

SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

6–17 JUNE 2018

MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 8.30pm SUNDAY 17 JUNE 2018

SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED AT CLOSING NIGHT GALA

The 65th Sydney Film Festival tonight awarded *The Heiresses*, the debut feature of Paraguayan filmmaker **Marcelo Martinessi**, the prestigious Sydney Film Prize, out of a selection of 12 Official Competition films.

The \$60,000 cash prize for 'audacious, cutting-edge and courageous' film was awarded to Martinessi at the Festival's Closing Night Gala awards ceremony and event at the State Theatre, ahead of the Australian premiere screening of heart-warming indie comedy *Hearts Beat Loud*.

Accepting the award, Martinessi said: "For me, this first experience in Sydney was beautiful, and was a great discovery of people, places, and stories."

He emphasised that cinema is not about winning, but about sharing personal truths, adding: "Cinema is a collective work... sometimes we win, and sometimes we don't win. But the important thing is to always do what we strongly believe in."

Sydney filmmaker **Ben Lawrence** was awarded the Documentary Australia Foundation Award for Australian Documentary's \$10,000 cash prize for *Ghosthunter*, about a Western Sydney security guard and part time ghost hunter searching for his absent father.

The Dendy Awards for Australian Short Films saw the \$7000 cash prize for the Dendy Live Action Short Award going to *Second Best*, directed by **Alyssa McClelland**. **Tom Noakes' Nursery Rhymes** took out the \$7000 Rouben Mamoulian Award for Best Director, with Special Mention going to **Alison James' Judas Collar**. The \$5000 Yoram Gross Animation Award went to **Andrew Goldsmith** and **Bradley Slabe's Lost and Found**, with **Larissa Behrendt's Barbara** receiving a Special Mention.

The Event Cinemas Australian Short Screenplay Award, a \$5,000 prize for the best short screenwriting, was awarded to Indigenous screenwriter **Tyson Mowarin** of *Undiscovered Country*. **Renée Marie Petropoulos (Tangle and Knots)**, **Lucy Knox (An Act of Love)** and recently-announced recipients of the 2018 Lexus Australia Short Film Fellowship **Curtis Taylor** and **Nathan Mewett (Yulubidi – Until the End)**, all received Special Mentions.

The \$10,000 Sydney-UNESCO City of Film Award, bestowed by Create NSW to a trail-blazing NSW-based screen practitioner, went to Indigenous Australian filmmaker **Warwick Thornton (We Don't Need A Map, SFF 2017 Opening Night Film)**. The Award was presented by his friend and Archibald Prize-winning painter and activist **Ben Quilty**.



Sydney Film Festival CEO Leigh Small said: “The Festival spread out further this year to include cinemas at Moore Park and expand attendance at Randwick and Casula. Over 170,000 people joined filmmakers from 66 countries and our own filmmaking community.

“Audiences of all ages and backgrounds ventured away from their personal screens to attend the Sydney Film Festival cinemas – much to the delight of the filmmakers. Virpi Suutari, Finnish director of *Entrepreneur*, summed it up well, ‘it’s one of the most open, most receptive, curious audiences that I’ve ever had in any festival. Really, it was a wonderful experience.”

SFF former director and 2018 programmer **David Stratton** said: “What you learn from the success of the Sydney Film Festival is that there’s still an audience that wants to come and see movies where they’re meant to be seen – on cinema screens, where they’re designed to be shown. Not sitting at home and watching them on television, no matter how big your television screen is.”

Sydney Film Festival Director Nashen Moodley said: “This year’s program presented a large number of first films from international directors, including the Official Competition winner Marcelo Martinessi from Paraguay. Our program continues in Sydney Film Festival’s spirit of discovery of impactful, relevant and urgent films. We have had filmmakers from every continent and many Indigenous Australian communities, and every year our audience continues to elate and surprise them.”

“Our juries have enthused about the quality of competition films; and our red carpets have been graced with Guo Pei gowns and New England Kelpies. Audiences have been in tears, in stitches and standing to applaud,” he said.

THE SYDNEY FILM PRIZE

On awarding the Sydney Film Prize to Paraguayan filmmaker Marcelo Martinessi’s debut feature ***The Heiresses***, Jury President Lynette Wallworth said:

“We have spent 12 days together and truly we have cherished them. We want to thank Nashen for the challenge set for us in jurying this remarkable selection of works, we were broken and mended by these films. We soared with their majesty, we were moved by their intimacies, and we were changed by what they provoked in us: the possibility of redemption, of relationship, and of loss that cannot be recovered.”

“As the best of cinema does, these 12 films made our complex, complicated world more known to us and we watched in wonder what the filmmakers achieved through the distinct clarity of their vision.”

“The film we chose carried us with restraint and confidence into a world still shielded by entitlement even as its structures crumble. It revealed a delicately unfolding courage to release what we cling to, even when it is all we know, and let change come - within ourselves and within this collective frame that we build, that is society.”

“The indelible mark left by this provocative, layered and surprising film, is why we have awarded the Sydney Film Prize, for his first feature *The Heiresses*, to Paraguayan director Marcelo Martinessi,” she said.

Winner of the Berlinale Silver Bear Alfred Bauer Prize and the Silver Bear for Best Actress, *The Heiresses* is a rare film from Paraguay’s modest film industry. The complex relationship drama takes an unusual look at the lives of wealthy Paraguayan families, through the tribulations of a lesbian couple.



The Festival jury was comprised of Australian artist and filmmaker **Lynette Wallworth**, Filipino producer and writer **Bianca Balbuena** (*Season of the Devil*, SFF 2018), South African film composer and songwriter **Chris Letcher**, Australian actor **Ewen Leslie** (*The Daughter*, Official Competition SFF 2016), and Programming Director, Tokyo Film Festival, **Yoshi Yatabe**.

Previous winners include: *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 competition is endorsed by FIAPF, the regulating body for international film festivals, and is judged by a jury of five international and Australian filmmakers and industry professionals.

The selection of films in Competition for the SFF 2018 Sydney Film Prize are listed [HERE](#).

THE DOCUMENTARY AUSTRALIA FOUNDATION AWARD FOR AUSTRALIAN DOCUMENTARY

The **Documentary Australia Foundation Award for Australian Documentary** was awarded to ***Ghosthunter*** from filmmaker **Ben Lawrence**. The Jury comprising South African filmmaker **Shameela Sadat**, US film producer **Melanie Miller**, Australian filmmaker **Maya Newell**, in a joint statement said:

“The ten films in the Australian Documentary competition presented the Jury with a fascinating range of stories, creative perspectives and critical issues, and we would like to emphasise how difficult it was to make the final decision with such powerful films.”

“The Jury Award for best Australian Documentary goes to *Ghosthunter*. We were impressed by the humanity brought to this complex and dark subject matter as well as the suspenseful storytelling approach that had us on the edge of our seats.”

“We honour the filmmakers for their careful judgement while navigating this challenging ethical terrain.”

2018 marks the fifth year the prize has been supported by the Foundation.

Previous winners include: *The Pink House* (2017), *In the Shadow of the Hill* (2016); *Only the Dead* (2015); *35 Letters* (2014); *Buckskin* (2013); *Killing Anna* (2012); *Life in Movement* (2011); and *The Snowman* (2010). In 2009 the inaugural prize was shared between *Contact* and *A Good Man*, and each film received a \$10,000 cash prize.

The 12 finalists for the 2018 Sydney Film Festival Documentary Australia Foundation Award for Australian Documentary are listed [HERE](#).

THE DENDY AWARDS FOR AUSTRALIAN SHORT FILMS

The **Dendy Awards for Australian Short Films** were awarded to **Alyssa McClelland** for ***Second Best*** (Dendy Live Action Short Award), **Tom Noakes** for ***Nursery Rhymes*** (Rouben Mamoulian Award for Best Director) and directors **Andrew Goldsmith** and **Bradley Slabe** for ***Lost & Found*** (Yoram Gross Animation Award).

The Jury comprised NZ actress-turned-filmmaker **Miranda Harcourt**, Executive Vice President of Sony Pictures Entertainment **Stephen Basil-Jones**, and Australian producer **Kylie Du Fresne**. In a joint statement, the Jury said:



“*Second Best* has everything you look for in a short narrative - structure, emotion, beautifully drawn characters, funny but touching. The director has a great eye for observational comedy and it is also a richly painted immigrant story. It draws you in and delivers.”

“*Lost & Found* is a delightful, clever and rewarding tale about the simplicity of friendship in a gender neutral (toy) world, and *Nursery Rhymes* is a perfectly executed singular vision which really packs a punch.”

“Special Mentions go to *Barbara* for its unique take on verbatim text, and powerful story that will resonate for years to come, and *Judas Collar* for the ability to tell a compelling story with no dialogue and a bunch of camels.”

The Festival’s short-film competition is now in the 49th year; and has been sponsored by **Dendy Cinemas** for 30 years. Winners of the Best Live Action Short Film award and the Yoram Gross Animation award, sponsored by Yoram Gross Films, are **Academy Award-eligible**, opening new pathways for many Australian filmmakers.

These ground-breaking awards have kick-started the careers of many prominent filmmakers, with past competitors Warwick Thornton, Ariel Kleiman, Cate Shortland, Jane Campion, Phillip Noyce and Ivan Sen among Dendy Awards alumni.

The 10 finalists for the 2018 Dendy Award for Australian Short Film are listed [HERE](#).

EVENT CINEMAS AUSTRALIAN SHORT SCREENPLAY AWARD

A jury comprising NZ actress-turned-filmmaker **Miranda Harcourt**, Executive Vice President of Sony Pictures Entertainment **Stephen Basil-Jones**, and Australian producer **Kylie Du Fresne** awarded the **Event Cinemas Australian Short Screenplay Award** to Indigenous filmmaker **Tyson Mowarin**, the writer and director of *Undiscovered Country*.

Renée Marie Petropoulos (*Tangle and Knots*), **Lucy Knox** (*An Act of Love*) and recently-announced recipients of the 2018 Lexus Australia Short Film Fellowship **Curtis Taylor** and **Nathan Mewett** (*Yulubidi – Until the End*), all received Special Mentions.

Sponsored by **Event Cinemas**, **Anthony Kierann**, General Manager of Film Festivals, Australian Cinema at Event Cinemas said:

“The cornerstone of a film’s realisation is the writer’s vision. Event Cinemas is proud to be an award partner, with the Event Cinemas Australian Short Screenplay Award that acknowledges and supports the idea, concept and vision of a short film, and creates an opportunity for a team of film artists and technicians to present a unique Australian story to an audience.

“The Award encourages and supports writers in delivering more extraordinary Australian stories in the film landscape, that may inspire others to write and create. We applaud the excellent quality of the short films within the category at the festival this year.”

The Australian short films eligible for the 2018 Event Cinemas Australian Short Screenplay Award are listed [HERE](#).

Winners of all Sydney Film Festival awards are presented with the Festival’s signature mesmeric swirl award, designed and handmade in Sydney by Festival partners **Dinosaur Designs**.

The UNESCO Sydney City Of Film Award

The \$10,000 Sydney-UNESCO City of Film Award, bestowed by Create NSW to a trail-blazing NSW-based screen practitioner, went to Indigenous Australian filmmaker **Warwick Thornton** (*We Don't Need A Map*, SFF 2017 Closing Night Film). The Award was presented by his friend and Archibald Prize-winning painter and activist **Ben Quilty**.

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

EDITOR'S NOTES

ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

From Wednesday 6 June to Sunday 17 June 2018, the 65th 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: *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.

The 65th 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.

