

## MEDIA RELEASE

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# Sydney Film Festival announces winner of inaugural Sustainable Future Award

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The 68<sup>th</sup> Sydney Film Festival (3-14 November) has today awarded the inaugural **Sustainable Future Award** to new Amazon Australian Original documentary, *Burning*, directed and produced by Oscar-winning filmmaker **Eva Orner**, alongside Producer Jonathan Schaerf, Executive Producers Ben Silverman and Howard T Owens (Propagate), and Cate Blanchett's **Dirty Films**.

**Sydney Film Festival Director Nashen Moodley** said, "The Festival is proud to introduce a new **\$10,000 cash prize** for a narrative or documentary film that deepens our knowledge and awareness of the impact of the global climate emergency to our existing Festival awards."

"The Award is philanthropically motivated and funded by a syndicate of climate activists who believe deeply in the power of film to heighten community awareness of the need for action."

"There couldn't be a more pertinent first winner of the inaugural Sustainable Future Award. *Burning* is sure to elicit a powerful response from audiences at the Festival," he said.

*Burning* will have its Australian premiere in-cinema at the Sydney Film Festival at the **State Theatre on 6 November** and will launch globally and exclusively on **Amazon Prime Video on 26 November**.

The film was selected from a shortlist of eight documentaries from around the world, which included: Australian documentary *A Fire Inside*; two from Scandinavia - Berlinale-selected *From the Wild Sea* and CPH:DOX-selected *How to Kill a Cloud*; tales from the frontlines of climate change in *The Magnitude of All Things*; Jen Peedom and the Australian Chamber Orchestra's latest collaboration *River* narrated by Willem Dafoe; an inspiring life story of an eco-warrior in *The Seeds of Vandana Shiva*; and stunningly beautiful yet shocking Georgian documentary *Taming the Garden*.

All films will screen in-cinema at the **68<sup>th</sup> Sydney Film Festival**, with a number of titles also screening in **SFF On Demand's** online program (**12-21 November**).

"I'm thrilled to be back at Sydney Film Festival for the Australian premiere of *Burning*," said Director Eva Orner on accepting the award. "It's such an honour to receive this award and be considered amongst so many incredible films and by such an esteemed jury. I hope the film encourages and inspires audiences to act now and call governments to action immediately on climate change."

On behalf of Dirty Films, **Partner Cate Blanchett** added, "Alongside my partners at Dirty Films, I applaud the Sydney Film Festival for not only honouring Eva's powerful work on this important subject matter, but for also acknowledging the power of documentaries – in this instance to inspire

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global audiences to engage in positive action against the ongoing threats of climate change so that we can ensure a sustainable future for generations to come.”

SFF’s prestigious jury of filmmakers and climate advocates comprised: school student and Strike4Climate activist **Natasha Abhayawickrama**; documentary filmmaker **Bettina Dalton**; Deputy-Vice Chancellor Research Office and Climate Council Member **Professor Leslie Hughes**; actress and philanthropist **Amanda Maple-Brown**, and documentary filmmaker **Tom Zubrycki**.

“This compelling documentary serves as a reminder of the devastating bushfires that ravaged Australia in 2019-20,” said **The Jury** in a joint statement. “*Burning* is an urgent and angry call to action. It probes and investigates the fires from the perspective of victims, fire-fighters, activists and scientists, as well as the lack of political will to address climate change.”

## **SUSTAINABLE FUTURE AWARD WINNER**

From the lens of Oscar-winning filmmaker Eva Orner (*Taxi to the Dark Side* - SFF 2008, *Bikram: Yogi, Guru, Predator and Chasing Asylum*), Amazon Australian Original *Burning* takes an unflinching look at the unprecedented and catastrophic Australian bushfires of 2019-2020, known as ‘Black Summer’. Fuelled by climate change, the nation’s hottest and driest summer ever recorded resulted in bushfires that burned over 59 million acres, killed or injured an estimated three billion animals, and affected millions of Australians. *Burning* is an exploration of what happened as told from the perspective of victims of the fires, activists and scientists.

The preceding years of drought play directly into the ongoing hot-button issue of climate change, with Orner’s film (produced by Propagate, Amazon Studios and Dirty Films) drawing comparisons between government inaction & media perceptions, and a bushfire season that would wreak an extraordinary level of destruction upon the landscape – as well as raising questions about how we move forward as a nation to ensure this piece of history is never repeated.

## **SUSTAINABLE FUTURE AWARD NOMINEES**

- ***A Fire Inside***, Grammy-nominated Australian filmmakers Justin Krook’s and Luke (Red Hill) Mazzaferro’s documentary, reflects on the selfless acts of everyday Aussies that inspired the nation during the 2019-20 bushfires.
- ***From the Wild Sea*** by Danish director Robin Petré screens in SFF program strand, Europe! Voices of Women In Film. The documentary, which premiered in the 2021 Berlinale, tells the story of the volunteers working tirelessly to rescue Europe’s marine life from pollution and violent weather fuelled by climate change.
- ***How to Kill a Cloud***, also screens in SFF program strand, Europe! Voices of Women In Film. The film from director Tuija Halttunen follows a Finnish scientist who takes on a multimillion-dollar project to make rain in the desert, but soon becomes caught in an ethical dilemma between research, finance and the environment.



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- ***The Magnitude of All Things***, from multi-award-winning director Jennifer Abbott (*The Corporation*, SFF 2004), is a potent look at the frontlines of climate change, featuring interviews with Greta Thunberg and other vital activists.
- ***River*** is from the Australian creative team behind *Mountain* (SFF 2017), Jennifer Peedom and Joseph Nizeti. A cinematic love-letter to the world's waterways, narrated by Willem Dafoe, the film features eye-opening footage from 39 countries, matched by the Australian Chamber Orchestra's score that includes music by Bach, Jonny Greenwood and Radiohead, and First Nations musician William Barton.
- ***The Seeds of Vandana Shiva***, tells the remarkable life story of eco-activist Dr. Vandana Shiva, the rock star of the organic food movement. From the Himalayan forests to the Sydney Peace Prize, childhood to activism, a difficult marriage and to the world stage, Shiva's life story is exceptionally inspiring.
- ***Taming the Garden***, from Georgian director Salomé Jashi tells a shocking, surreal environmental tale that follows the journey of ancient trees uprooted from their home in a Georgian coastal community by a wealthy, anonymous man. This singular film was selected for Sundance, New Directors/New Films, CPH:DOX and Berlinale this year.

The full Sydney Film Festival 2021 program can be found online at [sff.org.au](http://sff.org.au).

Sydney Film Festival runs in cinema 3–14 November 2021. SFF On Demand's online program runs 12-21 November. Tickets to Sydney Film Festival 2021 are on sale now. Please call 1300 733 733 or visit [sff.org.au](http://sff.org.au) for more information.

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\*\*\*Sydney Film Festival Press Pack and Images Available [HERE](#)

#### EDITOR'S NOTES

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#### ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

From Wednesday 3 November to Sunday 14 November 2021, the 68<sup>th</sup> Sydney Film Festival offers Sydneysiders another exciting season of cinema amidst a whirlwind of premieres, in-depth discussions with film guests, and now a virtual offering with **SFF On Demand** streaming nationally from 12-21 November.

Sydney Film 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 [sff.org.au](http://sff.org.au).

The 68th Sydney Film Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Screen NSW, the Federal Government through Screen Australia and the City of Sydney.



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