



## MEDIA RELEASE

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 10:00 WEDNESDAY 7 MAY 2014**

# SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES THE 10 FINALISTS FOR THE 2014 DOCUMENTARY AUSTRALIA FOUNDATION AWARD

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The 2014 Sydney Film Festival is proud to announce the 10 finalists in the inaugural Documentary Australia Foundation Prize for Australian Documentary.

For the first time, the Documentary Australia Foundation will award the \$10,000 Australian Documentary Award to a film screening in the 2014 Sydney Film Festival this June. The winner will be announced during the Closing Night Gala on Sunday 15 June at the State Theatre.

"Australia has a long and proud tradition of documentary filmmaking. This award acknowledges the passion and commitment of our documentary filmmakers, who provide the window through which we witness beauty, understand tragedy and share in the wonder of our world," said **Documentary Australia Foundation CEO, Dr Mitzi Goldman**. "We are excited about extending our support for Australian documentary filmmaking by partnering with Sydney Film Festival and this important award."

Since its opening year in 1954, the Sydney Film Festival has showcased Australian documentary filmmaking. Now in its sixth year, entrants/entries of any length compete for a \$10,000 Australian Documentary Prize awarded at the Closing Night Awards Ceremony at the State Theatre on Sunday 15 June.

Previous winners of the Australian Documentary prize at Sydney Film Festival include; *Buckskin* (2013), *Killing Anna* (2012), *Life in Movement* (2011), *The Snowman* (2010), in 2009 the prize was shared between *Contact* and *A Good Man* (each film received a \$10,000 cash prize).

**The 10 finalists for the 2014 Sydney Film Festival Documentary Australia Foundation Award for Australian Documentary Film are:**

### **35 Letters**

Australia | 2014 | 98 mins | In English | World Premiere

Director, Screenwriter: *Janine Hosking* | Producers: *Janine Hosking, Carol Seeley* | Production Company: *iKandy Films*

On Michelle Flowers' 35th birthday she received a bundle of letters from her younger sister Angelique. This was no humdrum correspondence; rather they were birthday wishes full of charm and wit. The letters expressed Angelique's love of nature, art and literature, and most of all her unique and joyful personality, despite suffering from a painful disease since her mid-teens. A year on, she's in the last phases of terminal illness, and is struggling to find a peaceful way to die – not in a hospice, but somewhere altogether more in tune with her spirit.

Janine Hosking's innovative and moving film follows Angelique's final months as she struggles to find grace in an inflexible health care system. Janine Hosking won a Walkley Award in 1997. Her films include *Mademoiselle and the Doctor*, *My Khmer Heart*, *Ganja Queen*, *The Pageant* and *I'm Not Dead Yet* (SFF 2011).

### **All This Mayhem**

Australia | 2013 | 96 mins | In English

*Director: Eddie Martin | Producers: George Pank, Eddie Martin, James Gay-Rees | Distributor: Entertainment One Australia*

Two skateboarding brothers – self-described bogans – from the wrong side of Melbourne discover their unique talents on the ramps of Prahran. The older, short-tempered one, Tas Pappas, quits school and heads for the US skateboarding circuit. He starts out stony broke, sleeping under the ramp, but soon finds his groove. His younger brother Ben, a natural on the board, joins him and together they hit the big time. Then things take an unexpected turn. Full of footage of skateboarding magic, director Eddie Martin's unflinching film is both an exposé of the perils of success and an ode to brotherly love.

Eddie Martin's debut film (2005) won the Audience Award at the St Kilda Film Festival, and *Lionel* (2008) was nominated for Best Documentary Feature at the 2009 AFI Awards.

### **Black Panther Woman**

Australia | 2014 | 52 mins | In English | World Premiere

*Director, Producer: Rachel Perkins | Screenwriters: Rachel Perkins, Marlene Cummins | Distributor: SBS International*

In 1971, Marlene Cummins, a vivacious Indigenous teen, was a member of Brisbane's short-lived chapter of the Black Panthers, a global Black revolutionary movement. Her first love was the group's founder, the dead-eyed and sharp-talking Dennis Walker. The Panthers spoke of Black Power and equality, but this didn't extend to the women in the group. Many on the frontline paid a hefty price for their loyalty to the cause. Thirty years on, Marlene is invited to speak at a conference of ex Panthers from around the world, an opportunity to finally share her memories. This is a disturbing story, told with great sensitivity by director Rachel Perkins.

Rachel Perkins' filmmaking work spans documentary, TV drama series, telemovies and feature films. Her directing credits include *Redfern Now*, *Mabo* (SFF 2012), *Bran Nue Dae*, *One Night the Moon*, *First Australians* and *Radiance* (SFF 1998).

### **China's 3Dreams**

Australia | 2014 | 90 mins | In English and Mandarin with English subtitles | World Premiere

*Director, Screenwriter, Producer: Nick Torrens | World Sales: TVF International*

The changing face of China is the subject of Nick Torrens' latest film, his third on the region. Once China's ordinary citizens dreamed of a watch, a bicycle and a radio. Today they strive for wealth and a better life, often to the detriment of family and tradition. The generation gap is wider than the Three Gorges. Grandparents are reluctant to speak of their experiences during the Cultural Revolution and grandchildren are only concerned with material gains, saying, "I'd rather cry in a BMW than laugh on a bicycle." Torrens' absorbing film, 12 years in the making, successfully opens the door on the past, and questions its impact on the present.

Nick Torrens' work has screened at major film festivals, on international television and all Australian television networks. Two of his films premiered at SFF: *To Get Rich Is Glorious* (1998) and *The Men Who Conquered China* (2004).

### **The Last Impresario**

Australia | 2013 | 85 mins | In English | Australian Premiere

*Director, Screenwriter: Gracie Otto | Producer: Nicole O'Donohue | Distributor: Umbrella Entertainment*

At the 2010 Cannes Film Festival, director Gracie Otto met an elegant elderly man, who appeared to know everyone in town. His name was Michael White – "the most famous person you've never heard of," according to Greta Scacchi. He was a British theatre impresario whose résumé began with the scandalous and continued through Yoko Ono to *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. He was a boundary-breaker extraordinaire – think *Oh! Calcutta!* and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* – who staged both hits and flops. Otto's vibrant documentary celebrates the life of this most entertaining man from the entertainment world.

Gracie Otto graduated from Sydney Film School in 2006. Her five short films – *Seamstress*, *La même nuit*, *Tango Trois*, *Broken Beat*, *Kill Blondes*– have won awards and screened internationally.

### ***Love Marriage In Kabul***

Australia | 2013 | 84 mins | In English and Farsi with English subtitles | World Premiere

*Director: Amin Palangi | Producer: Pat Fiske | Production Company: Bower Bird Films*

At the centre of Amin Palangi's impressive directorial debut is a determined and admirable Afghani Australian. Mahboba Rawi spends part of her year driving cabs in Sydney and the rest at the orphanage she founded in Kabul. Abdul was one of the first children she rescued. When he wants to marry the girl of his choice, like any mother, she tries to help out. The object of his affection is Fatemeh, but neither Abdul nor Mahboba can afford the exorbitant dowry that her widowed father demands. As we follow Abdul's dogged attempts to secure his bride, we learn much about the traditions and challenges of this part of the world.

Amin Palangi is an AFTRS graduate and is currently working towards finishing his PhD. He is the Screen Culture Producer at Parramatta's Information and Cultural Exchange, mentoring emerging filmmakers and storytellers.

### ***Once My Mother***

Australia | 2013 | 75 mins | In English, Polish and Ukrainian with English subtitles

*Director, Screenwriter: Sophia Turkiewicz | Producer: Rod Freedman | Production Company: Change Focus Media*

Helen's life was riddled with misfortune. As a motherless child in Eastern Europe she was placed with uncaring relatives. She escaped, but then the Second World War began. Deported to a Siberian gulag, she survived starvation rations and a forced march of thousands of kilometres. Finally, this irrepressible woman finds happiness in a Rhodesian internment camp, but fate is about to play another trick. Helen's daughter, director Sophie Turkiewicz, tells her mother's miraculous story with archival and personal footage. Significantly, it is also Sophie's story. The bond between mother and daughter is examined in all its strength and fragility, in this heartrending and redemptive documentary.

Sophie Turkiewicz was selected for the first intake of full-time students at AFTRS. Since graduating, she has worked a freelance drama director in film and television. Her credits include *Silver City*, *Something in the Air*, *Escape of the Artful Dodger*, *Time's Raging* and *I've Come About the Suicide*.

### ***The Redfern Story***

Australia | 2014 | 57 mins | In English | World Premiere

*Director, Screenwriter: Darlene Johnson | Producers: Sue Milliken, Darlene Johnson | Production Company: Samson Productions Pty Ltd*

In the early '70s, Aboriginal political activism took to the stage with the first all-Indigenous theatre company, the National Black Theatre in inner-city Redfern. Against the backdrop of street protests, a group of actors and activists created a voice for their community; the theatre became a social hub where Indigenous identity could be explored. Darlene Johnson's forceful documentary features interviews with Indigenous media pioneer Lester Bostock, writer Gerry Bostock, actor Lillian Crombie, activist-academic Gary Foley, academic Marcia Langton and actors Rachael Maza, Bryan Brown and Bindi Williams.

Darlene Johnson's credits include *Two-Bob Mermaid*, *Stolen Generations*, *Stranger in My Skin*, *Everyday Brave*, *Gulpili – One Red Blood*, *Crocodile Dreaming* and *River of No Return* (SFF 2008).

### ***Tender***

Australia | 2013 | 73 mins | In English

*Director, Screenwriter: Lynette Wallworth | Producer: Kath Shelper | Production Company: Scarlett Pictures*

A community centre in Port Kembla is the warm heart of this extraordinary documentary from artist-filmmaker Lynette Wallworth. Burials are not just an emotional trauma, but a financial struggle for cash-strapped locals. The centre's committee decides to investigate other options, including running their own not-for-profit funeral business. As discussions on just how to proceed continue, the close knit group must deal with a terminal illness close to home. With stunning visuals and music from maverick maestros Nick Cave and Warren Ellis, this beautiful documentary speaks tenderly of love and death.

Lynette Wallworth is an Australian artist whose practice spans video installation, photography and film. Her work has been presented in the USA, UK, New Zealand, Melbourne and Sydney.

### ***Ukraine is Not a Brothel***

Australia, Ukraine | 2013 | 80 mins | In Ukrainian and Russian with English subtitles | Australian Premiere  
*Director: Kitty Green | Producers: Kitty Green, Jonathan auf der Heide, Michael Latham | World Sales: Cinephil*  
In Australian filmmaker Kitty Green's fascinating and intimate documentary, the members of FEMEN, the infamously topless female protestors of Ukraine, talk about life in their country as they shower off their slogans. The treatment of Ukrainian women – more often viewed as whores than as humans – is their main bone of contention. Driven by a need for empowerment, the women find strength in walking down the streets in G-strings, but the authorities react violently. The disturbing question, however, is just who is controlling their campaign? Green, in her debut feature-length documentary, displays a deft hand in revealing both the courage and vulnerability of these self-described naked warriors against patriarchy.

Kitty Green graduated from the Victorian College of Arts; her graduating film *Spilt* screened at festivals internationally. She then worked at the ABC shooting, editing and producing documentary content.

**The 61<sup>st</sup> Sydney Film Festival runs 4-15 June and brings a packed program of screenings and special events to even more venues across Sydney.** For tickets and full up-to-date program information visit [sff.org.au](http://sff.org.au)

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### **ABOUT DOCUMENTARY AUSTRALIA FOUNDATION**

Documentary Australia Foundation (DAF) brings philanthropists and filmmakers together to create social change. DAF fosters creative partnerships with documentary storytelling at its core, working with filmmakers to create social action campaigns. DAF is Australia's only independent, non-profit initiative enabling private funding for cultural and social impact documentary filmmaking, and has facilitated funding for more than 600 projects from hundreds of private donors since opening its doors in November 2008.

Info: [documentaryaustralia.com.au](http://documentaryaustralia.com.au)

### **ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL**

Sydney Film Festival screens feature films, documentaries, short films and animated films across the city at the State Theatre, Event Cinemas George Street, Dendy Opera Quays, the Art Gallery of NSW, Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace Cremorne, the Apple Store, SFFTV at Martin Place, Skyline Drive-In Blacktown, and the Festival Hub at Town Hall.

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

Sydney Film Festival also presents 12 films that vie for the Official Competition, a highly respected international 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 include: *Only God Forgives* (2013), *Alps* (2012), *A Separation* (2011) – which went on to win an Academy Award, *Heartbeats* (2010), *Bronson* (2009) and *Hunger* (2008).

The 61st Sydney Film Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Screen NSW, the Federal Government through Screen Australia, and the City of Sydney. The Festival's Strategic partner is the NSW Government through Destination NSW.

**What:** Sydney Film Festival

**When:** 4-15 June, 2014

**Tickets & Info:** 1300 733 733 [sff.org.au](http://sff.org.au)

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