

MIFF AWARDS: 2024 NOMINEES AND INTERNATIONAL JURY LINE-UP ANNOUNCED, UNCLE JACK CHARLES AWARD INTRODUCED



kajoo yannaga (come on let's walk together)

Press release

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With a mammoth prize pool of over \$300,000AUD on offer, the Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) has today unveiled the nominees and esteemed juries for the annual MIFF Awards. Shining a light on local and international filmmaking excellence, this year's categories includes the newly coined Uncle Jack Charles Award, recently renamed in honour of the legendary actor, musician and activist, presented in collaboration with Kearney Group.

A jury of celebrated local and international industry luminaries have been selected to preside over two of the major **MIFF Award** categories for 2024, including those titles competing in the festival's prestigious **Bright Horizons Competition**. Championing filmmaking talent on the rise with support from **VicScreen**, the **Bright Horizons Award** gifts \$140,000 to the winning title by a first or second-time director, making it one of the most lucrative film prizes globally.

This year's Bright Horizons Jury comprises some of the most brilliant multidisciplinary film talent from around the world, including award-winning filmmaker **Ivan Sen** (*Limbo*, *Mystery Road*) who will serve as Jury President; American writer and director, **David Lowery** (*The Green Knight*, *A Ghost Story*, *Ain't Them Bodies Saints*); Oscar-winning costume designer, **Deborah Scott** (*Avatar*, *Titanic*, *Back to the Future*); Australian actress, **Jillian Nguyen** (*Shayda*, MIFF 2023; *Scarygirl*, MIFF 2023); and Indonesian film producer **Yulia Evina Bhara** (*Tiger Stripes*, MIFF 2023).

The **Bright Horizons Jury** – including its international members – will each attend the festival to meet and deliberate in-person. The jury will also be on hand to present their chosen category winners on stage at the annual **MIFF Awards** ceremony on **Saturday 24 August** at **Rydges Melbourne**.

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Of this year's Bright Horizons competition, **MIFF Artistic Director Al Cossar** said: "Bright Horizons is the place to go for auteurs on the ascent – a renowned line-up of filmmakers announcing themselves on the global stage, alongside the incredible opportunity for Melbourne audiences to meet many of them at MIFF. Presided over by an esteemed Jury of attending cinema visionaries from all around the world, the competition again presents some of the year's most essential and anticipated moviegoing. Bright Horizons' 2024 edition is set to celebrate those new voices set to become major talents and the future of filmmaking itself."

Presented in collaboration with **Kearney Group**, the **Uncle Jack Charles Award** recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creatives participating in a film screening at this year's festival. Formerly known as the First Nations Film Creative Award, the prize has been retitled in honour of the late, great Uncle Jack Charles. The award seeks to support Indigenous excellence and commitment across all creative departments including; directing, producing, screenwriting, composing, editing, cinematography, acting, production design, art direction and sound design, with a \$20,000 cash prize and \$25,000 worth of financial services provided by **Kearney Group**.

Inaugural winners, co-directors Adrian Russell Wills and Gillian Moody, were awarded the prize in 2023 for their intimate documentary film, *Kindred*. The 2024 nominees for the Uncle Jack Charles Award are:

- Jon Bell – Director/Writer, *The Moogai*
- Semara Jose – Co-director, *Voice*
- Danielle MacLean – Co-director, *Like My Brother*
- Jake Duczynski – 'Gilay Gabinya', Director/Writer/Animator, *Magic Beach*
- April Phillips – Director, *kajoo yannaga (come on let's walk together)*

*The Moogai*

Three First Nation industry talents, including; Bidjara, Wakka Wakka and Gubbi Gubbi producer, writer, actor and VicScreen Production Exec **Davey Thompson** (*All My Friends are Racist*); Kamilaroi actor and writer **Thomas Weatherall** (*Heartbreak High*); and Anmatyerr film veteran and producer, **Trisha Morton-Thomas** (*High Country, Total Control*), will award this year's chosen creative for the demonstration of excellence and commitment to their craft within a film screening at MIFF 2024.

Of the award, **Davey Thompson** said; "I'm so excited by the range of First Nations Australian storytellers using film and extended reality formats. Thanks to MIFF and

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the Kearney Group in establishing this Award in recognition of Uncle Jack Charles. It's an honour to be a part of the jury."

Paul Kearney, Founder and CEO of Kearney Group, said: "Congratulations to this year's nominees. We are absolutely delighted to continue our partnership with MIFF and shine the spotlight on some incredible First Nations film creatives, and the 65,000+ year legacy of storytelling on this continent. This year is particularly special as we honour the late, great Uncle Jack Charles – a creative powerhouse and a champion of MIFF, by presenting this Award in his honour. This award is a testament to the extraordinary talent and cultural heritage of First Nations artists, and dedication to ensuring their stories are heard and celebrated."

Recognising an outstanding Australian creative from within a film in this year's program, the **Blackmagic Design Australian Innovation Award** by **Blackmagic Design** returns with a \$70,000 cash prize awarded to a director or a technical or creative lead. Presented to co-directors Soda Jerk for their groundbreaking satire feature documentary *Hello Dankness* in 2023, this year's nominees for the Blackmagic Design Australian Innovation Award are:

- Jaydon Martin – Director, *Flathead*
- Audrey Lam – Director, *Us and the Night*
- Steven Boyle – VFX Executive Producer, *The Demon Disorder*
- Adam Elliot – Director, *Memoir of a Snail*

"Everyone here at Blackmagic Design congratulates the nominees for continuing to show that there are no longer any technical limitations keeping filmmakers from creating the highest quality films. It was amazing to hear about last year's winner who used free software, DaVinci Resolve, to create a high end looking film that has been seen around the world. It is truly humbling to see the level of innovation and creativity from these Australian filmmakers," said **Grant Petty, CEO, Blackmagic Design**.

*Flathead*

The winner of the **Blackmagic Design Australian Innovation Award** will also be chosen by the international **Bright Horizons Jury**, whose members will be on-ground in Melbourne during the festival.

Taking time out from his jury duties, multi-award-winning filmmaker **David Lowery** will spend an hour speaking about his work to date for a special in conversation event at The Edge in Fed Square on **Saturday 24 August**. Across mainstream and

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independent cinema, Lowery has developed an unique filmmaker's eye and a strong audience following, from the contemplative *A Ghost Story*, to medieval epic *The Green Knight* and his live-action adaptation of *Pete's Dragon*.

Today's category nominees will join the outstanding line-up of titles previously announced as screening in the festival's **Bright Horizons Competition**, presented by **VicScreen**. Continuing its mission to recognise and celebrate the auteurs of the future, the competition cohort introduces 10 new compelling films, with all set to screen at the festival in their Australian or World Premiere.

Several Bright Horizons alumni have gone on to achieve further global success, with MIFF amongst the first in the world to recognise their emerging talents. Past nominees include Charlotte Wells' Oscar-nominated *Aftersun*, the critically acclaimed *Tótem* by Lila Avilés and Molly Manning Walker's wave-making *How To Have Sex*. The 2023 Bright Horizons Award was presented to debut director Ramata-Toulaye Sy's entrancing *Banel & Adama*.

The 2024 Bright Horizons Competition films include:

- *Flow* directed by Gints Zilbalodis
- *Good One* directed by India Donaldson
- *Hoard* directed by Luna Carmoon
- *Inside* directed by Charles Williams
- *Janet Planet* directed by Annie Baker
- *Julie Keeps Quiet* directed by Leonardo Van Dijn
- *On Becoming a Guinea Fowl* directed by Rungano Nyoni
- *Sweet Dreams* directed by Ena Sendjarević
- *Universal Language* directed by Matthew Rankin
- *The Village Next to Paradise* directed by Mo Harawe

*Sweet Dreams*

From the Bright Horizons line-up, international filmmakers, **India Donaldson** (*Good One*), director-animator **Gints Zilbalodis** and producer **Matiss Kaza** (*Flow*), **Luna Carmoon** (*Hoard*), **Leonardo Van Dijn** (*Julie Keeps Quiet*), director **Matthew Rankin** and screenwriter and actor **Ila Firouzabadi** (*Universal Language*), **Mo Harawe** (*The Village Next to Paradise*), will attend the festival in-person this August, presenting their films first-hand at select screenings and participating in Q&A events. Among this year's global competition slate is the locally-filmed *Inside*, by Australian filmmaker and Short Film Palme d'Or winner, **Charles Williams**. Williams will also appear at MIFF in support of his debut feature's World Premiere.

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Audiences can explore the full suite of competition films with a special **Bright Horizons Pass** available for purchase, with ticket holders able to see three exceptional competition films of their choosing at a discounted rate.

*The Village Next to Paradise*

The MIFF Schools Youth Jury Award, presented by **Collarts**, returns, sees three young filmmakers – selected from Top Screen 2023’s best and brightest – deliberating on the best title from the **MIFF Schools**.

"At Collarts, the Australian College of the Arts, we believe that stories change the world. Our students bring fresh new voices to the arts and cultural landscape, and we are excited to provide industry connections and opportunities for our students to learn with one of the biggest film festivals in the southern hemisphere," said **CEO of Collarts, Sam Jacob**. "We're thrilled to have MIFF as a long-term creative partner, and to be presenting the 2024 MIFF Schools Youth Jury Award, which provides mentorship to the Youth Jury members, along with awarding a prize of \$10,000 to the winning film."

Meanwhile, the **Intrepid Audience Award** sees MIFF audiences selecting their favourite films from the festival, with the opportunity to win a Intrepid trip for two to Vietnam just for voting.

Of the partnership, **Intrepid Managing Director ANZ, Brett Mitchell** said: "Intrepid is thrilled to be partnering with MIFF for the first time, bringing together two iconic Melbourne brands. We share a strong values alignment and are excited to reach a new audience of culturally engaged and curious minds through this partnership. Both travel and cinema have the power to spark creativity and inspire positive change, serving as forces for good. They bring people together, fostering a sense of community through shared experiences and collective engagement."

Celebrating the best in short-form filmmaking, the much-loved **MIFF Shorts Awards**, presented by **Campari**, showcases the mastery in brevity across animation, documentary, experimental and Australian and international fiction shorts. Jury members for the 63rd edition of the awards are: award-winning screenwriter, director, and former TV journalist **Beck Cole**; COO at Mushroom Studios, entertainment lawyer and producer **Bethany Jones**; artist, film director, performance-maker, writer, and Artistic Director of Back to Back Theatre (which recently won the Golden Lion for Theatre’s Lifetime Achievement) **Bruce Gladwin**.

The **MIFF Shorts Awards** winners will be announced earlier in the festival with a dedicated ceremony on **Saturday 17 August** at **ACMI**.

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MIFF Media Centre**NOTES TO EDITOR**

- MIFF 2024 runs in-cinema from 8-25 August
- The 2024 MIFF Awards will take place on Saturday 24 August at Rydges Melbourne
- The flagship MIFF Bright Horizons Award is supported by VicScreen. The winner receives \$140,000
- The Uncle Jack Charles Award is presented in collaboration with Kearney Group. The winner receives a \$20,000 cash prize and \$25,000 worth of financial services with Kearney Group
- The Blackmagic Design Australian Innovation Award is supported by Blackmagic Design and awards the winner with a prize of \$70,000
- The 63rd MIFF Shorts Awards, presented by Campari will take place Saturday 17 August at ACMI
- MIFF's Audience Award is supported by Intrepid. Audiences can vote for their favourite film from the program via the MIFF app or online – more details [here](#)
- MIFF Schools Youth Jury Award, presented by Collarts returns in its fourth year at the festival. The jury is comprised of three Top Screen 2023 filmmakers who will select a winner from within the MIFF Schools Program
- In Conversation: David Lowery will be held at The Edge in Fed Square on Saturday 24 August
- To purchase tickets, including the Bright Horizons Pass, and explore the full program visit miff.com.au

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