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SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES 2016 COMPETITION FOR SYDNEY FILM PRIZE

The 63rd Sydney Film Festival announces the 12 films selected to compete for the Sydney Film Prize this 8-19 June.

The internationally recognised Sydney Film Festival Official Competition, now in its ninth year, awards the **Sydney Film Prize** and **\$60,000 cash** in recognition of courageous, audacious and cutting-edge cinema. The 12 films selected by Festival Director Nashen Moodley are judged by a panel of industry luminaries, with the winning film announced at the end of the Festival on Sunday 19 June.

“Sydney Film Festival’s Official Competition is where audiences can experience some of the most exciting films and filmmakers in the world right now,” said **Sydney Film Festival Director Nashen Moodley**. “The Competition is a compelling program of 12 of films that demonstrate the cutting edge of filmmaking, and this year’s selection offers some true surprises,” he said.

The Festival’s opening night film, the world premiere of Indigenous writer/director Ivan Sen’s **Goldstone**, features among 12 films selected to compete. A stylish and intelligent outback noir, the film boasts a stellar Australian cast including **Aaron Pedersen, Jacki Weaver, David Wenham, and David Gulpilil**.

Four films – **Apprentice, Psycho Raman, Aquarius, It’s Only the End of the World** – in the running for the Sydney Film Prize, come to the Sydney Film Festival direct from Cannes.

The 2016 Official Competition jury members are: Jury President, international programmer and producer **Simon Field** (UK), prolific writer, director and producer **Robert Connolly** (Australia), Dublin International Film Festival’s Director **Grainne Humphreys** (Ireland), acclaimed producer **Bridget Ikin** (Australia), and cutting edge documentarian **Kazuhiro Soda** (Japan).

The SFF 2016 Official Competition selection includes:

Apprentice, from Singaporean director **Boo Junfeng**, is an emotionally and psychologically astute film that powerfully surveys the impact of capital punishment on death-row prisoners, their families, and the executioners themselves. **Boo Junfeng will attend the Festival and introduce the screenings of his film.**

Aquarius, from Brazilian director **Kleber Mendonça Filho** (*Neighbouring Sounds*, SFF Official Competition 2012), is in competing for the Palme d’Or at Cannes. A story of great ambition and scope, starring Sonia Braga (*Kiss of the Spider Woman*), the film masterfully reflects on an entire society. **Kleber Mendonça Filho will be a guest of the Festival in 2016 and introduce each screening of his film.**

Certain Women, from American director **Kelly Reichardt** (*Night Moves*, SFF 2013; *Meek’s Cutoff*, SFF 2010; *Old Joy*, SFF 2006), described by *Variety* as ‘the quietest of great American filmmakers’, is

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based on Maile Meloy's short stories; three connected melancholic, transcendent tales about independent Montana women trying to understand and shape the world around them (Laura Dern, Michelle Williams, Kristen Stewart).

The Childhood of a Leader, from American director and actor **Brady Corbet**, was the winner of Best Debut Feature and Best Director awards at the 72nd Venice International Film Festival. This is a stylish and uncompromising historical drama starring Liam Cunningham, Bérénice Bejo, Robert Pattinson and Stacy Martin. The film details the journey of a fictional character's rise to power as chronicled in three chapters – or 'tantrums'.

The Endless River, the third feature from South African director **Oliver Hermanus** (*Shirley Adams*, SFF 2010; *Beauty*, SFF 2012), is a western that deals with racial prejudice and cyclical violence in post-apartheid South Africa. **Oliver Hermanus will attend the Festival and introduce each screening of his film.**

Goldstone, from acclaimed Indigenous Australian auteur **Ivan Sen** (*Mystery Road*, SFF 2013 Opening Night film), is a stylish and intelligent outback noir that reflects on Australia's history with a compelling tale of its present. Opening the Festival, and screening as part of **Screen: Black**, a partnership with Screen Australia's Indigenous Department, the film boasts a stellar Australian cast including Aaron Pedersen, Jacki Weaver, David Wenham, and David Gulpilil. **The director will introduce the World Premiere of his film on Opening Night alongside the film's producers David Jowsey and Greer Simpkin. Sen and Jowsey will appear at a free Meet the Filmmakers Talk at the Apple Store on Saturday 11 June, 5-6pm. They will also appear in AFTRS' Black Talk, A Double Bill: Indigeneity And Australian Screen Storytelling on Sunday 12 June, 4:00pm upstairs at the Festival Hub Town Hall. The event will showcase leading creative voices and leading Indigenous auteurs and filmmakers.**

It's Only the End of the World, from one of the most celebrated young voices in contemporary cinema, the 27-year-old **Xavier Dolan** (*I Killed My Mother*, SFF 2010; *Heartbeats*, winner of the 2010 Sydney Film Festival Prize, *Mommy*, SFF 2014). Screening in Competition at Cannes, this intense family drama based on the eponymous play by Jean-Luc Lagarce is perhaps the most emotional and immersive film in Dolan's distinctive body of work, and boasts a standout French cast (Nathalie Baye, Léa Seydoux, Vincent Cassel, Marion Cotillard).

Land of Mine, from Danish filmmaker **Martin Zandvliet**, is an edgy thriller about young German prisoners of war forced to disarm hidden weapons in the aftermath of World War II. Based on extraordinary true events, the film has won awards and audience prizes at several international festivals.

Letters from War, by Portuguese director **Ivo M. Ferreira**, is a wartime love story from the producers of Miguel Gomes' *Tabu* (SFF 2012) and *Arabian Nights* (Winner of the 2015 Sydney Film Prize). The stunning black and white film is based on the letters of one of Portugal's most acclaimed writers, António Lobo Antunes. **Ivo M. Ferreira will attend the Festival and introduce each screening of his film.**

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Notes on Blindness, from British filmmakers **Peter Middleton** and **James Spinney**, is based on audio cassettes made by writer and theologian John Hull in the early '80s, documenting the decades-long deterioration of his vision and eventual loss of sight. A follow-up feature to their short films also based on Hull's experiences: *Rainfall* (SFF 2014), and the Emmy award-winning *Notes on Blindness* (SFF 2013); the film is accompanied by a virtual reality project which can be experienced at the Festival Hub. **Peter Middleton will appear at a free Meet the Filmmakers Talk at the Apple Store on Sunday 19 June, 11:30am-12:30pm.**

Psycho Raman by prolific contemporary Indian director **Anurag Kashyap** (*Gangs of Wasseypur* SFF 2012 Official Competition) follows a deranged psychopath inspired by Raman Raghav, a real-life 1960s serial killer who terrorised Mumbai. Selected for the Cannes Directors' Fortnight, the film is a highly stylish and suspenseful cat-and-mouse thriller raising issues of inequality, justice and aspiration in modern India. **Anurag Kashyap will attend the Festival and introduce each screening of his film.**

Viva by Irish filmmaker **Paddy Breathnach** (*I Went Down*) is a heartbreaking family drama set in Cuba about a troubled drag queen, written by acclaimed screenwriter Mark O'Halloran. **Paddy Breathnach will attend the Festival and introduce each screening of his film. Viva Cuba Party, a free Cuban-themed party will follow the premiere of the film at The Hub at Town Hall.**

Previous Sydney Film Prize winners include *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 also presents a number of awards to recognise excellence in local filmmaking, including; the **Dendy Awards for Australian Short Films** (which are Academy Award eligible), **Documentary Australia Foundation Award for Australian Documentary** and **Event Cinemas Australian Short Screenplay Award**. The winners are announced at the Festival's Closing Night.

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

2016 Official Competition titles:

- **APPRENTICE** Singapore, Germany, France, Hong Kong, Qatar | 2016 | 96 mins | In English and Bahasa Malaysian with English subtitles | Australian Premiere
Director, Screenwriter: Boo Junfeng | Producer: Raymond Phathanavirangoon | Cast: Fir Rahman, Wan Hanafi Su, Mastura Ahmad | World Sales: Luxbox
- **AQUARIUS** France, Brazil | 2016 | 141 mins | In Portuguese with English subtitles | Australian Premiere
Director, Screenwriter: Kleber Mendonça Filho | Producers: Saïd Ben Saïd, Emilie Lesclaux, Michel Merkt | Cast: Sonia Braga, Maeve Jinkings, Irandhir Santos | World Sales: SBS International
- **CERTAIN WOMEN** USA | 2016 | 107 mins | In English | Australian Premiere
Director, Screenwriter: Kelly Reichardt | Producer: Neil Kopp | Cast: Kristen Stewart, Michelle Williams, Laura Dern | Distributor: Sony Pictures

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- **THE CHILDHOOD OF A LEADER** UK, Hungary, France | 2015 | 116 mins | In English and French with English subtitles | Australian Premiere
Director: Brady Corbet | Screenwriters: Brady Corbet, Mona Fastvold | Producers: Chris Coen, Ron Curtis, Antoine de Clermont-Tonnerre, Helena Daneilsson, Istvan Major | Cast: Liam Cunningham, Bérénice Bejo, Robert Pattinson | World Sales: Protagonist Pictures
- **THE ENDLESS RIVER** South Africa, France | 2015 | 110 mins | In English | Australian Premiere
Director, Screenwriter: Oliver Hermanus | Producers: Didier Costet, Marvin Saven, Genevieve Hofmeyr | Cast: Nicolas Duvauchelle, Crystal-Donna Roberts, Clayton Evertson | World Sales: Urban Distribution International
- **GOLDSTONE** Australia | 2016 | 109 mins | In English | World Premiere
Director, Screenwriter: Ivan Sen | Producers: Greer Simpkin, David Jowsey | Cast: Aaron Pedersen, Alex Russell, Jacki Weaver | Distributor: Transmission Films
- **IT'S ONLY THE END OF THE WORLD** France, Canada | 2016 | 97 mins | In French with English subtitles | Australian Premiere
Director, Screenwriter: Xavier Dolan | Producers: Xavier Dolan, Nancy Grant, Nathanaël Karmitz, Sylvain Corbeil | Cast: Gaspard Ulliel, Vincent Cassel, Marion Cotillard | Distributor: Transmission Films
- **LAND OF MINE** Denmark, Germany | 2015 | 101 mins | In English, German and Danish with English subtitles | Australian Premiere
Director, Screenwriter: Martin Zandvliet | Producers: Mikael Chr. Rieks, Malte Grunert | Cast: Roland Møller, Louis Hofmann, Joel Basman | Distributor: Palace Film
- **LETTERS FROM WAR** Portugal | 2016 | 105 mins | In Portuguese with English subtitles | Australian Premier
Director: Ivo M. Ferreira | Screenwriters: Ivo M. Ferreira, Edgar Medina | Producers: Luís Urbano, Sandro Aguilár | Cast: Miguel Nunes, Margarida Vila-Nova, Ricardo Pereira | World Sales: The Match Factory
- **NOTES ON BLINDNESS** UK | 2016 | 87 mins | In English | Australian Premiere
Directors, Screenwriters: Peter Middleton, James Spinney | Producers: Mike Brett, Jo-Jo Ellison, Steve Jamison, Peter Middleton, James Spinney, Alex Osborne | Cast: Dan Skinner, Simone Kirby, | World Sales: Cinephil
- **PSYCHO RAMAN** India | 2016 | 128 mins | In Hindi with English subtitles | Australian Premiere
Director: Anurag Kashyap | Screenwriters: Vasan Bala, Anurag Kashyap | Producer: Madhu Mantena | Cast: Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Sobhita Dhulipala, Vicky Kaushal | World Sales: Stray Dogs
- **VIVA** Ireland | 2015 | 100 mins | In Spanish with English subtitles | Australian Premiere
Director: Paddy Breathnach | Screenwriter: Mark O'Halloran | Producers: Rebecca O'Flanagan, Robert Walpole | Cast: Jorge Perugorria, Luis Alberto Garcia, Héctor Medina | Festivals: Pascale Ramonda

Sydney Film Festival runs 8 – 19 June 2016.

Tickets for Sydney Film Festival 2016 are on sale now. Please call 1300 733 733 or visit sff.org.au for more information.

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

EDITORS NOTES

Expanded 2016 Official Competition titles:

Apprentice

Singapore, Germany, France, Hong Kong, Qatar | 2016 | 96 mins | In English and Bahasa Malaysian with English subtitles | Australian Premiere

Director, Screenwriter: Boo Junfeng | Producer: Raymond Phathanavirangoon | Cast: Fir Rahman, Wan Hanafi Su, Mastura Ahmad | World Sales: Luxbox

Selected for Cannes Un Certain Regard, Boo Junfeng's second feature is an emotionally and psychologically astute film about a Singaporean correctional officer who serves as the apprentice to the chief executioner. Aiman is a 28-year-old prison guard who lives with his sister in modest circumstances. When he is transferred to a new prison, Aiman becomes fascinated by an older warden named Rahim, who turns out to be the long-serving chief executioner of the prison. Soon Rahim asks Aiman to serve as his apprentice. Aiman harbours a secret however; one that has had a profound effect on his family life, and will certainly impact on his new career path. Superb cinematography (partly shot at the decommissioned facilities of Maitland Gaol and Parramatta Correctional Centre in New South Wales) and clever sound design create an eerie sense of darkness and loss at the prison. *Apprentice* powerfully surveys the impact of capital punishment on death-row prisoners, their families, and the executioners themselves. Filled with conflict and tension, this is a complex and rewarding film.

Aquarius

France, Brazil | 2016 | 141 mins | In Portuguese with English subtitles | Australian Premiere

Director, Screenwriter: Kleber Mendonça Filho | Producers: Saïd Ben Saïd, Emilie Lesclaux, Michel Merkt | Cast: Sonia Braga, Maeve Jinkings, Irandhir Santos | World Sales: SBS International

Neighbouring Sounds, Kleber Mendonça Filho's extraordinary examination of race, class and fear in Recife, Brazil appeared in the SFF Official Competition in 2012. In *Aquarius*, selected for the Competition in Cannes, Mendonça returns to his native Recife, again telling a story of great ambition and scope. This time he hones in on an unforgettable protagonist Clara, played brilliantly by the incomparable Sonia Braga (*Kiss of the Spider Woman*). 65-year-old Clara is a fiercely independent and intelligent retired music critic and the last resident of the seaside Aquarius building. Every other apartment has been acquired by a development company with plans for the site. Clara politely refuses to sell, but the requests from the company become increasingly aggressive. So follows an escalating battle between Clara and the firm. In Clara, Mendonça has created a remarkable

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character for whom we feel great concern and affection. The film's strength is in the way her life is conveyed in its fullness – her intellectual, family and sex lives are all explored. Through Clara, Mendonça masterfully reflects on an entire society in this powerful and complex film.

Certain Women

USA | 2016 | 107 mins | In English | Australian Premiere

Director, Screenwriter: Kelly Reichardt | Producer: Neil Kopp | Cast: Kristen Stewart, Michelle Williams, Laura Dern | Distributor: Sony Pictures

Described by *Variety* as 'the quietest of great American filmmakers', Kelly Reichardt has distinguished herself as a director able to convey deep emotion and meaning through her concise, atmospheric storytelling. Her new film, based on Maile Meloy's short stories, tells three connected stories of independent Montana women trying to understand and shape the world around them. Attorney Laura (Laura Dern) is pestered by a client eager to have his case reopened and things quickly escalate to a hostage crisis. Meanwhile, on an elderly family friend's property, Gina (Michelle Williams) and her husband find the ideal sandstone for the dream home they're building on the outskirts of town. They convince him to part with the stone, but it's unclear that he's aware of what he's promising. In the third story, a young woman (Lily Gladstone) who works as a ranch hand becomes fascinated with Elizabeth (Kristen Stewart), a lawyer who runs legal workshops in the small town. Reichardt uses the landscape and its stillness as a spectacular backdrop to these melancholic, transcendent tales. Leaving much unsaid, she vividly creates a unique and mesmerising world that is a pleasure to enter.

The Childhood of a Leader

UK, Hungary, France | 2015 | 116 mins | In English and French with English subtitles | Australian Premiere

Director: Brady Corbet | Screenwriters: Brady Corbet, Mona Fastvold | Producers: Chris Coen, Ron Curtis, Antoine de Clermont-Tonnerre, Helena Daneilsson, Istvan Major | Cast: Liam Cunningham, Bérénice Bejo, Robert Pattinson | World Sales: Protagonist Pictures

Winner of Best Debut Feature and Best Director awards at Venice, this stylish and uncompromising historical drama stars Liam Cunningham, Bérénice Bejo, Robert Pattinson and Stacy Martin. As an actor, Brady Corbet has displayed a taste for working with audacious filmmakers like Michael Haneke, Olivier Assayas and Lars von Trier. So it comes as no surprise that his feature directorial debut is something this grand and ambitious. *The Childhood of a Leader* is a period piece that liberally plays with historical fact in detailing the journey of the fictional Prescott (Tom Sweet). His rise to power is chronicled in three chapters – or 'tantrums', as they're cheekily titled. At the end of WWI, the boy is living in France with his influential parents, when he begins to subvert the order of things, shifting the balance of power in the family. An enigmatic and challenging speculation about the beginnings of fascism conveyed with surrealism and operatic intensity, the film has a whirlwind impact on the senses and the mind. With a formidable ensemble cast, and an extraordinary head-trip of a music score from the legendary Scott Walker, this is historical drama as you've never seen before.

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The Endless River

South Africa, France | 2015 | 110 mins | In English | Australian Premiere

Director, Screenwriter: Oliver Hermanus | Producers: Didier Costet, Marvin Saven, Genevieve Hofmeyr | Cast: Nicolas Duvauchelle, Crystal-Donna Roberts, Clayton Evertson | World Sales: Urban Distribution International

The Endless River opens with a series of stunning rural South African landscape shots, accompanied by a swelling orchestral score, as the film's credits appear in a classic Hollywood style typeface. It's a stirring intro that perfectly primes you for the film to follow, which is at once traditional and contemporary. Writer-director Oliver Hermanus's third feature is a western, albeit one that deals with racial prejudice and cyclical violence in post-apartheid South Africa – the small village town of Riviersonderend, specifically. Here, Percy (Clayton Evertson) returns home to his wife Tiny (Crystal-Donna Roberts) after a four-year prison stint for gang activity. Elsewhere, Gilles (Nicolas Duvauchelle) and his family are subjected to horrific violence. This leads to an investigation that exposes the corruption and prejudice of the local authorities, while also bringing Gilles and Tiny together in unexpected ways. With an intricate plot and stunning widescreen cinematography, *The Endless River* is at once brutal and beautiful, combining operatic storytelling and social commentary to distinctive and powerful effect.

Goldstone

Australia | 2016 | 109 mins | In English | World Premiere

Director, Screenwriter: Ivan Sen | Producers: Greer Simpkin, David Jowsey | Cast: Aaron Pedersen, Alex Russell, Jacki Weaver | Distributor: Transmission Films

Australian auteur Ivan Sen's new feature is a complex, stylish and intelligent western that reflects on Australia's history with a compelling tale of its present. *Goldstone* sees the excellent Aaron Pedersen (*Mystery Road*, SFF 2013) reprise his role as troubled Indigenous detective Jay Swan. On the trail of a missing person, Jay finds himself in the small mining town of Goldstone, where he is immediately arrested for drunk driving by young local cop Josh (Alex Russell). When Jay's motel room is blasted with gunfire, it becomes clear that something larger is at play in the district. Jay and Josh struggle to overcome their mutual distrust to uncover the unpleasant truth. Sen, who also shot the film, takes full advantage of the beauty of the outback without shying away from the scars it bears – both societal and environmental. With an all-star cast including Jacki Weaver, David Wenham, David Gulpilil, Cheng Pei-pei, Michelle Lim Davidson and Tom E. Lewis, *Goldstone* is a taut, intelligent thriller encompassing the environment, corruption, politics, corporate greed, tradition and mythology.

It's Only the End of the World

France, Canada | 2016 | 97 mins | In French with English subtitles | Australian Premiere

Director, Screenwriter: Xavier Dolan | Producers: Xavier Dolan, Nancy Grant, Nathanaël Karmitz, Sylvain Corbeil | Cast: Gaspard Ulliel, Vincent Cassel, Marion Cotillard | Distributor: Transmission Films

Prodigiously talented Xavier Dolan, who at the age of 27 has already created a distinctive body of work, has made perhaps his most emotional and immersive film, the 2016 Cannes Competition

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contender *It's Only the End of the World*. Dolan, who won the Sydney Film Prize with *Heartbeats* (SFF 2010), and the Jury Prize at Cannes with *Mommy* (SFF 2014), is a superb chronicler of relationships, both romantic and familial. In his new film, he assembles a standout French cast for an intense family drama based on the eponymous play by Jean-Luc Lagarce. Successful writer Louis (Gaspard Ulliel) returns to his hometown after a twelve-year absence to break the news of his impending death. He is welcomed, with varying degrees of warmth, by his mother (Nathalie Baye), sister Suzanne (Léa Seydoux), brother Antoine (Vincent Cassel) and sister-in-law Catherine (Marion Cotillard). What should be a sincere reunion soon turns into an afternoon of bickering and recriminations, and Louis' mind wanders back to some pivotal memories. With extreme close-ups eliciting raw, expressive performances from the superb cast, the film draws you in close, as if you are yourself a member of this family of strangers.

Land of Mine

Denmark, Germany | 2015 | 101 mins | In English, German and Danish with English subtitles
| Australian Premiere

Director, Screenwriter: Martin Zandvliet | Producers: Mikael Chr. Rieks, Malte Grunert | Cast: Roland Møller, Louis Hofmann, Joel Basman | Distributor: Palace Film

Winner of awards and audience prizes at several festivals, *Land of Mine*, based on extraordinary true events, is an edgy thriller about young German prisoners of war forced to disarm hidden weapons in the aftermath of World War II. Following the Nazi surrender, a group of teenaged Germans, conscripted at the tail end of the war, are put to work on the coast of Denmark. With minimal training, they are sent to disarm the landmines that lie hidden on Danish beaches. The Danish sergeant, Rasmussen (Roland Møller, *A Hijacking*, SFF 2013) supervises the young soldiers with an iron fist. Embittered by the brutal German occupation, he initially lacks sympathy for the young men. Gradually empathy develops, and Rasmussen grows to recognise the horror of the situation. Director Martin Zandvliet creates extraordinary tension but his humane concerns are very much the centre of the film, and he draws heartbreaking performances from his talented cast. *Land of Mine* is an unforgettable film about a little-known part of history that has great resonance all these years later.

Letters From War

Portugal | 2016 | 105 mins | In Portuguese with English subtitles | Australian Premier

Director: Ivo M. Ferreira | Screenwriters: Ivo M. Ferreira, Edgar Medina | Producers: Luís Urbano, Sandro Aguilar | Cast: Miguel Nunes, Margarida Vila-Nova, Ricardo Pereira | World Sales: The Match Factory

Gorgeous images and passionate declarations come together in an enchanting wartime love story from the producers of Miguel Gomes' *Tabu* (SFF 2012) and *Arabian Nights* (2015 Sydney Film Prize winner). The stunning black and white film is based on the letters of one of Portugal's most acclaimed writers, António Lobo Antunes. In 1971, António (Miguel Nunes), also a medical doctor, was drafted into the Portuguese Army to serve in one of the most violent zones of the Colonial War: East Angola. In this desperate setting, he writes letters of love and desire to his pregnant wife Maria José (Margarida Vila-Nova) back in Portugal. As António is exposed to the reality of his government's brutal policies in Angola, he becomes increasingly critical and shares his political transformation in his letters home. A tremendous cinematographic achievement, *Letters from War* manages to find

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beauty in this war zone, conveying a strong anti-war message as it tells of a sensual romance interrupted by distance. The letters themselves, as read by Maria José, weave an intoxicating spell of their own in this singular, formally daring work.

Notes on Blindness

UK | 2016 | 87 mins | In English | Australian Premiere

Directors, Screenwriters: Peter Middleton, James Spinney | Producers: Mike Brett, Jo-Jo Ellison, Steve Jamison, Peter Middleton, James Spinney, Alex Osborne | Cast: Dan Skinner, Simone Kirby, | World Sales: Cinephil

In the early 1980s, writer and theologian John Hull lost his eyesight after decades of steady deterioration, documenting his experience on audio cassettes. Upon publication, author and neurologist Oliver Sacks described Hull's diaries as "The most extraordinary, precise, deep and beautiful account of blindness I have ever read. It is to my mind a masterpiece." In 2013, Spinney and Middleton made an award-winning short film based on Hull's experiences entitled *Notes on Blindness: Rainfall* (SFF 2014). Hull's profound life is now the inspiration for this breathtaking feature-length film. The filmmaking duo, with an approach akin to Clio Barnard's *The Arbor* (SFF 2011), cast actors Dan Skinner and Simone Kirby to lip sync to Hull's original recordings. The resulting film, and associated VR project (which can be viewed at the Festival Hub), is a remarkable re-creation of the author's thoughts and observations that unearths the interior world of blindness. Hull was closely involved with the process before his death, aged 80, in July last year.

Psycho Raman

India | 2016 | 128 mins | In Hindi with English subtitles | Australian Premiere

Director: Anurag Kashyap | Screenwriters: Vasan Bala, Anurag Kashyap | Producer: Madhu Mantena | Cast: Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Sobhita Dhulipala, Vicky Kaushal | World Sales: Stray Dogs

A leading figure of independent Indian cinema, Anurag Kashyap has directed landmark films such as *Dev D*, *Black Friday* and *Gangs of Wasseypur* (SFF 2012 Official Competition) and produced *Monsoon Shootout* (SFF 2013) and *The Lunchbox* (SFF 2014). His new film, selected for the Cannes Directors' Fortnight, is a highly stylish and suspenseful cat-and-mouse thriller. Set in contemporary Mumbai, it follows Ramanna (Nawazuddin Siddiqui), a deranged psychopath inspired by Raman Raghav, a real-life 1960s serial killer who terrorised the city. In hot pursuit is the young cop Raghavan (Vicky Kaushal), a drug addict who at one point has the killer in his grasp only to let him escape. What follows is an exhilarating chase, as the killer and cop circle each other, coming closer and closer to an explosive clash. Kashyap, a master of using genre conventions for greater purpose, uses his intriguing, damaged characters to raise issues of inequality, justice and aspiration in modern India. Kashyap expertly ratchets up the tension, and with perfect use of fantastic lead performances, makes a stylistically bold and provocative film.

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Viva

Ireland | 2015 | 100 mins | In Spanish with English subtitles | Australian Premiere
Director: Paddy Breathnach | Screenwriter: Mark O'Halloran | Producers: Rebecca O'Flanagan, Robert Walpole | Cast: Jorge Perugorría, Luis Alberto García, Héctor Medina | Festivals: Pascale Ramonda

Paddy Breathnach uncovers authentic Cuba in this heartbreaking family drama about a troubled drag queen; an audience favourite at festivals all around the world. In the vibrant drag community of contemporary Havana, Jesus (Héctor Medina) waits for the courage to steal the spotlight from troublesome local divas. His initial steps towards stardom are complicated by the arrival of his charismatic jailbird father Angel (Jorge Perugorría), who he hasn't seen since he was a toddler. Realising a long-cherished passion project, Paddy Breathnach (*I Went Down*, 1997) has created a masterful and intimate portrayal of love and sacrifice, his camera capturing both the beauty of the Cuban capital and the pain beneath its alluring exterior. Breathnach became interested in the underground world of drag performers when he visited Havana in 1996. He captures the less touristy, grittier side of Havana in vividly detailed vignettes. Written by acclaimed screenwriter Mark O'Halloran (*Adam & Paul*, 2004; *Garage*, 2007), *Viva* continues his penchant for creating engaging stories that shine a light on hidden lives, and break your heart into a million pieces.

ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

From **Wednesday 8 June to Sunday 19 June 2016**, the 63rd 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. Each year the Festival's programming team curates 12 days of cinema sourced from world-famous film festivals, including Cannes, Sundance, Toronto and the Berlinale; as well as Australia's finest productions.

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 are: *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 takes place across greater Sydney: at the State Theatre, Event Cinemas George Street, Dendy Opera Quays, Dendy Newtown, Skyline Drive-In Blacktown, Art Gallery of NSW, Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace Cremorne, Casula Powerhouse, the Festival Hub at Sydney Town Hall and SFF Outdoor Screen.

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: www.sff.org.au.

The 63rd Sydney Film Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Screen NSW and Destination NSW, the Federal Government through Screen Australia and the City of Sydney. The Festival's Strategic Partner is the NSW Government through Destination NSW.

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