

MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 11.00am WEDNESDAY 10 MAY 2017

BEST OF THE SYDNEY FILM FEST SCREENS IN NEWCASTLE

Sydney Film Festival's 2017 touring program, the Travelling Film Festival, returns to Tower Cinemas, Newcastle 23-25 June, with a selection of nine local and international award winning and festival favourite films.

"Seven features and two documentaries will premiere in Newcastle, opening with Australia's first Muslim comedy *Ali's Wedding* by award winning television director **Jeffrey Walker**," said **Travelling Film Festival Manager Karina Libbey**. "Closing the Festival is new documentary *We Don't Need a Map*, from acclaimed Australian First Nation filmmaker **Warwick Thornton**. The film will be fresh from opening the Sydney Film Festival and competing in the Official Competition for the \$60,000 Sydney Film Prize," she said.

"The Festival is thrilled to be returning to Newcastle right off the back of a huge Sydney Film Festival June 7-18. Of course, we'll be bringing all the hot picks from the Festival with us, Newcastle being the first centre in regional Australia to see these films," she said.

The Program:

- *Ali's Wedding* is history in the making - Australia's first Muslim rom-com. This Australian comedy won an AWGIE for Best Original Screenplay, and is based on the real-life experience of lead actor Osamah Sami, whose arranged marriage lasted less than two hours. The smart screenplay by Sami and Andrew Knight (*Hacksaw Ridge*, *Rake*, *Jack Irish*) tells a humorous, authentic and poignant tale about family life in multicultural Australia. Stylishly directed by Jeffrey Walker (*Modern Family*, *Angry Boys*), the film boasts a terrific cast including Don Hany as Ali's father.
- *My Life as a Zucchini* is an Oscar-nominated Swiss-French stop-motion family animation that's realistic and life affirming, dealing with real issues in a way that doesn't patronise or traumatise its audience. When nine-year old Zucchini's alcoholic mother dies, he is taken to an orphanage filled with misfits who, like himself, have been dealt a rough hand by life. Little does he know, they will soon become his de facto family. Based on a best-selling young adult novel and adapted for the screen, *My Life as a Zucchini* is an unusual, affirming but honest film that calls on its young audience's ability to empathise with lives far tougher than their own. The Festival will be screening the English language version in Newcastle, starring Nick Offerman and Ellen Page.
- *Pop Aye* is an offbeat and very funny Sundance Special Jury Prize award-winner about a downtrodden architect and his long-lost elephant who take a road trip across Thailand to find their childhood home. Once a cutting edge architect renowned for his progressive buildings, Thana is having a hard time at work and with his wife. Wandering the streets of Bangkok he comes across Pop Aye, the elephant he grew up with in rural Thailand. Thana promptly buys the elephant and the unusual pair set off on a road trip back towards the idyll of their home village. In her debut feature Kirsten Tan has total control, taking advantage of the beautiful scenery, wonderful actors and a charismatic elephant to tell a story that is unsentimental but genuinely moving.
- *Ingrid Goes West*, winner of the Sundance Screenwriting Award, is a biting, dark satire about the impact of social media on real human connection. Aubrey Plaza is hilarious as awkward loner Ingrid, a social media addict who heads to LA to meet her Instagram idol. Ingrid (Plaza, *Parks and Recreation*, *Safety Not Guaranteed*, SFF 2012) is a troubled young woman who's found herself in strife because of her dangerous obsession with social media. Let loose upon the world with an inheritance she travels to befriend social media influencer Taylor (Elizabeth Olsen, *Avengers: Age of*

Ultron; *Wind River* also playing at TFF this year). *Ingrid Goes West* is sure to cause both laughter and reflection.

- ***Wind River***, straight from Cannes, is an intelligent crime drama with Jeremy Renner and Elizabeth Olsen and the directorial debut of screenwriter Taylor Sheridan (*Hell or High Water*, *Sicario*). Renner (*The Hurt Locker*) plays Cory Lambert, a wildlife officer in Wyoming. When he discovers the body of a young Native American woman while hunting, the FBI come knocking. Rookie agent Jane Banner (Olsen, *Avengers: Age of Ultron*; *Ingrid Goes West* playing at TFF this year) is assigned to the case. Superbly directing his own screenplay, this stylish, potent mystery also features the music of Nick Cave and Warren Ellis.
- ***The Teacher*** from Czech director Jan Hřebejk, is a satire that uses the microcosm of a teacher abusing power in Communist era Czechoslovakia to make cutting points about society at large. Zuzana Maurery gives an award-winning performance as the unscrupulous school teacher in this crowd-pleasing dark comedy. Drawing power from her political connections, the teacher encourages competitive sucking up, carefully noting the professions of her students' parents. But some parents are unable, or unwilling, to give, setting the scene for a conflict between those who have acquiesced and those who resist.
- ***I Am Not Your Negro***, narrated by Samuel L Jackson, is a mesmerising Oscar-nominated film that channels the impassioned words of writer James Baldwin, one of the most incisive commentators on race in America. Winner of the People's Choice Documentary Award at Toronto and a box office success in the US, the film takes as its starting point notes from a book Baldwin intended to write about the lives and assassinations of his friends Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., and Medgar Evers. That unwritten book finds life in this remarkable film which melds Baldwin's unpublished writing (powerfully narrated by Jackson), archival footage of his eloquent analysis of the times, and contemporary Black Lives Matter protests. Haitian Raoul Peck is a stridently political filmmaker and here his profound and poetic cine-essay is, as The New York Times describes it, "life-altering".
- ***Holy Air*** is a clever comedy about a Nazareth businessman who must negotiate with the holy city's rulers, gangsters and his own family when he tries one last idea to get rich, selling 'holy air'. Adam (writer and director Shady Srour) is a Christian Arab with an ailing father and pregnant wife. With a string of failed business ideas behind him and in urgent need for cash, Adam comes upon one last brilliant idea: taking to the streets and selling to tourists the very air that the Virgin Mary breathed. Skilfully conveying the political and religious tensions of the region, Srour has created a very funny and witty film.
- ***We Don't Need A Map***. In 2010, Warwick Thornton's *Samson and Delilah* won the Camera d'Or at Cannes and he was nominated for Australian of the Year. When asked at a press conference what his main concern would be if he received Australia's highest honour, he replied "that the Southern Cross is becoming the new Swastika". Seven years later, Thornton takes us on a journey through this five-star constellation's astronomical, colonial and Indigenous history to the present day. For Aboriginal people the meaning of this heavenly body is deeply spiritual, a connection vividly expressed in stories from North East Arnhem Land, Katherine and the Central Desert. By contrast, the star-adorned Eureka Flag was emblematic of protest and defiance from its first appearance, a quality that caused it to be adopted by activists, and lately, the darker side of Australian nationalism. Produced by Brendan Fletcher (*Mad Bastards*) and shot by Thornton and his filmmaker son, Dylan River, this poetic essay-film features interviews with tattooists, rappers, astronomers... plus bush puppets. *We Don't Need a Map* doesn't shy away from the tough questions about the place of the Southern Cross in the Australian psyche, but Thornton's cavalier spirit and inventive filmmaking skillfully balances the provocative and the pleasurable.

Tickets to Australia's longest running travelling film festival are on sale now.

Don't miss your chance to experience a unique and exciting array of award winning, local and international cinema. 'Subscribe and Save' packages offer great value for multiple ticket purchases.

Travelling Film Festival acknowledges the financial assistance of Screen Australia and the New South Wales Government through Screen NSW and is supported by media partner ABC Newcastle and distinguished partner Princess Cruises.

WHAT: Travelling Film Festival Newcastle
WHEN: Friday 23 June - Sunday 25 June, 2017
WHERE: Tower Cinemas, 183 – 185 King St, Newcastle NSW 2300
SINGLE TICKETS: \$14 / \$12 / \$10 (Adult / Concession / Student & Kids)
SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE: FULL SUBSCRIPTION: \$81 Adult / \$72 Concession
5-FILM FLEXIPASS: \$53 Adult / \$48 Concession
Note: films must be selected at time of purchase.

HOW TO BOOK: Book tickets online in advance at sff.org.au/newcastle

For ticket enquiries please contact Sydney Film Festival on 02 8220 6600 or contact the cinema box office.

SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE: Save 30% on regular ticket prices with a subscription: all nine films for only \$9 per film (\$8 concession), including Opening Night film. Or dip into the festival with a 5-film Flexipass for just \$10.60 per film (\$9.60 concession).

TOWER CINEMAS TFF SCHEDULE

Friday 23 June

7PM **ALI'S WEDDING** (UC) | Australia | In English, Arabic, Farsi with English subtitles | 100 mins
9PM **COMPLIMENTARY OPENING NIGHT DRINKS**

Saturday 24 June

1.30PM **MY LIFE AS A ZUCCHINI** (PG) | Switzerland, France | In English | 88 mins
Screens with short **THE WALL**
3.30PM **POP AYE** (UC) | Singapore, Thailand | Thai with English subtitles | 102 mins
6.30PM **INGRID GOES WEST** (UC) | USA | In English | 98 mins
8.30PM **WIND RIVER** (UC) | UK, Canada, USA | In English | 110 mins

Sunday 25 June

12.00PM **THE TEACHER** (M) | Slovakia | In Slovak with English subtitles | 102 mins
2.00PM **I AM NOT YOUR NEGRO** (M) | France, USA, Belgium, Switzerland | In English | 93 mins
5.00PM **HOLY AIR** (UC) | Israel | In Arabic, English, French, Hebrew and Italian with English subtitles | 81 mins
8.00PM **WE DON'T NEED A MAP** (UC) | Australia | In English | 85 mins
Screens with short **FINDING MAWIRANGA**

TRAVELLING FILM FESTIVAL VISITS...

NT Alice Springs, Darwin, Katherine **QLD** Bundaberg, Cairns, Mackay, Rockhampton, Toowoomba, Townsville
NSW Huskisson, Nambucca Heads, Newcastle, Port Macquarie, Sawtell, Tamworth, Ulladulla, Wagga Wagga, Wollongong **TFF AT SEA** Sydney to Tasmania

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