



MEDIA RELEASE

Sydney, Australia - Embargoed until 5AM Wednesday 20 June, 2012

The 59th Sydney Film Festival Closes On a Record-Breaking Note

The 59th Sydney Film Festival wrapped on Sunday 17 June 2012 with the Australian Premiere of the US sci-fi comedy, *Safety Not Guaranteed*, bringing to a close **the most highly attended Sydney Film Festival to date.**

"This year, attendances at films and talks **grew by 10% to 122,000,**' said **SFF CEO, Leigh Small.** "There was also a **27% growth in Flexipass sales,** indicating individuals are attending more films during the Festival. We were elated by the positive festival buzz in the city this year, and again **almost 50% of the sessions were over 90% full."**

"In my first year as Festival Director for Sydney Film Festival, I was proud to lead an event that continues to grow and change; adding new dimensions ranging from the Blackfella Films Presents program to the potpourri of comedy, burlesque, live music, talks and events in the Hub," said **SFF Festival Director Nashen Moodley.** "On a personal note, I was delighted to see so much of Sydney come together in such a spirit of celebration; all ages, all cultures, all interests, all backgrounds were out in force, creating audiences of great diversity united by their shared love of the cinema experience."

This year, SFF was pleased to announce **Rachel Perkins** and **Darren Dale** as new programming partners to jointly curate and present the best indigenous films from Australia and around the world, under the program banner of **Blackfella Films @ Sydney Film Festival.** BFF@SFF presented six films including the **World Premiere** of *Mabo*, which was attended by the real-life protagonist, **Bonita Mabo** and her family and received an emotional reception and standing ovation.

"Aside from the public and critical success and tremendous atmosphere around town for 12 days - I don't think anyone can deny the most poignant moment of the festival was the premiere of *Mabo* in the State Theatre," said **Minister Souris** in his speech on the closing night. " With a 10 minute ovation involving 2000 people and Bonita Mabo and Sam Lee in attendance the screening will last forever."

The **Festival Hub @ Lower Town Hall** was successfully launched as a free public space where filmgoers could relax and mingle, see local and international live acts, hear filmmaker talks and have a drink at the Keystone Bar. Over **8,000** visitors made the Festival Hub a big success in its inaugural year. A Hub highlight was Paris-based photographer **Fabrizio Maltese's** exhibition, *Role/Play*, featuring large-scale photographic portraits of iconic film stars and filmmakers. Memorable moments included sassy burlesque performances and riotous comedy routines inspired by cinema, a dance party in which we counted down the festival's 59 years of existence one song at time, and a night of 60's Cambodian surf rock which had everyone dancing.

All up there were a total of **225** sessions held across the **12** days of the Festival, including **157** films from **51** countries in **51** languages, **17** world premieres (**9** features, **8** shorts) and **112** Australian premieres, **13** retrospective titles, **34** short films, **68** features and **42** documentaries, **25** films by first-time feature directors and **44** films directed or co-directed by women.

Over **150** Australian and International filmmakers attended SFF 2012. This prestigious list included guests from **22** countries, who had won over **45** International awards between them, including four Academy Awards®, four Sundance Awards® and three Logie Awards®. This year's SFF guests attended over **75** screenings and gave over **85** talks and Q&As, which took place at the Apple Store, Festival Hub @ Lower Town Hall and post-screening across all venues.

"It's tremendous to see that the Festival has had such a great year with a program that has broad appeal to film-loving Sydney audiences," said **Ruth Harley, CEO, Screen Australia**. "Sydney Film Festival is both an important cultural event for Sydney and the Australian film industry."

2012 Showtime Movie Channels Audience Award

SFF is also proud to announce the 2012 Showtime Movie Channels Audience Awards today. After each screening, audience members were invited to rate each film via our new SMS voting system. The winner for best narrative feature went to the Oscar®-nominated Canadian drama ***Monsieur Lazhar*** and the winner for best documentary went to ***Death of a Japanese Salesman***, a pragmatic yet immensely moving tribute to the end of a life.

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 and the Art Gallery of NSW. 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 <http://www.sff.org.au>

The 59th Sydney Film Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Arts 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: 6-17 June, 2012

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

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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