



MEDIA RELEASE
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The 60th Sydney Film Festival Closes on a Record-Breaking High and Audience Awards Announced

The 60th Sydney Film Festival wrapped on Sunday 16 June 2013 with the Australian Premiere of the documentary *Twenty Feet from Stardom*, bringing to a close **the most highly attended Sydney Film Festival to date**.

“Attendances at films and talks grew by 17% to 143,050,” said SFF CEO Leigh Small. “There was also a 22% increase in tickets issued leading to a 20% increase in revenue. Beyond the numbers, the favourable buzz all over the city was palpable – this is an event that Sydney continues to embrace anew each year.”

“In this, my second year as Festival Director, it was both exciting and humbling to be part of a team that delivered to Sydney its 60th film festival,” said SFF Festival Director Nashen Moodley. “Seeing such growing popularity with audiences for the screenings, talks and other events makes all the hard work seem so worthwhile. The filmmakers who participated in the festival were delighted with the response of the audience, and it was great to see so many Australian and international filmmakers interacting and sharing ideas, approaches and inspiration.”

This year, SFF announced a new partnership entitled **Screen: Black** with Screen Australia’s Indigenous Department, a team that has nurtured many of the projects and filmmakers that Sydney Film Festival has screened. This year’s program featured award-winning director Ivan Sen’s Opening Night film *Mystery Road*; Steven McGregor’s documentary *Big Name No Blanket*; emerging talent Dylan McDonald’s documentary, *Buckskin* – which was awarded the **2013 Foxtel Australian Documentary Prize** – and Jon Bell’s short film *The Chuck In*.

The Hon. George Souris, Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing and Minister for the Arts, said the 60th Sydney Film Festival has played a starring role in a spectacular month of special events.

“Sydney Film Festival is part of what is fast becoming a globally recognised winter festival program that showcases Sydney’s creative expertise and capacity for staging major events.”

“Congratulations to Nashen Moodley and the SFF team on preparing such a superb program, which included several World Premieres. It’s pleasing to see so many sold-out sessions, including the Opening

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Night screening of *Mystery Road*. If the lines outside the cinemas on George Street waiting to attend SFF films are any indication, the enthusiastic support of audiences demonstrates the importance of arts and culture to the community. The NSW Government recognises this through its support for the screen industry, as well as tourism and major events," said Minister Souris.

The **Festival Hub at Lower Town Hall** returned for a second successful year with attendances increasing by **16 per cent**. Over ten days the Festival Hub attracted over **9,000** visitors for free filmmaker talks, screenings, live acts and mingling with other patrons at the Keystone Bar. A Hub highlight was award-winning European artist and filmmaker **Jeff Desom's *Rear Window Loop***, stunning 20-minute panoramic three-channel video projection shown daily. Other memorable moments included steamy burlesque performances, outrageous home-grown stand-up comedy, and a dance-a-rama Freak Me Out disco spun by the genre's programmer **Richard Kuipers**.

All up there were a total of **278** sessions held across the **12** days of the Festival, including **192** films from **55** countries in **54** languages, **20** world premieres, **4** international premieres and **124** Australian premieres, **17** retrospective titles, **82** features, **51** documentaries and **30** short films.

For the first time ever SFF screened films from Angola (***Death Metal Angola***, screening in the Sounds on Screen program), Bangladesh (***Television***), North Korea (***Comrade Kim Goes Flying***), Malawi (***William and the Windmill***) and Saudi Arabia (***Wadjda*** directed by Saudi Arabia's first-ever female filmmaker).

Over **150** Australian and International filmmakers attended SFF 2013. This prestigious list included guests from **19** countries who attended **over 75 talks and Q&A sessions** hosted by filmmakers, writers, actors and industry guests across **six** venues over **12** days. There were **15** free talks and more than **60** screenings with filmmaker introductions and post-film Q&As at this year's festival, across all venues.

"Sydney Film Festival is both an important cultural event for Sydney and the Australian film industry," said **Ruth Harley, Screen Australia's Chief Executive**. "The Festival is significant in the development of fostering the talents of new Australian filmmakers and showcasing the best new Australian films. It also provides an opportunity for audiences to interact with international filmmakers. It is wonderful to see the Sydney Film Festival continue to grow in popularity with audiences."

2013 Foxtel Movies Audience Awards

SFF is also proud to announce the 2013 Foxtel Movies Audience Awards today. The awards are SFF's people's choice awards, and the winners reflect the most popular feature-length films at the Festival. After each screening, audience members were invited to rate each film via our app- and SMS-based voting systems.

The **Audience Award for Best Narrative Feature** is the award-winning Australian film ***The Rocket***, directed by Australian director **Kim Mordaunt** (*Bomb Harvest*) and producer **Sylvia Wilczynski**. This heart-warming coming-of-age tale set entirely in Laos screened at the Tribeca Film Festival, where it won the Best Narrative Feature and Best Actor prizes; and was earlier awarded three prizes at the Berlinale, including the Crystal Bear. *The Rocket* opens nationally in cinemas on August 29, 2013.

The **Audience Award for Best Documentary** is ***The Crossing***, directed by **Julian Harvey**, which screened in the Foxtel Australian Documentary competition. The film follows two young Australians, Clark Carter and Chris Bray, as they attempt the difficult crossing of a remote island in the Arctic.

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ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

Sydney Film Festival screens feature films, documentaries, short films and animations 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, Grasshopper Lounge and SFFTV@Martin Place.

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

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 Festival Official Competition winners include: *Alps* (2012), *A Separation* (2011) – which went on to win an Academy Award®, *Heartbeats* (2010), *Bronson* (2009) and *Hunger* (2008).

The 60th Sydney Film Festival was 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.

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