

2009 BigPond[®] Adelaide Film Festival showcases AUSTRALIAN CINEMA

Thirty-nine Australian films, including nine features, eight documentaries and 22 shorts will be showcased at the 2009 BigPond Adelaide Film Festival, offering an of the moment snapshot of the state of play of Australian filmmaking with romantic comedy, historical dramas, and inspiring documentaries of human courage all emerging as strong themes.

Nine new Australian features will have their world premieres at the festival, with six of these – *A GOOD MAN*, *LAST RIDE*, *LUCKY COUNTRY*, *MY TEHRAN FOR SALE* and *SAMSON AND DELILAH*, and opening night film *MY YEAR WITHOUT SEX* – made possible through the festival's investment arm, the AFF Investment Fund, which invests in new and innovative Australian works.

Other world premieres include Natalie Imbruglia in her first starring role in *CLOSED FOR WINTER*; *VAN DIEMEN'S LAND* based on the amazing story of Alexander Pearce, Australia's most notorious convict; and *BEAUTIFUL* a drama about Australian suburbia as you have never seen it before.

Three extraordinary Australian documentary features will have their national premieres – *YES MADAM*, *SIR*, *SOLO* and *ACROSS THE PLATEAU*.

WORLD PREMIERES

MY YEAR WITHOUT SEX – Opening Night film & in Natuzzi Competition for Best Feature Film

Sarah Watt's long awaited follow up to *Look Both Ways*, *MY YEAR WITHOUT SEX* extends Watt's concerns with the capricious ways that the gods can reach out into suburbia and strike you down. Natalie and her family are the stuff of suburban life: mortgage, messy house, job worries, and trying to figure out how fast to let the kids grow up, until something unexpected occurs which forces Natalie to address the big questions: is there a God, and if there is, why does the dryer keep on breaking down? If life is governed by dumb luck, should I play the pokies? Sacha Horler, alongside Matt Day, gives one of the great performances you'll see this year at the centre of a family prone to all the terrors and comedies of ordinary life in this strange, exotic and quietly remarkable place called Australia.

LAST RIDE

Hugo Weaving stars in the touching and uncompromising *LAST RIDE* (Dir: Glendyn Ivin) as an ex-con but loving father. When he takes his ten year old son, Chook (Tom Russell) on the run after committing a violent crime, the scene is set for a poetically spare and emotionally tense road movie. Hugo Weaving, Tom Russell, Glendyn Ivin, producers Antonia Barnard and Nichola Cole, and writer Mac Gudgeon will be in attendance. +Glendyn Ivin won the Palme D'Or at Cannes with his short film, *Cracker*.

LUCKY COUNTRY

Director Kriv Stenders (*Boxing Day*, *AFF07*) channels the visual traditions of the Heidelberg School in the taut period film, *LUCKY COUNTRY*. **Aden Young** stars as Nat, a small landholder barely hanging on to his patch of the bush. His daughter Sarah is just old enough to see herself as a woman, his son Tom just old enough to judge his father as a man. When three ex-soldiers arrive amidst rumours of gold, the group begins to turn on each other, and the cabin becomes a psychological battleground. Kriv Stenders, producer Kristian Moliere, and Aden Young will be guests of the festival.

CLOSED FOR WINTER

Based on Georgia Blain's critically acclaimed novel, *CLOSED FOR WINTER* (Dir: James Bogle) features a dazzlingly central performance by **Natalie Imbruglia** in her first leading role. The beach and the missing child are both motifs which have a powerful place in Australian culture. When her sister disappears off a suburban beach, a young girl is left to piece together her life. Twenty years on and she is continually drawn back into the past. James Bogle and Natalie Imbruglia will attend the world premiere of *CLOSED FOR WINTER* at the festival.

MY TEHRAN FOR SALE – in Natuzzi Competition for Best Feature Film

MY TEHRAN FOR SALE is a groundbreaking film by writer director Granaz Moussavi, revealing fresh truths behind the façade of contemporary Iran. Marzieh is an actress living in Tehran where, like most young people, she is forced to lead a secret life to express her art. At an underground rave party she meets Saman, now an Australian citizen, who offers her a way out—until things go terribly wrong. Shot entirely on location in Tehran, with the assistance of Bahman Ghobadi (*Turtles Can Fly*) and post-produced in Adelaide, this is a uniquely daring project. Adelaide-based filmmaker Granaz Moussavi is one of the most prominent poets of her generation in Iran. Granaz Moussavi, producers Julie Ryan and Kate Croser and lead actors Marzieh Vafamehr and Mir Chegeni will be in attendance.

SAMSON AND DELILAH

SAMSON AND DELILAH by director/cinematographer Warwick Thornton tells the story of two Aboriginal teenagers in a remote community. Samson gets through his days by sniffing, while Delilah is the caregiver for her Nana before taking a moment for herself to listen to Latino music. Their journey ranges across many of the most urgent issues concerning indigenous people in Australia—homelessness, poverty, domestic violence and substance abuse—but it does so with tenderness, dignity, and even humour. Warwick Thornton, producer Kath Shelper, actors Rowan McNamara and Marissa Gibson, and Mitjili Gibson will be in attendance.

VAN DIEMEN'S LAND

VAN DIEMEN'S LAND, the visually stunning debut by Jonathan auf der Heide is based on the true story of Alexander Pearce, Australia's most notorious convict. In 1822 Van Diemen's Land was a dreaded penal settlement. A work party of eight convicts escape into the beautiful and brutal wilderness intent on freedom but totally unprepared for the hardship which awaits them in this dark and primeval place. As their food runs out and tensions escalate, they find themselves contemplating the unthinkable. Jonathan auf der Heide, producer Maggie Miles, actors Oscar Redding, Mark Winter, Torquil Neilson, and other cast members will be guests of the festival.

BEAUTIFUL

Deborra Lee-Furness, Sebastian Gregory, **Peta Wilson** and **Tahyna Tozzi** star in *BEAUTIFUL* (Dir: Dean O'Flaherty), a drama about Australian suburbia as you have never seen it. Daniel is an introverted 14 year old whose two obsessions are photography and Suzy, a sixteen year old femme fatale in training. Their suburb is haunted by the urban myths of missing teenage girls. Using his crush to her advantage, Suzy asks Daniel in exchange for her friendship to get her secrets and photographs of the neighbours and houses that surround them. Thus begins a journey into the underbelly of suburbia, taking them on the trail of a killer. *BEAUTIFUL* has an original score by **Paul Mac**. Dean O'Flaherty, Peta Wilson, Sebastian Gregory, Tahyna Tozzi and Paul Mac will be guests of the festival.

A GOOD MAN

A GOOD MAN (Dir: Safina Uberoi) is an extraordinary documentary about love, commitment, the uniquely Australian culture of country people, and a resilience which seems to know no bounds. Chris Rohrlach, a grazier from the northern NSW town of Inverell looks like an ordinary bloke but is actually anything but. Fourteen years ago, Chris' pregnant girlfriend Rachel suffered a massive stroke which left her a quadriplegic with significant neurological impairment. Not only did she and Chris marry and have their child, but now there is another baby. With life on the land becoming increasingly tough, Chris and the family decide to diversify into small business—by opening Inverell's first legal brothel. Director Safina Uberoi and Chris and Rachel Rohrlach will be in attendance.

AUSTRALIAN PREMIERES

YES MADAM, SIR

Australian documentarist Megan Doneman presents *YES MADAM, SIR*, a detailed portrait of a mightily tenacious woman bent on making a difference, Kiran Bedi. After winning the Asian tennis championships in 1972, she became the first woman to join the elite Indian Police Service. During separatist riots in 1978 she faced down a mob armed with swords, armed only with her determination. She gained national prominence after having Indira Gandhi's illegally parked car towed. Her attempts to reorganise Delhi's notorious Tihar Jail, using methods including meditation, won her the Asian equivalent of a Nobel Prize.

Narrated by Helen Mirren, Megan Doneman and Kiran Bedi will be guests of the festival and will speak at the *Changing the World Through Film* forum.

SOLO

In December 2006 Andrew McAuley set out to become the first person to kayak solo across one of the world's fiercest bodies of water, the Tasman Sea. It was a quest which was to cost him everything. Jennifer Peedom (who initially hails from Adelaide) and David Michôd have gained unique access to McAuley's family, support team, and his own video footage to assemble *SOLO*, a unique and highly affecting record of his journey and of the beliefs that motivated it. McAuley emerges as a complex hero, an extreme sports enthusiast but also a family man all too aware of his vulnerability. He believes that life is best understood when you go out on to the edge and challenge its limits, when you stare into the face of death and despair. He must balance this against his love of his wife and young son.

ACROSS THE PLATEAU

Seven retired Chinese people from different backgrounds and life experiences come together to realise their long-cherished dream of crossing the roof of the world on bicycles in *ACROSS THE PLATEAU* (Dir Zhang Zeming, Paul Liu). They take a memorable journey from the industrial city of Lanzhou in north-west China, across the Tanggula Mountain and Tibetan plateau to Lhasa, and finally on to the Everest Base Camp. The whole journey is 3,100 kilometres and takes the cyclists across five mountains with altitudes of over 5,200 metres. The oldest cyclist is 66 and recovering from a stroke. Another was left paralysed for a year after being poisoned in an industrial accident. The seven cyclists (five men and two women) all survived traumatic experiences during the Cultural Revolution and their life experiences contribute to their determination and stamina in tackling this extraordinary adventure. Through their story, we glimpse China's past and present, and the challenges the people face with the pace and scale of their changing culture.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PREMIERES:

THE MISCREANTS

From Australian documentarist **George Gittoes** comes *THE MISCREANTS*, an impassioned film about the struggle against the Taliban. Gittoes becomes fascinated with the cheap, melodramatic films churned out in the frontier areas of Pakistan. Their absurd violence seems to hold a crazy mirror up to what is happening all around, but they are ruthlessly opposed by the truly violent religious hardliners who see them as an affront to Islam. For Gittoes, the makers of these films are the true heroes of art. He plunges into their world by financing, and even starring in, "Taliwood" films shot under the most dangerous of conditions. George Gittoes and producer Gabrielle Dalton will be guests of the festival.

The 2009 BigPond Adelaide Film Festival runs from 19 February to 1 March.

For more information please contact Miranda Brown Publicity on +61 3 9419 0931 or miranda@mbpublicity.com.au

For bookings and more info visit www.adelaidefilmfestival.org or phone the BAFF Ticket Hotline on 1300 727 432

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