

SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

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SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES FIRST FILMS FOR 2022

The 69th Sydney Film Festival today announced a sneak peek of 22 new films to be featured in this year's 8 – 19 June 2022 event. The announcement is in advance of the full program launch on Wednesday 11 May.

“This first taste of the Festival's 2022 program gives audiences a snapshot of the selection and flavour of films featured in our first full-scale Festival since the pandemic began,” said **Sydney Film Festival Director Nashen Moodley**.

“The past few years have been tough for the film industry, with many films halting production across the globe. Now the world is starting to open back up again, we're seeing a resurgence of gutsy, innovative and compelling storytelling. It's an exciting time to be programming a film festival when there is such a wealth of ground-breaking films, giving audiences an opportunity to discover unique and timely stories from home, and across the world.”

“The 22 films revealed today take us on a kaleidoscopic odyssey of the human experience. Travel across space and time with features about lovers bonding in virtual reality through the COVID-19 lockdowns, to rich Westerners behaving badly in the High Atlas mountains of Morocco, to a single mother liberated from her husband in 1980s Paris. And land back in Australia for tales of a millennial's Instagram-obsessed hen's weekend that goes very badly.”

“From an insightful documentary uncovering the struggles of the Indigenous Uru-eu-wau-wau people to protect their Amazonian homeland to a real-life narrative following female street dancers training for Australia's biggest dance competition, these films are indicative of the incredible local and international titles in this year's program.”

Hot films

Hannah Barlow and **Kane Senes** show audiences that revenge is a dish best shared on Instagram with **Sissy**. A SXSW success, this clever Australian horror sees an influencer played by **Aisha Dee** (*The Bold Type*) encounter her childhood tormentor on a hen's weekend.

The inimitable **John Michael McDonagh's** (*Calvary* – SFF 2014) black comic drama **The Forgiven** features global stars **Jessica Chastain** (Oscar winner for *The Eyes of Tammy Faye* – SFF 2021) and **Ralph Fiennes** (*The White Crow* – SFF 2019) depicting the entitlement of Westerners juxtaposed with the lives of ordinary Moroccans in a merciless neo-colonial society.

Luke Cornish's Sydney documentary **Keep Stepping** is about two remarkable female performers training for Australia's biggest street dance competition, Destructive Steps: a tale of love, obsession and the transformative power of performance.



Audience Award and Special Jury Award (World Cinema Documentary) winner at Sundance 2022, **The Territory**, is **Alex Pritz**'s debut about the struggle of the Indigenous Uru-eu-wau-wau people of Brazil as they are forced to protect their motherland from underpaid and ambitious farmers.

Direct from the World Cinema Documentary Competition at Sundance 2022 is **Joe Hunting's We Met in Virtual Reality**, where love, fantasy and technology coalesce in this ground-breaking documentary filmed entirely inside the world of VRChat during the pandemic.

Macario De Souza's (*Bra Boys*) film **6 Festivals** doubles as an emotional tale of friendship and a celebration of Australia's iconic festival scene, with cameos by several notable local music acts including **Bliss n Eso** and **Peking Duk**, as a young group of friends attempt to attend as many music festivals as possible in the wake of their friend's serious diagnosis.

Asa Butterfield (*Sex Education*, *X + Y* – SFF 2015) and **Gwendolyn Christie** (*Game of Thrones*, *In Fabric* – SFF 2019) star in **Flux Gourmet**, a deliciously deadpan comedy by British outré cinema master **Peter Strickland** (*In Fabric* – SFF 2019), for an outrageous film depicting the residency of a 'culinary collective' that turns cooking sounds and supermarket shopping into performance art.

French filmmaker **Mikhaël Hers'** (*Amanda*) slice-of-life drama set in 1980s Paris, **The Passengers of the Night**, casts **Charlotte Gainsbourg** (*Sundown*, *The Tree* – SFF 2010, *Antichrist*) as a single mother rediscovering herself after being left by her husband.

Please Baby Please is a genderqueer musical starring **Andrea Riseborough** (*Shepherds and Butchers* – SFF 2016) and **Demi Moore** (*Songbird*) as a 1950s Manhattan couple unlocking a sexual awakening within themselves after witnessing a violent incident.

Direct from the 2022 Rotterdam International Film Festival is Australian docudrama **The Plains**, set almost entirely in the world of a car during peak-hour traffic in Melbourne by director **David Easta** (*Monaco*). The film paints a compelling portrait of a fifty-something lawyer facing an existential crossroads.

Devery Jacobs (*Reservation Dogs*, *The Sun at Midnight* – SFF 2017) stars in social drama **Bootlegger**, about two women on opposing sides of the debate around the legalisation of the sale of alcohol in a First Nations community in Northern Quebec.

International festival favourites

International festival prize-winners include Golden Shell winner at San Sebastián 2021, **Blue Moon**, which depicts a young woman rebelling against her dangerously dysfunctional family in a gripping first feature by Romanian writer-director **Alina Grigore**.

Directing Award (World Cinema – Documentary) winner at Sundance 2022, **A House Made of Splinters** by **Simon Lereng Wilmont** (*The Distant Barking of Dogs* – SFF 2018), is a heart-tugging documentary filmed in pre-invasion Ukraine, chronicling a small group of indefatigable social workers who run a temporary refuge for neglected children.

Toronto 2022 NETPAC Award and London Film Festival 2022 Audience Award winner **Costa Brava, Lebanon**, stars BAFTA-nominee **Nadine Labaki** (*Rock the Casbah* – SFF 2014) and **Saleh Bakri** (*Wajib* – SFF 2018). The film follows a family who quit life in Beirut for a more peaceful existence in the mountains, only to find that escape is not so easy.

Toronto 2021 Platform Prize winner **Yuni** by Indonesian filmmaker **Kamila Andini** (*The Seen and Unseen* – SFF 2018) follows a bright Indonesian student, exploring her ambitions in contrast to the societal pressures she faces in her conservative Indonesian community.



Venice Days 2021, BNL People's Choice award winner, **Private Desert** is **Aly Muritiba's** (*Rust*) poignant tale exploring ideas around desire and masculinity as the film follows a disgraced police officer who wanders the country in search of an online lover who has ghosted him.

Also from Sundance 2022 are **Calendar Girls**, Swedish filmmakers **Maria Loo** and **Love Martinsen's** uplifting, joyous documentary about a 60+ female dance troupe; as well as **Sirens**, **Rita Baghdadi's** (*My Country No More*) arresting documentary about the Middle East's first all-female, queer death metal band which skilfully captures their magnetic energy while highlighting their battle to stake a place in their homeland's culture.

European gems

European cinema will have a strong presence throughout the Festival's program with tales like **Gentle**, the first Hungarian film selected for competition at Sundance, starring real life bodybuilder **Eszter Csonka**, an athlete willing to sacrifice everything for perfection and success.

Stefan Ruzowitzky, director of Oscar winner *The Counterfeiters*, honours the great age of German Expressionism with Locarno Film Festival Audience Award winner **Hinterland**, a visually stunning thriller set in the underbelly of post-WWI Vienna, about a returned prisoner-of-war's quest to catch a serial killer.

And cult French filmmaker **Quentin Dupieux's** (*Deerskin*) goofy time-travel romp **Incredible But True** starring **Alain Chabat** (*Mood Indigo* – SFF 2018), sees an average suburban couple move into their dream home only to become victims of strange bouts of topsy-turvy time travel as a result of their mystical basement.

Family-friendly

The first of this year's Family Films is **Super Furball Saves the Future**, a fun animated film following a young girl who must save the world from a future without bees. Directed by **Joona Tena** (*Arctic Circle*), this film is perfect for kids aged 10 years and up.

The full Sydney Film Festival program is announced on Wednesday 11 May 2022.

Flexipasses and subscriptions to Sydney Film Festival 2022 are on sale now.
Call 1300 733 733 or visit sff.org.au for more information.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES:

Dylan Foley, Communications Assistant

E: dylan@originalspin.com.au M: 0423 771 138

Anna Dvorak, Communications Assistant

E: anna@originalspin.com.au M: 0420 630 266

Amber Forrest-Bisley, Publicity Manager, Sydney Film Festival

E: amber@originalspin.com.au P: 8065 7363 M: 0405 363 817

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



EDITOR'S NOTES

ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

From Wednesday 8 June to Sunday 19 June 2022, the 69th Sydney Film Festival offers Sydneysiders another exciting season of cinema amidst a whirlwind of premieres, red-carpet openings, in-depth discussions, film guests, and more.

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.

The 69th Sydney Film Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Screen NSW, the Federal Government through Screen Australia and the RISE fund, and the City of Sydney.

DOCUMENTARIES

A HOUSE MADE OF SPLINTERS

A heart-tugging doco filmed in pre-invasion Ukraine from the director of *The Distant Barking of Dogs* (SFF, 2018). Directing Award, World Cinema Documentary, Sundance 2022.

Not far from Eastern Ukraine's front line, a small group of indefatigable social workers run a temporary refuge for neglected youngsters. The children are obliged to stay at the rundown shelter for around nine months, until the courts have determined their fate. From the first scenes where a motherly figure gently wakes a roomful of slumbering kids, we're swept into a world of comfort and routine. When the children speak of trauma, substance abuse and violence, the dedicated staff are always on hand to provide care and support. Danish director Simon Lereng Wilmont's follow-up to his Oscar-nominated debut movingly reveals the impact of neglect and conflict on these young souls, ultimately giving voice to each child.

CALENDAR GIRLS

An uplifting, joyous documentary featuring a female dance troupe with a difference: they're 60+ and out to prove that age is just a number. Selected Sundance and CPH:DOX 2022.

Surely one of Florida's hardest working dance teams, the Calendar Girls perform for fundraising events and regularly kick up their heels in parades. It all adds up to more than 100 performances a year. They also find the time to craft elaborate candy-coloured costumes, complete with personalised headgear. Against this busy backdrop, the like-minded women negotiate their sunset years while challenging society's perceptions. Swedish directors Maria Loohevud and Love Martinsen weave the dancers' personal stories with their colourful routines, shot in the bright Florida sunshine. The enthusiasm of their performances underscores their pride and determination, as the troupers live their lives to the fullest.

KEEP STEPPING

Two remarkable female performers train for Australia's biggest street dance competition in this tale of love, obsession and the transformative power of performance.

On Sydney's urban fringe, two young women battle for a better life in the underground world of competitive street dance. Patricia, Romanian-born and hanging out for a visa, is a breakdancer. Gabi, of Chilean-Samoan heritage, pops with power. Both dream of escaping the rough hand they've been dealt. Will a win at Australia's biggest dance competition Destructive Steps – in which 60 contestants compete in the preliminary rounds - be their golden ticket? Or will the external pressures of financial hardship and volatile relationships stop them from even reaching the dancefloor? Director Luke Cornish spent seven years filming the women's progress. Waiting to see how they fare will have you on the edge of your seat.



SIRENS

This rousing rock-doc features an all-female thrash metal band from Lebanon, led by Beirut guitarists Shery and her on-off bestie Lilas. Selected Sundance 2022.

In Lebanon, bands are under threat for pro-LGBTIQA+ lyrics, heavy metal is banned in many venues and women in Lebanese society find themselves caught between convention and liberation. It's against this background that musicians Shery Bechara and Lilas Mayassi created thrash metal band Slaves to Sirens. Despite a Glastonbury gig, Sirens struggles to make an impact in Beirut. The volatile founders were once in a romantic relationship, but Lilas has moved on, adding to the band's woes. Moroccan-American director Rita Baghdadi's crowd-pleaser skilfully captures the Slave to Siren's magnetic energy while highlighting her subjects' battle to stake a place in their homeland's culture.

THE TERRITORY

First Peoples of Brazil's Amazon rainforest fight landgrabs and illegal logging in this stirring World Cinema Documentary Audience Award winner from Sundance 2022.

The motherland of the Uru-eu-wau-wau people is increasingly under threat. President Bolsonaro's 2018 election has only escalated the problem. Two young men, Bitaté and Ari, along with their environmental activist mentor Neidinha, lead the campaign to save their environment and, ultimately, their community. When a group of impoverished farmers establishes a homestead by brazenly clear-cutting the 'protected' forest, the Indigenous community sets up a media team, using cameras to record the deforestation and send their SOS to the world. The farmers use more brutal tactics. Director and cinematographer Alex Pritz made this exceptional award-winning documentary in close collaboration with the Uru-eu-wau-wau people.

WE MET IN VIRTUAL REALITY

Love, fantasy and technology coalesce in this groundbreaking documentary filmed entirely inside the world of VR during the pandemic. Sundance and CPH:DOX selected.

In the VRChat universe avatars meet to learn belly dancing and sign language, play billiards, and even fall in love. In this fantasy world, there are no limits and all is fluid - but the rawness and complexity of relationships here are no different to those in the "real" world, especially during the era of COVID-19 lockdowns. Director Joe Hunting follows several couples who met in VR during the pandemic. DustBunny and Toaster, DragonHeart and IsYourBoi – their names are as fantastical and colourful as their forms. Adapting his camerawork to VRChat and in essence creating a new filmmaking language, Hunting reveals a caring alternative reality, one that aims to welcome, connect and support everyone within its community.

FEATURES

6 FESTIVALS

Three teen besties go to extremes to attend six music festivals in an uplifting film by Macario De Souza (*Bra Boys*) featuring some of Australia's hottest acts performing live.

Maxie, Summer and James share a deep bond and love for music. James (Rory Potter) is the entrepreneur of the trio, his sights set on a career as a promoter. Summer (Yasmin Honeychurch) has an incredible singing voice. Maxie (Rasmus King, *Bosch & Rockit*, SFF 2021) is the maestro of mischief. When James receives a devastating diagnosis, the friends – each with burdens to bear – throw themselves into a whirlwind of festivals in an attempt to escape reality. Featuring top acts Dune Rats, G Flip, Bliss n Eso, B Wise, Peking Duk, Ruby Fields, Jerome Farah, Kobie Dee and more - and fantastic footage shot at actual festivals - *6 Festivals* is a moving love letter to young friendship and the life-altering power of live music.

BLUE MOON

A young woman rebels against her dangerously dysfunctional family in the gripping first feature by Romanian writer-director Alina Grigore. Winner, Best Film, San Sebastian.



It's only a few hours' drive to Bucharest but it seems like a world away to Irina. An intelligent 22-year-old, Irina wants to study in the capital but feels coerced into working at the country hotel run by the violent and abusive men in her extended family. This toxic atmosphere of in-fighting, mind games and simmering resentment has also deeply affected Irina's volatile sister, Vicki. Things begin to change when Irina makes an unexpected and unorthodox connection with Tudor, a married actor. Grigore's fearless and confronting screenplay is matched by Ioana Chitu's outstanding performance as the vulnerable yet coolly determined young woman who wants to finally start living her own life.

BOOTLEGGER

Filmmaker-artist Caroline Monnet spotlights a complex political debate in this award-winning Canadian First-Nations drama. Best Dramatic Film at ImagineNATIVE.

Law student Mani (Devery Jacobs, *Reservation Dogs*) returns to the northern Quebec reservation where she grew up. Determined to reconnect with her community after years in the city – her Algonquin is rusty at best – she finds a town wrestling with illegal grog and the hypocritical authorities trying to halt it. Matters are made worse when Mani goes head-to-head with town leaders over a referendum to legalise the sale of alcohol. A divisive debate over self-determination ensues. Monnet – Algonquin herself – shows a remarkable talent for voicing socio-political themes in a film whose ideas stretch beyond the Canadian context to speak to issues affecting colonised peoples around the globe.

COSTA BRAVA, LEBANON

Nadine Labaki and Saleh Bakri star in this story of a family that quits Beirut only to discover that escaping its chaos is not so easy. Award-winner at Toronto and London.

The Badri family decided years ago to abandon Beirut with its terrible pollution, garbage-filled streets and corruption. Souraya (Labaki, *Capernaum*) is a world-renowned singer, husband Walid (Bakri, *Wajib*) is an activist, and with their daughters and Walid's mother, they now live in a beautiful retreat in the mountains. But their idyllic existence is shattered when men arrive to build a garbage landfill next door. Confronted by a world they thought they could leave behind, the family spirals into crisis. Made in the aftermath of the catastrophic Beirut explosion in 2020, Mounia Akl's debut feature, which premiered at Venice and won awards in Toronto and London, is filled with both anger and charm.

PRIVATE DESERT

A provocative exploration of masculinity and loneliness from Brazil's hottest new director, Aly Muritiba. Audience Award, Venice, 2021.

Following an act of police violence, burned-out cop Daniel (Antonio Saboia, *Bacurau*, SFF 2019) is suspended. With little to do but lay low, he finds solace in online hook-ups and a sexting connection with 'Sara'. But before Daniel has the chance to learn more about his crush – and right after he has sent a naked selfie - he is suddenly ghosted. Daniel heads north to track Sara down, travelling from town to town asking locals if they know or recognise her. An enigmatic stranger offers to help, but only under strict and mysterious conditions... Violent and tender by turns, Muritiba's curious love affair paints a vivid portrait of the soul of today's Brazil – one fought for by conservative and progressive forces.

FLUX GOURMET

A deliciously deadpan comedy by *outré* cinema master Peter Strickland (*In Fabric*, SFF 2019) serves an outrageous recipe of food, music, and arts funding. Berlinale 2022.

Only Peter Strickland could have dreamt up a tale set in an art institute for culinary and alimentary performance. Gloriously gowned institute director Jan (*Game of Thrones*' Gwendoline Christie) is sponsoring the residency of a 'culinary collective' that turns cooking sounds and supermarket shopping into performance art. Visionaries or pretentious charlatans? You be the judge, as a journalist with severe gastrointestinal 'issues' documents the squabbling group's work-in-progress while reptilian arts patron Dr Glock watches from the wings. Strickland's customary outlandish style,



as well as his fandom of *This is Spinal Tap*, inhabits every frame of this hilarious commentary on the creative process.

GENTLE

Competitive bodybuilder Eszter Csonka stars in the haunting tale of Edina, an athlete willing to sacrifice everything for perfection and success. In Sundance 2022.

The first Hungarian film selected for competition at Sundance takes us into a rarely seen world. Edina and her trainer-partner Ádám (former bodybuilder György Turós) have spent 10 years preparing for this moment. Now in peak physical and mental condition, Edina is ready to compete for the world title. But first the financially struggling couple must raise thousands of euros for dietary supplements and travel expenses. In desperation Edina turns to sex work for clients with muscle fetishes, triggering doubts about her relationship with Ádám. This unexpectedly tender drama contrasts the harsh realities of female bodybuilding with lyrical, dreamlike scenes of attraction and seduction.

HINTERLAND

A returned POW tracks a serial killer in this visually stunning thriller set in the underbelly of post-WWI Vienna. Audience award winner, Locarno Film Festival.

Peter Perg was once a leading detective and criminologist. Now he's a shattered ex-soldier shunned by those in power and haunted by his ordeal in a brutal POW camp. When several of his comrades are savagely murdered, Perg pursues the killer through a maze of twisted streets, contorted buildings and dimly lit alleys. Stefan Ruzowitsky (director of Oscar winner *The Counterfeiters*) honours the great age of German Expressionism with his nightmarish vision of a barely functioning Austrian society in the aftermath of the Great War. This riveting cat-and-mouse thriller marvellously invokes the spirit of masterpieces such as *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920) and *The Student of Prague* (1913).

INCREDIBLE BUT TRUE

The latest hilarious offering from French absurdist and cult favourite Quentin Dupieux has taken critics and audiences on a ludicrous ride since its Berlinale premiere.

The less you know going into a Dupieux film, the more rewarding the experience. So here's the skinny: Alain (Alain Chabat) and Marie (Léa Drucker) have moved to the suburban house of their dreams. But the real estate agent has a warning for them. There's something in the basement that may well change their lives forever. So begins a rabbit hole of a journey with all the trademark ridiculousness of Dupieux's previous successes *Mandibles*, *Deerskin* and *Rubber*. Tilting the slippery slope of mid-life crisis to the extreme, this wickedly funny film is for lovers of the deadpan, the absurd and the downright silly.

PLEASE BABY PLEASE

A Streetcar Named Desire by way of John Waters, Andrea Riseborough leads this leather-clad, gender-bending treatise on lust, marriage and camp. Opening film, Rotterdam 2022.

A seemingly ideal lower-east side bohemian couple, Suze (Riseborough) and Arthur (Harry Melling) re-evaluate their sexuality, gender and connection to each other after witnessing the violent murder of a stranger by the Young Gents, a group of dangerously alluring greasers. Thrust into unfamiliar territory, Arthur is drawn to gang leader Teddy, whose lustful gaze and Tom of Finland-conjuring looks titillate Suze in equal measure. Featuring cameo appearances from Demi Moore and Mary Lynn Rajskub and styled straight out of an early Almodóvar film, this defiantly unconventional and feverish pseudo-musical cements director Amanda Kramer (*Ladyworld*, SFF 2019) as a unique voice in the contemporary film landscape.

SISSY

A SXSW success, this devilishly clever Aussie horror sees an influencer encounter her childhood tormentor on a hen's weekend. Revenge is a dish best shared on Instagram.

Don't call popular wellness advocate Cecilia "Sissy". It's an old nickname that triggers traumatic memories of school bully Alex, who drove a wedge between 12-year-old Cecilia and her bestie



Emma. A decade later, Cecilia (a superb Aisha Dee) bumps into Emma, who invites Cecilia to her hen's party at a remote bush property. What could go wrong at this happy reunion? Well, just about everything from the moment Cecilia comes face to face with Alex again and all revenge-fuelled hell breaks loose. Playing it fast, funny and gory, writer-director duo Hannah Barlow and Kane Senes subvert slasher film conventions while dishing up a scathing satire of influencer culture and approval addiction.

SUPER FURBALL SAVES THE FUTURE

A young girl must save the world from a future without bees in this highly entertaining tale full of superhero hijinks, time travel and guinea pigs!

Emilia has a pet guinea pig who imbues her with incredible superpowers, which she must use to save the world from a bleak bee-less future. Time-travelling to the future to find out what went wrong, Emilia realises that her mission to save the bees also means saving the school bully. But when a costly mistake sees her stripped of her superpowers, she must figure out another way to save the world. Can she do it? Or is the future in jeopardy? Based on the children's book series by Finnish author Paula Noronen, *Super Furball Saves the Future* is a super-fun romp full of laughs and adventure – and a reminder that superheroes come in all shapes and sizes. Perfect for kids aged 10 and up.

THE FORGIVEN

Ralph Fiennes and Jessica Chastain star in this blackly comic study of clashing cultures by the inimitable John Michael McDonagh (*The Guard*, SFF 2011; *Calvary*, SFF 2014).

David (Fiennes), a drunken British surgeon, and his American author wife Jo (Chastain, Oscar winner, *The Eyes of Tammy Faye*, SFF 2021) are on the brink of separation. Still, they decide to attend an opulent party in Morocco's Atlas Mountains hosted by gay couple Richard (Matt Smith, *The Crown*) and Dally (Caleb Landry Jones, *Nitram*). En route, David runs over a boy selling fossils by the roadside. Callously, David puts the body into his car, and drives on. Next day, the boy's father arrives, demanding David accompany him to his son's funeral in a distant village. But the party must go on... In ways only he can, McDonagh skewers the privileged while juxtaposing the lives of ordinary people in a neo-colonial society.

THE PASSENGERS OF THE NIGHT

Charlotte Gainsbourg shines in a warm family drama set in 1980s Paris – a time of vinyl LPs, political optimism and talkback radio. Screened in Competition, Berlinale 2022.

Election night, 1981. Socialist François Mitterrand has been declared president and there are hopeful celebrations across Paris. But it is not a happy night for Elisabeth (Gainsbourg, *Antichrist*), whose marriage has come to an unexpected end. She must find the means to support herself and two teenaged children. When she lucks upon a job on her favourite talkback radio show, she meets Talulah (Noée Abita, *Slalom*, SFF 2021), a charismatic young woman who is struggling, and invites her home. Free-spirit Talulah has a lasting impact, inspiring confidence in each of the family members. With exquisite production design, a lovely soundtrack and clever use of archival footage, this heart-warming film is filled with small acts of kindness that have profound effects.

THE PLAINS

Documentary and fiction converge in this intimate portrait of a middle-aged Australian driving home from work over the course of a year. In competition, Rotterdam.

There's nothing in Australian cinema to compare with this remarkable first feature by filmmaker-barrister David Eastal. Filmed almost exclusively from the back seat of a car that doubles as a safe space and confessional, this deceptively simple film is deeply layered and emotionally rewarding. The affable man at the wheel is Andrew Rakowski, a colleague Eastal met at a Melbourne legal centre. Over the course of Rakowski's journeys from work to home – solo or with Eastal for company – we learn about the ups and downs of a man whose life story is anything but



ordinary. Not a moment is wasted in this boldly conceived, cleverly executed and quietly compelling existential road movie.

YUNI

A teenage girl's ambitions in an austere Indonesian community poetically explored by Kamila Andini (*The Seen and Unseen*, SFF 2018). Winner of Toronto's Platform Award.

Yuni (Arawinda Kirana) is the smartest in her school and aspires to go to university. But her high school is becoming increasingly puritanical, insisting on mandatory virginity tests for girls and a ban on music. Yuni's hopes are further dampened by two marriage proposals from older men she barely knows. Her grandmother urges her to accept this "blessing", for it is said that a woman who rejects three suitors is destined to never marry. In the face of this societal pressure, Yuni must also negotiate her crush on a teacher and the affections of shy schoolmate Yoga, a budding poet. A sensitive portrait of a vibrant, unforgettable character from rising-star Andini, a distinctive and essential voice in international cinema.

