



MEDIA RELEASE
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Sydney Film Festival, 5- 16 June, presents Foxtel Australian Documentary Prize Finalists

Ten finalists have been shortlisted for the prestigious 2013 Foxtel Australian Documentary Prize, now in its fifth year at Sydney Film Festival. The winner is awarded a generous cash prize of \$10,000 sponsored by Foxtel.

This year's finalists are Australian documentarians who demonstrate their storytelling skills and unlimited curiosity about our world. These documentaries look at subjects as diverse as the first Burmese female pop group in *Miss Nikki and the Tiger Girls*; the legacy of Indigenous Australian rock 'n' roll/reggae legend George Rrurrumbu in *Big Name No Blanket*; and the power of art to bring social change in Afghanistan in *Love City Jalalabad*.

Five filmmakers take you on personal journeys of discovery and exploration: one young woman's isolated experience of living in the French Alps in *Audrey of the Alps*; a group of recovering drug addicts' journey to redemption in *The Unlikely Pilgrims*; two young Australians as they set off on the adventure of a lifetime in the Arctic in *The Crossing*; the journey of Adelaide's Jack Buckskin to reconnect with the Indigenous community by learning his ancestral language and culture in *Buckskin*; and the efforts of award-winning photographer Murray Frederick (*Salt*) to capture the dangerously elusive and beautiful sights of Greenland's icecaps in *Nothing on Earth*.

Featuring as SFF's Gourmet Cinema film for this year is *Red Obsession*, narrated by Russell Crowe, which looks at China's thirst for Bordeaux wines. Audiences can view the film followed by a gourmet Bordeaux-inspired feast by top Australian celebrity chef Luke Mangan at Hilton Sydney's glass brasserie.

In collaboration with Vivid LIVE, SFF will screen the world premiere of *The Sunnyboy*, which follows Australian musician Jeremy Oxley's 30-year struggle with schizophrenia as he considers returning to the stage with his band The Sunnyboys after a 19-year hiatus. The screening will follow with the band playing a live gig at Sydney Opera House Concert Hall. The film also screens on the Saturday 8 June.

"This year's Foxtel Australian Documentary Prize line-up demonstrates the power of documentaries to take audiences on journeys to places they never knew existed," said **SFF Programs Manager Jenny Neighbour**. "The 10 films, diverse in both form and content, are full of inspiring people, enlightening stories and emotional high notes."

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“We’re proud of our continued partnership with Sydney Film Festival in presenting the annual Foxtel Documentary Prize. Recognising emerging talent in this way in front of a film-festival audience is a great way to identify and celebrate great documentary filmmakers,” said **Foxtel’s General Manager of Factual Channels Jim Buchan**.

Sydney Film Festival invites you to enjoy this unique opportunity to see the best Australian documentaries of the year on the big screen, with guest filmmaker introductions and Q&A sessions following each screening. The winner is announced at SFF’s Closing Night ceremony on 16 June.

And now for the Sydney Film Festival 2013 Foxtel Australian Documentary Finalist synopses:

***Audrey of the Alps* | Director: Grace McKenzie**

Twenty-something Audrey isn’t entirely sure what she wants to do with her life. Other young women in her position would most likely backpack or volunteer, but Audrey decides to sign on as a shepherd for the season. In the high pastures of the French Alps, Audrey and her boyfriend take on the daunting task of marshaling 1700 recalcitrant sheep, a handful of goats and six dogs. Often at odds with her pragmatic employers, Audrey struggles to learn shepherding ways, until she finally discovers her inner strength. Director Grace McKenzie’s close rapport with her subjects is evident in their openness towards her always-at-the-ready camera.

Filmmaker: Grace McKenzie has worked as a cinematographer and assistant editor on films including *The Cup*, *Last Dance*, *Mental* and *Meet Me Under the Mango Tree* (SFF 2009). She also works as a photographer. *Audrey of the Alps* is her directorial debut. Her body of work includes solo and group photography exhibitions in Melbourne and Perth, and cinematography for a documentary, *No One Eats Alone*.

***Big Name No Blanket* (Premiere) | Director: Steven McGregor**

The charismatic and inspirational frontman of the Warumpi Band, George Rurrumbu Burarrawanga, hailed from Elcho Island, off the coast of Arnhem Land. George moved to Papunya (northwest of Alice) to get married, and joined Sammy Butcher, his brother-in-law, in a band named after a small local community and honey-ant dreaming site. With Sammy on guitar, his brother Gordon on drums and songwriter Neil Murray, they took to the road. The first musicians ever to release a pop record in an Aboriginal language - ‘Jailanguru Pakarnu’ (‘Out of Jail’) – they rocked Australia from the Centre out in the 80s. Steven McGregor’s impressive documentary, filled with interviews, clips and scorching music, follows George’s story, from his island home to his premature demise.

Filmmaker: Steven McGregor is an Indigenous writer/director from Darwin and a graduate of AFTRS. His films include *My Brother Vinnie*, *5 Seasons*, *In a League of Their Own*, *Cold Turkey* and *Croker Island Exodus* (SFF 2012).

***Buckskin* (Premiere) | Director: Dylan McDonald**

Like many young Aboriginal men, Jack Buckskin grew up not knowing his traditional language and culture, as it had been driven almost to extinction a hundred years ago. Living on the edge of Adelaide, a life-changing event set him on a new path. Now Jack is on a mission to renew the Kurna language and culture, the language of the Adelaide Plains, and teach it to as many people as he can in his lifetime. As his Uncle Steve says, “People who are still very strong in their culture walk differently.” And Jack Buckskin is no exception to this.

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Filmmaker : Dylan McDonald is a young filmmaker who is also a keen musician and photographer. He says he was attracted to Jack Buckskin's vision and infectious enthusiasm and decided that his story had to be told.

The Crossing (Premiere) | Director: Julian Harvey

Two young Aussie guys, Clark Carter and Chris Bray, decide to cross a remote island in the Arctic - just for the hell of it. To say they're game is an understatement, and once you see the knee-deep mud and razor-sharp rocks, you'll quickly realize why no one has attempted this before. With teeth gritted and their homemade kayaks fully loaded, the duo head off into the frozen wilderness. The film is edited from more than a hundred hours of stunning footage shot by the travellers themselves. *The Crossing* is a 21st century boy's own adventure that successfully shows the duo's inner and outer worlds.

Filmmaker: Julian Harvey – an adventurer himself – is co-founder of Distracted Media. He wrote and produced the award-winning feature *The Tunnel* and created the web series *Event Zero*. He won Breakthrough Independent Producer of the Year at the 2011 SPAA Awards.

Love City Jalalabad (Premiere) | Director: George Gittoes

Internationally renowned filmmaker and artist George Gittoes has learned that documentation of frontline action is not enough; he wants to use art to bring about change. He forms a Yellow House, an artists' collective, in the western Afghan city of Jalalabad – a province long controlled by the Taliban. Next he decides to make movies, recruiting female actors from Pakistan (there are no Pashtun-speaking Afghan women actors) to join Australian performance artist Hellen Rose, and action star Amir Shah. Determined to film an Afghan story, not a foreign one, Gittoes is often stymied in his attempts, but his dogged determination wins through.

Filmmaker: George Gittoes is a painter, filmmaker and photographer with a number of major international exhibitions. He was awarded an Order of Australia for his contribution to the arts. His films include: *Soundtrack to War*, *Rampage* (SFF 2006) and *The Miscreants of Tallwood*.

Miss Nikki and the Tiger Girls (Premiere) | Director: Juliet Lamont

Director Juliet Lamont (winner of SFF's 2010 FOXTEL Australian Documentary Prize with *The Snowman*) returns to the festival with the insightful and entertaining story of Burma's first girl band. The five young girls, led by their Australian mentor Miss Nikki, face all the challenges of a music career, including hard-headed music entrepreneurs, picking the right image, and overcoming stage fright. They also have to contend with the massive changes sweeping their homeland, as the reigns of the military regime are loosened. Is their girl power tough enough to break through age-old cultural traditions, and what will they lose along the way?

Filmmaker: Juliet Lamont's debut short film *Burst* screened at Telluride's Filmmakers of Tomorrow in 2006. Her feature documentary *The Snowman* screened at IDFA Amsterdam, won the 2010 FOXTEL Prize and was nominated for an AFI Award.

Nothing on Earth (Premiere) | Director: Michael Angus

Sydney photographer Murray Fredericks and filmmaker Michael Angus join forces once again following the success of their Lake Eyre project *Salt*, (SFF2009). This time, Fredericks is heading out across the massive Greenland Ice Cap, seeking inspiration in a stunningly featureless landscape. After several failed excursions, he realises that he can't travel solo – the environment is just too unforgiving. In the spring of 2012, with an

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experienced guide and two Inuit dogsledders, he makes it to a Cold War relic, an abandoned radar station slowly sinking into the ice. Against this breathtaking background, Angus captures Fredericks' determined endeavours to capture time and space in an image.

Filmmaker: Michael Angus has worked as an actor, director and producer across a number of different mediums including theatre, film and television. His films as director include *The Fight Game*, *Ooldea* and *Salt*.

Red Obsession (Premiere) | Directors: David Roach and Warwick Ross

The legendary Bordeaux region, 'the best plot of land in the world', has been producing valued wine for centuries. The region's fortunes, long exposed to the vagaries of climate, are now swayed by market forces. In 2010, when a vintage year was on the cards, the global financial crisis ensured that Western pockets were empty, and cashed-up Chinese buyers set the price. This shift, fuelled by the East's obsession with these illustrious vineyards, created a perfect wine storm; co-director and vigneron Warwick Ross documented the upheaval. Narrated by Russell Crowe, *Red Obsession* is an expertly told, delectable tale of a much-coveted global commodity in times of change. See the SFF Program Guide for details of SFF's Gourmet Cinema offer pairing a screening of *Red Obsession* with dinner at glass brasserie.

Filmmakers: David Roach and Warwick Ross are writers and producers who have previously collaborated on *Young Einstein*, *Reckless Kelly* and *Mr. Accident*. Their projects include *Beneath Hill 60*, *Banjo & Matilda*, *Drift* and the WWII drama *Escape from Hong Kong*. *Red Obsession* is their directorial debut.

The Sunnyboy (Premiere) | Director: Kaye Harrison

It was the 1980s in Sydney and The Sunnyboys' talented frontman Jeremy Oxley was riding a wave of success; the band's postpunk pop hit just the right note. A few short years later, the band was in disarray and the enigmatic singer was fighting to keep his head above water. His family, including brother and fellow band member Peter, didn't know how to help and the boy they loved slipped further away. Withdrawn from the world, Jeremy battled with his schizophrenia. Thirty years later, in a loving relationship and with his medication stabilised, he's finally emerged from his isolation. He now faces the challenge of unpicking the past, an upcoming marriage, and the tantalising possibility of returning to the stage. SFF and Vivid LIVE present the World Premiere of *The Sunnyboy* on 2 June in the Concert Hall at Sydney Opera House, followed by a live performance by the band.

Filmmaker: Kaye Harrison's short documentaries include *Crossing the Line* and *The Long Goodbye*, both of which won awards. *The Sunnyboy* is her debut feature documentary.

The Unlikely Pilgrims (Premiere) | Directors: Kristen Mallyon and John Cherry

The Camino de Santiago is a centuries-old 800-kilometre pilgrim trail through northern Spain, attracting thousands of tourists annually. The pilgrims in Kirsten Mallyon and John Cherry's revelatory documentary – nine years in the making - are not, however, your usual hikers. Amy, Chris and Dave are recovering addicts. Ronan O'Connor, a drug and alcohol counsellor at a New South Wales rehab centre, has agreed to be their guide, but not their therapist. He's well aware that the trek will be a challenge for the trio, but is convinced that in order to move on, they need to take charge in the long haul through life's bumpy road.

Filmmakers: Kirsten Mallyon and John Cherry are longtime collaborators. Mallyon's credits include writing (*Hidden History*) and directing (*Each Grain of Rice*). John Cherry is the award-winning producer of *Strange Birds in Paradise* (SFF 2010) and director of *Hidden History*.

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SFF 2013 Foxtel Festival guests include: *Claire Jager* (*Audrey of the Alps*) ; director **Steven McGregor**, producers **Rachel Clements** and **Lisa Watts** and subjects **Neil Murray**, **Sammy Butcher** and **Suzina McDonald** (*Big Name No Blanket*); director **Dylan McDonald** and producer **Penelope McDonald** (*Buckskin*); director **George Gittoes** and partner **Hellen Rose**, producer **Lizzette Atkins** and **Torstein Grude** (*Love City Jalalabad*) ; director **Juliet Lamont** and producer **Jessica Douglas-Henry** (*Miss Nikki and the Tiger Girls*); director **Michael Angus** and photographer **Murray Fredericks** (*Nothing on Earth*); directors and producers **David Roach** and **Warwick Ross**, subject **Andrew Caillard** and producer **Robert Coe** (*Red Obsession*), director **Julian Harvey**, producer **Enzo Tedeschi** and producers/subjects **Chris Bray** and **Clark Carter** (*The Crossing*); director **Kaye Harrison**, producer **Tom Zubrycki**, musician **Jeremy Oxley** as well as **Mary Oxley Griffiths** and **Peter Oxley** (*The Sunnyboy*); and directors and producers **Kristen Mallyon** and **John Cherry**, and subjects from the film (*The Unlikely Pilgrims*).

Sydney Film Festival celebrates its 60th anniversary this 5-16 June bringing a packed program of screenings and special events to even more venues across Sydney. The full program will be announced on **Wednesday 8 May 2013**. For tickets and full up-to-date program information please visit www.sff.org.au.

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 and the Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace Cremorne. 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 twelve 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 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: 5-16 June, 2013

Tickets & Info: 1300 733 733 www.sff.org.au

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