

MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL REVEALS FIRST GLANCE LINE UP

DOWN UNDER TO SCREEN AS CENTREPIECE GALA

FESTIVAL CELEBRATES 65th EDITION IN STYLE WITH NEW HEADLINERS SPOTLIGHT AND A VIRTUAL REALITY SHOWCASE

MELBOURNE, 31 MAY 2016 – Celebrating its 65th edition, the **Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF)** is thrilled to announce its First Glance line-up of titles and new initiatives ahead of the 18-day festival, which opens on 28 July with the World Premiere of *The Death and Life of Otto Bloom* (Australia).

Artistic Director Michelle Carey says of the program: “There is much that is new at MIFF this year – including our exciting new section, Headliners, and a deep exploration of what’s new and what’s next in virtual reality. But then there are the films! 2016 is proving to be a massively strong year in features, docs, shorts and local productions that impress in their breadth. Come explore with us!”.

Marking the halfway point in the festival, MIFF is thrilled to feature Abe Forsythe’s *Down Under* (Australia) as this year’s red carpet Centrepiece Gala. A black comedy set during the aftermath of the Cronulla riots, *Down Under* is the story of two carloads of hotheads from both sides of the fight destined to collide. Sincere, though misguided, intent gives way to farcical ineptitude as this hilarious yet poignant story of ignorance, fear and kebab-cravings unfolds, and what was meant to be a retaliation mission turns into something neither side could have imagined. Featuring a strong ensemble cast spearheaded by Lincoln Younes (*Love Child, The Wedding Party*, MIFF 2010), Rahel Romahn (*Underbelly, The Principal*, MIFF 2015), Alexander England (*Power Games: The Packer-Murdoch Story*), Damon Herriman (*100 Bloody Acres*, MIFF 2012) and David Field (*These Final Hours*, MIFF 2013; *Mystery Road*, MIFF 2013).

Along with the **Opening Night** feature *The Death and Life of Otto Bloom* and *Down Under*, local films are in focus with the world premieres of the **MIFF Premiere Fund**-supported titles, including *Ella*, the heartwarming portrait of Ella Havelka, who made history in 2013 by becoming the first Indigenous dancer at the Australian Ballet; *The Family*, an incendiary, heartbreaking investigation into one of Australia’s most notorious cults and the scars its victims still bear today; *Monsieur Mayonnaise*, the incredible true tale of Melbourne’s beloved Mora family, mayonnaise sandwiches, Nazis and a hand-painted comic book; *Emo (The Musical)*, a sweetly satirical story about tolerance, individuality and harmonising, that is a cheerfully irreverent take on *Romeo and Juliet*-style star-crossed love, via *High School Musical* and *Glee*; and *Bad Girl*, starring Samara Weaving (*Mystery Road*, MIFF 13) and Sara West (*The Daughter*, MIFF 15), a pulse-pounding psychological thriller that offers a boldly dramatic twist on the femme fatale.

Celebrating the consummate cinema experience with **Headliners**, where MIFF will present a selection of striking works from gifted filmmakers with star studded casts and standout performances at the beautiful Comedy Theatre. Here are five titles to whet your appetite...

High-Rise (UK), an adaptation of J.G. Ballard’s subversive 1975 classic from MIFF favourite Ben Wheatley (*Sightseers*, MIFF 12), starring Tom Hiddleston as physiologist Dr Robert Laing in a gloriously unhinged work of darkly comic dystopian surrealism. Kelly Reichardt (*Night Moves*, MIFF 14) continues her loves affair with the American landscape with *Certain Women* (USA), a simmering insight into three women battling in small ways to sustain love and find connection, starring Laura Dern, Michelle Williams and Kristen Stewart. Winner of the Silver Bear for Best Director, Mia Hansen-Løve’s life-affirming *Things to Come*

(France/Germany), a magisterial, emotionally potent study of middle-age's transitions, gifts, cruelties and loneliness starring Isabelle Huppert. **Sunset Song** (UK), the long-awaited passion project from director Terence Davies (*Of Time and the City*, MIFF 08; *The House of Mirth*) featuring a career-making performance from model Agyness Deyn. And **Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World** (USA), from celebrated filmmaker Werner Herzog (*Into the Abyss*, MIFF 12), who returns with an entertaining, characteristically idiosyncratic look at the connected world.

Other early highlights include: **Chevalier** (Greece), from Greek new wave star Athina Rachel Tsangari (*The Capsule*, MIFF 12; *Attenberg*, MIFF 10), who returns to the festival with a bizarre and formally adventurous study of male antagonism set aboard a luxury yacht, co-written by Efthymis Flippou (*The Lobster*, MIFF 15); **Louis Theroux: My Scientology Movie** (UK/USA), a revealing, hilarious and absurd film, his first made for the cinema, in which Louis Theroux retains goes straight to the source to know what life is like inside the Church of Scientology; and **Men & Chicken** (Denmark), the first directorial effort in ten years from Danish director Anders Thomas Jensen, which is a wildly unhinged black comedy about two half-brothers who, upon learning they were adopted, go in search of their real father.

Also from Denmark, the Academy Award-nominated Best Foreign Language Film **A War** – from writer/director Tobias Lindholm (director of *A Hijacking*, MIFF 13; co-writer of *The Hunt*, MIFF 12) and starring Pilou Asbæk (soon to be seen in *Game of Thrones*) – vibrates with haunting, documentary-like realism and refuses to settle for easy answers as it digs into the moral implications of combat in a way few films manage.

Films that blur the lines between documentary and fiction include Robert Greene's **Kate Plays Christine** (USA), the Special Jury Award winner at this year's Sundance Film Festival, which follows Kate Lyn Sheil as she prepares to play journalist Christine Chubbuck, who in 1974 infamously committed suicide live on air; and **Sonita** (Germany/Switzerland/Iran), winner of the Sundance Grand Jury Prize and Audience Award (World Cinema – Documentary), which tells the inspiring story of a gutsy, defiant 14-year-old Afghan refugee whose dream is to become the next Rihanna – a feel good tale that challenges the very nature of what documentary should be.

The spotlight continues to focus on the prominent issue of refugees and asylum seekers with the winner of the Golden Bear for Best Film, the Amnesty International Film Prize and the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury at the Berlinale **Fire at Sea** (Italy/France), by master documentary maker Gianfranco Rosi, which is a wrenching, humane and timely survey of Europe's refugee crisis; and from legendary documentarian Frederick Wiseman (*National Gallery*, MIFF 14), **In Jackson Heights** (USA), which shines the spotlight on Queens – possibly the most culturally diverse neighbourhood not only in New York, but in the entire world – in a complex exploration of a microcosm of humanity and how it deals with looming threats of gentrification to deportation.

This year, book-to-film adaptations provide a strong slate, including: **Indignation** (USA), on which legendary film industry veteran James Schamus makes his directorial debut by bringing Philip Roth's deeply personal novel to the screen in a sharply delivered, physiologically focused exploration of the human condition; and **Cosmos** (Portugal/France), the first film in 15 years and the bittersweet swansong for singular auteur Andrzej Żuławski, and his adaptation of Witold Gombrowicz's surreal mystery novel.

From the offbeat to the plain bizarre comes **Tickled** (New Zealand), where journalist David Farrier investigates the world of "competitive endurance tickling", which soon takes a darker turn; **Zero Days** (USA), in which Academy Award-winning documentarian Alex Gibney (*Finding Fela!*, MIFF 2014) turns his finely honed investigative eye to the frightening world of state-sponsored cyber warfare; and the winner of the Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary at this year's Sundance Film Festival, **Weiner** (USA) – a fascinating pièce de résistance where the filmmakers are given unprecedented access to US Democrat Congressman Anthony Weiner during his now-infamous mayoral campaign.

Combining fantasy, imagination and artistry, *Kaili Blues* (China) is the striking debut from 26-year-old Chinese poet turned filmmaker Bi Gan that transforms from road movie into waking dream, at once vivid and fascinatingly enigmatic; *Girl Asleep* (Australia), the sparkling filmmaking debut of Adelaide's Windmill Theatre Artistic Director Rosemary Myers, is a wonderfully eccentric modern fairytale of female adolescence; while *Life, Animated* (USA) is a powerful emotional experience about a young boy with autism who is able to open up through animated Disney films, which scored director Roger Ross Williams the award for best directing (US Documentary) at this year's Sundance Film Festival.

Heartfelt gems about love and loss include artist Laurie Anderson's *Heart of a Dog* (USA), a love letter to a pooch that could be the wisest, most moving rumination on life and death you'll see this year; *No Home Movie* (Belgium/France), an intimate and personal work about love that is the last work of one of cinema's most innovative figures, Chantal Akerman (*Almayer's Folly*, MIFF 12); *Happy Hour* (Japan), a joyfully discursive cinematic journey about four 30-something friends, that over the course of five hours builds a remarkably warm and textured emotional portrait of contemporary womanhood; and *Madly* (USA/Argentina/Australia/UK/India/Japan), in which love bewitches, bewilders, baffles and binds across six short films from six filmmaking talents including MIFF 2015 guest Sebastián Silva (*Nasty Baby*, MIFF 15) and Australian actor/director Mia Wasikowska (*Tim Winton's The Turning*, MIFF 13).

From comical delights to International award winners, MIFF's Shorts program delivers with an exciting mix of highlights including *Curmudgeons* (USA), directed and produced by and starring Danny DeVito alongside co-star David Margulies; *Roast Battle* (USA), Jason Reitman's documentary which throws us into a night at LA's Comedy Store where comedians exchange insults as brutal as they are hilarious; *Cured* (USA), starring cult actor Michael Berryman (*The Hills Have Eyes*) a physician performing a very grisly and strange procedure on a troubled soul; *Belladonna* (Croatia), winner of the Orizzonti Award for Best Short Film at the 2015 Venice Film Festival; *Bring Me the Head of Tim Norton* (Canada), where Guy Madden, Evan Johnson and Galen Johnson direct a behind-the-scenes featurette of the Canadian war film *Hyena Road*; and *Batrachian's Ballad*, winner of the Golden Bear for Best Short Film at this year's Berlin International Film Festival, the experiences of the Romani in present day Portugal are explored through images, mythology and relics of the past.

For filmmakers and film-goers alike, **virtual reality** (VR) is re-writing the rules of how we create and consume entertainment. The implications and possibilities are immense, and exiting. In a specially curated program, MIFF presents a series of VR experiences by Australian and international filmmakers alongside a number of local and overseas speakers. It will be a unique opportunity to strap on a VR headset and fully experience the jaw-dropping wonders of total immersive cinema.

Headlining a Talking Pictures keynote session on Virtual Reality and Storytelling with *Madagascar* director and immersive cinema pioneer Eric Darnell, presented in partnership with The Wheeler Centre.

Also showcased in the VR program will be Australian multimedia artist Oscar Raby's enchantingly surreal fairytale *The Turning Forest*, written by Shelley Silas. This real-time visual and audio project inspired by *Where the Wild Things Are* and *The Neverending Story* will be a breathtaking festival experience.

The full program of over 300 titles will be announced on Tuesday 5 July with public tickets on sale Friday 8 July.

Metro Trains Melbourne is the Principal Partner of the 2016 Melbourne International Film Festival. As part of this partnership, Metro will promote the festival across the rail network and on its suburban trains. There will be plenty of activity on social media too, including free ticket giveaways.

Metro Trains Melbourne CEO Andrew Lezala said, "MIFF is a wonderful celebration of modern cinema and a festival that is close to the hearts of Melburnians. Metro moves hundreds of thousands of people around this city – and we hope that many of our customers are moved by the festival. With venues dotted around

the city, taking a train to MIFF is a great way to see cutting edge cinema.”

Screen Australia is a supporting partner of VR at MIFF.

Tickets to Opening Night film and party are now on sale.

Tickets to Centrepiece Gala and party are now on sale.

The 2016 Melbourne International Film Festival runs 28 July - 14 August.

For more information visit miff.com.au

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