

# SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

05-16 JUNE 2019



## MEDIA RELEASE

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01am TUESDAY 30 APRIL 2019**

## WORLD PREMIERE OF AUSTRALIAN DRAMA/COMEDY *PALM BEACH* TO OPEN SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL 2019

The 66<sup>th</sup> Sydney Film Festival (5 – 16 June) announces the World Premiere of *Palm Beach*, an uplifting drama/comedy from Australian director Rachel Ward, as the Opening Night Film at the State Theatre on Wednesday 5 June.

Sydney Film Festival's Opening Night Gala is proudly presented by **Lexus Australia**. Tickets are on sale now via [sff.org.au](http://sff.org.au).

*Palm Beach* features an all-star cast of Australian screen legends including Golden Globe-nominated icons **Bryan Brown** (*Australia Day*, SFF 2017), **Sam Neill** (*The Daughter*, SFF 2015), Oscar nominee **Richard E. Grant** (*Gosford Park*), **Greta Scacchi** (*The Player*, SFF 1992), **Jacqueline McKenzie** (*Romper Stomper*) and **Heather Mitchell** (*Rogue*), as well as Brown and Ward's daughter **Matilda Brown**, playing Ella - the daughter of Brown's character Frank.

Set at Sydney's spectacular Palm Beach, the film follows lifelong friends who gather to celebrate a milestone birthday, only for tension to mount when new and old resentments arise, along with the threat of an old secret coming to light.

With a filmmaking team comprising over 50% female crew, the film is Ward's second feature film following *Beautiful Kate*, which will also screen at this year's Festival as part of **Essential Australian Women Directors – 10 Trailblazers Selected by David Stratton**.

"Film festival time in Sydney is my favourite time of year. To be kicking it off is a really special treat," said **Rachel Ward**. "The inspiration for the film came over a Christmas in Wales with friends ... It was a funny and warm occasion, but also one where we realised no one is untouched."

"Set in one of Sydney's most beautiful locations, it's great to think *Palm Beach* will open this year's Festival," she said.

"Ward is an incredible Australian storyteller whose second feature combines a breathtaking Sydney location with an exuberant and life-affirming story celebrating friendship, brought alive with witty dialogue and a cast of great talent at the top of their game," **Sydney Film Festival Director Nashen Moodley** said. "The Festival is thrilled to open with the World Premiere of this fantastic ensemble piece."

"Lexus Australia is delighted to again support Sydney Film Festival – an event that continues to showcase breakthrough filmmaking talent amid a well-organised, highly enjoyable atmosphere," **Vin Naidoo, Senior Manager, Marketing, Lexus Australia** said.

**Create NSW Executive Director for Investment and Engagement, Elizabeth W. Scott** said "When we (Create NSW) announced our gender target – 50:50 by 2020 – we wanted to level the playing field and make a real impact on the industry. Now I'm thrilled to see those targets come to life with Rachel Ward directing a 50% female crew with the fantastic *Palm Beach* opening the Sydney Film Festival."



**Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism and Western Sydney Stuart Ayres** said “*Palm Beach* captures the sheer beauty of NSW’s beloved northern beaches, while celebrating the creative excellence of the State”, citing that the film would profile NSW as a world-class destination to visit.

A limited number of Film and Party, and Film-only tickets are available now. Film and Party tickets include entry to the Opening Night Film and the exclusive after-party at Centennial Hall at Town Hall, Sydney.

NB: Tickets to the Closing Night Film and Awards Presentation on Sunday 16 June are also on sale from 9am on Tuesday 30 April.

*Palm Beach* received major production investment from Screen Australia in association with Create NSW, and was financed with support from Destination NSW and Spectrum Films. It will be distributed through Universal Pictures and will have a national theatrical release on Thursday 8 August, 2019. It will be distributed through Universal Pictures and will have a national theatrical release on Thursday 8 August, 2019.

**The Sydney Film Festival Opening Night film is presented by Lexus Australia.**

**Flexipasses and subscriptions to Sydney Film Festival 2019 are on sale now.  
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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##### **PALM BEACH**

**In Rachel Ward’s funny, uplifting drama/comedy, a group of lifelong friends reunite for a party at Sydney’s Palm Beach; but tension mounts when deep secrets emerge.**

With a fantastic cast including Bryan Brown, Sam Neill, Richard E. Grant, Greta Scacchi, Jacqueline McKenzie and Heather Mitchell, *Palm Beach* raises universal issues through the prism of friendship. To mark his birthday, Frank (Brown) and Charlotte (Scacchi) decide to throw a three-day party at their luxurious house in Palm Beach, welcoming their closest friends. Frank, Leo (Neill) and Billy (E. Grant) were once involved in a band together; The Pacific Sideburns had one hit but little beyond that. Rounding out the guest list: Billy’s partner, beautiful actress Eva (Mitchell); Leo’s wife Bridget (McKenzie) and his step daughter Caitlin (Frances Berry); the hosts’ children Dan and Ella (Charlie Vickers and Matilda Brown); and Holly (Claire van der Boom), the daughter of the band’s late lead singer, who’s brought along her new sheep farmer beau (Aaron Jeffery). The party starts well, with mouth-watering food and flowing champagne, but it doesn’t take long for new and old resentments to emerge and, more seriously, the threat of an old secret coming to light. With witty dialogue, a breathtaking location and great actors at the top of their game, *Palm Beach* is an exuberant and life-affirming celebration of friendship.



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## ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

From Wednesday 5 June to Sunday 16 June 2019, the 66<sup>th</sup> Sydney Film Festival offers Sydneysiders another exciting season of cinema amidst a whirlwind of premieres, red-carpet openings, in-depth discussions, international guests and more.

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: *The Heiresses* (2018), *On Body and Soul* (2017); *Aquarius* (2016); *Arabian Nights* (2015); *Two Days, One Night* (2014); *Only God Forgives* (2013); *Alps* (2012); *A Separation* (2011); *Heartbeats* (2010); *Bronson* (2009); and *Hunger* (2008).

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

The 66<sup>th</sup> Sydney Film Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW and Destination NSW, the Federal Government through Screen Australia and the City of Sydney. The Festival's Strategic Partner is the NSW Government via its tourism and major events agency, Destination NSW.

