina Maurel Belgium, France, Mexico

Winning a trio of Un Certain Regard Best Actress awards at Cannes, this emotionally textured drama interrogates the practical limits of love.

After years abroad, Elsa returns to Costa Rica to find her younger sister Amalia – now a broke university dropout – loafing around the unkempt family home, hooking up with older men and gorging on conspiracy theories. Their divorced parents seem comparably adrift: their mother is obsessing about the erotic poems she's rediscovered from her youth, and their father fills his calendar with romantic affairs. Believing herself to be the only put-together member, Elsa decides to fix this family in shambles. Valentina Maurel's second feature, full of powerhouse performances, is at once a sagacious study of the complexities of womanhood and a shrewd depiction of how distance can cleave relationships.

105 MINS



The River Train

Dir. Lorenzo Ferro, Lucas A. Vignale Argentina

In this spellbinding urban fantasy, a young malambo dancer breaks free of his rigid rural life by catching a train to the Argentinian capital.

In the countryside, nine-year-old Milo seems stuck in an endless loop of responsibilities: washing dishes, helping to cook family dinners and training with his father to perfect malambo: a traditional Argentinian gaucho folk dance. One day, he sees a boy on TV raving about finding fame in Buenos Aires. This sparks a flame in Milo, who decides to escape his provincial existence by way of a city-bound train – but he quickly discovers that the journey and the destination are much more than he could have ever imagined. Lorenzo Ferro and Lucas A. Vignale's debut feature is a sublime, magic-realist coming-of-age tale that blurs the factual and fantastical elements of Milo's journey to striking effect.

75 MINS



The Currents

Dir. Milagros Mumenthaler Argentina, Switzerland

Why is a successful, stylish young mother floundering? This sensuous portrait of dissociation refuses easy answers.

Argentinian designer Catalina has just won a prestigious award in Geneva, but something within her has clearly come unmoored. She drifts aimlessly through city streets, then casually throws herself off a bridge into the river below. Though she survives the attempt, she can't shake a new, debilitating fear of water, which she's too ashamed to share with her husband and small daughter; her inner turbulence buffets her between dissociation and an almost sublime sensitivity. Director Milagros Mumenthaler's deeply observational storytelling invites comparisons to her compatriot Lucrecia Martel (*Landmarks*, MIFF 2026), submerging Catalina's traumas in metaphor through a flow of light and textures.

104 MINS



La Perra

Dir. Dominga Sotomayor Chile, Brazil

A haunting tale of a woman with a troubled past and the free-spirited dog that gives her life renewed meaning.

In a wind-lashed, sparsely inhabited island off the coast of Chile, Silvia supplements her fishmonger husband's income by harvesting seaweed. One day, she crosses paths with a puppy, whom she decides to adopt and name Yuri. Over time, she and this wayward creature – both seemingly forsaken by life – become inseparable. But when Yuri suddenly disappears, unhealed wounds from Silvia's childhood are reopened. Adapted from the novel of the same name by Pilar Quintana, *La Perra* is an affecting, revelatory portrait of loneliness, commiseration and the sometimes-cyclical nature of time and trauma that won its canine performer the Palm Dog at Cannes.

112 MINS



Six Months in a Pink and Blue Building

Dir. Bruno Santamaría Razo Mexico, Brazil, Denmark

The first Mexican film to premiere at Cannes Critics' Week in two decades masterfully navigates queerness and familial crisis.

For Bruno in 1990s Mexico City, life is exuberant. He's celebrating his 11th birthday with a gender-swap costume party, and he spends many frivolous days with his best friend and crush Vladimir. But things take a turn when he and his mother receive news that his father has HIV. Thirty years later, Bruno confronts the memories and revelations of this watershed in his childhood. Award-winning documentarian Bruno Santamaría Razo's fiction debut ingeniously blurs boundaries in both excavating and reimagining the past, interweaving dramatic recreations with talking-head footage, animation and educational AIDS videos from the era – a visionary account of the affirming power of storytelling.

104 MINS

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Clarissa
Dir. Arie Esiri, Chuko Esiri Nigeria, USA

Sophie Okonedo is sublime as a contemporary Nigerian Mrs. Dalloway in a star-stacked drama that deftly revitalises Virginia Woolf’s themes of memory and regret.

As elegant Lagos society wife Clarissa (Sophie Okonedo, *Mouse*, MIFF 2026) prepares to host an opulent party, she remembers one golden summer with the friends of her youth: aspiring writer Peter, outspoken Sally (Ayo Edebiri) and cheerful Ugo. Why didn’t she marry the passionate Peter, or explore her attraction to Sally? When Clarissa unexpectedly runs into Peter, now a dispirited expat, she invites him to the party, where the quartet reunite and reckon with their past choices. Twin brothers Arie and Chuko Esiri transform Virginia Woolf’s 1925 novel *Mrs. Dalloway* into a potent meditation on Nigerian class and colonialism.

134 MINS



Roya
Dir. Mahnaz Mohammadi Germany, Czechia, Luxembourg, Iran

The Iranian state has imprisoned her body; now it wants her innermost self. Can a rebel teacher defend her values, emotions and memories?

Iranian teacher Roya is a political prisoner, detained and tortured after her students burned their hijabs. The regime offers her two options: make a televised confession falsely denouncing her beliefs, or face indefinite solitary confinement in her tiny prison cell. For Roya, choice and coercion blur. Is her family really at risk if she doesn’t confess? And will confessing end the terror, or bring it inside forever? Director Mahnaz Mohammadi has been repeatedly arrested for defending Iranian women’s rights; through dreamlike voyages into Roya’s defiant past and bruised present, her empathetic drama honours the dissident mind’s struggle against authoritarian power.

93 MINS



Congo Boy
Dir. Rafiki Fariala Central African Republic, France, DR Congo, Italy

This Cannes-awarded coming-of-age tale about a teenage refugee whose musical ambitions might just save his life is as poetic as it is uplifting.

As a Congolese refugee in Bangui, the odds are stacked against 17-year-old Robert. His parents have been jailed for the ‘crime’ of being refugees, and Robert must look after his four younger siblings; he’s also got his final exams to worry about. He copes by writing songs and lyrics, in the process holding on to his dream of making it as a musician. Based on director Rafiki Fariala’s own experiences, *Congo Boy* is the first Central African film to screen at Cannes. Leading a stellar cast of non-professionals, Un Certain Regard Best Actor–winning star Bradley Fiomona shines through his thrilling skills on the mic, showcasing a rousing soundtrack of tunes.

91 MINS



Variations on a Theme
Dir. Jason Jacobs, Devon Delmar South Africa, Netherlands, Qatar

This Tiger Award winner is a lyrical docufiction fable of a forgotten mountain community.

Hettie is a goatherd in South Africa’s remote Kamiesberg mountains. On the eve of her 80th birthday, she’s offered long-overdue reparations for her father’s military service in World War II. The only problem: it’s a scam. As Hettie and her neighbours wait for money that will never come, other villagers – each with their own rich inner life – search for diamonds, play dominoes or slip into memories. Staged as a series of ‘variations’, this hybrid docufiction takes a literary approach, in which co-director Jason Jacobs’s real-life grandmother plays the lead role of Hettie. This intimacy is at the centre of an achingly empathetic film blessed with cultural specificity, lyrical imagery and an evocative score.

65 MINS
SCREENS WITH WHISPERS OF A BURNING SCENT (28 MINS)



Ben’lmana
Dir. Marie-Clémentine Dusabejambo Rwanda

This year’s Cannes Caméra d’Or winner is a deeply felt portrait of a community seeking justice, and closure, in the wake of genocide.

It’s 2012 in Kibeho, a rural town in the mountains of south Rwanda. Though it’s been a generation since the 1994 genocide, community-led tribunals are ongoing. Vénéranda, who is deeply committed to the reconciliation process, has been asked to publicly forgive the man who killed most of her family, but her sister Suzanne is outraged at the suggestion. Meanwhile, Vénéranda has just learned that her daughter is pregnant, news that complicates her commitment to healing and deepens her own reckoning with the past. A decade in the making, Marie-Clémentine Dusabejambo’s debut film is a profoundly intimate story of a nation still reckoning with its past.

101 MINS



Dao
Dir. Alain Gomis France, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau

A freewheeling family saga bounces between a wedding in France and a funeral in Guinea-Bissau, exuberantly exploring identity and belonging.

Fifty-year-old Gloria has been a devoted single mother to her daughter Nour. But when Nour announces she’s getting married, Gloria has to look at her own life, from past mistakes to future hopes. Across two grand public ceremonies – Nour’s upmarket wedding in France and a death ritual for Gloria’s late father in his home village – mother and daughter explore their connection to family, cultural heritage and each other. A sweeping cine-mosaic filled with director Alain Gomis’s own family members and interrogating notions of fact and fiction, screen representation, and cross-continental cultural identities, this vibrant, thematically rich family saga is a uniquely personal and deeply thoughtful work.

185 MINS



Chronicles From the Siege
Dir. Abdallah Alkhatib Algeria, Palestine, France

This Berlin award winner highlights how humour and humanity persist amid the horrors of war.

In an unidentified war zone under constant attack, life for locals must go on. While former filmmaker Arafat scavenges for food and medicine, a group of young friends break into his boarded-up video store, debating whether to burn the old videotapes to make a fire or just trade memories of their favourite movies. Long-time human rights activist Abdallah Alkhatib was born in Syria’s Yarmouk refugee camp, one of the largest settlements of displaced Palestinians; drawing from his own experiences, he builds a drama that is at once urgent, defiant and unexpectedly funny. The recipient of the Best First Feature award at Berlin, *Chronicles From the Siege* delivers a searing portrait of lives that refuse to be overlooked.

94 MINS



Inside Amir
Dir. Amir Azizi Iran

This wistful, warm-hearted Venice award winner follows a young man making the bittersweet choice to leave his home city of Tehran.

Amir is planning to emigrate to Italy to join his girlfriend Tara, but he remains torn between staying in the city he’s known all his life and leaving it all behind for a new adventure. Awaiting visa approval, Amir visits his uncle, plays poker with his buddies and replays memories from his relationship with Tara as his life-changing decision looms. Writer/director Amir Azizi won two awards at the Venice International Film Festival for this humanistic portrayal of a young man at a crossroads. Spotlighting the beauty in the everyday, *Inside Amir* poignantly captures a side of Tehran that we rarely see depicted, as well as a feeling that will resonate with anyone who’s ever moved far from home.

103 MINS

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MIFF 37°South Market brings together producers, financiers, buyers, publishers, IP owners, writers and industry leaders to spark new connections and bring projects to life. Through curated pitching opportunities, screenings, networking events and industry discussions, the market connects Australian and New Zealand screen projects with the global marketplace – right here in Melbourne.

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Backing bold Australian screen stories

The MIFF Premiere Fund provides co-financing for new Australian feature films that then premiere at MIFF. Films supported by the Premiere Fund include *This Is Going to Be Big*, *Pasa Faho*, *Shayda*, *Of an Age*, *First Light*, *Nitram*, *Balibo*, *Bran Nue Dae*, *Paper Planes*, *Ellis Park* and *Memoir of a Snail*.

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MIFF Accelerator Lab

Developing Australia's next generation of directors

This selective event provides emerging filmmakers with the mentorship, industry access and professional development needed to take the next step in their careers. Alumni have gone on to direct some of the most acclaimed Australian and international feature films. Previous participants include Sophie Hyde (*52 Tuesdays*), Justin Kurzel (*Snowtown*), David Michôd (*Animal Kingdom*), Noora Niasari (*Shayda*), Goran Stolevski (*Of An Age*), Natalie Erika James (*Saccharine*) and Shannon Murphy (*Babyteeth*).



Cate Blanchett

GIORGIO ARMANI



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Prefer to keep things flexible? **Food & Film Express** menus are available throughout the festival, with walk-ins welcome.



Saadi
The Cycle of Love
Saturday 8 August

Exploring the rich diversity of India’s cuisine as dictated by the seasonal produce of small, local farms, Saadi puts a unique spin on South Asian flavours. From a pop-up to Punch Lane, its chefs have never taken the easy road – much like the subject of the heartwarming documentary *The Cycle of Love*, who embarked on an epic journey of romance from Delhi to Sweden in 1977.



SAADI
18 Punch Lane,
Melbourne

SAADI



Supernormal
We Are All Strangers
Sunday 9 August

Supernormal is an inspired interpretation of our favourite Asian eating experiences with classic dishes revisited and some new favourites born. In Anthony Chen’s *We Are All Strangers*, the first ever Singaporean film selected in competition at the Berlinale, new relationships are forged and familial bonds tested over delicious meals and cold beers.



SUPERNORMAL
180 Flinders Lane,
Melbourne

SUPERNORMAL



Cumulus Inc.
Marc by Sofia
Wednesday 12 August

Housed within a turn-of-the-century rag-trade warehouse in Melbourne’s art and fashion precinct, Cumulus Inc. brings people together over seasonal share plates and generous hospitality – a natural companion to *Marc by Sofia*, Sofia Coppola’s intimate first documentary feature about her long-time friend, designer Marc Jacobs.



CUMULUS INC.
45 Flinders Lane,
Melbourne

CUMULUS INC.



Bossley Bar & Restaurant
The Fox
Friday 14 August

Bossley Bar & Restaurant is all about honest cooking, celebrating seasonal Australian produce and offering a city haven for both bustling crowds and those looking for a cosy moment. Equally entertaining and mercurial is Dario Russo’s *The Fox*, a darkly comedic Australian folktale about a flawed relationship made all the more chaotic by the addition of a sly fox, voiced by Olivia Colman.



BOSSLEY BAR & RESTAURANT
186 Exhibition Street,
Melbourne

BOSSLEY

Food & Film Express

Short on time? Save feature-length for the cinema with **Food & Film Express**: curated menus designed to be enjoyed in 60 minutes or less before your film, between screenings or after the final credits roll. Available at **Elio’s Place**, **Bossley Bar & Restaurant** and **Apollo Inn** throughout the festival.



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1/238 Flinders Lane, Melbourne

Available for lunch and dinner during the festival.
Bookings recommended, walk-ins welcome.
\$55 per person.



BOSSLEY BAR & RESTAURANT
186 Exhibition Street, Melbourne

Available for dinner during the festival.
Bookings recommended, walk-ins welcome.
\$45 per person.

BOSSLEY



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Animation

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miff.com.au/animation



Bouchra
Dir. Orian Barki, Meriem Bennani Italy, Morocco, USA

In a world of anthropomorphic animals, a queer coyote breaks the wall of silence with her mother nine years after coming out.

Bouchra, a coyote, is a New York-based Moroccan filmmaker unable to access the inspiration she seeks. She decides to call her mother, who lives in Casablanca, to address the topic they've left untouched for almost a decade: Bouchra's sexuality. Winning the top queer prize at the Chicago International Film Festival, *Bouchra* blends live action, photogrammetry and 3D scanning, as well as using actual snippets of conversation between co-director Meriem Bennani and her mother to launch into confabulation and to meditate on the act of mediation itself – how cinema, just like discussions held across distance and time, necessarily hinges on our version of the truth.

82 MINS



Decorado
Dir. Alberto Vázquez Spain

Unicorn Wars director Alberto Vázquez returns with another visionary, Goya Award-winning animated polemic.

Unemployed middle-aged mouse Arnold is convinced that the town he lives in is a theatre set. With the all-powerful Almighty Limitless Megacorporative Agency tightening its grip on the townsfolk, Arnold enlists the ghost of his recently deceased best friend Ramiro and the outcast Mr. Mushroom, and sets out to reclaim what's left of his life. Evoking *The Truman Show*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and classic Disney, *Decorado* is visually bold and narratively breathtaking, tapping into the existential, industrial and psychological crises of a present riddled with inequality and fake news. If all the world's a stage, this dystopian work dares to ask, are we its actors obliged to keep the show going on?

95 MINS



Jim Queen
Dir. Nicolas Athane, Marco Nguyen France, Belgium

Come for a gleefully filthy romp through Gay Paree as a buff influencer and his twink fight to cure a heinous virus that makes queer people straight!

When one of his 24 magnificent abs vanishes, top gay gymfluencer Jim realises he has heterosis: the dreaded virus that's turning queer Parisians ... *straight*. As Jim's fickle followers abandon him for his brawny nemesis Pavel, he teams up with Lucien – closeted twink son of France's villainous conservative health minister – on a hero's cruise for a cure, encountering techno-blasting leather puppies and the militant 'Gaystapo' along the way. Be prepared for serious commentary on the state of the modern world along with a barrage of the silliest, lewdest jokes imaginable, while the macaron-toned *Rick and Morty*-esque animation stuffs the frame with as much absurdity as the protein that Jim gorges on.

86 MINS



Light Pillar
Dir. Xu Zao China

This amusingly deadpan portrait of technology's seductive appeal combines animation and live action in visionary ways.

In a near future in which affordable space travel has sent the film industry into freefall, Zha is a humble caretaker at an unused studio lot in snowbound northern China, tending to the decaying ruins of past productions. When the studio can't afford to pay his salary, he's gifted a VR headset instead. Zha soon grows obsessed with the virtual realm, and the borders between reality and illusion begin to blur. Moving between hand-drawn animation and digital live action in its VR sequences, *Light Pillar* is at once an achingly sad portrait of loneliness, an epitaph for the glory days of cinema and a smart critique of people turning to technology to solve their problems.

90 MINS [MIFF ONLINE](#)



Tangles
Dir. Leah Nelson USA

Sarah Leavitt's acclaimed graphic novel about Alzheimer's is brought to the screen with an exceptional voice cast.

Sarah is in her twenties and embracing life in San Francisco, where she has a job she loves at a queer magazine and a new girlfriend. But on a trip back home to Maine, she notices something's not quite right with her mum. When the diagnosis comes, Sarah finds herself caught between two worlds, juggling the life she was just beginning with the one she thought she'd left behind. Debutant director Leah Nelson creates an exceptionally moving tribute to those touched by the ruthless tangles of Alzheimer's in this gorgeous, mostly black-and-white, hand-drawn animation featuring a voice cast including Abbi Jacobson, Julia-Louis Dreyfus and Bryan Cranston. Bring tissues.

103 MINS



Viva Carmen
Dir. Sébastien Laudenbach France

A painterly, profound adaptation of Bizet's iconic opera told from the perspective of children.

Salva, Belén, Piranha and La Bola are street kids scrapping for survival in 19th-century Seville. When Salva hears a prophecy that free-spirited young Romani woman Carmen will be killed by the soldier who loves her, he leaps into action in the hope of saving her from her fate. Animator Sébastien Laudenbach (*The Girl Without Hands*, MIFF 2016) offers a unique take on Georges Bizet's classic text, turning the narrative away from the star-cross'd lovers at the centre of its tragedy and instead presenting it from the perspective of children watching fate unfold. Filled with expressive lines and evocative colours, this gorgeously hand-painted work is a sheer delight for those who treasure the animated artform.

90 MINS



We Are Aliens
Dir. Kohei Kadowaki Japan, France

This poignant animation traces the friendship and falling-out of two boys after an incident at school changes their lives forever.

In rural Japan, awkward Tsubasa has trouble connecting with his peers. Luckily, the gregarious Gyotaro invites him to play, and they quickly become firm friends. However, an unexpected event drives a wedge between the pair, going on to mark both boys in profound ways well into adulthood. Bowing at Cannes Directors' Fortnight, Kohei Kadowaki's stunning directorial debut recalls *Monster* (MIFF 2023) in its preoccupation with the impacts of childhood cruelty and *Rashomon* in its representation of alternative perspectives. Rendered using a dynamic, at times dreamlike blend of rotoscoped and hand-drawn 2D animation, *We Are Aliens* is a beautiful, bittersweet meditation on lost innocence.

117 MINS

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Experimentations

Cross worlds, film formats and the borders between dreams and reality in these dispatches from the other side of cinema.

miff.com.au/experimentations



Aro berria
Dir. Irati Gorostidi Agirretxe Spain

With ecstatic sequences reminiscent of *The Holy Mountain*, this is a striking, complex portrait of new-age commune life.

In 1978, in the wake of Franco's death, a host of activist workers from a Basque factory attempt a complete rebellion, setting out to join a commune in rural Navarre. Eme wants to believe that Arco Iris offers a new way of living, but she soon learns it's just as political as a picket line: the commune is riddled with personality clashes and ideological disagreements, and its sexual practices are underpinned by patriarchal power imbalances. The debut feature from Irati Gorostidi Agirretxe – whose own parents lived in a new-age commune before she was born – is a slippery film that, in sitting at the intersection of sincerity and scepticism, introduces a vital new voice in Basque cinema.

102 MINS



Chronovisor
Dir. Kevin Walker, Jack Auen USA

In this shrine to the wonders of research, an academic falls down a multimedia rabbit hole of hoax, conspiracy and Vatican intervention.

Béatrice Courte is an academic with research interests in the darkest corners of philosophy. When she encounters a short paragraph on the Chronovisor – a device built in the 1950s that claimed to “photograph the past” – she soon becomes obsessed. Camping out at libraries, poring over pages and chasing up leads in four different languages, Béatrice is hot on the trail of the machine's inventor: an eccentric real-life Benedictine monk named Father Pellegrino Ernetti. Is he still alive? Is his machine a hoax? And how is the Catholic Church involved? Shot on 16mm in a host of shadowy, Gothic libraries, *Chronovisor* fashions an uncanny bricolage from authentic books, magazines, journals and degraded videos.

90 MINS



Dry Leaf
Dir. Alexandre Koberidze Georgia, Germany

A young woman's disappearance prompts an investigative road trip tinted with magic realism in this gorgeous, wildly lo-fi Georgian gem.

When sports photographer Lisa vanished, she was working on an assignment documenting ramshackle football fields across the country. Her father Irakli attempts to retrace her path together with her colleague Levan – who, like many of the characters in this gentle and transfixing saga, happens to be invisible – but theirs is destined to be a sublimely digressive quest, punctuated by curious encounters. Shot entirely on an old Sony Ericsson camera phone, Alexandre Koberidze's award-winning feature combines a sense of melancholic whimsy with its daring formal gambit, giving its images of the Georgian countryside a surprising, pixelated beauty at times verging on abstraction.

186 MINS



Eight Bridges
Dir. James Benning USA

US master of slow cinema James Benning invites audiences to consider bridges: structural and political, physical and metaphorical.

Eight American bridges are viewed for 10 minutes each. Each shot is simultaneously static and full of life, the long takes painting with light, sound and composition the point where nature meets human ingenuity, activity and history. The latest visual essay from minimalist legend James Benning, this is cinema distilled to its purest form: a single take presented as is for audiences to contemplate; repeat. *Eight Bridges* harks back to and builds upon earlier long-take observational works such as *13 Lakes* and *Ten Skies*. Shooting digitally, Benning mimics the structural syntax of these 16mm works to deliver another essential cinematic essay on looking and listening.

82 MINS
SCREENS WITH *FOREVER...FOREVER* (21 MINS)



Phillip Philadelphia
Dir. Adam C. Briggs Australia

Crude, lust-riddled and brilliantly cracked, this Gold Coast-set fever dream is the latest twisted caper from maverick auteur Adam C. Briggs.

Phillip is a screenwriter by trade, though he's not doing much writing these days. He's more interested in pursuing flights of fantasy and intoxicating indulgences, even as the line between the two grows fuzzier. In this, he's aided and abetted by an aspiring actor with whom he's enjoying a dalliance, though Phillip suspects the younger man might be mainly interested in his showbiz connections. Adam C. Briggs previously garnered acclaim for 2024 feature *A Grand Mockery*; here, he captures the garish, grubby beauty of the Gold Coast on 16mm, evoking Florida as seen through the lenses of Harmony Korine and Sean Baker yet also extending his own distinctively homegrown, eloquently vulgar style.

72 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Sour Minnows
Dir. Harrison Atkins USA

This surrealist stoner noir follows two LA roommates who witness a shocking scene of pavement worship one sunny afternoon.

Walking home from grocery shopping, roommates Ricky and Tepper stumble across a disturbing scene: six grown men lying on the ground, feverishly licking the pavement. From that moment on, everything changes for Ricky, Tepper and even Aura, the girl Ricky is newly dating. Time slips, space bends, reality morphs and little slimy minnows start to appear in Ricky's pockets. The deeper he investigates, the more he starts to believe that the three of them may be under the control of a mysterious entity known as “The Yellow Thing”. A stoner hangout movie with Lynchian stylings and an experimental spirit, *Sour Minnows* is equal parts goofily funny and chillingly existential.

83 MINS



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Ulrike Ottinger: Radical Travels

Embark on a cinematic odyssey of works by the octogenarian German auteur, a brilliantly idiosyncratic filmmaker known for wildly sensuous visuals and avant-garde tales that journey to the most unexpected of places. This strand focuses on the films of Ottinger’s that are rooted in the fantastical, and also includes three titles by other directors that she has personally selected.

miff.com.au/ulrike-ottinger-radical-travels



The Blood Countess
Dir. Ulrike Ottinger Germany, Austria, Luxembourg 2026

Screen icon Isabelle Huppert mesmerises as a glamorous vampire in this high-camp comedy. Countess Elizabeth Báthory awakens from a four-century-long slumber in modern-day Vienna, costumed in crimson gowns and a perfectly coiffed updo. Reunited with her faithful handmaid and her vegetarian vampire nephew (with his sceptical psychotherapist in tow), the countess sets out to find and destroy an ancient book that has the power to end vampire immortality. With police and dithering vampirologists in hot pursuit, the countess soon realises that her nephew’s plans for the book are very different from her own. This playful reimagining of one of history’s most notorious serial killers is a sumptuous visual feast with a committed supporting cast including Birgit Minichmayr, Lars Eidinger and former Eurovision winner Conchita Wurst.

119 MINS



Ticket of No Return
Dir. Ulrike Ottinger West Germany 1979

An enigmatic woman with no name books herself a one-way trip in order to drink her way through West Berlin in Ottinger’s most revered film. Dressed to the *neuns*, Tabea Blumenschein (known only here as “she”) arrives at Tegel Airport with one thing on her mind: alcohol. Setting off on a curious odyssey through Berlin’s bourgeois and bohemian drinking establishments, she invites a woman of very different means to join her, and together they rub shoulders – at an aloof distance – with the city’s outré inhabitants (played by an eclectic cast including Nina Hagen, Eddie Constantine and Martin Kippenberger). Intent on her own oblivion, she pays no attention to the Greek chorus following her all the while: three sociologists in houndstooth suits whose conversation revolves around moral judgements and facts about gendered alcoholism.

109 MINS



Freak Orlando
Dir. Ulrike Ottinger West Germany 1981

Ottinger explores the span of human history in this deeply surreal, outré romp. Across five sweeping, nonlinear adventures, the multi-named, gender-fluid and barely ageing Orlando (Magdalena Montezuma) explores the history of civilisation. From a modern department store to medieval times, and from the Spanish Inquisition to a carnival sideshow, Orlando jostles with a wild cast of performers with a diverse array of bodies and identities. A loose adaptation of Virginia Woolf’s epic 1928 novel *Orlando: A Biography* by way of Tod Browning’s *Freaks*, this is perhaps Ulrike Ottinger’s most unclassifiable film. A cinematic fever dream, it challenges idealised norms of beauty, gender and sexuality through pageantry – an assemblage of irreverent tableaux vivants in lush colour and extravagant costuming.

128 MINS



Dorian Gray in the Mirror of the Yellow Press
Dir. Ulrike Ottinger West Germany 1984

Delphine Seyrig stars opposite model Veruschka (in drag) in this avant-garde take on fake news. As Dr. Mabuse, Delphine Seyrig is the high-femme head of an international media empire. Seeking to boost circulation figures, she has a cunning plan: create a character for her readers to fall in love with, and then ruin him before their very eyes. Dorian Gray (Veruschka von Lehndorff) is just the dandy: young, rich and handsome. Pliable and immaculately dressed, he journeys to the opera, to the Press Ball and much further to the underworld, and a battle of wills emerges. Ulrike Ottinger borrows loosely from Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* with a great sense of queer irony to create a delicious satire of ego and capitalism.

152 MINS



The Enchantment of the Blue Sailors
Dir. Ulrike Ottinger, Tabea Blumenschein West Germany 1975

With glitter, feathers and gender-bending sailors, Ottinger’s rarely screened early experimental film sets the scene for her work to come. An exotic sea laps upon the sands of a distant beach, and a woman in an extravagant red gown and matching headdress crosses the dunes, singing. A woman in a leopard-print party dress settles in for a solo picnic, while another woman in full-feathered bird regalia prowls nearby, her tinselled wings shimmering in the light. Scantly clad characters cavort and canoodle with bacchanalian pleasure. An assemblage of vivid imagery, *The Enchantment of the Blue Sailors* was Ulrike Ottinger’s second mid-length experimental film and her first in riotous colour. Joining her at the helm here is then-partner and frequent collaborator Tabea Blumenschein, who also oversaw the film’s costumes and make-up.

49 MINS
SCREENS WITH USINIMAGE (10 MINS)



Madame X: An Absolute Ruler
Dir. Ulrike Ottinger West Germany 1977

Tabea Blumenschein stars as a leather-clad lesbian pirate who promises a new way of life to the brave women who dare to join her crew. The most successful and cruelest pirate on the Far Eastern Seas, Madame X rules her junk *Orlando* with a gloved iron fist, from which extends a long spike, having lost her real hand to a deadly jellyfish years ago while attempting to save her lover (played by Ulrike Ottinger herself in flashback). Now in desire of “total domination”, she sends out a signal to women across the globe, inviting them to join her for a life of excitement; but no-one expects the tyranny that awaits. Shot on 16mm, Ottinger’s first scripted feature is a swashbuckling sadomasochistic reverie that caused much controversy for its brightly coloured, often humorous depictions of queer violence.

145 MINS



Black God, White Devil
Dir. Glauber Rocha Brazil 1964

A landmark film of the Brazilian Cinema Novo movement, this underseen 1964 western returns to the screen in a stunning 4K restoration. In the 1940s, during a drought in the Brazilian *sertão*, or hinterlands, fed-up ranch-hand Manuel kills his deceitful boss and goes on the lam with his wife Rosa. Together, they venture to Monte Santo, where, now outlaws, they align themselves with the violent self-proclaimed holy man Sebastião, who is leading a revolt against wealthy landowners. The mercenary Antônio das Mortes, hired by the church and rich locals, is sent to kill Sebastião – and, in turn, the bandit Corisco is out to stop Antônio. Causing a sensation at Cannes in 1964, this sweeping, urgent political allegory won the FIPRESCI Prize and further established the career of director Glauber Rocha, only 25 years old at the time.

120 MINS 4K RESTORATION



Medea
Dir. Pier Paolo Pasolini Italy, France, West Germany 1969

In her only film role, Maria Callas stars in Pier Paolo Pasolini’s mesmeric take on the immortal tragedy. High priestess Medea has her life fatefully ruptured when Jason and the Argonauts arrive on her homeland of Colchis to steal the Golden Fleece. Together, she and Jason abscond to Corinth, where she attempts to relinquish her spiritual past and subsume herself in the role of dutiful wife and mother to their two sons. When Jason abandons her to follow a more politically beneficial marriage, Medea is driven to a shocking act of vengeance. In this visually stunning adaptation of Euripides’s canonical work, Pier Paolo Pasolini infuses the mythical tragedy with biting colonial allegory, while Maria Callas – dressed in brilliant costumes by Piero Tosi – delivers a powerhouse performance of diva proportions in the title role.

111 MINS

Lisandro Alonso: Frontiers

To celebrate his quarter-century of filmmaking, MIFF presents the meditative, expansive and uncompromised feature-length works of audacious Argentinian director Lisandro Alonso.

miff.com.au/lisandro-alonso-frontiers



Double Freedom

Dir. Lisandro Alonso Chile, Argentina, Luxembourg, Germany, UK 2026

In his newest work, fresh from its Cannes premiere, the visionary director revisits his acclaimed debut.

Misael is content with his spartan life in a remote corner of Argentina's picturesque La Pampa province. Dwelling in a shack, he spends his days cutting down trees, treating the wood and dealing with local traders. Soon, however, an unexpected responsibility upends Misael's life, and the logic of his days fades away. Returning 25 years later to the protagonist of Lisandro Alonso's debut feature, *La libertad*, *Double Freedom* – whose title directly calls back to its predecessor – reunites the director with the same non-professional lead, Misael Saavedra, along with cinematographer Cobi Miglora, once again shooting on 35mm.

100 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Johanna d'Arc of Mongolia

Dir. Ulrike Ottinger West Germany 1989

In this ethnographic odyssey, a group of women are taken hostage by a Mongolian princess.

The carriages of the Trans-Siberian Railway have never seen such a theatrical ensemble of strangers: chic high-society ethnologist Lady Windermere (Delphine Seyrig); an American Broadway star; a Russian cabaret trio; a reserved German schoolteacher; and a naive young woman with little else but a rucksack and a yearning for adventure. Their fantastical train journey makes a sharp turn when mounted Mongolian warriors under the command of Princess Ulun Iga take them as captives to their nomadic summer village, where the women observe and attempt to adapt to the customs of their new society. Depicting a stunning assemblage of colours against a vast landscape, this masterwork was frequent collaborator Seyrig's final performance onscreen.

167 MINS



Who Are You, Polly Maggoo?

Dir. William Klein France 1966

Legendary fashion photographer and photojournalist William Klein exploded into narrative filmmaking with this mockumentary, now a cult record of groovy 1960s mod fashion.

Trailed by a gormless French film crew through Paris, American model Polly is a mod Alice weaving her way through a stylishly shambolic Wonderland. Right from the famous opening sequence – a runway show in a Gaudi-esque colosseum in which fashionistas coo over models encased in sheet metal – director William Klein is fascinated with fashion's theatre of the absurd. His satirical eye finds something solemn, even religious, in the banal pronouncements of fashion editors and the nonsensical questions of TV interviewers, while Polly seems bemused to find herself an object of worship for trend-hungry teens and lecherous men.

97 MINS



La libertad

Dir. Lisandro Alonso Argentina 2001

Made on a shoestring when Alonso was just 25, the director's groundbreaking first feature offers a hypnotic depiction of rural labour.

In the remote La Pampa province of Argentina, Misael ekes out an ascetic existence. Living alone in an isolated corner of a rural property, he rarely sees other people, and barely says a word when he does. Premiering in competition at Cannes and scoring two special mentions at Rotterdam, *La libertad* showcased a new foundational work of slow cinema. Lisandro Alonso's observational approach blends documentary with cine-minimalism, blurring the lines between fact and fiction. *La libertad* poses big questions: What is freedom? Is Misael, living completely off the grid, truly liberated? Or is he, as the film's circular construction might suggest, trapped in an unending cycle of his own making?

73 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Liverpool

Dir. Lisandro Alonso Argentina, France, Netherlands, Germany, Spain 2008

A sailor travels through a harsh but beautiful landscape in search of his old hometown and what remains of his family.

When his ship is forced to dock at Ushuaia, southern Argentina's gateway to Antarctica, merchant seaman Farrel requests permission to go ashore to find out if his ailing mother is still alive. Downing drinks as he goes, he eventually manages to hitch a ride on a logging truck headed for his old hometown. There, he discovers that his mother is still alive, but barely – and that she's living with his daughter Analía, whom he abandoned prior to her birth. Shot amid the icy surrounds of Tierra del Fuego, *Liverpool* is a sensorial work aswirl with wind and snow, aching with isolation both environmental and emotional.

84 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Los muertos

Dir. Lisandro Alonso Argentina 2004

Alonso's sophomore feature follows a newly freed ex-con on an upriver trip into the jungle, seeking either redemption or retribution.

Vargas is a convicted murderer coming to the end of decades of incarceration in a ramshackle, sun-dappled rural prison. On his release, seemingly ill at ease with his newfound freedom, he sets out on a journey into the Argentine jungle. He has two goals in mind: one is to deliver a letter to the wife of another prisoner; the other is to see his estranged daughter. As he journeys north into increasingly wild surrounds, we're left to wonder if Vargas is a man rehabilitated, or if violence will follow wherever he goes. Lisandro Alonso's second feature is another singular portrait of a man at work; beneath the long takes and cyclic rhythms, however, are uneasy, menacing details lurking in the film's subtext.

78 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Jauja

Dir. Lisandro Alonso Argentina, Denmark, France, Mexico, USA, Germany, Brazil, Netherlands 2014

Alonso's beguiling revisionist western reinvents itself with a mystifying final act.

Captain Gunnar Dinesen (Viggo Mortensen) is a Danish military explorer, charting the lands of Patagonia in the late 19th century. Travelling with his teenage daughter Ingeborg, Gunnar feels under constant threat from the myth of Zuluaga, a Danish officer turned wilderness-dwelling killer. When Ingeborg disappears into the desert with a Spanish soldier, Gunnar heads after her alone. Winning a FIPRESCI Prize at Cannes, *Jauja* marked Lisandro Alonso's first historical work. Though its vignettied corners and Academy frame give the film an antique appearance, his fifth feature uses genre tropes to reflect on the colonisation of Argentina and takes enigmatic, unexpected narrative turns.

109 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Fantasma

Dir. Lisandro Alonso Argentina 2006

Reuniting the two 'lonely men' from *Los muertos* and *La libertad*, Alonso's third film wanders lost through the halls of a run-down movie house.

Argentino Vargas, the star of *Los muertos*, has arrived in Buenos Aires to attend a retrospective screening of the film at the grand Teatro General San Martín. He soon gets lost within the cinema – a movie palace that, having fallen into disarray, is full of shadows and secrets. As he drifts through the labyrinthine building, he crosses paths with Misael Saavedra, the central figure of *La libertad*. With little dialogue or narrative, *Fantasma* is built from evocative tracking shots and ultra-detailed sound design. As always, there is mystery in the film's intention and its title. Is this a portrait of being haunted by the spectre of cinema itself? Or are these lonely men lost spirits, fated to forever live on in Alonso's movies?

63 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Eureka

Dir. Lisandro Alonso France, Argentina, Germany, Portugal, Mexico 2023

Alonso's hugely ambitious triptych explores the collision between Indigenous lives and colonisation.

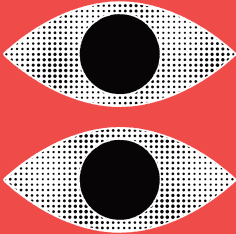
Nineteenth-century Old West gunslinger Murphy (Viggo Mortensen), searching for his missing daughter, arrives in a lawless outpost where the only justice to be found is by way of the gun. In the contemporary US, Alaina is a local cop at snowy South Dakota reservation Pine Ridge. Lastly, in 1970s Brazil, two young men from a remote tribe fight over a girl – and one of them ends up dead. Stitched together by the migratory flight of a jabiru and the shapeshifting presence of a character called El Coronel (Chiara Mastroianni), Alonso's ambitious sixth feature is a triptych tripping through eclectic genres and varying aspect ratios.

146 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST

Kim Novak: Hollywood Heretic

Revisit six classics led by one of Hollywood’s last golden-age stars, from her most iconic performances to lesser-seen, recently reappraised works.

miff.com.au/kim-novak-hollywood-heretic





Bell, Book and Candle
Dir. Richard Quine USA 1958

In a stand-out performance, Novak has a bewitching good time toying with Jimmy Stewart’s clueless mortal.

Among the jazz bars and beatnik scene of 1960s Greenwich Village resides a thriving community of witches and warlocks. Gillian Holroyd (Kim Novak), one of the most powerful among them, lives behind the shop she runs selling African artefacts. When mild-mannered publisher Shep Henderson (James Stewart) moves into the building, she decides on an impulse to playfully seduce him. Re-teaming with her *Vertigo* co-star Stewart, Novak gives one of the most natural and lived-in performances of her career, while the film offers a sly meditation on conformity, desire and the vulnerability required to truly connect with another person.

106 MINS



Middle of the Night
Dir. Delbert Mann USA 1959

In this forward-thinking drama, a widowed businessman becomes involved with a much younger employee at his textiles factory.

Jerry Kingsley (Frederic March), a recently bereaved Manhattan textiles manufacturer, is encouraged by all around him to take a new wife. What they don't expect is that his affections will land on Betty Preisser (Kim Novak), the 24-year-old divorced receptionist who works at his factory. Even as the two tentatively pursue this May–December romance, they soon grasp the complexities of sharing the relationship with their families and friends. Adapted for the screen by playwright Paddy Chayefsky, *Middle of the Night* is a deeply compassionate portrait of people reaching for connection in a world determined to judge them for it.

118 MINS 35MM PRINT



The Man With the Golden Arm
Dir. Otto Preminger USA 1955

An early-career milestone for Novak, this honest, raw depiction of a man’s addiction to heroin was a shocking outlier in its era of release.

After a stint getting clean in prison, aspiring jazz drummer Frankie Machine (Frank Sinatra) returns to Chicago’s chaotic backstreets, where – alongside sympathetic girlfriend Molly Novotny (Kim Novak) – he struggles to rebuild his life and avoid the suffocating pull of old habits. This landmark of postwar American cinema takes an unflinching look at the psychological impacts of addiction with a startling candour that shattered Hollywood taboos at the time. Adapted from Nelson Algren’s uncompromising novel, Otto Preminger’s Oscar-nominated film – released without the Production Code seal of approval – remains a devastating character study laden with moral ambiguity.

119 MINS 35MM PRINT



Strangers When We Meet
Dir. Richard Quine USA 1960

Novak excels in this heartbreaking story of an extramarital affair in sleepy 1950s Los Angeles.

Maggie Gault (Kim Novak) is listless, persisting in a stable but passionless marriage. Kirk Douglas plays Larry Coe, an architect in a happy but comfortable marriage who has just taken on a new project to design a house for a successful writer. After a meet-cute at school pick-up, Maggie and Larry embark on a tender, deeply felt affair, sharing a connection they haven’t previously enjoyed with anyone else. But when nosy neighbour Felix (Walter Matthau) discovers the dalliance, he makes a sinister play for Larry’s wife. Adapted from a novel by Evan Hunter, *Strangers When We Meet* is a gorgeously rendered melodrama that fields a mature viewpoint on adult relationships, layered with shades of grey.

117 MINS 35MM PRINT



Vertigo
Dir. Alfred Hitchcock USA 1958

Revisit Novak’s iconic dual performance in Alfred Hitchcock’s psychological-thriller masterpiece, presented in glorious 70mm.

Former detective John “Scottie” Ferguson (James Stewart) is hired by an old college acquaintance to trail his wife, Madeleine Elster (Kim Novak). It’s not long before Scottie is deeply infatuated with his enigmatic mark, then shattered at her untimely death. In the grip of obsession, he meets a woman on the street, whom he proceeds to make over in order to resurrect Madeleine as he remembers her. Though she was only 24 at the time of the film’s production, Novak’s performance is that of a much wiser and more experienced actor – and while the genius of Hitchcock is undeniably central to the film’s construction, it’s her own complexity that brings nuance to the two distinct women she plays.

128 MINS 70MM PRINT



The Legend of Lylah Clare
Dir. Robert Aldrich USA 1968

Novak once again tackles dual roles in this wildly unhinged satire of the Hollywood system.

Lylah Clare’s death has long been shrouded in mystery. When unknown Elsa Brinkman (Kim Novak) is cast in the principal role in a biopic about the doomed thespian, she is almost immediately seduced by the heady Hollywood lifestyle, not to mention by tyrannical director Lewis Zarken (Peter Finch). With echoes of her iconic role in *Vertigo*, Novak delivers another haunting dual performance that blends innocence (quickly lost) and bravado, while Robert Aldrich directs with feverish intensity, transforming sound stages, mirrors and camera lenses into sites of psychological entrapment in this savage, self-reflexive meditation on Hollywood’s capacity to consume the women it immortalises.

130 MINS 16MM PRINT

Critical Condition

This year’s edition of Critical Condition is devoted to the art of performance, as our internationally attending guest critics host a trio of films and conversations that explore the many modes of acting across both fiction and documentary. Each screening will be introduced by a critic and followed by a panel discussion.

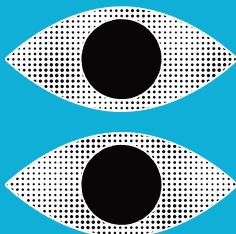
miff.com.au/critical-condition



Tales of Cinema

Explore the stories behind the celluloid in these vivid documentary accounts of cinema’s past, present and future.

miff.com.au/tales-of-cinema



Holofiction

Dir. Michal Kosakowski Germany, Austria

Drawing on thousands of films and TV shows about the Holocaust, this gripping supercut queries the ethics of representing atrocity.

“Fiction is a transgression,” stated Claude Lanzmann, in reference to *Schindler’s List*. “It is my belief that the depiction of certain things is prohibited.” Michal Kosakowski’s found-footage essay film takes Lanzmann’s famous statement as its provocative point of departure, assembling clips from more than 3000 narrative works about World War II and the Holocaust – from *Rome*, *Open City* to *Inglourious Basterds* – to reveal the constants and the contradictions of the genre. It also offers a compelling meditation on the relationship between history, memory and media – one that resonates far beyond the events depicted on screen.

102 MINS



Kim Novak’s Vertigo

Dir. Alexandre O. Philippe USA

In studio-era Hollywood, Kim Novak fought to craft her own identity. In this affectionate documentary portrait, she elegantly redefines her legacy.

People have rarely given Kim Novak the credit she deserves – but all the while, she has been her own auteur. She fought Columbia Pictures boss Harry Cohn to keep her own surname, and went on strike for better pay. Now 93, she recalls *Vertigo* as a satisfyingly metatextual collaboration, reframing her life’s dizzying, spiralling narratives as “a big, beautiful circle”. Illuminating a complex person rather than worshipping a star, Alexandre O. Philippe’s documentary celebrates an unforgettable movie through its subject’s refreshingly candid musings on the tensions between authenticity and mystique.

76 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST

PRESENTED BY
ARMANI
OFFICIAL BEAUTY PARTNER



Barbara Forever

Dir. Brydie O’Connor USA

Avant-garde lesbian filmmaker Barbara Hammer’s life and pioneering work take centre stage in this archive-driven tribute to a queer cinema icon.

Across her prolific career, from her groundbreaking 1974 short *Dyketactics* to her feature-length breakout *Nitrate Kisses* (MIFF 1993) and beyond, the filmography of fearless LA-born artist Barbara Hammer was as playful as it was relentless in decentring the heterosexual gaze. Brydie O’Connor’s energising tribute to the late icon artfully weaves together footage from the director’s personal archive with clips from her films, accompanied by commentary from Hammer herself. Winner of a Teddy Award at the Berlinale along with a prize for editing at Sundance, *Barbara Forever* looks to the future of queer filmmaking by honouring one of its greatest revolutionaries.

102 MINS



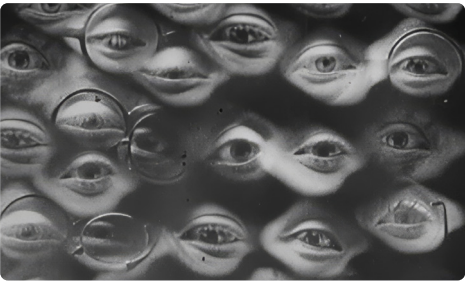
Crocodile

Dir. The Critics, Pietra BrettKelly Nigeria, New Zealand

Spanning 13 years, this lively documentary chronicles the incredible rise of a group of young Nigerian filmmakers working outside the system.

Though Nigerian cinema emerging from the Nollywood hub of Lagos is famously prolific, The Critics live hundreds of kilometres away in the northern city of Kaduna. Inspired by Hollywood sci-fi blockbusters, the collective’s members use whatever’s on hand – hand-sewn green screen, makeshift tripods, borrowed iPhones – to furnish their playful but grand moviemaking visions. New Zealand director Pietra BrettKelly worked with footage shot over more than a decade by The Critics themselves to trace the group’s burgeoning political consciousness alongside their creative development, revealing the harsh realities that their love of cinema has enabled them to transcend.

101 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Nostalgia for the Future

Dir. Brecht Debackere Belgium, Italy, Netherlands

Visionary filmmaker, artist and writer Chris Marker forms the mysterious locus of this documentary drawing on his expansive archives.

Chris Marker described himself as “the best-known author of unknown films”, but perhaps the opposite is true. Today, works such as *La Jetée*, his haunting sci-fi almost entirely comprising still images, and *Sans Soleil* (MIFF 1983), the existential travelogue that redefined the essay film, are widely revered. But Marker – one of numerous pseudonyms he used in his 91 years – very rarely gave interviews; averse to being photographed, he often used a drawing of his cat as an avatar. A precious souvenir for existing fans, this meditation on the slippery persistence of memory is also a beguiling introduction for anyone who wishes to peer behind his Cheshire grin.

75 MINS

The Story of Documentary Film

Dir. Mark Cousins UK

The premier chronicler of all things cinematic returns with this plunge into more than a century of reality-based storytelling.

With his 900-minute, award-winning opus *The Story of Film: An Odyssey*, Mark Cousins issued a groundbreaking audiovisual history of cinema – but that history can’t be told without documentary. Tackling the “more shadowy” flipside to fiction’s glamorous past, the passionate celluloid historian’s journey follows a very different path from the conventional canon, and what he discovers is guaranteed to surprise and intrigue even the most seasoned cinephile. MIFF is delighted to present, across three sessions, the first nine episodes of this towering new achievement that reframes our ideas of truth, power and the pursuit of onscreen beauty.

540 MINS



Gone to Earth

Dir. Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger UK 1950

Jennifer Jones gives an unforgettable performance in Powell and Pressburger’s ravishing, rarely screened melodrama.

In a rural England somewhere between the late 19th century and a Technicolor dream, headstrong nature girl Hazel (Jennifer Jones) communes with animals and fairies in the untamed countryside. Like the foxes with whom she shares a spiritual kinship, Hazel finds herself hunted by both a dark, dashing squire (David Farrar) and a straitlaced clergyman (Cyril Cusack), two men to whom she refuses to be shackled. Steeped in mysticism and eerie folklore – and serving as inspiration for Kate Bush’s *Hounds of Love* – this expressionistic tale of doomed desire from the legendary Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger is presented in a vibrant 35mm print from Martin Scorsese’s personal collection.

107 MINS 35MM PRINT HOSTED BY MIRIAM BALE



Portrait of Jason

Dir. Shirley Clarke USA 1967

In Shirley Clarke’s magnetic work, New York hustler, would-be cabaret star and raconteur Jason Holliday delivers a monologue for the ages.

Holding court over a long, boozy night at New York’s Hotel Chelsea, Jason Holliday dispatches fraught, flamboyant anecdotes of a life lived on the city’s margins – including working the streets as a hustler and doing time on Rikers Island – that become profound reflections on race, class and sexuality. Just how much of Jason’s studied fabulousness, in which the self is nested within endless layers of performance, is an elaborate shield against a hostile world, including the overtures of his director? An exquisite study in character and a fascinating look at the ethics behind documentary performance, *Portrait of Jason* is a slippery, shapeshifting work, as exhilarating as it is unsettling.

107 MINS HOSTED BY MAYA S. CADE



The Unfaithful Wife

Dir. Claude Chabrol France 1969

Suspicion, murder and psychosexual paranoia abound in this twisted thriller from French New Wave titan Claude Chabrol.

In this exquisitely calibrated homage to Hitchcock, a Parisian insurance executive begins to suspect that his wife is having an affair, sending him into an escalating state of paranoia – and towards a plan that will rupture the bourgeois calm of his existence. Through its chilly surfaces, precision staging and dark humour, this deliciously deviant drama finds Claude Chabrol on signature form, with the filmmaker’s then-wife Stéphane Audran delivering a glamorous, emotionally opaque performance ripe with depth and mystery. *The Unfaithful Wife* is one of Chabrol’s most enduring and influential works, serving as the inspiration for Andrei Zvyagintsev’s Cannes Grand Prix winner *Minotaur*.

98 MINS HOSTED BY DANIELLA SHREIR

Guest Presenters



Daniella Shreir is the founder and co-editor of film journal *Another Gaze* and a translator of literature, including work for *The Paris Review*, *Granta* and her award-winning translation of Chantal Akerman’s *My Mother Laughs*. She has served on the selection committee for Cannes Directors’ Fortnight and written for publications such as *London Review of Books* and *Cahiers du cinéma*.



Maya S. Cade is the creator and curator of Black Film Archive and the inaugural CCDI scholar-in-residence at the Library of Congress. Her work has been featured in publications including *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *NPR*, *The Paris Review* and *Vulture*, and she has been awarded special distinctions by the New York Film Critics Circle and the National Society of Film Critics for the Archive.



Miriam Bale is a critic and film programmer. She has written for *The New York Times*, the *New York Daily News*, *W Magazine*, *Gagosian Quarterly*, *The New Republic*, *Film Comment*, *IndieWire*, *Sight and Sound* and many other publications. She was the artistic director of the Indie Memphis Film Festival in Tennessee, and has curated multiple repertory film programs worldwide.

Restorations

From the first film by a Portuguese master to a controversial 90s biopic, MIFF’s Restorations strand presents beloved classics, hidden gems and cult favourites.

miff.com.au/restorations



Aniki-Bóóbó

Dir. Manoel de Oliveira Portugal 1942

The feature debut of Portuguese master Manoel de Oliveira, beautifully restored, is a charming, proto-neorealist revelation.

Carlitos’s heart beats a little faster for Terezinha; so does Eduardo’s. Terezinha, for her part, has eyes for a doll in the window display of a shop. Hoping to win his crush’s admiration, Carlitos swipes the doll for her – and, in doing so, introduces a new tension into the lives of this gang of Porto urchins. While its greatness is now recognised, *Aniki-Bóóbó* was largely dismissed in its day, and Manoel de Oliveira – the only filmmaker whose career stretched from the silent to the digital era – would not make another feature-length film for 21 years. In its spareness, his first fiction film is an edifying counterpoint to his later, lavishly stylised works, and enchanting in its own right.

72 MINS 4K RESTORATION



Can She Bake a Cherry Pie?

Dir. Henry Jaglom USA 1983

Recently restored to 4K, this odd-couple romance is a sweet slice of 1980s New York life featuring cameos from Larry David and Orson Welles.

After her husband unceremoniously leaves her, Zee (Karen Black) wanders the streets of the Upper West Side in a daze. When she stops at Café Central to eat her feelings with a big bowl of chocolate ice cream, Zee’s loud sobs are noticed by fellow divorcee Eli (Michael Emil). Before long, the two strangers develop a distinctly neurotic New York–style case of *amour fou*, engaging in a courtship characterised by mutual wallowing. Filmed with a freewheeling style that lends the film a refreshing spontaneity, this dryly funny romance from iconoclastic independent filmmaker Henry Jaglom is enhanced by its wonderfully quirky central performances.

91 MINS 4K RESTORATION



I Shot Andy Warhol

Dir. Mary Harron USA 1996

In its Australian-premiering 4K restoration, Mary Harron’s fictionalised portrait of radical-feminist avenger Valerie Solanas still aims truly.

On 3 June 1968, Valerie Solanas (Lili Taylor) – the writer of the notorious man-hating polemic the *SCUM Manifesto* – walks into Andy Warhol’s Factory, points a handgun at the art superstar and fires three times. Many debates about gender and celebrity have raged since *American Psycho* director Mary Harron’s astonishing debut feature emerged, but the complex agency the film grants its protagonist still blows most biopics away. Featuring a stunning cast including Jared Harris, Martha Plimpton and Michael Imperioli, *I Shot Andy Warhol* returns after a long absence from screens as a vivid, timely provocation.

103 MINS 4K RESTORATION



My Life Without Steve

Dir. Gillian Leahy Australia 1986

This gorgeous, rigorously composed reflection on a break-up is a landmark work of Australian feminist cinema.

“After you left, I moved in here for a year, hoping that the view would pull me out of the misery.” Over a series of domestic tableaux – a copper kettle on the boil; a bulging vase stuffed with white daisies – a woman delivers a discursive monologue. Inspired by the works of Chris Marker and Chantal Akerman and made during a notable period for women filmmakers in Australia, Gillian Leahy’s sophisticated essay film – shot on lush 35mm – won awards but also ruffled feathers, critiqued by some as failing certain feminist ideals. Forty years later, in a culture attuned to prickly autofiction, the conversation seems to have finally caught up to Leahy.

53 MINS 4K RESTORATION FESTIVAL GUEST



Nadja

Dir. Michael Almereyda USA 1994

This stylish, newly restored 90s indie curio follows an elegant vampire stalking Manhattan by night.

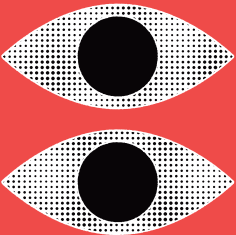
The city that never sleeps suits Nadja, a Romanian vampire who spends her nights drinking coffee, smoking cigarettes and waxing philosophical in dive bars alongside fellow ennui-afflicted New York scenesters. When her dad, Count Dracula, dies from a nasty case of stake-in-the-heart, Nadja finally has a chance to emerge from his long, overbearing shadow. But a twist of fate romantically entangles Nadja with Lucy, an extended relative of her father’s murderer, Van Helsing. This magnetically cool black comedy by Michael Almereyda, starring Elina Löwensohn, Martin Donovan and Peter Fonda, also features producer David Lynch in a cameo as a morgue attendant, naturally.

93 MINS 4K RESTORATION

Doc Visions

Between documentary and fiction lie captivating works that merge observation and imagination in daring, surprising ways, redefining how film can show us the world.

miff.com.au/doc-visions



Back Home

Dir. Tsai Ming-liang Taiwan

Let loose in Laos without a crew, master auteur Tsai Ming-liang delivers a quiet, contemplative meditation on place and belonging.

Slow-cinema legend Tsai Ming-liang accompanies actor Anong Hounghueangsy back to his hometown, a rural Lao village situated amid rice paddies. More drawn to the surrounding environment than the reunion between Anong and his family, Tsai’s ever-patient camera gazes on dogs, cats, cows, goats and house plants. For the Buddhist filmmaker, these lives are just as interesting as those of family members, farmers selling their wares at markets and stonemasons carving statues. Each new outing for cinema’s Zen master is a humble treasure to behold; *Back Home* offers another still, quiet study for those attuned to his filmmaking approach, and particularly the entries in his ongoing *Walking* series.

65 MINS



Do You Love Me

Dir. Lana Daher France, Lebanon, Germany, Qatar

A play-it-loud trip through 70 years of Lebanese history.

“Disorientation is part of the journey. Welcome to Lebanon.” So pronounces *Do You Love Me*, which jams on Lebanese collective memory in ways both joyous and harrowing. Stitching together still photos, home movies, old celluloid, TV clips, radio broadcasts and podcasts, this free-associative portrait of life in Beirut is an act of resistance filled with singing and dancing. Combing through 20,000 hours of footage drawn from across seven decades, filmmaker and interdisciplinary artist Lana Daher and co-writer/editor Qutaiba Barhamji (*Four Daughters*, MIFF 2023) forgo talking heads, voiceovers and explanatory intertitles. Instead, their exuberant supercut is shot through with energy, daring and an undeniable sense of humour.

75 MINS



Ninja Scroll

Dir. Yoshiaki Kawajiri Japan 1993

Vividly restored in 4K, this 1993 anime masterpiece follows a ronin, a ninja and a spy on their quest to defeat eight superhuman warriors.

In Edo-period Japan, wandering ronin Jubei winds up in a village tyrannised by an iron giant; there, he saves the female ninja Kagero, who decides to join him. Crossing paths with Dakuan, a government spy, they are informed that Jubei must confront the Eight Devils of Kimon – a band of malevolent super-ninja hell-bent on overthrowing the shogunate. As the trio set out to vanquish evil, they quickly learn that it's kill or be killed. First released in 1993, this legendary Animate Film production sits alongside *Akira* and *Ghost in the Shell* as an influential classic of its genre: a cel-animated wonder renowned for its action sequences featuring both visceral brutality and virtuosic movement.

94 MINS 4K RESTORATION



Shades of Silk

Dir. Mary Stephen France, Canada 1978

Long out of circulation, this evocatively elliptical tale of Sapphic yearning in 1930s Shanghai has been hailed as a major rediscovery.

Lysanne and Marlène (the latter played by writer/director Mary Stephen herself) were best friends in high school; perhaps, even then, their bond was underpinned by a desire for and fear of greater intimacy. Time has since separated the two women – both originally from Shanghai, Lysanne is now living in Paris and Marlène in Massachusetts – but they pine for one another still, each in their own way and to tragic ends. Stephen's darkly dreamy and remarkably assured debut, made when she was just 24 years old, was conceived as a loving counterpoint to Marguerite Duras's *India Song*, and launched a directorial oeuvre characterised by exploration of colonial identity and cultural memory.

62 MINS 2K RESTORATION



Tilai

Dir. Idrissa Ouedraogo Burkina Faso 1990

An adulterous love affair brings tragedy to a traditional village in Idrissa Ouedraogo's masterful, Cannes-awarded fable, now restored in 4K.

When Saga returns home after two years, he's dismayed to learn that his fiancée, Nogma, has married someone else – his father. Her feelings for Saga haven't waned, she reassures him, but she had no choice in the matter. Reunited, they find temptation too great to resist; but their transgression is discovered, fracturing both family bonds and the broader community. Offering a potent distillation of complex social dynamics set against a backdrop of expansive plains, this modernist take on a story steeped in patriarchal tradition is as striking today in its restored form as it was when it first screened at Cannes in 1990, sharing that year's Grand Jury Prize.

81 MINS 4K RESTORATION



Weighed But Found Wanting

Dir. Lino Brocka Philippines 1974

In this scathing, multi-awarded, newly 4K-restored 1974 drama, an affluent teen disillusioned by privilege befriends two outcasts.

Junior is the only son of Cesar, the richest man in town. This wealth has afforded him an ultra-comfortable life – one he spends with his similarly well-off friends and girlfriend. After a series of upsetting discoveries, however, Junior soon learns that beneath the strictures of small-town respectability lurks all manner of ruthlessness. A pioneering work of the Second Golden Age of Philippine Cinema that won six FAMAS Awards, *Weighed But Found Wanting* championed empathy and anti-establishment principles during a period of large-scale repression; now, in one of the film's first international screenings, it can be discovered afresh.

128 MINS 4K RESTORATION



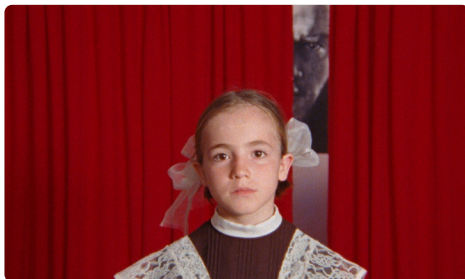
Hair, Paper, Water...

Dir. Nicolas Graux, Trương Minh Quý Belgium, France, Vietnam

A critically endangered language is passed from grandmother to grandson in this sensory 16mm docufiction set among Vietnam's Rục people.

At 60-plus years of age, Cao Thị Hậu dreams of returning to the traditional Rục cave dwelling where she was born. Instead, she travels from her modest village home to Ho Chi Minh City, where she'll spend time with her daughter and grandchildren. The Rục vocabulary lessons that Mrs Hậu offers her Vietnamese-speaking grandson become invitations to the filmmakers to play with text as a graphic element. Nicolas Graux and Trương Minh Quý's (*Viet and Nam*, MIFF 2024) richly textured, impressionistic documentary is a thoughtfully layered extension of the relationship between director and subject, while its contemplative pacing is perfectly complemented by its lush, rain-misted palette.

71 MINS



Memory

Dir. Vladlena Sandu France, Netherlands

This visually imaginative filmic collage recalls the director's childhood in Chechnya.

In the late 1980s, six-year-old Vladlena Sandu was sent from Crimea to Grozny, Chechnya, to live with her grandparents. Little did she, or her family, know that the horrors of war would be right on their doorstep over the following decades. In this poetic, autobiographical hybrid documentary, Sandu confronts the ways in which geopolitical conflict impacts children, and asks what can be done to break these generational cycles of violence. The influence of Andrei Tarkovsky, Pier Paolo Pasolini and Sergei Parajanov looms large in the evocative and lyrical imagery that makes up *Memory*, which incorporates live-action re-enactment, puppetry, animation, archival material and surreal vignettes shot on 16mm film.

98 MINS MIFF ONLINE

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Time and Tide

Dir. Vee Shi Australia

A Melbourne filmmaker returns to the small Chinese town of his childhood.

When his father suffers a stroke, Melbourne-based filmmaker Vee Shi returns to his hometown in south-eastern China, a small rural community that he left behind when he was 13. As the family's proud, stubborn patriarch struggles with his need for care, his estranged wife and daughter – who, due to China's one-child policy, was given up for adoption prior to the director's birth – are suddenly entrusted with the duty of looking after a man who has often treated them badly. These strained family dynamics evoke a bigger-picture portrait of changing Chinese society, in which the once-total dedication to family is falling away. This unique hybrid documentary profoundly and often painfully explores the contested space of a fractured family home.

99 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Waking Hours

Dir. Federico Cammarata, Filippo Foscari Italy

A nocturnal descent into a forest, this Venice award winner is a profound, immersive experience.

In the darkness of a forest in northern Serbia, right by the Hungarian border, Afghan *passeurs* gather around a flickering fire: smoking, baking bread and discussing the best corridors for smuggling people across the border. As gunshots resound in the distance and loudspeakers blast periodic warnings from the Hungarian side, these tiny figures linger in the shadow of the European Union. Taking place almost entirely in darkness – illuminated only by firelight, torches, phones and distant passing headlights – this experiential work of direct cinema plays almost like a slow-burning horror movie: plunging viewers into an unsettling night; cultivating a sense of mounting fear; asking us to imagine what's lurking outside the frame.

78 MINS

Documentaries

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miff.com.au/documentaries



Better Go Mad in the Wild

Dir. Miro Remo Czechia, Slovakia

An enchanting portrait of solitude and free-spirited abandon following eccentric twin brothers living in the Czech wilderness.

Deep in the Šumavan Mountains in Czechia live identical twins František and Ondřej Klišík. Now in their sixties, the brothers exist in bucolic bliss: drinking, bickering, swimming in glacial lakes and wandering – sometimes in the nude – through nearby forests. On other occasions, they commune with the animals in their midst, including their majestic bull Nandy, whose voiceover recounts the brothers’ storied pasts and current concerns. A dreamy and poetic glimpse into a life of wilful seclusion, *Better Go Mad in the Wild* leverages its hybrid form – not quite essay film or observational documentary – to transport viewers to a world both elemental and unmoored from modern society.

83 MINS [MIFF ONLINE](#)



Gabin

Dir. Maxence Voiseux France, Germany, Switzerland

Gracefully condensing a decade’s worth of footage, this tender nonfiction gem chronicles the adolescence of a boy in northern France.

Young Gabin Jourdel lives in Artois, an agricultural region in economic decline. His father, butcher Dominique, intends for Gabin to one day take over his business; but even at the age of eight, the boy is demonstrably less at ease with his peers than with the cows tended to by his mother. Over 10 years, as he grows up in front of director Maxence Voiseux’s camera, Gabin negotiates not only the burdens of familial expectation but also the limitations of his rural environment. Recalling both Richard Linklater’s *Boyhood* (MIFF 2014) and the beloved *Up* series, *Gabin* – with its quietly grand scope and seamless, effortlessly intimate vérité style – is a poignant, truly impressive feature-length debut.

105 MINS



Closure

Dir. Michał Marczak Poland, France

Transcending true-crime cliché, this masterful study of obsession documents a father’s quest for answers in the wake of his son’s disappearance.

In the last-known footage of 16-year-old Krzysztof Dymiński – “Chris” to his friends – he is seen standing on a bridge overlooking Warsaw’s Vistula River. One year on, little hope remains that Chris is still alive, but his father Daniel pours his immense grief into the task of at least filling in the narrative blanks, trawling his son’s social media profiles and the river itself for clues. Bringing a steady, sensitive gaze to this heart-rending material, director Michał Marczak withholds archival material of Chris in favour of a present-tense approach grounded in his absence, his prodigious cinematography giving Daniel’s dogged pursuit an uncanny resemblance to fiction.

105 MINS



The History of Concrete

Dir. John Wilson USA

When an inventive cult filmmaker decides to make a documentary on concrete, he paves a path to something far more profound and hilarious.

Idle during the 2023 Writers Guild of America strike, documentarian John Wilson attends a workshop on how to make Hallmark Christmas rom-com movies. Inspired by his apartment building’s crumbling foundations, he tests this formula on the world’s love affair with concrete. Unsurprisingly, Wilson struggles to pitch his idea to prospective investors – and, fretting that he might be falling through the industry’s cracks, he takes a pilgrimage around the world, finding surprising insights along the way. For fans of HBO comedy series *How To With John Wilson* and newcomers alike, this is a rich, hearteningly humane meditation on life and death, on the things we either leave in ruins or care enough to fix.

101 MINS

PRESENTED BY
The Saturday
Paper



Adam’s Apple

Dir. Amy Jenkins USA

In this candid and heartwarming portrait of transition, a filmmaker mother and her trans son capture the power of acceptance and authenticity.

Adam Sieswerda always knew he was a boy, but the aspiring singer/songwriter feared his artistic prospects because he also knew his voice wouldn’t drop. At 15, he received his first testosterone shot – and so began Adam’s journey to becoming his true self. As he embraces his growing identity, his mother, filmmaker Amy Jenkins, documents his milestones with curiosity and compassion. This eight-years-in-the-making film chronicles Adam’s experiences of gender-affirming care while giving glimpses into the logistical, physiological and emotional demands of the process. Amid the threats to trans rights around the world, *Adam’s Apple* is an urgent testament to familial solidarity.

99 MINS [MIFF ONLINE](#)



The Cycle of Love

Dir. Orlando von Einsiedel UK

To find the girl who’d won his heart, a young Indian artist set out to cross the world – by bike.

In 1975, Swedish backpacker Lotta von Schedvin paid the gentle, curious 23-year-old P.K. Mahanandia to sketch her portrait on a Delhi street, and soon fell for him. After two magical months together, von Schedvin returned home – but, for Mahanandia, it wasn’t over. With his last \$80, he bought a secondhand Raleigh bicycle and pedalled off on the hippie trail on what would become an almost 6000-mile quest. Documentarian Orlando von Einsiedel weaves the couple’s photos, letters and heartfelt interviews through beguilingly vintage-textured re-enactments of their courtship and Mahanandia’s odyssey, adding unscripted interactions with some of the colourful characters the director meets while filming along his subject’s original route.

98 MINS



Joybubbles

Dir. Rachael J. Morrison USA

Inspiring Apple’s Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs, this telephone hacker who was born blind was both a tech prodigy and a big-hearted iconoclast.

Before internet hackers popularised the concept of scrambling technology, the analog pioneers known as ‘phone phreaks’ discovered that they could manipulate landlines simply by whistling at certain frequencies. Born Josef Ingressia in 1949, Joybubbles was one such phreaker. As a whiz-kid, he was drawn to experimenting with technology, but it also represented a kind of lifeline: born blind, Joybubbles used the phone to forge connections with people – and to help others connect, too. In chronicling its singular subject’s life, underpinned by trauma but still overflowing with kindness, this loving documentary spotlights a sidelined but fascinating pre-internet chapter of hacking history.

79 MINS [MIFF ONLINE](#)



American Doctor

Dir. Poh Si Teng USA, Palestine, Qatar, Malaysia, Denmark

An unapologetic cry for humanity that reveals the reality of the genocide in Gaza and the experiences of frontline medical volunteers.

Across late 2024 and early 2025, three doctors from the United States – Jewish orthopaedic surgeon Mark Perlmutter, Zoroastrian trauma surgeon Feroze Sidhwa and Palestinian emergency doctor Thaer Ahmad – worked in hospitals in the Gaza Strip trying to save some of the many lives being destroyed by war. Back home in North America, they attempt to reconcile these experiences with their day-to-day lives as they also strive to raise awareness in a world that would prefer to look away. *American Doctor* provides an unflinching exposé of the consequences of war as experienced by physicians, reinforcing the urgency of their shared call for a more just world.

93 MINS



Everybody to Kenmure Street

Dir. Felipe Bustos Sierra UK

The thrilling tale of a Glasgow community’s spontaneous act of civil resistance that saved two of their own from a Home Office deportation raid.

On 13 May 2021, as the first day of Eid-ul-Fitr dawned, a Home Office immigration raid targeted an ordinary residential street in Pollokshields, Glasgow, bundling two local men into a van. But their neighbours wouldn’t let it leave; soon, more than 2000 ordinary people had converged on Kenmure Street. Director Felipe Bustos Sierra commemorates this day of spontaneous solidarity as a moment-by-moment mosaic of crowdsourced testimonies, archival fragments and self-aware dramatisations by actors Emma Thompson and Kate Dickie. Winning a Special Jury Award at Sundance, this heartening film is a timely reminder that we never need permission to stop legalised injustice.

98 MINS



Kings of Venice

Dir. Sveinn Ingimundarson, S.D. Saltarelli USA

In Venice Beach, paddle tennis players are a band apart ... united only by a hatred of pickleball.

In the Los Angeles neighbourhood of Venice Beach, paddle tennis courts are under threat from an encroaching enemy: pickleball. The hugely popular monolith, like some ruthless developer, is taking up increasing space in its expansion, threatening to wipe out a small community playing an exceedingly similar sport. From Scott, the self-described GOAT of paddle tennis, to hot-tempered Italian model Ernesto, these misfits unite to stage a paddlers vs pickleballers tournament. Winner gets \$50,000 – and the right to control these courts. Chronicling a subculture, those who inhabit it and their sporting passions, *Kings of Venice* is a serve of outsized personalities that wouldn’t be out of place in a Christopher Guest comedy.

95 MINS [MIFF ONLINE](#)



Knife: The Attempted Murder of Salman Rushdie

Dir. Alex Gibney USA

He was stabbed 15 times. But, for Salman Rushdie, creative freedom remains the sharpest weapon.

In 1989, an Iranian fatwa called for author Salman Rushdie's death over his novel *The Satanic Verses*. In 2022, with the danger seemingly over, the 75-year-old was stabbed repeatedly while speaking on exiled artists' safety in upstate New York. Despite the life-changing injuries he endured, Rushdie refused to become a tragic symbol of ideological violence. Now, doubling down on his commitment to free expression, he documents his own survival. Acclaimed documentarian Alex Gibney allows his subject's clever, poetic voice to show how resistance against authoritarian censorship is sharpened by wit, imagination and a defiantly imperfect humanity.

107 MINS



Landmarks

Dir. Lucrecia Martel Argentina, USA, Mexico, France, Netherlands, Denmark

Lucrecia Martel's potent true-crime documentary connects the murder of an Indigenous leader to a national history of violence.

In October 2009 in northern Argentina, members of the Diaguita community of Los Chuschagasta attempted to resist eviction from their native land. In the confrontation that followed, 68-year-old resident Javier Chocobar was shot dead and two others were wounded – a crime that was captured on video, but only taken to court after a decade-long process of protest and agitation. Winner of Best Film at the BFI London Film Festival, Lucrecia Martel's first feature-length documentary offers not only an indictment of systemic shortcomings but also a deeper exploration of her nation's centuries-long history of colonial settlement.

122 MINS



Lomu

Dir. Gavin Fitzgerald, Vea Mafile'o New Zealand

A nuanced portrait of history's youngest All Black, whose legend remains a beacon for Pasifika pride.

In 1994, at the age of 19, Jonah Lomu donned his first All Blacks jersey – the youngest ever to wear it. Nearly 2 metres tall and 120 kilograms, he could run 100 metres in 11 seconds and evade every tackle. But Lomu wasn't superhuman. Privately, he battled nephrotic syndrome, a rare kidney disorder that would extinguish his stupendous, record-setting career. A humble, staunch Lomu emerges here in intimate interviews with his closest family, friends and coaches, along with archival footage and previously unseen family videos. Sensitive stewarding Lomu's world-spanning legacy are Dublin native Gavin Fitzgerald, known for documentary profiles of Liam Gallagher and Conor McGregor, and Kiwi Tongan trailblazer Vea Mafile'o.

106 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Marc by Sofia

Dir. Sofia Coppola USA

Made in her signature intimate style, Sofia Coppola's debut documentary invites long-time friend Marc Jacobs to share his creative sensibility.

Filmmaker Sofia Coppola met fashion designer Marc Jacobs in 1993, when her downtown New York minimalism intrigued the upstart who'd just brought grunge to the Perry Ellis runway. Thirty years on, as Jacobs's spring 2024 show approaches, his one-time muse hangs out in his studio, watching him plan the staging as meticulously as the clothes. Jacobs and Coppola both intuitively gravitate towards the playful and attainable rather than confronting or luxuriating in wealth; the director's fascination with the evanescent is perfectly suited to tracing the wandering pathways of creative inspiration and influence that guide her subject's creative sensibility.

87 MINS



Mary Oliver: Saved by the Beauty of the World

Dir. Sasha Waters USA

Pulitzer-winning poet Mary Oliver was famously private; a loving look at her one wild and precious life sheds new light on her cherished work.

Openly queer but fiercely private, Mary Oliver was an American mystic, enamoured with the transcendental natural beauty she encountered on her daily walks through Provincetown's woods and wilds. Now, in this documentary on the poet's life, director Sasha Waters respectfully shows us the woman behind the words adored by millions, exploring her lonely and sometimes traumatic childhood as well as her salvation: in love, in nature and in writing. Friends and admirers including Stephen Colbert, Lucy Dacus and John Waters share memories and read favourite poems, interspersed with stunning visuals of the landscapes that so inspired her.

91 MINS



The Match

Dir. Juan Cabral, Santiago Franco Argentina

The mythology of the fateful 1986 World Cup clash between England and Argentina is untangled in this thrilling documentary.

The FIFA World Cup quarter-final match played on 22 June 1986 between England and Argentina is infamous for the contentious 'hand of god' goal from Diego Maradona, followed minutes later by his 'goal of the century'. But it's not just the golden boy's feats that set the match apart; in the wake of the Falklands War, fans on both sides viewed this game through a prism of revenge. Forty years later, this documentary reflects on the sociopolitical context that gave it so much charge, juxtaposing interviews with former on-field opponents against footage of the match in vivid colour. Whether you've seen the match 100 times or never, *The Match* makes for a suspenseful, riveting and moving watch.

91 MINS



The Oligarch and the Art Dealer

Dir. Andreas Dalsgaard France, USA, Denmark

The true story of one of the world's richest men and one of the 21st-century art world's greatest frauds. Or is it?

Unfolding like a Hollywood thriller, *The Oligarch and the Art Dealer* unpacks with exquisite precision all the shady details of the Bouvier Affair: a court case between Russian businessman Dmitry Rybolovlev, the notoriously private owner of the world's most expensive art collection, and his former trusted art dealer and friend Yves Bouvier, a maestro of freeports – duty-free tax havens for the ultra-wealthy's Picassos, da Vincis, Klimts and Magrittes. This engrossing documentary digs into the decade-long battle that began when Rybolovlev accused Bouvier of a billion-dollar scam, blowing up their once-symbiotic relationship. When the stakes – and sums – are this high, can you trust anyone's story?

120 MINS MIFF REGIONAL



Once Upon a Time in Harlem

Dir. William Greaves, David Greaves USA

Gather alongside Harlem Renaissance luminaries in this incredible time capsule, finally completed more than 50 years after the footage was shot.

In 1972, groundbreaking Black filmmaker William Greaves (*Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One*, MIFF 2023) issued an invitation to the surviving figureheads of the cultural boom that emanated from Harlem in the 1920s and 30s. The likes of Noble Sissle, Eubie Blake, Aaron Douglas and Louise Thompson Patterson convened one summer evening at the stately home of Duke Ellington, where the drinks and reminiscences flowed. With Greaves having passed in 2014, it fell to his son David to ensure that this remarkable footage could at last be seen. In *Once Upon a Time in Harlem*, he creates an inviting, immersive atmosphere that crackles with revolutionary verve.

100 MINS

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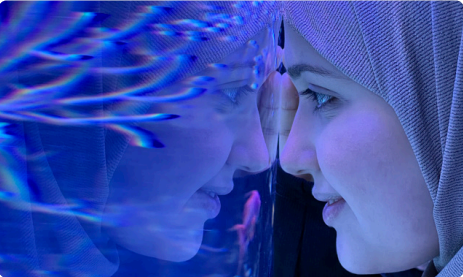
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One in a Million

Dir. Itab Azzam, Jack MacInnes UK, USA

PRESENTED BY
The Monthly

Filmed over a decade, this award-winning portrait of the coming of age of a Syrian girl in exile is a profound cinematic odyssey.

When we meet Israa, she's 11 years old, hustling to help make money for her family. A refugee from Aleppo, Syria, she has only just embarked on a journey across countries, cultures and bureaucratic barriers to find asylum in Europe. Once she settles into her adopted home of Cologne, however, life offers different challenges: a new language and culture to learn, and newfound Western freedoms clashing with her family's traditions. Across 2015 and 2016, at the height of the Syrian Civil War, over one million refugees entered Germany; but their stories didn't end there. Filmed over 10 years, this astonishing documentary zooms in to relate one of those accounts in intimate detail.

102 MINS

MIFF REGIONAL



Palimpsest: The Story of a Name

Dir. Mary Stephen France, Hong Kong, Taiwan

Through a canny postcolonial lens, a filmmaker peels back conflicting layers of family history.

"All my life I've been asked about my family name," reflects Mary Stephen, born in British Hong Kong to parents who adopted Western names. Poring over her father's records, Stephen uncovers all manner of tall tales – including a claim of an Indigenous Australian grandfather – and meditates upon the mechanisms and functions of such mythologisation. The editor of some of Éric Rohmer's most cherished films, including *A Tale of Winter* and *A Summer's Tale*, Stephen has recently enjoyed a much-deserved revival of her own directorial work thanks to the restoration of her dreamy 1978 debut *Shades of Silk* (p. 33). Her latest film proves a richly personal new entry in an oeuvre dedicated to the exploration of identity across borders.

109 MINS



Past Future Continuous

Dir. Morteza Ahmadvand, Firouzeh Khosrovani Iran, Norway, Italy

A layered portrait of an Iranian family long divided by geography but reunited by technology.

Aged 20, Maryam fled Iran in the aftermath of the 1979 revolution. Now a political exile, she resides in the United States, while her parents still live in the house that she grew up in. Longing to somehow bridge the distance, Maryam – herself unseen in the film – has surveillance cameras installed in their home; together with super-8 home videos and archival materials, this dialogue-free footage of her ageing parents illustrates her reflective voiceover. *Past Future Continuous* is something more complex than straight documentary, provocatively slipping between historical fact and narrative fabrication – in the process, gesturing towards the broader relevance of Maryam's story to families in today's Iran.

76 MINS



Rehearsals for a Revolution

Dir. Pegah Ahangarani Czechia, Spain

Receiving the highest documentary prize at Cannes, this inspired essay movie channels Iranian history into a personal account of loss.

Living in exile in the UK, actor/director Pegah Ahangarani wants to make a film about Iranian history, as a way to understand how the country ended up where it is today. Fashioning home movies, archival imagery, news footage, animated sequences and sobering statistics into a singular cinematic essay, Ahangarani chronicles conflict and rebellion across the decades in five chapters – each dedicated to a friend or family member she lost along the way – while also intimately capturing scenes from her current life in London with her newborn daughter. Winning the L'Œil d'Or at Cannes, this documentary vividly interrogates what it means, and costs, to resist.

95 MINS



Remake

Dir. Ross McElwee USA

In his most devastatingly personal work to date – awarded at Venice and True/False – veteran auto-documentarian Ross McElwee probes his home movies for insights into his son's death.

Adrian McElwee was just 27 when he died in 2016 – a victim of the opioid crisis, having also struggled with bipolar disorder. In the painful aftermath, his filmmaker father Ross turned to his archive, in search of what he and his camera might have missed. A clear influence on the likes of John Wilson (*The History of Concrete*, MIFF 2026), McElwee, now in his late seventies, has long been an obsessive documenter of his own life, always bringing a wry intelligence and, at times, endearingly awkward humour to his filmed pursuits. In the more sober and reflective *Remake*, however, he finds himself questioning the limits of his chosen medium.

116 MINS



School for Defectors

Dir. Jeremy Workman South Korea, USA

Spending a year in a school for children of North Korean refugees, Jeremy Workman's documentary is as humanistic as it is intimate.

In many respects, the pupils at Jangdaehyun School are like any other teens: they stress about exams and getting into university; they dance on TikTok; they joke and laugh with friends. And they dream about their futures – a radical act when you're born in North Korea. But Jangdaehyun is in South Korea, and its 20 boarders are all children of defectors from across the 38th parallel. Over the course of a year, Jeremy Workman (*Secret Mall Apartment*, MIFF 2024) embedded himself within the school with permission from the students, their parents and teachers, and filmed. In small moments and in defiant acts, *School for Defectors* gives empathetic voice to an unseen generation.

93 MINS



The Siege of Paradise

Dir. Gar O'Rourke Ireland, Switzerland

Scoring a Special Jury Mention at Tribeca, this documentary turns its lens on overtourism in "the most beautiful place in the world".

On the Italian Riviera lies Cinque Terre, whose centuries-old villages and postcard-perfect beaches attract around four million holiday-makers – including countless social media influencers – annually. It's among the most photographed places in the world, but this fame also concerns the 4000 or so who call it home. Some have resigned themselves to this yearly influx that finances their region; others lament its toll on tradition. *Sanatorium* (MIFF 2025) director Gar O'Rourke returns with another elegant exploration of culture and place, this time exploring tourism as a double-edged sword. Grounded in compelling firsthand accounts, it's a robust, handsomely realised account of #travel's true cost.

82 MINS



To Hold a Mountain

Dir. Biljana Tutorov, Petar Glomazić Serbia, France, Montenegro, Slovenia

With poetic empathy, this Sundance Grand Jury Prize winner maps the love and determination that tie a Montenegrin shepherd to her land.

In Montenegro's starkly beautiful Sinjajevina alpine range, Mileva "Gara" Jovanović herds sheep, milks cows and raises adoring teenager Nada to be kind and resilient. Women here have endured generations of patriarchal violence, and Gara works hard to hold her precious space of care and community. As NATO forces plan to exploit these high rolling pastures for military training, she stands her ground, rallying her neighbours to repel repeated incursions into the land and life she holds dear. Building an emotional cartography all its own, *To Hold a Mountain* traces the contours of the pure bonds between people and place.

105 MINS



Tristan Forever

Dir. Tobias Nölle, Loran Bonnardot Switzerland

A burnt-out Parisian doctor travels to an ultra-remote South Atlantic isle in search of isolation, salvation and perhaps even love.

Tristan da Cunha is the most remote place of human habitation in the world. A volcanic speck in the South Atlantic, it's visited by only six to eight boats per year, and its 230-odd inhabitants are vastly outnumbered by penguins. Loran Bonnardot, a Parisian physician with a lifetime serving in Médecins Sans Frontières, has spent 30 years visiting Tristan; now, he's hoping to permanently relocate there to escape the hectic nature of 21st-century living. Blurring lines between ethnography, documentary and fantasy, this is a quiet, contemplative study of both the pleasures and the perils of isolation – the perfect film for anyone with a love of exploration or a desire to escape.

90 MINS

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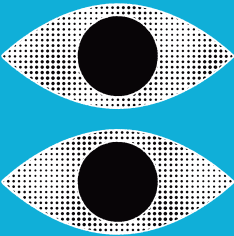




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The Last First: Winter K2

Dir. Amir Bar-Lev USA, UK

Hubris collides full-force with the limits of human endurance as competing teams aim to make history on the world's most dangerous mountain.

At the turn of 2021, 13 of the world's 14 highest mountains had been summited in winter. The exception? The second-tallest mountain on Earth, K2, a notoriously perilous Himalayan peak. In late 2020, Icelandic alpinist John Snorri Sigurjónsson and Pakistani father and son Ali and Sajid Sadpara are preparing their bids to enter the record books when they're joined by throngs of others vying to be the first, including Nepalese mountaineering rock star Nirmal Purja and commercial climbing tourists of varying experience. As ego and capitalism clash with ethics, physics and the indifference of howling winds and icy temperatures, the stage is set for an epic and catastrophic competition.

96 MINS



Sentient

Dir. Tony Jones Australia

Veteran Australian journalist Tony Jones explores the moral and clinical questions around why we still test on animals, and what it will take us to stop.

Dr Lisa Jones-Engel is a passionate primatologist who reflects, with a mix of sadness and horror, on her past work at the Laboratory for Experimental Medicine and Surgery in Primates – it was enough to turn her from animal tester to animal welfare advocate. Through the perspectives of frontline scientists discussing the fraught balance of human needs and animal rights, one compelling fact emerges: animal testing does psychological harm not just to its victims, but also to its human practitioners. Former Q&A host Tony Jones investigates this secretive world responsible for so much suffering – but also for saving countless lives. *Sentient* is vital viewing that's bound to spark debate.

90 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Sukundimi Walks Before Me

Dir. Matasila Freshwater, Lachlan McLeod Australia

Papuan Indigenous communities mobilise to fight a planned mine on the sacred Sepik River in this stirring portrait of ecoactivism.

When an Australian conglomerate announces plans to build a huge copper/gold mine and toxic-waste dam on Papua New Guinea's Sepik River, local communities fear ecological degradation. The "Amazon of the Asia Pacific" snakes for over 1100 kilometres through virgin rainforest, and is one of the few remaining large rivers in the world whose water remains drinkable. It's also home to tens of thousands who've lived alongside it for millennia, drawing on it for sustenance and spiritual lore. Led by the charismatic Emmanuel Peni, these communities come together to fight the forces of old colonial power structures, extractive economic practices, multinational lobbying and the supposed inevitability of 'progress'.

93 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Super Nature

Dir. Ed Sayers UK

PRESENTED BY
kowtow

Super-8 images of nature offer a stunningly impressionistic, hopeful vision of our footprint upon the world.

Forget ultra-high-definition cameras, macro imagery and drone shots. Compiled exclusively from new super-8 footage shot on vintage cameras in 25 countries across five continents, Ed Sayers's documentary offers an unexpectedly rich, gloriously lo-fi view of the world, captured by 40 local volunteer cinematographers who filmed whatever caught their eye, providing commentary as they saw fit. From Welsh puffins and Patagonian whales to Italian mountain ranges and Indigenous Brazilian communities, *Super Nature* is a global love letter to nature, written in all the textures of the human heart, that reconnects us to our world through the nostalgic intimacy and vibrant immediacy of its format.

82 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



The Tale of Silyan

Dir. Tamara Kotevska North Macedonia, USA

Man meets stork in this heartwarming depiction of rehabilitation from one of the filmmakers behind the Oscar-nominated *Honeyland*.

Nikola Conev, born into a long lineage of farmers in North Macedonia, is struggling. Harsh economic conditions, the collapse of local markets and the decline of rural living have gripped his local community. His wife, children and grandchildren have all left the country for greater opportunities. At a loss, and filled with loneliness, he brings home a white stork with a broken wing. As he nurses it back to health, Conev experiences his own sense of healing. Premiering at Venice and winning Best Feature Documentary at the International Documentary Association Awards, *The Tale of Silyan* is a unique modern-day folktale filled with spectacular cinematography.

81 MINS MIFF REGIONAL



Nuisance Bear

Dir. Gabriela Osio Vanden, Jack Weisman USA, UK, Canada

In this acclaimed documentary, animals and humans collide in the world's "Polar Bear Capital".

Welcome to the snowy Canadian outpost of Churchill, Manitoba. Driven towards urban developments by changing climate and the increasing encroachment of 'civilisation' into wilderness, polar bears arrive as both dangerous predators and photo-op fodder for tourists. As the animals forage for food and scrap for survival, indifferent to the circus that surrounds them, locals debate whether to welcome them, drive them away peacefully or follow a more traditional mode of coexistence informed by Indigenous practices. Blessed with stunning photography of bear and landscape, this tragicomic portrait of one of the animal realm's most regal creatures won the U.S. Documentary Grand Jury Prize at Sundance.

86 MINS



Phenomena

Dir. Josef Gatti Australia

Chemistry experiments produce dazzlingly psychedelic results in this spectacular, scientifically illuminating Australian debut.

When thinking about the world's natural wonders, it's likely the big stuff – the mountains, the canyons, the oceans – that first spring to mind. But what about those things you *can't* see, such as light, gravity and quantum energy? Using a high-powered camera and absolutely no AI, Melbourne-based filmmaker Josef Gatti makes brilliantly manifest those intangible building blocks of our universe. Across 10 chapters, kaleidoscopic Petri dish displays are augmented by tracks from Nils Frahm and British electronic musician Rival Consoles. Gatti's narration offers a mind-blowing journey into the hidden world around us. This is the high school science lesson you've always wished you had.

86 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST MIFF REGIONAL



Time and Water

Dir. Sara Dosa Iceland, USA

Iceland's glaciers, now imperilled, loom over a personal journey through generations.

The first Icelandic glacier was declared lost to climate change in 2019; recent studies project that, in 200 years, the country will be entirely ice-free. For celebrated author Andri Snær Magnason, the layers of history melting along with the ice have a personal connection: in the 1950s, his grandparents were among the first to explore Iceland's glaciers, capturing their splendour in incredible colour footage that we see alongside Magnason's own home movies. Infusing chilly facts with a lyrical sensibility, this awe-inspiring documentary from the director of *Fire of Love* (MIFF 2022) brings big environmental questions into focus in a moving meditation on what once was, and what has already vanished.

92 MINS MIFF REGIONAL



Whispers in the Woods

Dir. Vincent Munier France

This César Best Documentary-winning French box-office smash is a stunning visual and aural immersion into the misty Vosges mountains.

Three generations of nature lovers set out to find the western capercaillie amid the densely wooded and visually spectacular Vosges, a French mountain range close to the German border. Award-winning wildlife photographer and filmmaker Vincent Munier joins his 12-year-old son and his father, environmentalist Michel Munier, on a journey through the forest in search of the endangered bird, his camera capturing bears, deer, owls and more in all their visual and sonic glory. Munier's images are extraordinary, combining with the sound design to highlight the unique aural vibrations of these woods – all underscored by Warren Ellis, Dom La Nena and Rosemary Standley's score.

93 MINS

Music on Film

What's more Melbourne than music on film? A perennial festival highlight, this strand turns up the volume with cinematic explorations of sound, performance and the stories behind the music.

miff.com.au/music-on-film

PRESENTED BY



Broken English

Dir. Iain Forsyth, Jane Pollard UK

From chart-topper to tabloid fodder and back again, legendary British rock balladeer Marianne Faithfull reflects candidly on her storied past.

Plucked from obscurity at the age of 17, Marianne Faithfull had a monumental career punctuated by both high-profile love affairs and highly publicised struggles. But, for all its wealth of archival materials, *Broken English* is no conventional rock doc. Here, she is interviewed by a record keeper (George MacKay) at the fictional Ministry of Not Forgetting, overseen by Tilda Swinton. This inventive portrait of a legendary singer/songwriter is suffused with a particular pathos: Faithfull died in January 2025 while the film was still in production, making the rendition we see of her track 'Misunderstanding' – accompanied by Nick Cave and Warren Ellis – her final recorded performance.

99 MINS **MIFF REGIONAL**



Summer Tour

Dir. Mischa Richter USA

Head out on the road with the true believers who follow a Grateful Dead revival act around the US.

Jerry and Annie are young and in love – with each other, and with the music of the Grateful Dead. Setting out to catch every show on successor band Dead & Company's farewell tour in 2023, they journey across the United States and deep into the heart of Deadhead fandom. Mischa Richter's "love letter" to this communal roadshow is a deeply personal doc from a committed Dead devotee – as are two of the film's producers, Chloë Sevigny and Emily Mortimer. Filmed on 16mm and from deep within the community of fans, *Summer Tour* isn't about the band – who are never seen performing – but about those who follow them. Richter's warm-hearted hymn to hippie culture doubles as an exploration of how people find meaning, and belonging, in art.

80 MINS



Everybody Digs Bill Evans

Dir. Grant Gee Ireland, UK

This Silver Bear–winning ensemble piece plays on the emotions of the people surrounding an anguished US jazz piano icon.

June 1961: the Bill Evans Trio have just live-recorded a New York residency that will spawn two celebrated jazz albums. Ten days later, a car crash kills bassist Scott LaFaro at just 25. Devastated, Bill stays with his brother Harry, shoots heroin and journeys silently, scarily inwards. British documentarian Grant Gee won the Berlinale's Silver Bear for Best Director with this fiction debut, which seeks its lost subject in negative space, emulating his subtle style. Playing both Evans and his compositions, Anders Danielsen Lie (*The Worst Person in the World*, MIFF 2021) is magnetically quiet, while Bill Pullman and Laurie Metcalf are in career-best form as Evans's parents.

102 MINS



Tina Arena: Unravel Me

Dir. Adrian Russell Wills Australia

Follow the threads of this Melbourne-born Oz-music treasure's story, in her own words.

Tina Arena has been in the music business for 50 years; after 25 albums, she's had enough eras to make other pop stars envious. Born in suburban Melbourne to Sicilian parents, Filippina Arena became Australia's darling in 1976, aged eight, on variety show *Young Talent Time*. She went on to score a soaring run of 90s hits, but self-doubt, misogyny and tall-poppy syndrome drove her to reinvent herself repeatedly in the UK and France. This world-premiering documentary unravels her vulnerable yet tenacious private self in candid, dryly funny conversation. Also appearing in new and archival interviews are collaborators and admirers including Céline Dion, Lionel Richie, Katy Perry, Marc Anthony and Ronan Keating.

90 MINS **FESTIVAL GUEST** **MIFF REGIONAL**



Jebediah: Are We OK?

Dir. Arlo Dean Cook Australia

Take a 30-year journey with the beloved Australian alternative rock band, from humble beginnings to the harder aspects of growing up.

Perth alt rockers Jebediah were a breed apart in the halcyon days of the late-90s and early-2000s Australian indie music scene. Commanding national attention on triple j and soon channelling the cred of multiple studio albums into their own record label, Jebediah seemed like quintessential industry survivors. But as the band entered its third decade, the freewheeling lifestyle of their youth had begun to cast a shadow. Built from a wealth of archival and home-movie footage as well as firsthand perspectives from local music icons such as Tim Rogers, Phil Jamieson and Janet English, this MIFF Premiere Fund–supported documentary is a candid cautionary tale about the price of fame.

89 MINS **MIFF PREMIERE FUND** **FESTIVAL GUEST** **MIFF REGIONAL**



Newport & the Great Folk Dream

Dir. Robert Gordon USA

In 1965, Bob Dylan took the stage at the Newport Folk Festival and changed music forever ... or so the story goes.

There are many interpretations of the heckling at the Newport Folk Festival that accompanied Bob Dylan plugging in for the first time, but one thing remains clear: it represented a key turning point in the history of American music. Mining the archives of previously unseen footage shot by Murray Lerner for his 1967 Oscar-nominated documentary *Festival*, director Robert Gordon has assembled an ecstatic account of the countercultural event in its formative years. Featuring performances from Johnny Cash, Joan Baez, John Lee Hooker, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Buffy Sainte-Marie and many others, this is an extraordinarily raw and energising music documentary.

99 MINS



The Way We Move

Dir. Vanessa Dumont, Nicolas Davenel France, USA

A trailblazing ASL interpreter trains fast-fingered protégés to embody live acoustics in this paean to the Deaf community's bond with music.

Amber Galloway specialises in live American Sign Language interpretation for music festivals and concerts. She captures complex instrumentation and wordplay with her whole body, using facial expressions to evoke tones and moods. Now, this accessibility trailblazer is training new ASL music interpreters, including young Puerto Rican father Julian Ortiz and AV Vilavong, a queer Laotian from Oakland. Can they master this complex skill in time for the Austin City Limits Music Festival? As the students wrestle with live interpreting's complex cognitive demands and poetic creative choices, Galloway and her protégés' identities help them express music's life-affirming power.

94 MINS



The Best Summer

Dir. Tamra Davis Australia, Indonesia, USA

Beastie Boys, Sonic Youth, Foo Fighters, Bikini Kill, Pavement and more, all at one fateful Aussie music festival. Get in line – we're heading to 1995.

December 1995: riding high on her hit comedy *Billy Madison*, Tamra Davis brought her Sony Hi8 camcorder to Australia on tour with her new husband, Mike D of the Beastie Boys. At upstart festival Summersault, Davis recorded electric live sets from the Beasties and pals Pavement, Sonic Youth, Foo Fighters and more. Thirty years later, Davis found a shoebox of old 8mm videotapes while evacuating her home during the Los Angeles Palisades wildfire. This precious time capsule – a last hurrah of scrappy underground camaraderie before landmark albums and arena superstardom – formed the basis for this wistful feature-length window into another era.

84 MINS **FESTIVAL GUEST**



Summer 2000: The X-Cetra Story

Dir. Ayden Mayeri USA

The true story of how an album by four tween girls became an accidental alt-music sensation.

In the first summer of the new millennium, with girl pop dominating the charts, 11-year-old Ayden moved to Santa Rosa; met Jessica, Janet and Janet's sister Mary; and started a band. Calling themselves X-Cetra, they recorded eight songs; but the final album was a disappointment, sounding more like a creepy, haunted version of *Pure Moods* than the slick pop they'd imagined. When summer ended, so did X-Cetra. Two decades later, the quartet were astonished to find that their childhood experiment had developed a fan base. This SXSW Grand Jury Award winner is an unexpectedly honest, introspective tale about four women reconnecting with fearless creativity and reckoning with their most authentic selves.

96 MINS



We Are The Shaggs

Dir. Ken Kwapis USA

Forced to form a band by their dad, ordinary teen girls became icons of outsider art.

Austin Wiggin's mother had prophesied his daughters would become a famous band – so, in 1965, he pulled Dot, Helen and Betty out of school; handed them instruments they couldn't play; and named them The Shaggs. For years, they endured weekly heckling at local gigs before recording an album, 1969's *Philosophy of the World*. When Austin died in 1975, the sisters could finally live regular lives ... until the 90s, when they learned The Shaggs had become a cult band, whose tastemaker fans included Frank Zappa, Patti Smith and Kurt Cobain. Veteran comedy director Ken Kwapis's film explores the strangeness of the sisters' wildly out-of-tune guitars, eccentric rhythms and unorthodox chords, tracing their path from "the worst band ever" to outsider-music stars.

100 MINS

MIFF Schools

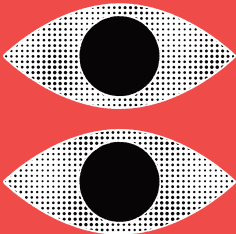
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Foster critical thinking and discussion with MIFF’s dedicated program for curious learners.

Also screening in the MIFF Schools program:

Guided by Horses (see p. 14)
Phenomena (see p. 37)

miff.com.au/schools



Mary Anning

Dir. Marcel Barelli Switzerland, Belgium

The story of a pioneering female palaeontologist, whose discoveries – at just 12 years of age – changed our understanding of prehistory.

Pre-teen Mary Anning loves nothing more than scouring the local seaside cliffs on fossil-finding expeditions with her father. When he dies suddenly, it seems like her dinosaur-hunting career is over. But he leaves behind a mysterious drawing that might change her fortunes ... and, in so doing, change the world. Inspired by the true story of the groundbreaking fossil collector of the same name, Marcel Barelli’s debut feature is built on a bedrock of enchanting handcrafted 2D animation. Exploring a key moment in Anning’s childhood – the discovery of the world’s first complete ichthyosaur skeleton – *Mary Anning* is a big-hearted tale of friendship and adventure.

72 MINS [MIFF ONLINE](#)



Sad Girlz

Dir. Fernanda Tovar Mexico

This delicate, sunlit, Berlinale award-winning drama follows two teenage girls forced to navigate the fallout from a traumatic experience.

Best friends Paula and La Maestra are training to represent Mexico at an important swimming event. One night at a party, Paula’s crush Daniel follows her into the bathroom. Over the days that follow, La Maestra notices Paula becoming increasingly distant, and the two friends consult ChatGPT and a tarot deck for answers as they try to process what happened to her. In confronting the emotions and decisions that follow, the girls’ once-inseparable bond faces a grave test. Fernanda Tovar has crafted a perceptive, nuanced portrait of female teenage friendship and a story that, in exploring the aftermath of sexual assault, is as accessible as it is compassionate.

90 MINS



Chimney Town: Frozen in Time

Dir. Yusuke Hirota Japan

This thoughtful, visually vivid sequel to anime mega-hit *Poupelle of Chimney Town* is an epic adventure about the power of belief.

Though now hailed as the hero of Chimney Town, Lubicchi is struggling to move on after the departure of Poupelle, his magical friend made of garbage. When an accident transports him to a mythical world populated by talking animals and impish spirits, he is told he can only return home if he can restart the land’s giant clock, which has been frozen at 11.59 for decades. With the help of a large white cat with attitude, Lubicchi discovers that a clockmaker and a plant spirit in human form are two figures who hold the key to his quest. A family adventure dealing with big themes like grief and coming of age, this fantastical, psychedelic sequel constructs a visual world reminiscent of Hayao Miyazaki’s *Spirited Away*.

98 MINS



Tomorrow I’ll Be Brave

Dir. Bernd Sahling Germany

The anxieties and heart-fluttering feelings of first love are given tender, respectful treatment in this charming coming-of-age tale.

Karl is 12, short, insecure and in love. Does the much taller, literally out-of-reach Lea like him back? If so, how can he tell? And how will he deal with all the feelings that come with a crush in the meantime? An opportunity to understand arrives when a teacher encourages Karl and his friends to make a short film interviewing people about their first loves. While working on this project, Karl channels his longing into his own creative pursuits in the hope of impressing Lea. A sweet take on a familiar summertime-coming-of-age narrative, this special film dares to regard the normal, everyday emotions of adolescents as meaningful and worthy of exploration.

80 MINS [MIFF ONLINE](#)



Hold Onto Me

Dir. Myrsini Aristidou Cyprus

A young girl connects with her miscreant father in this beautifully photographed, emotionally deft, Sundance award-winning debut.

Over a never-ending Cypriot summer, mischievous 11-year-old Iris has all the freedom she could want. With a mother who’s always working and an older brother who has a brand-new girlfriend, she’s left to her own devices, and takes the opportunity to run wild. When Iris ends up in a police station, the only one to bail her out is her estranged father Aris, unexpectedly back in town and in her life. These two misfits soon find that they’re a lot alike, striking a deal to work – or, more specifically, hustle – together. With echoes of recent MIFF favourites *Aftersun* (MIFF 2022) and *Scraper* (MIFF 2023), Myrsini Aristidou’s impressive debut is a poignant study of two charismatic, complicated characters.

102 MINS [MIFF ONLINE](#)



Whispers in May

Dir. Dongnan Chen Hong Kong, Netherlands, Sweden, South Korea

This impressionistic hybrid documentary follows a teenage girl on a quest to find a ceremonial skirt.

Fourteen-year-old Qihuo has just had her first period. In her Nuosu community in China’s remote, mountainous Liangshan prefecture, this milestone signals that she is ready to work in the factories – and, even, for arranged marriage. Tradition also calls for a “skirt-changing” ceremony, in which garments signifying childhood are replaced. Qihuo shares her secret with her two best friends; together, the girls set out across the mountains to find her a new skirt. *Whispers in May* is a poignant documentary that could easily be mistaken for a fictional work, allowing us to witness a precious and fleeting moment of these girls’ lives between childhood and adulthood, between freedom and responsibility.

95 MINS

Family Films

Stories that spark laughter, joy and wonder for kids, teens and anyone who loves an adventure.

miff.com.au/family-films



Forgotten Island

Dir. Joel Crawford, Januel Mercado USA

H.E.R., Liza Soberano, Manny Jacinto and Lea Salonga lend their voices to this fantastical tale of friendship, fearlessness and Filipino culture.

Best friends Jo and Raissa have just graduated from high school. They vow to remain close forever, even though Raissa’s about to move to the US for university. On their last night together, the girls accidentally open a portal to Nakali, a mysterious island populated by *aswangs*. The longer you stay in Nakali, the more your memories fade; so they must figure out how to get back home, fast. From DreamWorks – the studio behind *Shrek* and *How to Train Your Dragon* – and Oscar-nominated directors Joel Crawford and Januel Mercado comes the Australian premiere of an immersive, exciting adventure that boasts a voice cast of Filipino A-listers as well as fellow stars Dave Franco, Jenny Slate and Ronny Chieng.

98 MINS



Coyote vs. ACME

Dir. Dave Green USA

Wile E. Coyote sues the company responsible for his shoddy tools in this legal comedy that’s dynamite ... in every sense of the word.

For decades, pure-hearted predator Wile E. Coyote has suffered the slings and anvils of outrageous fortune: every gimmicky mail-order product he bought from the ACME Corporation has failed grievously instead of helping him catch the infuriatingly swift Road Runner. Now he’s suing the profit-obsessed ‘everything store’. But can his small-time lawyer Kevin (Will Forte) and Kevin’s plucky niece Paige (Lana Condor) win against Buddy Crane (John Cena), ACME’s slick corporate counsel? Don’t miss the Australian premiere of this legendary Looney Tunes reunion – a warm-hearted underdog comedy that blends live action with classic 2D animation in the spirit of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*

98 MINS [FESTIVAL GUEST](#)

Night Shift

See what’s crawling on screen after dark. Night Shift is for genre lovers and night owls drawn to midnight movies, cult curiosities and horror oddities.

miff.com.au/night-shift



Ghost in the Cell
Dir. Joko Anwar Indonesia

When a vengeful ghost starts mutilating the inmates of one of Indonesia's toughest prisons, the men must work together to stay alive.

The newest inmate to join cell block C of Labuan Angsana prison is Dimas, a weedy journalist doing time for the brutal murder of his editor. Suspiciously soon after Dimas's arrival, prisoners start getting picked off, their bodies found gruesomely maimed and arranged into macabre sculptures that would make Hannibal Lecter proud. The prisoners panic, pointing the finger at Dimas, but one clairvoyant inmate is adamant that there's a sinister supernatural entity behind the killings. Smuggled in between the film's visually imaginative gore and twisted sense of humour is an astute commentary on systemic inequality and corruption, using the prison setting as a microcosm of society.

106 MINS



Of Womb
Dir. Peter Firebrace Australia

After their religious matriarch's death, three sisters gestate dark ecstasies of faith and folk horror.

Three young women have been raised in innocence on a remote, dilapidated homestead, alone with their bedbound, intensely religious mother. Fuelled by a heady brew of existential terror, dogmatic belief and desire to dominate, The Eldest decides to hide Mother's death from her siblings, telling them the Devil is lurking behind her closed bedroom door as sound and stench, ready to repay their curiosity with a terrible sickness. Invented sacraments begin playfully but soon plunge the trio into a claustrophobic shared delirium. Belying its micro-budget, this visually stunning psychological fever dream thrums with the ritual gestures of *Dogtooth* and *The Witch* and evokes the landscape-horror tradition of *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.

90 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Imposters
Dir. Caleb J. Phillips USA

When a lost little boy is found, his father is sceptical that it's really him.

New York cop Paul and his wife Marie move to a quiet suburb in the hope of reviving their failing marriage. But after their baby, Theo, vanishes mysteriously at his own first birthday party, an odd neighbour – who seems somehow connected to their house – tells the distraught parents about a cave that can “give back things you have lost”. Venturing into the darkness, Marie re-emerges with Theo, having lost all memory of what happened inside the cave. Paul begins to suspect that whatever she's brought back, it isn't their son. Caleb J. Phillips's feature debut offers a surprisingly speculative twist on a horror trope you thought you knew, while Jessica Rothe stuns in a wrenching, primal performance as the increasingly erratic Marie.

102 MINS



Our Effed Up World
Dir. Alice Maio Mackay Australia

To save Earth from an insatiable alien, a slacker will need her dad and her effing loyal mates, who make a crap planet worth fighting for.

Sheri hasn't been okay since her beloved grandma died. She's over her annoying boyfriend, and resents her astronomer dad Hank (Scott Major, *Neighbours*) for avoidantly watching the skies. When a glowing green meteorite crash-lands near their small town and its passenger starts melding gruesomely with locals, humanity's last hope is Sheri, her dad and her Scooby Gang of mates: Poppy, Ash and Finn, whose run-down video store has become the alien's lair. Prolific Aussie queer-horror phenom Alice Maio Mackay merges retro schlock and teen-culture cool in this low-budget big-screen adventure produced by Jane Schoenbrun (*I Saw the TV Glow*, MIFF 2024).

67 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Body Blow
Dir. Dean Francis Australia

A disgraced, sex-addicted cop is thrust into Sydney's crime-ridden gay district in this neon-soaked queer erotic thriller.

Battling both sex addiction and sexual misconduct allegations, undercover cop Aiden is reassigned to an inner-city precinct among Sydney's nightclubs, bathhouses and drag venues. While investigating, he hooks up with hot bartender and sex worker Cody – an encounter that also gets him embroiled in the machinations of drag mob boss Fat Frankie. Caught up in drug deals, shootouts, a deadly heist and more, Aiden must find a way out before he loses himself in this sinister web. Set mostly around Oxford Street, *Body Blow* is a stunning lovechild of classic film noir and 1990s erotic thrillers, infusing its tale of (anti)heroism and redemption with a playful critique of hyper-masculinity.

99 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Mārama
Dir. Taratoa Stappard New Zealand, UK

This distinctly Māori Gothic horror tells a terrifying tale of dark family secrets and one woman's wrath in the face of colonial violence.

In 1859, Māori teacher Mary Stevens receives a letter summoning her from Aotearoa to North Yorkshire with the promise of revelations about her family history. Upon her arrival, lord of the local manor Nathaniel Cole offers Mary board and work as a governess for his niece. Nathaniel proudly shows off his collection of Māori artefacts and fluency in te reo Māori; he claims to have a deep affection for Mary's culture and people. But the longer Mary stays in the windswept manor, the more she senses someone – or something – in the house is trying to communicate a grave warning. This chilling ghost story takes the tropes of classic Victorian Gothic horror and redeploys them through a uniquely Māori lens.

89 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST MIFF REGIONAL



Species
Dir. Marion Le Corroller France

A stressed-out young doctor suspects hostile jobs are doing something gnarly to her generation. Turns out work doesn't just suck – it mutates.

Margot has worked hard to land her first job as a doctor in France's most prestigious emergency department. But Charles Boyau Hospital is a brutal pressure cooker, leaving Margot so stressed that she's *literally* sweating blood. She recalls treating similar unexplained symptoms in patients her own age: young professionals in French workplaces are brutally lashing out, seeming somehow to be ... changing. Is this extreme burnout, a novel virus or a transformative environmental adaptation? *Species* delivers its critique of 'rise-and-grind' productivity culture with an axe, not a scalpel: every frame is a gonzo frenzy, set to a pulsating electronic score.

103 MINS



Corpus
Dir. Corrin Evans USA

Lured to a mansion in the woods of upstate New York, party-loving bros find a threesome of witchy femmes who are down for darker carnal pursuits.

In the sultry New York summer of 1998, night-life photographer and small-time drug dealer Sayo (Jeff Wahlberg) reluctantly accepts a party invitation from rising movie star Vince (Brodie Townsend), his long-time friend for whom he has complicated feelings. They and boisterous club buddy Ross head upstate to an isolated mansion estate, ready to get rowdy. Instead, they find Billie, Wren and Cata – three mysterious women whose disturbing agenda draws them into a dark web of seduction and terror. Steaming into MIFF from its premiere at Montreal's Fantasia International Film Festival, *Corpus* announces first-time feature director Corrin Evans as an exciting new voice in genre film.

102 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Mum, I'm Alien Pregnant
Dir. THUNDERLIPS New Zealand

A twentysomething homebody is stuck carrying more than she bargained for in this gleefully gloopy Kiwi body-horror comedy.

After an unusual erotic encounter with a neighbour in the laundry room of their apartment building, Mary finds herself unexpectedly knocked up. Worse, Mary's unborn offspring is a rapidly gestating alien foetus. An underachieving millennial who still lives with her oversharing single mother, Mary must now navigate dismissive doctors, a useless parenting partner and a whole host of discombobulating side effects if she is to reclaim autonomy over her body and her life. Directors Sean Wallace and Jordan Mark Windsor – aka THUNDERLIPS – bring an unmistakably Kiwi self-deprecating humour to this outrageous comedy positively dripping in extraterrestrial bodily fluids.

95 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST MIFF REGIONAL



Victorian Psycho
Dir. Zachary Wigon USA

Scream queen Maika Monroe plays an unhinged governess terrorising a posh 19th-century family.

In 1858, Winifred Notty arrives on the Gothic doorstep of Ensor House, a mansion on the Yorkshire moors. Wealthy John and Emily Pounds hire the well-spoken but odd woman as a governess for their young son and daughter. Courtesy of an inner demon she calls “Fred”, the impulsive carnage that's always followed in Winifred's wake doesn't take long to pop up gruesomely again. Given the Poundses' own depraved lineage, has Winifred finally found her people? In this gory Gothic romp that's *Wuthering Heights* slash *Jane Eyre* slash *American Psycho*, Maika Monroe demolishes her final-girl persona and exploits eat-the-rich sentiments as gleeful sociopath Winifred, aided by Ruth Wilson and Jason Isaacs as her loathsome employers.

90 MINS

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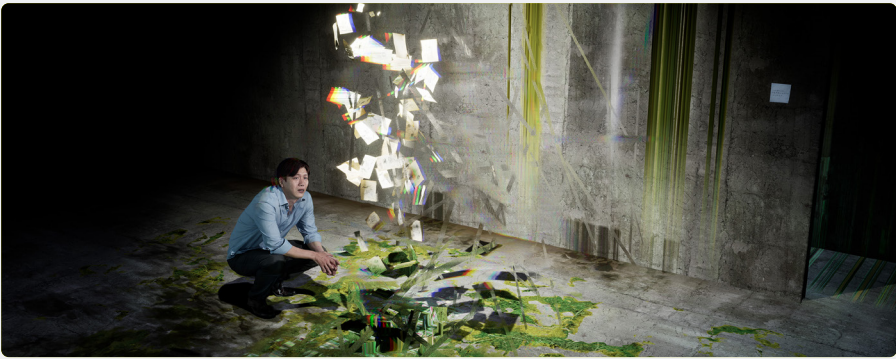
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NOW OR NEVER
The Clouds Are Two Thousand Meters Up
Dir. Singing Chen Taiwan, Germany

Venture to the cutting edge of XR in this reality-bending pilgrimage between digital worlds and a living forest.
A big screen overlooking an intersection broadcasts the news of a train accident, alerting Guan to the death of his wife. Discovering in the aftermath of this tragedy

that she was working on a novel, Guan is inspired to follow its narrative, charting a path that shifts masterfully between the digital realm of her cloud storage and the fantasy-tinged real-life forest where the book is set, home to Taiwan's Indigenous Rukai people. Singing Chen's staggering work – the winner of the Venice Immersive Grand Prize – poignantly expands on the theme of memory the artist explored in *Afterimage for Tomorrow* (MIFF 2019) while taking the medium of extended reality to new technological heights. Rather than adopting a first-person perspective, the user figures as Guan's shadow: a ghostly presence moving freely through an eight-square-metre space.
62 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Firestorm
Dir. Dennis Del Favero Australia

World-premiering at MIFF, this generative-AI cinematic work explores the future of wildfires.
As the world faces a probable super El Niño event in 2026–2027, picturing these unprecedented fires defies imagination. Using the latest scientific data, a custom machine-learning model and the Unreal Engine 3D-creation platform, *Firestorm* allows you to visualise historical Australian bushfires and then interactively adjust weather conditions to see how they would dramatically change under escalating global warming scenarios. Presented at the VCA in a world-first conversion of an LED volume into a stereoscopic cinema, *Firestorm* fully immerses you in a panoramic fire landscape, allowing you to viscerally experience the look and feel of these possible futures firsthand.
30 MINS



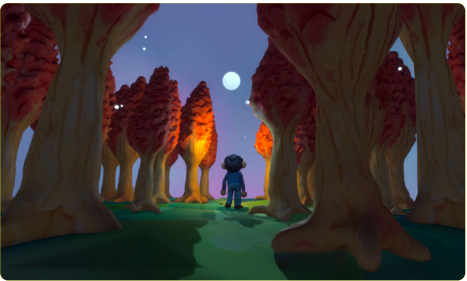
The Dollhouse
Dir. Charlotte Bruneau, Dominic Desjardins Luxembourg, Canada

When you invite someone into your home, how do you treat them? Play along with little Juniper and help her learn the kindness her family lacks.
In the handmade paper diorama of her dollhouse, nine-year-old Juniper untangles her feelings of guilt about how her family treated Magnolia, a refugee who worked as a cleaner in their house. Re-enacting troubled memories with her dolls, Juniper finds the courage to disagree with her parents and follow her heart. Using childlike textures inspired by puppetry, this animated interactive XR work explores how power dynamics arise intimately in our homes, passing between generations. Audiences at Cannes, Annecy, BFI London Film Festival and SXSW have already discovered it's never too late to be kind – can you help Juniper figure out how?
25 MINS



The Awake
Dir. Hsieh Hsiao-Ting, Hsieh Hsiao-Wei Taiwan

Be immersed in a dance-driven journey into the inner world of ALS patients, whose frozen bodies conceal minds and souls burning with resilience.
Vision becomes the primary anchor to reality for patients in the later stages of motor neurone disease – also known as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS. Twin interdisciplinary choreographers Hsieh Hsiao-Ting and Hsieh Hsiao-Wei invite you, too, to watch without moving. Poetic dance evokes ALS patients' heightened consciousness as everyday objects dissolve under the weight of illness: a wheelchair, drifting curtains, a dining table, a fish in its bowl. Winner of the XR Competition's Humanity Award at NewImages in Paris, this meditative work entwines the sensory and virtual to express something hidden but intensely human.
27 MINS



Sense of Nowhere
Dir. Hsin Hsuan Yeh Taiwan, Belgium, Finland, Portugal, France

Where do we go when we zone out, and how do we return to reality? Zone in – your own way – through a mindful flow of sonic textures and visual motifs.
When we let our minds drift, where are we wandering? Find out by taking a richly interior journey from 'no-where' to 'now-here', inspired by Taoism's enigmatic 'way', Buddhism's projection of illusion and Carl Jung's meditative process of active imagination. Fragmented mixed-media stop motion guides your attention from absence to presence, like the palms of hands slowly opening and closing. Everyone takes something different from this intriguing, associative work, and that's the quiet beauty of thought itself. Explore your own subconscious and find your way refreshingly back to the present moment.
30 MINS

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Artwork image: Simone Slee, *Rocks happy to help, hold up, hold down*, 2017. detail. Digital video. Time-based Work, Duration: 124:15 mins. Artbank collection.

MIFF Shorts

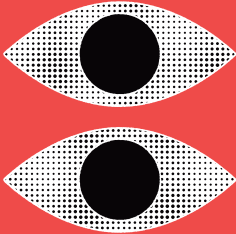
MIFF’s much-loved Shorts program returns with a vital selection of films from Australia and around the world, including exciting new fiction, documentary, animation and experimental works, plus director retrospectives and a 3D extravaganza you won’t want to miss.

miff.com.au/miff-shorts

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An Fylmow Berr | The Shorts of Mark Jenkin

A retrospective dedicated to the mysterious world of the singular Cornish filmmaker.

Join us for a haunting head trip in which ghostly dogs, grizzled fishermen and desolate coastlines commune on the *Rose of Nevada* auteur’s spellbinding super-8 stock.

Films in this package: *A Dog Called Discord* (2023), *Dear Marianne* (2016), *The Essential Cornishman* (2016), *Vertical Shapes in a Horizontal Landscape* (2018), *David Bowie Is Dead* (2018), *The Road to Zennor* (2017), *29 Hour Long Birthday* (2022) and *I Saw the Face of God in the Jet Wash* (2025).

82 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Cinema of Spectacle: Experimental Visions

Singular visions through the looking glasses.

Strap on your 3D goggles and take a voyage through contemporary cinema’s most thrilling stereoscopic work, while MIFF favourite Johann Lurf joins us in person for a conversation on the artistic possibilities of the form.

Films in this package: *Au hasard* (dir. Darren Dominique Heroux), *Infernal Combustion* (dir. Peter Rose), *FELT* (dir. Blake Williams), *toward a fundamental theory of physics* (dir. Victor Van Rossem), *A to A* (dir. Johann Lurf), *Embargo* (dir. Johann Lurf), *Twelve Tales Told* (dir. Johann Lurf) and *Revolving Rounds* (dir. Johann Lurf, Christina Jauernik).

73 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Australian Shorts

New work from electrifying local filmmakers.

This taste of the finest in short-form Australian filmmaking includes a polyamorous screwball comedy, a haunting look at colonial violence and a man’s obsession with a mind-controlling worm in the family backyard.

Films in this package: *Souvenir* (dir. Renée Marie Petropoulos), *Her Silence* (dir. Lionel Seah), *Man Wearing a Helmet* (dir. Keinan William McGillivray Pethybridge), *Spiders on My Lashline* (dir. Grace Tan), *Soft Gaze* (dir. Melissa Anastasi), *Despite the Night* (dir. Jack Zimmerman, Archie Hancock), *Twosome* (dir. April-Rose Desalegn) and *The Worm* (dir. Tom Noakes).

104 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST MIFF ONLINE



Animation Shorts

Explode the boundaries of cinematic imagination.

A dazzling suite of animated shorts: from expressionist, oil-painted visuals to charming felt characters.

Films in this package: *Daughters of the Late Colonel* (dir. Elizabeth Hobbs), *Our Choir Has Always Been Travelling* (dir. Judith Pungarta Inkamala, Marjorie “Nunga” Williams, Nelson Armstrong), *Hold It Together* (dir. Fan Sissoko), *My Good Boy* (dir. Sara Priorelli), *Boundaries* (dir. Seun Yee), *Please* (dir. Anna Mantzaris), *Balconada* (dir. Iva Tokmakchieva), *Paper Trail* (dir. Don Hertzfeldt), *Once in a Body* (dir. María Cristina Pérez González) and *The End* (dir. Niki Lindroth Von Bahr).

105 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Experimental Shorts

Visionary works from cinema’s avant-garde.

A reimagining of *The Decameron* that flips Western perspectives, an ecstatic vision of the body and more.

Films in this package: *Lost in the Water* (dir. Allison Chhorn), *Land of Barbar* (dir. Fredj Moussa), *Body, remember...* (dir. Matthew Berka), *Swing Swish Sway* (dir. TT Takemoto), *By the Faith of José Gerónimo* (dir. Juliano Kunert), *Time Life Volume 9. Life Model* (dir. Mungo Thomson), *Rojo Žalia Blau* (dir. Viktoria Schmid), *As Told by a Corpse* (dir. Yace Sula), *Daria’s Night Flowers* (dir. Maryam Tafakory) and *Acetone Reality* (dir. Sara Magenheimer, Michael Bell-Smith).

110 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



WTF Shorts

Films for freakmaxxers, fetishists and other fans of flickering filth.

What do you get when you combine films about a lonely woman’s torrid affair with a severed finger, a dying man who visits a sex worker in search of a graphic birth in reverse and a vicious predator who’s part woman, part insect and all mother? MIFF’s *WTF Shorts*, of course.

Films in this package: *Everything You Own* (dir. Raghav Rampal), *Fingerbang* (dir. Yeonwoo Kim), *A Shot at Art* (dir. Ilke Paddenburg), *Man Eating Pussy* (dir. Emily Lawson), *Praying Mantis* (dir. Joe Hsieh) and *iPIKA!* (dir. Alex Fischman Cárdenas).

95 MINS

MIFF SHORTS AWARDS 2026

PRESENTED BY



OFFICIAL BEAUTY PARTNER

MIFF hosts one of the most highly regarded short-film competitions in the Southern Hemisphere, with \$50,000 in prize money. The MIFF Shorts Awards are Academy Awards-accredited and BAFTA-qualifying.

City of Melbourne Grand Prix for Best Short Film

VicScreen Erwin Rado Award for Best Australian Short Film

Armani Beauty Talent of Tomorrow Award

Award for Best Fiction Short Film

Award for Best Documentary Short Film

Award for Best Animation Short Film

Award for Best Experimental Short Film



Accelerator Shorts 1

Emerging voices and fresh perspectives from across Australia and New Zealand.

This showcase of trans-Tasman talent includes a road trip that becomes a cosmic coming of age; a stylish thriller set entirely within an unnerving London share house; and a beautifully restrained tale of queer yearning, executive-produced by Jane Campion.

Films in this package: *Last Chance to Evacuate Earth* (dir. Andrew Dang, Jak Scanlon), *Daddy's Little Meatball* (dir. Yael Grunseit), *Socks* (dir. Todd Karehana), *Arrival* (dir. Ahmed Osman), *Sublet* (dir. James Nolan) and *The Native Police* (dir. Charles Perrurle Perkins).

84 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



Accelerator Shorts 2

The thrilling future of local filmmaking.

Films that will rattle your senses, move you to tears and have you in stitches: the region's hottest new filmmakers bring you tales of Auckland's spooky Waitākere Ranges, a near-future world in catastrophic ruin and an unsettling slice of rural body horror.

Films in this package: *Fertile Ground* (dir. Geraldine Hakewill), *Sound That Summons* (dir. Petra Leslie), *Too Few to Mention* (dir. Jeff Hu), *Flesh Fruit* (dir. Madison Lee Hislop-Stoessel), *G.O.A.T* (dir. Kimberley Benjamin), *Raft Race* (dir. Chloe Kemp), *Coconut* (dir. Ravi Chand) and *Lion Rock* (dir. Prisca Bouchet, Nick Mayow).

95 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST



International Shorts 1

Festival hits and discoveries from across the globe.

Your window on the short-form cinematic world, including films about a genderqueer photographer returning to their hometown in China, a femme-presenting son confronting violence in Nigeria and Danish bros who roll the dice on ever-riskier dares; plus, a deadpan satire set in a Greek luxury hotel.

Films in this package: *What Do the Maknines Dream Of* (dir. Sarra Ryma), *Obi Is a Boy* (dir. Dika Ofoma), *Free Eliza (notes on an anatomical imperfection)* (dir. Alexandra Matheou), *The Wind in Ash* (dir. Sun Kun) and *Reckless* (dir. Gustav Werner).

103 MINS



Documentary Shorts 1

Eye-opening nonfiction work from every corner of the world.

Experience a hypnotic ride through Australia's salt-lake speed-racing subculture, watch birds take poetic flight over Spain during lockdown and go inside the world of Tamil Nadu tuktuk drivers as they battle industry sexism. These short films prove that nothing moves us quite like portraits of real life.

Films in this package: *Dogs and Dust* (dir. Ece Era), *Where the grass don't grow* (dir. Riley Hart), *Auto Queens* (dir. Srailyanti Haricharan), *Statues Also Die?* (dir. Thais Fernandes) and *Murmurations* (dir. Xavier Marrades).

91 MINS



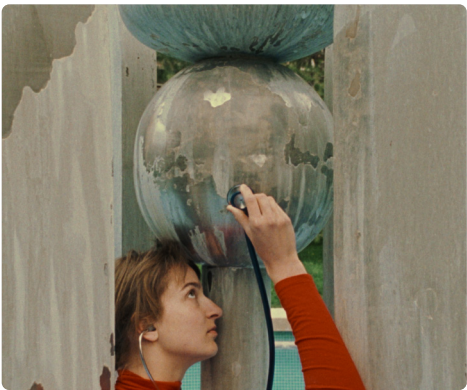
International Shorts 2

A selection of the world's brightest and bravest short-form storytelling.

A man wanders through a dystopian simulacrum of a city, a Ukrainian couple's reality collapses in the wake of the Russian invasion and a Palestinian woman confronts an existential threat on the road to Ramallah. Plus, catch the Cannes Palme d'Or-winning short, a moving portrait of a young Mexican boxer.

Films in this package: *In Her Arms* (dir. Roman Volosevych), *For the Opponents* (dir. Federico Luis), *Coyotes* (dir. Said Zagha), *A Soil A Culture A River A People* (dir. Viv Li) and *Mardochi* (dir. Lucas Gloppe).

96 MINS



Documentary Shorts 2

Films that challenge convention, inspire dialogue and meet the political moment.

How does cinema respond to a world in turmoil? In these emotionally resonant shorts, we bear witness to a Palestinian childhood under occupation, the confessions of a former dog trainer for the Chilean dictatorship and enigmatic babblings between fountains in Bratislava.

Films in this package: *Intersecting Memory* (dir. Shayma' Awawdeh), *When the Ground Paused* (dir. Jess Barclay Lawton), *Dead Tongue* (dir. José Jiménez), *How to Listen to Fountains* (dir. Eva Sajanová) and *Awake Before Your Gaze* (dir. Lin Yi-Chi).

89 MINS FESTIVAL GUEST

MIFF AWARDS 2026

Bright Horizons Award Supported by VicScreen

VICSCREEN

A celebration of bold new voices, the Bright Horizons Competition shines a spotlight on the most exciting emerging talents from around the globe. Awarding \$140,000 to the winner, it is one of the most substantial film prizes in the world.

Blackmagic Design Best Australian Director Award

Blackmagicdesign

Recognises an outstanding Australian director of a film playing in the MIFF 2026 program with a \$50,000 prize and a fully kitted URSA Cine 12K camera valued at \$27,500.

Uncle Jack Charles First Nations Film Creative Award Supported by the MIFF Lumiere Patrons

Celebrates the achievements of an outstanding Australian First Nations creative whose work appears in the MIFF 2026 program.

Intrepid Audience Award

Intrepid

Presented to the creative team behind the film voted most popular by audiences in the MIFF 2026 program.

MIFF Schools Youth Jury Award Presented by Collarts

COLLARTS
AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS

Recognises an outstanding film in the MIFF Schools program, as selected by a jury of winners from the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority's Top Screen. The winning filmmaker receives a \$10,000 prize.



Access

SUPPORTED BY  Bupa Foundation

Access at MIFF is delivered across three categories: Physical, Communication and Sensory. All other equity-focused offerings are presented under the category Inclusion.

Physical Access

Venue Information

Detailed venue information for each screening venue at MIFF this year is available on the MIFF website.



Step-Free and Wheelchair Accessibility

All metropolitan venues at MIFF 2026 have step-free access, are wheelchair-accessible and have accessible seating. Options such as aisle seats or seats close to an exit are also available.



Assistance Animals

Guide dogs and assistance animals are welcome in all venues at MIFF.

Communication Access



Open Captions

Select sessions at MIFF will screen with open captions. Open-captioned screenings display captions that dictate any spoken dialogue, music or sound effect in the film and are shown on the screen for the duration of the film.



Audio Description

Select sessions at MIFF will screen with an audio description (AD) track. This service provides additional narration and commentary that aim to describe the visual content of the film, thereby offering additional information through sound. AD units will be available for collection at the venue.



Hearing Induction Loops and Hearing Neck Loops

At select MIFF venues this year, a hearing induction loop or hearing neck loop is provided. Patrons can tune in using their own hearing-aid device for amplified film sound directly into the ear.



Assistive Listening

At select MIFF venues this year, assistive listening (AL) is available. This service provides an amplified version of the film's sound through a device with headphones. AL units will be available for collection at the venue.



Auslan-Interpreted

To engage a wider audience for MIFF's program of films and events, Auslan interpreters will be present at a selection of Talks, introductions, Q&As and special events throughout the festival.



100% Subtitled

Many films screening at MIFF are subtitled and without any spoken English language, including some films that are silent or that have no dialogue.

Sensory Access



Sensory-Friendly

MIFF will run sensory-friendly screenings at select sessions this year. Sensory-friendly screenings are designed to make the cinema experience accessible and are for anyone who would benefit from a more relaxed environment. This can include but is not limited to neurodivergent people who experience sensory processing differences (autistic people, ADHD people), people with learning disabilities, people with dementia as well as those living with anxiety or who have experienced trauma.

Inclusion



Baby-Friendly

MIFF is offering select baby-friendly sessions this year, catering for parents and carers with babies and toddlers who wish to enjoy the festival in a welcoming environment.



MIFF Online – streaming via ACMI

MIFF's digital offering, available via the dedicated streaming platform ACMI Cinema 3, has a limited selection of festival highlights with select access services made available. Bookings via ACMI Cinema 3.



To view all in-cinema and online sessions with access services and to filter the program by specific services, visit the MIFF website or use the MIFF 2026 App.

For more detailed information about access at MIFF 2026, visit miff.com.au/access



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