



MEDIA RELEASE

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SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL PREVIEWS 2015 GUEST LINE-UP

The 62nd Sydney Film Festival announces the first list of stars and filmmaker guests to attend the Festival in June.

These distinguished industry guests will attend the Australian and World Premieres of their films, walk the Festival's red carpets, introduce their films and participate in talks, panels and Q&A sessions. Please note: there will be a second, full announce of Festival guests on **Wednesday 27 May**. For the most up-to-date information, visit sff.org.au

Highlights include:

Alex Gibney, one of the world's most prolific filmmakers, will attend the Festival screenings of his two documentaries: ***Going Clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief*** and ***Mr. Dynamite: The Rise of James Brown***. Gibney has tackled some of the most contentious issues of our time, including *We Steal Secrets: The Story of Wikileaks*, *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room*, the Academy Award-nominated *Mea Maxima Culpa: Silence in the House of God* and the Academy Award-winning *Taxi to the Darkside*.

The Festival in partnership with **Vivid Ideas** will host an exclusive talk, **Alex Gibney: In Conversation**, at Sydney's Town Hall on **Sunday 7 June, 11am-12:30pm**. Tickets for the talk are \$30, or \$40 coupled with a screening of Gibney's film: ***Going Clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief***.

Writer and director **Brendan Cowell** will introduce the World Premiere of his film ***Ruben Guthrie*** also the **Festival's Opening Night Film**. *Ruben Guthrie* is Cowell's feature-directorial debut, based on his acclaimed play first staged in 2009 at Belvoir St Theatre, and then re-staged around the world. Cowell is a director and actor working in theatre, film and television. His credits include the hit series *Love My Way*, *The Slap*, *The Borgias*, *Noise* and *Save Your Legs*.

Other *Ruben Guthrie* industry guests include producer **Kath Shelper** and actors **Patrick Brammall** and **Alex Dimitriadis**. Cowell and Shelper will also appear at a free **Meet the Filmmakers Talk** at the **Apple Store** on Monday 8 June, 4-5pm.

Jennifer Peedom, director of Australian documentary ***Sherpa*** and producers **Bridget Ikin** and Academy Award-nominated **John Smithson** (*127 Hours*) will attend the World Premiere of ***Sherpa***, screening in Official Competition. They will also present a talk, ***The Making of Sherpa***, in The Hub at Town Hall on Tuesday 9 June.

Known for her intimate documentation of both epic and everyday stories, **Jennifer Peedom's** films *Miracle on Everest* (2008) and *Solo* (2008) are internationally renowned and she has an AFI and Film Critics Circle Award for Best Documentary and multiple Australian Directors' Guild Awards for Best Direction.

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Bridget Ikin is an award-winning producer, whose feature films include: *An Angel at My Table*; *Crush*; *Floating Life*; *Look Both Ways* and *My Year Without Sex*. She was the executive producer for *The Rocket* (SFF 2013).

Winner of over 50 international awards for his TV and film work, producer **John Smithson** has received global acclaim, including an Academy Award nomination for *127 Hours*. He also produced *Touching the Void*, which won the BAFTA for Outstanding British Film and 14 other awards and broke box-office records.

Director **Simon Stone** and producers **Jan Chapman** and **Nicole O'Donohue** will introduce the World Premiere of *The Daughter*, screening in **Official Competition**.

Simon Stone is one of Australia's leading theatre directors. His critically acclaimed 2011 adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's *The Wild Duck*, the basis for *The Daughter*, won major awards and recently had a season at London's Barbican Theatre. His production of *Thyestes* won multiple Green Room Awards in 2010. Stone will also appear at a free **Meet the Filmmakers Talk** at the **Apple Store** on Friday 5 June, 4-5pm; see below for more details.

Jan Chapman has produced some of Australia's most celebrated and popular films, including the Academy Award-nominated *Bright Star* (2009); *Lantana* (2001), winner of the Australian Film Institute Award for Best Film; and *The Piano* (1993), which won three Academy Awards. Her films have won over 38 AFI Awards along with numerous other honours around the world. **Nicole O'Donohue** is an Australian producer who has worked on *Griff The Invisible*, the BAFTA award winning TV series *Lockie Leonard* (Series One) and *The Last Impresario* (SFF 2014).

Jan Chapman will give this year's **Ian McPherson Memorial Lecture** in conversation with **David Stratton**. The free talk will take place at the **Festival Hub at Town Hall** on **Monday 8 June, 4pm**.

Director **Gillian Armstrong** will attend the Festival's World Premiere of her latest film, *Women He's Undressed*, a documentary about Oscar-winning Australian fashion designer **Orry-Kelly**. The film screens as one of the Festival's **Special Presentations** at the State, and also in competition for the **Documentary Australia Foundation Award**. The film's producer, **Damien Parer**, will also attend.

The award-winning Armstrong is one of Australia's most highly regarded filmmakers. Her films include *My Brilliant Career* (1979), *Starstruck*, (1982), *Mrs. Soffel* (1984), *Little Women* (1994), *Oscar and Lucinda* (1997) and *Charlotte Grey* (2001). She has also made a number of short and feature-length documentaries.

Producer **Emile Sherman** will attend screenings of his two latest films, *Slow West* and *Mr. Holmes*, both screening as **Special Presentations at the State**. Sherman is an Australian producer who won the Academy Award for Best Picture for *The King's Speech*. His other productions include *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2006), *Candy* (2006) and *Shame* (2011). *Slow West* producer **Rachel Gardner** will also attend.

Guests in attendance at the Festival's **Closing Night Film**, the World Premiere of *Holding the Man*, include director **Neil Armfield** and actor **Ryan Corr**.

Neil Armfield is an acclaimed director of theatre, opera, television and film, and former artistic director of Belvoir St Theatre for 15 years. His films include *Candy* (2006), which won an Australian Writers Guild Award. His other accolades include 12 Green Room Awards, four Critics' Circle Awards and seven Helpmann Awards.

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Official Competition:

Francesco Munzi, director of Italian crime drama ***Black Souls*** will attend SFF. Munzi's first feature film, *Saimir* (2004), was received with critical acclaim at film festivals worldwide, earning a Special Mention at the Venice Film Festival and the Silver Ribbon for Best New Director. Francesco Munzi will also host a talk at the Istituto Italiano di Cultura.

Kim Farrant, director of Australian thriller ***Strangerland***. Farrant graduated from AFTRS with a Masters in directing. Her documentary *Naked on the Inside* was a Dendy finalist at the Festival in 2007 and was nominated for the Film Critics Circle of Australia Award for Best Documentary. ***Strangerland*** is her feature debut. ***Strangerland*** producer **Naomi Wenck** will also attend and introduce the film. Farrant will appear at a free **Meet the Filmmakers Talk** at the **Apple Store** on Saturday 6 June, 2-3pm.

Rakhshan Bani-Etemad, writer and director of Iranian drama ***Tales*** will introduce the Australian Premiere of her film. Bani-Etemad is one of Iran's most loved and well-known filmmakers. Her feature films *Off Limits* (1987), *Nargess* (1991), *Gilaneh* (2005) and *Mainline* (2006) have won numerous awards from festivals around the world.

Jennifer Peedom, director of Australian documentary ***Sherpa***. Peedom is known for her intimate documentation of both epic and everyday stories. Her films *Miracle on Everest* (2008) and *Solo* (2008) are internationally renowned. She has won an AFI and Film Critics Circle Award for Best Documentary and multiple Australian Directors' Guild Awards for Best Direction. Producers **Bridget Ikin** and **John Smithson** will also attend and introduce the World Premiere.

Sean Baker, director and co-writer of American feature ***Tangerine***, a drama about Los Angeles' transgendered community shot on an iPhone 5s. Baker is an American director, writer, and producer known for the Independent Spirit Award-nominated films *Take Out* (2004) and *Prince of Broadway* (2008) and will introduce the International Premiere.

Special Presentations at the State:

Last Cab to Darwin director **Jeremy Sims**, star **Michael Caton** and producers **Lisa Duff** and **Gregg Duffy**; Sims and Caton will also appear at a free **Meet the Filmmakers Talk** at the **Apple Store** on Sunday 7 June, 2-3pm; see below for more details; **Ondi Timoner**, director of the **Russell Brand** documentary ***Brand: A Second Coming***; **Ramin Bahrani**, director of ***99 Homes***.

Features:

Villa Touma director, writer and producer **Suha Arraf**; ***These Are the Rules*** director and writer **Ognjen Svilicic**; ***Riz*** directors from Western Sydney, writers and producers **Guido Gonzalez** and **S. Shakthidharan**; ***Kabukicho Love Hotel*** director **Ryuichi Hiroki**; ***Red Rose*** director **Sepideh Farsi**; and ***Sunrise*** director **Partho Sen-Gupta** and actor **Adil Hussain**.

International Documentaries:

Mr. Dynamite: The Rise of James Brown and ***Going Clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief*** director **Alex Gibney**; ***Beats of the Antonov*** director **hajooj kuka**; ***Of Men and War*** director **Laurent Bécue-Renard**; and ***The Hunting Ground*** director and producer **Amy Ziering**.

Freak Me Out:

Deathgasm director **Jason Lei Howden**, executive producer **Anthony Timpson** and producer **Andrew**

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Beattie; Timpson also produced *Turbo Kid* from this year's Freak Me Out section.

Focus on South Africa:

Necktie Youth director **Sibs Shongwe-Le Mer** and *The Dream of Sharazad* director **Francois Verster**.

Sounds on Screen:

Song of Lahore director **Andy Schocken**.

Documentary Australia Foundation for Australian Documentary:

The Bolivian Case director **Violeta Ayala**; *The Cambodian Space Project – Not Easy Rock'n'Roll* director **Marc Eberle**; *Freedom Stories* director **Steve Thomas**; *Gayby Baby* director **Maya Thomas** and families in the film; *The Lost Aviator* director **Andrew Lancaster**; *Only the Dead* director **Michael Ware**; *Songlines on Screen 10* directors and custodians; *Tyke Elephant Outlaw* director **Susan Lambert**; *Wide Open Sky* director **Lisa Nicol**; *Women He's Undressed* director **Gillian Armstrong** and producer **Damien Parer**.

Dendy Awards for Australian Short Films:

Markers director **Rhett Wade-Ferrell** and producer **Carla de Menenez Ribeiro**; *Death in Bloom* producer **Jonas McLallen**; *Cherokee* director **Jem Rankin** and producer **Frances Wang Ward**; *A Single Body* director and producer **Sotiris Dounoukos**; *The Story of Percival Pitts* directors **Janette Goodey** and **John Lewis**; *Grace Under Water* director and producer **Anthony Lawrence** and writer **Chrissie McMahon**; *Ernie Biscuit* producer **Kristine Darmody**; *The Orchestra* director **Michael Hill**, producer **Melanie Brunt** and composer **Jamie Messenger**; *Red Rover* writer and director **Brooke Goldfinch** and producer **Brietta Hague**; and *Whispers Among Wolves* director **Kevin Lim** and producer **April Lafe**.

Meet the Filmmakers: SFF Talks at the Apple Store:

To celebrate the 2015 Sydney Film Festival and the spirit of fine filmmaking, the Apple Store Sydney once again hosts free Meet the Filmmakers series, where you can hear esteemed writers, directors, producers and actors discuss their latest projects and answer your questions.

- **Simon Stone (*The Daughter*)** Friday 5 June, 4-5pm (free)
Theatre-maker and actor Simon Stone will discuss working on his feature-film debut, *The Daughter*. The family drama is based on his award-winning re-imagining of Henrik Ibsen's play *The Wild Duck* and stars a host of top Australian talent, including Geoffrey Rush, Ewen Leslie, Miranda Otto and Sam Neill.
- **Kim Farrant (*Strangerland*)** Saturday 6 June, 2-3pm (free)
Australian director Kim Farrant has earned numerous accolades with her shorts and TV documentaries. Her documentary *Naked on the Inside* screened at the Festival in 2007. Here she will talk about the making of her feature debut, *Strangerland*, an outback-set thriller starring Nicole Kidman, Joseph Fiennes and Hugo Weaving, which premiered at Sundance.
- **Jeremy Sims and Michael Caton (*Last Cab to Darwin*)** Sunday 7 June, 2-3PM (free)
Award-winning stage and screen director and actor Jeremy Sims is joined by iconic actor and national treasure Michael Caton (*The Sullivans*, *The Castle*). Their talk will focus on the making of *Last Cab to Darwin*, an adaptation of the Sims-produced hit play about a cancer stricken cabbie (played by Caton) who seeks to die with dignity.
- **Brendan Cowell and Kath Shelper (*Ruben Guthrie*)** Monday 8 June, 4-5pm (free)
Theatre, film and television actor Brendan Cowell and producer Kath Shelper will discuss

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Cowell's feature-film directorial debut, ***Ruben Guthrie***, adapted by Cowell from his critically acclaimed play about a Sydney ad executive who tries to quit drinking. The World Premiere will open the Festival.

Visit apple.com/au/Sydney to see the latest schedule and reserve your spot.

Talks and Panels at the Festival Hub at Town Hall:

- **Micro-Talks** Saturday 6 June, 3-4:30pm
This very popular session from Sydney University returns again this year with short and informative 15-minute talks by leading film academics.
- **The History of Animation** Saturday 6 June, 5-6PM
Join Malcolm Turner, Sydney Film Festival programmer and animation researcher, as he talks us through the last 100 years of Australian animation.
- **Horror Tragic Talkfest** Sunday 7 June, 6:15-7:15pm
Join Freak Me Out guest programmer Richard Kuipers and producer and horror aficionado Ant Timpson (***Deathgasm***, ***Turbo Kid***) for a freewheeling discussion about all things horror. Be part of the lively discussion on the past, present and future of the most durable movie genre of them all.
- **Refugees on Screen** Monday 8 June, 6:30-7:30pm
Following the screening of *Freedom Stories*, OzDox will host a discussion on how refugees are represented on Australian screens big and small.
- **The Making of Sherpa** Tuesday 9 June, 6:30-7:30pm
Join director Jennifer Peedom, producers Bridget Ikin and John Smithson, the filmmakers behind the extraordinary Official Competition documentary ***Sherpa***.
- **Film Festivals Australia Brings Their Monthly Catch-Up to the Hub** Wednesday 10 June, 7-8pm
Learn what it takes to run a film festival and their growing importance to filmmakers and the industry.
- **Why Do We Need to Engage with Difficult Films?** Thursday 11 June, 6-7pm
Join ABC Radio National's Jason di Rosso as he ponders this question with fellow critics Margaret Pomeranz, Jack Sargeant and Dr. Sarinah Masukor.
- **Human Rights Watch** Thursday 11 June, 8-8:30pm
After the Festival's screening of ***The Look of Silence***, Joshua Oppenheimer will join us via Skype to discuss his sequel to award winning *The Act of Killing* (SFF 2013), moderated by Andreas Harsono, Indonesian researcher from Human Rights Watch.
- **The Return of Can Documentaries Change the World?** Friday 12 June, 7-8pm
After last year's full-house session it is clear there's still much to discuss.
- **Panel: Dendy Awards Finalists** Sunday 14 June, 1-3:30pm
Meet the Dendy Awards finalists for 2015 at this enlightening panel hosted by Metro Screen, and grill them on what it took to bring their acclaimed short film from idea to red-carpet premiere.
- **Margaret and David: The Films We Love – The Neglected and the Unexpected** Sunday 7 June, 3:30pm at Sydney Town Hall (\$15)
Australia's favourite film critics join the Sydney Film Festival stage once more with an entertaining overview of some of the films that they feel deserve our closer consideration. After 28 years and one of the longest and most enduring partnerships on Australian television, Margaret Pomeranz and David Stratton recorded the final episode of *At the Movies* late last year. But fortunately for us, they can't get enough of discussing the films they really love.
In this candid conversation at Sydney Town Hall, David will champion the films he loves that were overlooked by critics or audiences, or both. Margaret will reveal some of her

unexpected pleasures, from *The Fast and the Furious* to even more surprising selections. Their choices, and the reasons behind those choices, will make for a fascinating, lively and thought-provoking event.

Sydney Film Festival runs 3-14 June 2015.

Tickets for Sydney Film Festival 2015 are on sale now. Please call 1300 733 733 or visit sff.org.au for more information.

ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

From **Wednesday 3 June to Sunday 14 June 2015**, the 62nd Sydney Film Festival offers Sydneysiders another exciting season of cinema amidst a whirlwind of premieres, red-carpet openings, panel discussions, international guests and more. Each year the Festival's programming team curates 12 days of cinema sourced from world-famous film festivals, including Cannes, Sundance, Toronto and the Berlinale; as well as Australia's finest local productions.

Sydney Film Festival also presents an Official Competition of 12 films that vie for the Sydney Film Prize, a highly respected honour that awards a \$60,000 cash prize based on the decision of a jury of international and Australian filmmakers and industry professionals. Previous Sydney Film Prize winners are: *Two Days, One Night* (2014); *Only God Forgives* (2013); *Alps* (2012); *A Separation* (2011), which went on to win an Academy Award; *Heartbeats* (2010); and *Bronson* (2009).

The Festival takes place across greater Sydney: at the State Theatre, Event Cinemas George Street, Dendy Opera Quays, Dendy Newtown, Art Gallery of NSW, Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace Cremorne, Casula Powerhouse, the Festival Hub at Sydney Town Hall and SFF Outdoor Screen.

The Festival is a major event on the New South Wales cultural calendar and is one of the world's longest-running film festivals. For more information visit: www.sff.org.au.

The 62nd Sydney Film Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Screen NSW and Destination NSW, the Federal Government through Screen Australia and the City of Sydney.

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