

SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

6-17 JUNE 2018

MEDIA RELEASE

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SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES FIRST FILMS FOR 2018

The 65th Sydney Film Festival today announced a sneak peek of this year's essential viewing: 26 new films to be featured in this year's 6-17 June event, as well as a new Festival location: HOYTS Entertainment Quarter.

The announcement is in advance of the full program launch on Wednesday 9 May.

"65 years young, Sydney Film Festival celebrates a spectacular history of storytelling with another 200+ feature films and documentaries, beginning with these first 26 cinematic gems," **Sydney Film Festival Director Nashen Moodley** said.

"Since 1954 Sydney Film Festival has presented over 9,000 films to Australian audiences. The Festival may have reached a stately age, but it continues every year to deliver the most cutting edge and provocative voices in international cinema.

"In 2018's sneak peek of the program, there are features and documentaries from Argentina to the Arctic Circle. From the war zone of Kabul, where young men risk arrest for their love of rock music, to the revolutionary creativity of punk icon Vivienne Westwood, these unique and poignant films share stories of freedom, identity and passion from across the globe.

"The 2018 Sydney Film Festival is once again proud to kick-start exciting conversations and showcase powerful ideas and bold statements that open eyes, expand horizons and enrich the lives of our audiences and community," he said.

Leading the pack...

Leading the titles announced today is ***Westwood: Punk, Icon, Activist***. The film is a fascinating profile of revolutionary fashion designer and punk icon **Vivienne Westwood** from UK model-turned-filmmaker Lorna Tucker.

Also topping the list is the winner of Venice Film Festival's 2017 Grand Jury Prize, ***Foxtrot***, from award-winning Israeli director Samuel Maoz; and 2018 Sundance Film Festival Grand Jury Award winner, ***The Miseducation of Cameron Post***, featuring rising stars **Chloë Grace Moretz** (*Carrie*), **Sasha Lane** (*American Honey*) and **Forrest Goodluck** (*The Revenant*).

Two Oscar winners will also present their latest works: Sebastián Lelio's (*A Fantastic Woman*, SFF 2017) ***Disobedience*** starring **Rachel Weisz** and **Rachel McAdams**, and Debra Granik's (*Winter's Bone*) ***Leave No Trace*** featuring young New Zealand actress Thomasin Harcourt McKenzie.

Bold psychosexual thriller, ***Piercing***, starring Australian actress **Mia Wasikowska** (*Madame Bovary*, SFF 2015), and spine-tingling British chiller ***Ghost Stories*** starring Martin Freeman (*The Hobbit*), kicks off the 2018 Festival's Freak Me Out program.



Anchor and Hope also delivers more star power with **Natalia Tena** (*Harry Potter*) and **Oona Chaplin** (*Game of Thrones*) alongside her mother, Golden Globe nominee **Geraldine Chaplin** (*Chaplin*), in the second feature by award-winning Spanish director Carlos Marques-Marcet (*10.000 Km*).

New films from Australia

Closer to home, Australian journalist Travis Beard's fascinating documentary ***RockKabul*** examines Afghanistan's first metal band District Unknown, and ***I Used to be Normal: A Boyband Fangirl Story***, is a coming-of-age documentary about the intense love of boybands, from The Beatles to One Direction.

Maya the Bee: The Honey Games is a new family adventure – voiced by an all-star Australian cast including **Richard Roxburgh**, **The Umbilical Brothers' Dave Collins** and **Shane Dundas**, and **Justine Clarke** (ABC's *Play School*) – from Australian animation veteran Noel Cleary (*Blinky Bill*).

An exhilarating debut feature from Australian director Jason Raftopoulos, ***West of Sunshine***, starring Damien Hill (*Pawno*) alongside his real life step-son Ty Perham, and Kat Stewart (*Offspring*), will also screen in 2018.

Big festival winners and nominees

Favourites selected from the international festival circuit include: Sundance 2018 Special Jury Prize winner, ***Genesis 2.0***, a documentary following scientific efforts to resurrect the woolly mammoth in an Arctic spin on *Jurassic Park*; and Berlinale Silver Bear winner, ***Mug***, from renowned Polish filmmaker Małgorzata Szumowska.

Also highly anticipated are Oscar-nominated films: ***The Breadwinner*** and ***The Insult***. ***The Breadwinner*** was nominated for Best Animated Feature and produced by a team of Academy Award winners including **Angelina Jolie** and animation studio Cartoon Saloon (*Song of the Sea* – SFF 2015). Lebanese filmmaker Ziad Doueiri's potent legal thriller ***The Insult*** was nominated for the Best Foreign Language Oscar.

Sundance Grand Jury Prize nominee ***American Animals*** stars a cast of young Hollywood talent including Evan Peters (*American Horror Story*) and Barry Keoghan (*Dunkirk*, *The Killing of a Sacred Deer*).

The brand-new digital restoration, from the National Film and Sound Archive, of iconic Australian Oscar nominated film ***My Brilliant Career*** (1979) – from acclaimed director Gillian Armstrong and featuring Judy Davis in her movie debut – will revive this multiple award winner for new audiences.

Outstanding documentaries

Sydney Film Festival's documentary program will again deliver the most exciting true stories about people, places, enterprises and phenomena from Australia and around the globe.

The Festival opens a window into the lives of extraordinary young people, from ***Chef Flynn***, about prodigy chef Flynn McGarry who became one of the world's top chefs at just 13 years old, to students finding innovative ways to tackle the most complex environmental issues facing humanity today in ***Inventing Tomorrow***.



A light is shone in dangerous places, from the murder that made true crime an American obsession in ***Cold Blooded: The Clutter Family Murders***, to the life of a veteran Kurdish soldier deactivating landmines in Iraq using only a pen knife in ***The Deminer***, to ***The Long Season***, an intimate record of daily life for women in a Syrian refugee camp.

Quirky hits

The Festival also features heart-warming fly-on-the-wall glimpses into personal places, such as the family castle of Spanish director **Gustavo Salmeron's** eccentric mother in ***Lots of Kids, A Monkey and A Castle***. And the roly-poly lives of five guide puppies as they train for the ultimate canine career in ***Pick of the Litter*** – also screening in Sydney Film Festival's brand new **Screen Day Out** program, developed for high school students.

Interracial love, religious cults, Thai high society, and an appetite for raw offal complete a preview of the Festival's more avant-garde works, with classic noir ***Samui Song*** from Thai auteur **Pen-ek Rataranuang** (*Last Life In the Universe*).

New venue

In 2018 the Festival will bring films from the world's top film festivals to venues across Sydney. For the first time the Festival will present a program of films at HOYTS Entertainment Quarter in Moore Park. The venue will feature specially selected line-up of family films, as well as Screenability, the platform for screen practitioners with disability.

The State Theatre, Dendy Opera Quays, Dendy Newtown, Event Cinemas George Street, Art Gallery of NSW, the Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace Cremorne, Randwick Ritz, and Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre return as official Festival screening venues. An exciting virtual reality program will return to the Festival Hub at Sydney Town Hall premiering cutting edge VR experiences, many for the first time in Australia.

The full Sydney Film Festival program will be announced on Wednesday 9 May.

Flexipasses and subscriptions to the 65th Sydney Film Festival (6-17 June 2018) are on sale now. Please call 1300 733 733 or visit sff.org.au/tickets/flexipasses for more information.

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

EDITOR'S NOTES

ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

From **Wednesday 6 June to Sunday 17 June 2018**, the 65th 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.

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: *On Body and Soul* (2017); *Aquarius* (2016); *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 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: sff.org.au.

The 65th Sydney Film Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW, City of Sydney and Destination NSW. Federal Government support is provided through Screen Australia.

DOCUMENTARIES

CHEF FLYNN

What makes a great chef? Follow teenage culinary sensation Flynn McGarry's rapid ascent from the home kitchen to the cover of *New York Times Magazine*.

Bored with his mom's dinners, and inspired by television cooking shows, young Flynn decided to take over the kitchen. At thirteen, he was serving multiple courses in his front room to friends and family, with his mother providing table service and complex equipment. As his menus became more ambitious and mouth-watering, Flynn ultimately attracted the attention of the media. It's not all smooth sailing, however, as his talent is called into question in an online backlash. His adoring single mother, Meg, obsessively documented her son's passion from childhood. It's this intimate footage that offers a unique insight into the world of a culinary wunderkind, and the challenges he faces as he reaches adulthood.

COLD BLOODED: THE CLUTTER FAMILY MURDERS

A highly detailed reconstruction of the infamous Clutter family murders, which inspired Truman Capote's bestseller *In Cold Blood*, directed by Oscar nominee Joe Berlinger.

In 1959, in a small town in Kansas, farmer Herbert Clutter, his wife Bonnie, and their teenage children, Nancy and Kenyon, were savagely murdered. Capote visited the town, interviewed the killers (Perry Smith and Richard Hickock) and subsequently wrote his highly influential work; considered the first book in the true crime genre. Director Joe Berlinger has a history of working in this realm, with films such as *Paradise Lost* (SFF 1996) on the West Memphis Three. He was curious to know what the relatives and townsfolk felt about the murders and the impact of Capote's book. The resulting documentary is a fascinating reconstruction of the case, from the backgrounds of the victims and perpetrators, to the trial, Capote's visit and beyond.

GENESIS 2.0

Winner of a Special Jury Award at Sundance, this striking documentary connects Siberian hunters of woolly mammoth remains with cutting edge 21st century cloning technology.

Scavengers on a remote Arctic island spend the summer digging for prized mammoth tusks to sell to the Chinese market. Whole and partial skeletons of these long-extinct animals can be found in the melting permafrost. It's not just the tusks that are valued: pioneering scientists want hair, blood or skin, so the creature's genome can be sequenced and the beast cloned. The locals believe it's unlucky to touch the remains, and this sense of wrongdoing permeates the film as it shifts to the biotech world, where dogs are cloned and an entire population's genetic data is mapped. Siberian co-director Maxim Arbugaev worked with director Christian Frei (*War Photographer*, SFF 2002) to capture these two worlds, the boggy landscape and clinical laboratory, to chilling effect.

I USED TO BE NORMAL: A BOYBAND FANGIRL STORY

The coming of age stories of four Melbourne women whose lives were changed forever by their love of boybands Backstreet Boys, One Direction, Take That and The Beatles.

Melbourne filmmakers Jessica Leski and Rita Walsh interviewed three generations of fangirls. The women are not, as you might expect, hysterical and hormonal teenagers. They are obsessive, sure, but also insightful and vulnerable. Their ages reflect the bands they adore: the oldest of the quartet being a fan of the Fab Four. The youngest, Elif, lives at home with parents, who fail to appreciate her One Direction devotion. Sydneysider and Take That fangirl Dara can't understand her own obsession



with heartthrob Gary Barlow. Loving a boyband has helped the women through difficult times, and shaped their relationships, faith, and sexuality. Ultimately though, they've all found joy in the fandom world.

INVENTING TOMORROW

Enterprising high school students from Indonesia, India, Mexico and Hawaii tackle environmental issues in their own backyard, as they prepare for the world's largest science fair.

In Bangalore, Sahithi is developing an app to track toxic water levels in neighbourhood lakes. Across the globe, in one of Mexico's most industrial cities, Jesus, Jose and Fernando are exploring ways to improve air quality. Nuha is seeking a solution to the ocean pollution affecting her Indonesian island home, and Jared is investigating arsenic levels in the soil of Hawaii. Director Laura Nix follows these inspiring, innovative and community-minded students as they develop their presentations, finding optimistic experts and fellow enthusiasts along the way.

LOTS OF KIDS, A MONKEY AND A CASTLE

A hugely charming portrait of a Spanish family headed by an eccentric matriarch, whose teenage dreams for lots of kids, a monkey and a castle came true.

Julita's newly-wed wish for many children rapidly came about, and surprisingly so did her more outrageous desires. But in her old age she, her husband and six children must face reality. Their rambling home must be sold, and horde of bric-a-brac (including her grandmother's long-misplaced remains) squeezed into a modest apartment. Gustavo intercuts old and new footage to craft a loving (and multiple award-winning) portrait of his laid-back family and its history, which cuts across Spain's recent past from the Civil War to the financial collapse. At its core is larger-than-life Julita; alternately questioning the premise of her youngest son's film and swooping on treasured knickknacks.

PICK OF THE LITTER

We follow the two-year journey, from birth through training to graduation, of five cute but determined Labrador puppies, destined to become guide dogs for the blind.

At eight weeks old, a litter of puppies is distributed to volunteer 'puppy raisers' responsible for training and socialising the dogs. Some handlers are experienced and others nervous first-timers. The pups are an equally mixed bag – two girls, three boys, black and golden, rowdy and shy. They are evaluated throughout their growing years, before starting an intensive training course. We also meet two people with low vision, waiting patiently for a new dog. The film demonstrates the independence that guide dogs can provide as it delves into the dog-human affinity.

ROCKABUL

Australian musician, journalist and debut director Travis Beard chronicles Afghanistan's only metal band as they take to the stage, risking their lives for rock music.

When Beard met District Unknown back in 2009, Kabul's fiercely conservative and traditional community frowned upon music, and the underground party scene was for expats only. The four, later five, young Afghan men in the band could barely find instruments, let alone a rehearsal space. Practice sessions were interrupted by power cuts and exploding bombs. Nonetheless, the musicians persevered, excitedly performing their first gig to an audience as much at risk as the band themselves. But as their notoriety grew, Qasem, Pedram, Qais, Lemar and Yousef had to choose whether to stay or go, knuckle under or keep rockin'.

THE DEMINER

The Deminer is an edge-of-your-seat portrait of a bomb disposal expert in Iraq. Winner of a Jury Prize at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam.

Colonel Fakhir is committed to making his homeland a safer place for everyone, but he has very few tools to help in this hazardous task. He tackles booby traps and mines with a penknife and garden pliers, even his bare hands. Watching our hero stride into the danger zone is the stuff of action movies: the clock ticking, the mobile phone detonator primed. Fakhir shot much of the nerve-wracking footage himself. A Kurdish man serving in the Iraqi army and a loving father of eight, Fakhir's successful 'de-



mining' makes him an Al-Qaeda target. Despite this hefty threat, he doggedly continues, as his family waits in fear and pride.

THE LONG SEASON

Multi-award-winning filmmaker Leonard Retel Helmrich (*Shape of the Moon, Position Among the Stars*, SFF 2011) focuses his camera lens on life in a Syrian refugee camp.

Just across the border from Syria, Majdal Anjar in Lebanon's Bekaa valley is a sprawling, ramshackle collection of shelters. Helmrich spent over a year there filming, with his female collaborator Ramia Suleiman, steadily gaining the trust of his subjects. The duo filmed mothers battling to keep their children fed, clothed and educated, bickering wives and husbands, and young women bemoaning their loss of freedom. With his trademark single shot technique (utilising fluid camera movements to shoot a scene in one take), Helmrich captures the resilience of the refugees with tenderness and compassion, particularly the womenfolk, as they face an uncertain future.

WESTWOOD: PUNK, ICON, ACTIVIST

The wonderfully eccentric, endlessly inventive Vivienne Westwood is the reluctant star of this fabulous documentary.

The British fashion designer stomped into the limelight in '70s London, when the Sex Pistols (managed by her then-husband Malcolm McLaren) sported her designs. Over the decades, Westwood's aberrant focus has shifted from punk to eco-activism. Her working life, chaotic creative process and close collaboration with her third husband – the endlessly patient Andreas – is revealed through archival footage and interviews. Long shunned by the establishment, in 1992 she was awarded an OBE for services to fashion (true to form, she attended the Buckingham Palace ceremony knicker-less). Straight talking Dame Vivienne considers her history to be "so boring", but in this she's wrong: there's loads to entertain in Lorna Tucker's fine documentary.

FEATURES

AMERICAN ANIMALS

Bart Layton's (*The Imposter*, SFF 2012) first feature is a wildly entertaining docu-fiction hybrid about four young men who attempt one of the most audacious art-heists in history.

American Animals is an unbelievable but true story of four college students who are determined to transcend their boring middle class existence. They hatch a plot to pull off an incredible heist: stealing a number of incredibly valuable volumes from their college's under-protected rare books collection. Using a great cast of young talents like Barry Keoghan and Blake Jenner, Layton's brilliant strategy is to also incorporate the four actual subjects into the film. Older, and perhaps wiser, these four men reflect on their past misdeeds, frequently contradicting each other in their *Rashomon*-like testimonies. Quite unlike any other heist film, *American Animals* is an energetic, boundary-pushing thriller.

ANCHOR AND HOPE

A lesbian couple contemplate parenthood in a funny and free-wheeling comic drama by rising Spanish filmmaker Carlos Marques-Marcet.

Eva and Kat live a happy life in a houseboat on England's Regent Canal, until the thorny question of parenthood comes up. Eva desperately wants to be a mother. Kat thinks procreation is narcissistic. But wait, perhaps there's an answer. Kat's lifelong bestie, Roger, is coming to visit. Could this randy womanizer be the ideal sperm donor? So begins a fresh and funny tale about love, friendship and the different ways in which modern families can take shape. This hugely entertaining slice of alternative life features wonderful performances by Oona Chaplin (*Game of Thrones*), Natalia Tena and David Verdager. A delightful and insightful cameo by Oona's real-life mother Geraldine Chaplin tops things off very nicely.



DISOBEDIENCE

Oscar-winner (*A Fantastic Woman*, SFF 2017) Sebastián Lelio's new film is about the love affair between two women (Rachel Weisz and Rachel McAdams) in an Orthodox Jewish community.

Ronit (Weisz) is a New York-based photographer, long estranged from her rabbi father and her life in London. When the respected rabbi dies, Ronit returns to pay her respects and claim her inheritance. The welcome she receives is not exactly warm, and there's poor news on the inheritance front too. Ronit is taken in by her childhood friend Dovid (Alessandro Nivola) and his wife Esti (McAdams). Ronit and Esti had a passionate affair when they were younger and the old attraction simmers, but soon desire comes up against duty and faith. *Gloria* (SFF 2013) and *A Fantastic Woman* showed that Lelio is a sensitive and perceptive chronicler of desire and sexuality. With *Disobedience*, he has made a delicate, emotional and rewarding film.

FOXTROT

Winner of the Venice Grand Jury Prize and eight Israeli Ophir Awards, *Foxtrot* is a thrillingly inventive, tragic and funny examination of Israeli military culture.

When Michael and Dafna are visited by army officials, who inform them of the death of their soldier son, the couple is devastated. Michael's grief leads to anger and frustration, until a strange twist sets the narrative on its head, leading to a dizzying exploration of history and fate. Maoz won the Venice Golden Lion for his superb debut film, *Lebanon* (SFF 2010), set almost entirely in a tank. Here his view is more expansive, and *Foxtrot* zips back and forth in time and place, incorporating animation, music and an unforgettable dance sequence. Laced with irony and humour, and intellectually and viscerally powerful, *Foxtrot* is a meticulously crafted and beautifully acted film.

GHOST STORIES

Three terrifying tales unfold in this anthology by Jeremy Dyson (*The League of Gentlemen*) and Andy Nyman (*Dead Set*). Martin Freeman features in this classy British chiller.

Three screaming cheers for the return of the British horror anthology! And what a grand return this is. Professor Philip Goodman is a professional debunker of psychics and all things paranormal. After exposing yet another fraud on the cheesy TV show he hosts, Goodman receives a package from an academic he once idolised. The contents propel Goodman into a series of investigations that force him to confront everything he doesn't believe in. And it gets worse, much worse. Superbly evoking a drab gothic England of rising damp, peeling wallpaper, musty pubs and stale tobacco, *Ghost Stories* is a scary and wickedly clever fright fest that'll give you a mountain of goosebumps. We dare you to enter this Vault of Horror!

LEAVE NO TRACE

Debra Granik (*Winter's Bone*, SFF 2010) returns with a delicate drama about a father and daughter who are found by authorities after living off-grid in the wilderness for years.

Will (Ben Foster) and his teenage daughter, Tom (Thomasin Harcourt McKenzie), have lived in the Oregon wilderness for years, far from the prying eyes of authorities. They forage for food, and Will passes on survival skills to the smart and curious Tom. When the two are discovered, they're removed from the park and placed under the care of social services. Adjustment to mainstream society proves difficult, particularly for the traumatised Will. Granik, who famously discovered Jennifer Lawrence for *Winter's Bone*, has again found an actress of immense talent. New Zealander McKenzie delivers a spectacular portrayal of a loving daughter torn between her devotion to her father and her own desires. *Leave No Trace* is a film of great sensitivity and compassion.

MAYA THE BEE: THE HONEY GAMES

Maya the plucky bee returns in this charming animated adventure. A colourful tale of buzzy derring-do for kids aged three and up, directed by top Sydney animators.

Bubbly Maya (voiced by Coco Jack Gillies – *Oddball*, *Mad Max: Fury Road*) is set a challenge when she accidentally embarrasses the Empress of Buzztropolis. The little bee must win the prestigious Honey Games to save her hive's honey harvest. With her best friend Willi (Benson Jack Anthony) beside her, she meets her ragtag team, including old friends Arnie and Barnie (David Collins and Shane Dundas of



The Umbilical Brothers). She also encounters a jealous bee called Violet, who's determined her team will come out on top. Maya eventually learns how to get the best from her insect crew, with a little advice from Flip (Richard Roxburgh) and his band, and Justine Clark as the wise Queen Bee.

MUG

A bitingly funny satire and Berlinale Grand Jury Prize winner; Poland's first facial transplant patient awakes to find that – new face aside – it's his community that's changed, not him.

Jacek is a young man living in a Polish town who loves heavy metal, his girlfriend and his dog. While working on the construction of the tallest statue of Jesus in the world, Jacek is completely disfigured by a severe accident, requiring him to undergo a facial transplant. Surprisingly, Jacek emerges from the radical medical intervention unchanged in disposition – he's still funny, optimistic and wishes to marry his girlfriend. But all around him, people have changed and Jacek finds himself an outsider in his own community. Director Szumowska is unsparing in her criticism of the hypocrisy in this religious town, and aided by striking cinematography depicting a deformed world, has created a hilarious, stirring film.

MY BRILLIANT CAREER

A brand-new digital restoration of Gillian Armstrong's award-winning adaptation of Miles Franklin's classic novel, featuring Judy Davis in her movie debut.

Set in late 19th century rural Australia, the film focuses on Sybylla (Davis), a headstrong woman determined to be a writer, who refuses to follow conventions. Armstrong's 1979 film was nominated for the Palme d'Or at Cannes, an Oscar and a Golden Globe award, and was awarded two BAFTAs (for Davis), and six AFI Awards (Best Film, Best Director, Best Adapted Screenplay, Best Production Design, Best Costume Design and Best Cinematography for Don McAlpine). Predating Frances McDormand's 'Inclusion Rider' speech by several decades, the film's director, producers, scriptwriter, leading actor, production designer and costume designer were all women. Nearly 40 years on, Armstrong's film has lost none of its relevance or screen power.

PIERCING

Nicolas Pesce follows his monochrome nightmare *The Eyes of My Mother* (SFF 2016) with a colour-saturated tale of deviant desire and unspeakable urges starring Mia Wasikowska.

Reed is a seemingly ordinary husband and father. Except that he has an uncontrollable urge to kill. On a "business trip," Reed checks into a hotel and calls an escort service. His plan to murder sex worker Jackie turns out to be anything but straightforward. Pesce's lusciously filmed adaptation of Ryū Murakami's 1994 novel delves into the darkest domains of human nature. Christopher Abbott and Mia Wasikowska deliver outstanding performances as a perpetrator and victim whose notional roles reverse and reset multiple times during an extremely feverish night. Killer production design and a fabulous soundtrack of classic *giallo* tracks by Bruno Nicolai and legendary outfit Goblin complete the utterly compelling picture.

SAMUI SONG

Murder, marriage and religion are the ingredients of this juicy film noir by leading Thai filmmaker Pen-ek Ratanaruang (*Last Life in the Universe, Headshot*, SFF 2012).

There's style to burn in this classy Thai riff on the eternal theme of a fed-up wife who wants her no-good husband dead. Vi is an actress who's sick of playing soap opera bitches and wants to make an indie arthouse film. Worse still, her abusive and impotent French hubby is blindly devoted to a sleazy cult guru known as the Holy One. The answer to all Vi's problems seems to be Guy, a scuzzy hitman who desperately needs dough to pay his ailing mother's medical bills. Naturally everything goes haywire but not in ways we might expect. Dotted with gallows humour, sharp social satire and surreal sequences that'll keep you guessing, *Samui Song* is a hard-boiled and highly polished tale of unholy alliances.

THE BREADWINNER



Oscar-nominated animation about an 11-year-old Afghan girl, Parvana, who must pose as a boy to support her family when her father is unjustly jailed.

Adapted from the popular novel by Deborah Ellis, this portrait of life in Afghanistan under Taliban rule is the powerful tale of a young girl who faces adversity with creativity and courage. Animated by a team of over 200 artists, it was produced by Ireland's Cartoon Salon, the studio behind Oscar nominees *The Secret of Kells* and *Song of the Sea*. *The Breadwinner* is an unflinching indictment of a culture that oppresses women and girls. It is also an appeal for human rights and the power of imagination against tyranny.

THE INSULT

Ziad Doueiri's (*The Attack*, SFF 2013) thrilling, Oscar-nominated legal drama explores festering historical, political and religious divisions in his native Lebanon.

When Palestinian Muslim foreman Yasser installs a new drainpipe on Lebanese Christian Tony's balcony without his permission, Tony's dislike of Palestinians leads to what appears to be a minor disagreement. But insults are hurled, and the situation soon escalates out of control. What begins with a petty argument leads to a highly publicised trial that captivates a nation, and also gives a range of people an opportunity to settle old scores. Doueiri masterfully takes this private clash of wills as a starting point to explore historic rifts amongst Lebanese communities, and the aftermath of the civil war. Intelligently using humour and pathos, *The Insult* is ultimately a plea for empathy, forgiveness and peace.

THE MISEDUCATION OF CAMERON POST

Desiree Akhavan (*Appropriate Behavior*, SFF 2014) won the Sundance Grant Jury Prize for her latest film, a moving comedy-drama set in a "gay conversion" camp.

16-year-old Cameron Post (Chloë Grace Moretz, *Kick-Ass*) is living with her born-again Evangelical aunt while secretly sleeping with the prom queen. When the girls are caught in the back of a car, Cameron is sent to God's Promise, a Christian conversion therapy centre where teens are "cured" of their homosexual attractions. It's in this surreal setting that she forms a close bond with two friends, Jane (Sasha Lane, *American Honey*) and Adam (Forrest Goodluck, *The Revenant*). Akhavan charmed SFF audiences with her hilarious debut *Appropriate Behavior*, in which she played a bisexual Persian woman concealing her true self from her family. She finds wit and poignancy again in this timely film about sexuality and self-acceptance.

WEST OF SUNSHINE

A working-class dad must settle a crippling debt in this punchy slice of Australian social realism. Jason Raftopoulos' impressive first feature debuted at Venice Film Festival.

Jim's a decent guy who works for a courier company. But he has one terrible problem that's cost him his marriage. Jim's gambling addiction has also left him \$15,000 in debt to a loan shark. Full payment is due today – or else. Jim's first thought is to place a big bet on a sure thing in race two at Ballarat. He has no plan B. It's also school holidays, forcing Jim to take young son Alex around town in search of a solution – or a miracle. Marked by excellent performances and filmed in vibrant, little-seen Melbourne locations, *West of Sunshine* beautifully captures a father-son relationship and those moments in a child's life when the adult world comes suddenly and sharply into focus.

