

SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

05–16 JUNE 2019

MEDIA RELEASE

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SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES NEW FILMS, ON SALE NOW

The 66th Sydney Film Festival (5-16 June), which opens on Wednesday, announces that nine important new feature films and one outstanding documentary, including seven titles from the recent Cannes Film Festival, will have their Australian Premiere at the Festival.

“Direct from screening at prestigious film festivals across the globe, we have secured ten new incredible films, from both acclaimed master storytellers and exciting up-and-comers,” said **Festival Director Nashen Moodley**.

“Festival audiences will be the first in the country to see Olivia Wilde’s directorial debut **Booksmart**, an uproarious high school movie for Generation Z and a hilarious shot of pure cinematic girl power, as well as Ken Loach’s devastating drama **Sorry We Missed You**, straight from the Cannes Competition, about a working class British family struggling in the gig economy,” he said.

“Also from Cannes are the Un Certain Regard winner **The Invisible Life of Eurídice Gusmão**, about two sisters forcibly separated by conservatism and fate; Jury Prize winner **Les Misérables**, Ladj Ly’s explosive feature debut about a routine police patrol gone horribly wrong; Best Screenplay and Queer Palm winner **Portrait of a Lady on Fire**, Céline Sciamma’s first foray into period drama and Academy Award-winning filmmaker Asif Kapadia’s documentary **Diego Maradona**, tackling the controversial soccer megastar,” he said.

“We also present the first Cannes selection from a Peruvian woman, **Song Without a Name**, the true story of a newborn child stolen at a fake clinic; and Critics’ Week selection **The Unknown Saint**, a charming Moroccan comedy about a criminal whose buried stash has a mausoleum built over it; and thrilling noir film **The Whistlers**, about a cop who becomes entangled in the crimes he’s investigating,” he said.

“And from Sundance we present political thriller **Official Secrets**, with Keira Knightley playing the British whistle-blower who leaked information about the Iraqi invasion,” he said.

Already announced are Cannes Palme d’Or winner **Parasite**, a satire on income inequality by Bong Joon-ho (*Okja*, SFF 2017 Closing Night Film); **Bacurau**, which tied with *Les Misérables* for the Jury Prize; and **Pain and Glory**, which won Best Actor for lead actor Antonio Banderas’ performance.



Synopsis for these Special Screenings:

BOOKSMART

Two best friends run amok on the eve of their high school graduation in this irreverent, intelligent and hilarious shot of pure cinematic girl power from director Olivia Wilde.

Academic overachievers Molly (Beanie Feldstein, *Lady Bird*) and Amy (Kaitlyn Dever, *Short Term 12*) are about to finish high school, but can't shake the feeling that they've studied too hard and missed out on the fun parts of adolescence. What can they do, apart from try to fit six years of partying into one night? With the same determination they applied to studying, Molly and Amy set out on an outrageous night of debauchery – what follows is a fast-paced, riotous buddy comedy tailor-made for Generation Z. "It is a teen movie for the ages," writes *The Guardian*, "mixing elements of *Superbad*, *Dazed and Confused*, perhaps a touch of *Lady Bird*, but, in its own unpretentious way, *Booksmart* is also a tale about the dangers of labelling people in the first place. It makes the teen movies of yesteryear look old-fashioned, because they are."

SORRY WE MISSED YOU

Straight from the Cannes Competition, Ken Loach's devastating drama is about poverty in today's Britain, where a family struggles to get ahead in the "gig economy".

Ricky, Abby and their two children live in Newcastle and are a loving family. Ricky has worked job after job, often involving manual labour, while Abby is an overworked but empathetic carer for the aged. Spending a large proportion of their income on rent, the couple realise that though they work longer and harder, they will never get ahead or attain their dream of owning a home. The app revolution offers Ricky a golden opportunity to buy a van, start his own business, and become a freelance deliveryman. But things don't work out as planned, and Ricky and his family soon find themselves on the brink. In his follow-up to the Palme d'Or winning *I, Daniel Blake*, Loach masterfully depicts, with compassion and anger, a callous economic system designed to ignore the humanity of those on its lowest rung.

THE INVISIBLE LIFE OF EURÍDICE GUSMÃO

Winner of the Cannes Un Certain Regard Prize, this irresistible "tropical melodrama" tells the story of two sisters, forcibly separated through conservatism and fate.

In Rio de Janeiro, 1950, Eurídice, 18, and Guida, 20, are two inseparable sisters living at home with their conservative parents. Although immersed in a traditional life, each one nourishes a dream: Eurídice of becoming a renowned pianist, Guida of finding true love. In a dramatic turn, they are separated by their father and forced to live apart. They take control of their separate destinies, while never giving up hope of finding each other. Brazilian director Karim Ainouz (*Madame Sata*, *Praia do Futuro*, SFF 2014) is known for his sensual, visually resplendent films and here brings his skillset to a heart-wrenching story, spanning decades, of two strong women who never give up hope.

PORTRAIT OF A LADY ON FIRE

Winner of Best Screenplay at Cannes, Céline Sciamma's (*Water Lilies*, *Girlhood* SFF 2014) beautifully shot period drama is about the romance between an artist and her reluctant subject.

Brittany, France, 1760. Marianne, a painter, is commissioned to do the wedding portrait of Héloïse, a young lady who has just left the convent. Héloïse is a reluctant bride-to-be and Marianne must paint her without her knowing. She observes her by day and secretly paints her at night. Intimacy and attraction grow between the two women as they share Héloïse's first and last moments of freedom, all whilst Marianne paints the portrait that will end it all. Both Héloïse and Marianne find themselves in a struggle to defy social conventions and see in each other a means of escape. With vulnerable and nuanced performances by its superb leads, Noémie Merlant and Adèle Haenel, Sciamma has created an intimate and deeply moving period drama about freedom and desire.

LES MISÉRABLES

Winner of the Cannes Jury Prize, this thrilling, explosive feature debut takes us into Paris's diverse and tense outer suburbs as a routine police patrol goes horribly wrong.

Stéphane (Damien Bonnard) has recently joined the Anti-Crime Squad in Montfermeil, in the suburbs of Paris, where Victor Hugo set his famed novel *Les Misérables*. Alongside his new colleagues Chris (Alexis Manenti) and Gwada (Djebri Zonga) – both experienced members of the team – he quickly discovers tensions are running high between local gangs. When the trio finds themselves overrun during the course of an arrest, a drone captures the encounter, threatening to expose the reality of everyday life. Inspired by the 2005 Paris riots, and director Ladj Ly's short film of the same name, *Les Misérables* is a thrilling and provocative insight into the fractures in contemporary France.

DIEGO MARADONA

Academy Award-winning filmmaker Asif Kapadia (Amy, Senna) tackles the controversial and divisive soccer megastar Diego Maradona in this outstanding Cannes-selected documentary.

Kapadia's film begins with Maradona's move to Italy in 1984. After being shunned by Europe's star teams, the charismatic Argentine had been signed by down-at-heel SSC Napoli. The southern city, impoverished and in the vice-like grip of the Camorra, was fighting relegation. Maradona led them to their first-ever title; it was the stuff of dreams, and the stocky captain became the people's hero in a town wildly fanatical about soccer and their city. His image was everywhere, even pictured in the arms of God. But there was a price to pay for this rampant adulation, and the fast-living Maradona's fall from grace was brutal. Not just a film about a soccer hero, or even the game itself, Kapadia's accomplished documentary (expertly assembled from found footage) reveals both halves of this magnetic figure: Diego, the talented boy from a Buenos Aires slum; and Maradona, the epic hero brought low by his own hubris and folly.

SONG WITHOUT A NAME

Selected for Cannes Directors' Fortnight, this powerful feature, bearing striking similarities to Alfonso Cuarón's *Roma*, is based on the true story of a stolen newborn in 1980s Peru.

The first film by a Peruvian woman to be selected at Cannes, *Song Without a Name* is set in the 1980s during a political crisis in the country and is based on true events. Georgina is a woman from the Andes whose newborn daughter is stolen at a fake health clinic that promised free treatment to the poor. Increasingly desperate, she heads to a major newspaper where an investigative journalist becomes determined to discover the truth, despite mysterious figures threatening to use his sexuality against him. Soon, they discover that Georgina is not alone in having her child taken from her. With beautiful and affecting music, and a meticulous visual aesthetic, this lyrical film is all the more poignant and personal given that director Melina Leon's father was one of the journalists who broke this disturbing story decades ago.

THE UNKNOWN SAINT

This Cannes Critics' Week selection is a charming Moroccan comedy about a criminal who buries his stash only to find, years later, that a mausoleum has been built over it.

Amine steals a big bag of money and – with the cops hot on his trail – buries the money in a rudimentary grave before being arrested. Years later, he's released, and his first priority is to retrieve his treasure. To his surprise, he finds that the non-descript fake "grave" he created now lies under a mausoleum to "The Unknown Saint". The tomb has spawned a village catering to pilgrims from far and wide to worship at the shrine. Amine has no option but to move into the village and plot to be reunited with his cash, with much hilarity to follow. In his confident debut feature, Alaa Eddine Aljem delicately crafts a village of fascinating characters, ranging from the vindictive barber who also practices rudimentary dentistry, to the bored doctor whose surgery serves as the hangout place for the women of the village. *The Unknown Saint* is a delightfully funny look at greed, spirituality and superstition.



THE WHISTLERS

Maverick Romanian director Corneliu Porumboiu (*Police, Adjective* SFF 2010; *The Treasure*, SFF 2016) returns with an off-beat noir in which a cop becomes embroiled in a high-stakes heist.

Cristi is a police inspector in Bucharest, who is one day approached by the beautiful Gilda. She entreats Cristi to help free her boyfriend from prison and retrieve millions of euros of secreted-away cash. Cristi, already under surveillance by his fellow cops, is seduced by Gilda and unable to resist her increasingly outlandish demands on him. Soon he is on the Spanish island of La Gomera, learning a secret whistling language to ensure that the criminal gang can communicate without detection. But in this strange world of Porumboiu's creation, nobody can be trusted and those doing the investigating could well have ulterior motives. An entertaining thriller that's wryly amusing and filled with twists and turns, *The Whistlers* is a marked departure for Porumboiu yet retains his trademark dark humour.

OFFICIAL SECRETS

Keira Knightley is superb in this true-life political thriller about the British whistle-blower who leaked information about the Iraqi invasion and faced prison as a consequence.

It's 2003 and British and American politicians are pressing the case for the invasion of Iraq. Katharine Gun (Knightley) is a secret service employee who comes across an incendiary email containing a US directive to spy on UN Security Council members so as to coerce them into supporting the war on Iraq. Mindful of the potential repercussions of this illegal directive, Gun takes the brave and risk-filled decision to leak the information. With a stellar cast including Ralph Fiennes (*The White Crow* at SFF), Adam Bakri (*Slam* at SFF) and Rhys Ifans, Oscar-winning director Gavin Hood (*Tsotsi*, *Eye in the Sky*) moulds an intense film about a reluctant heroine who risks it all in trying to prevent a war and save the lives of thousands.

The full Sydney Film Festival 2019 program can be found online at sff.org.au.

Sydney Film Festival runs 5 – 16 June 2019. Tickets to Sydney Film Festival 2019 are on sale now. Please call 1300 733 733 or visit sff.org.au 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 5 June to Sunday 16 June 2019, the 66th 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: *The Heiresses* (2018), *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 66th Sydney Film Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW and Destination NSW, the Federal Government through Screen Australia and the City of Sydney. The Festival's Strategic Partner is the NSW Government via its tourism and major events agency, Destination NSW.

