

MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL OPENS TODAY: INTERNATIONAL GUESTS, WORLD PREMIERE SCREENINGS AND SPECIAL EVENTS TO COME



Memoir of a Snail

Press release

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MIFF Media Centre

The Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) officially opens today with the hometown and Australian Premiere of Adam Elliot's long-awaited new claymation masterpiece, *Memoir of a Snail*, supported by the MIFF Premiere Fund. A further 18 days of cinematic glory await with the festival running online nationwide, around Melbourne and across Victoria from 8-25 August.

Having recently been awarded the Cristal Award for best feature at this year's Annecy International Animation Festival in France, *Memoir of a Snail* tells the bittersweet tale of snail-devotee, Grace Pudel. The film's cavalcade of voice and creative talent will now officially unveil the film to local audiences in a special **Opening Night Gala** event at Hoyts Melbourne Central this evening. Star-studded arrivals to the red carpet include director-animator **Adam Elliot**, **Sarah Snook** and **Kodi Smit-McPhee**.

Marking Elliot's first feature since 2009's *Mary and Max*, *Memoir of a Snail* arrives a further twenty years after Elliot's remarkable Oscar win for his early animated short *Harvie Krumpet*. This latest animated marvel took over eight years to complete with scores of artists and animators contributing to the production. **Sarah Snook** lends her voice alongside **Kodi Smit-McPhee**, **Magda Szubanski**, **Eric Bana** and **Jacki Weaver** in what is sure to become a classic.

A staple of Melbourne's winter cultural calendar, MIFF returns to metro venues from **8-25 August**, with **MIFF Regional** expanding to theatres statewide across the weekends of **16-18 August** and **23-25 August** and **MIFF Online – streaming via ACMI** providing digital access Australia-wide to a limited selection of festival highlights from **9-25 August**.

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MIFF Artistic Director Al Cossar, said: "It is a joy to welcome audiences back to binge mode at the beginning of this year's Melbourne International Film Festival. With a program of over 250 films, and over 400 sessions, there is so much to come over the next 18 days. What's more, that starts right now – with MIFF coming out of the gates with a first weekend roster of World Premieres, special events, and a visiting array of incredible filmmakers from across the world, the festival is back to once more reignite Melbourne's love for the movies, and take it far beyond our city limits. See incredible cinema, first, in Victorian Premiere; discover something new and unexpected, and meet the artists behind some of the most amazing films of the year, as we brighten Melbourne's winter on screen this August."

Minister for Creative Industries Colin Brooks, said: "The Allan Labor Government is proud to support MIFF, which is offering Victorian movie fans another jam-packed program of superb films. Over the next 18 days, MIFF will showcase the best of cinematic artistry locally and around the globe. Join us for an inspiring 2024 festival!"

Following a blockbuster pre-festival sales period, Melbourne audiences are primed for an almost three week-long film festival marathon. Early session sell-outs include macabre cannibal comedy, *The Organist* by local director **Andy Burkitt** and poetic and ethereal *Us and the Night* by **Audrey Lam**, and newly scheduled encore screenings of both have already been made available.

*All We Imagine as Light*

Keen-eyed festival-goers will be amongst the first in the world to see some of the year's most talked about new releases, with tickets selling fast to the likes of **Payal Kapadia's** sensuous *All We Imagine as Light*; the **Hunter Schafer**-led horror *Cuckoo* and four-hour long foodie feast, *Menus-Plaisirs – Les Troisgros*.

MIFF is also the only place to see the year's biggest titles at a scale befitting their buzz, with a number of much-anticipated features showing on the biggest screen in the Southern Hemisphere at IMAX. Along with a one-off (and already sold out!) screening of **Francis Ford Coppola's** 40-years-in-the-making passion project, *Megalopolis*, IMAX will also host **Rungano Nyoni's** playfully surrealist *On Becoming a Guinea Fowl*; 3D visual art spectacle *Lasting Impressions*; and **Sally Aitken's** big-hearted and visually dazzling *Every Little Thing*, amongst other MIFF-exclusive screenings.

And for the last-minute ticket buyers, those unsure which film to pick next or the voracious film buff who just can't help but squeeze in one more screening, MIFF is

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offering an on-the-day **Rush Ticket** option at the 2024 festival. On select days of the festival MIFF will release a batch of discounted **Rush Tickets** to select films screening that same day. Details of sessions will be announced via MIFF's Instagram and website at midday, with tickets available for purchase online, at the MIFF Box Office or the cinema venue until the session sells out.

OPENING WEEKEND

Three of the country's most exciting new films will make their World Premiere across MIFF's opening weekend.

Adapted from **Craig Silvey's** bestselling novel and starring **Jai Courtney, Celeste Barber, Jack Thompson** and **Deborah Mailman**, **John Sheedy's** *Runt* is a true family heartwarmer and underdog tale for the whole family. Also for young audiences, **Damon Gameau's** (*That Sugar Film, 2040*) socially-driven **Future Council** follows eight kids on the ultimate school excursion: a road trip across Europe to seek solutions to the climate crisis. And local legend – by way of international rock icon – **Warren Ellis** returns to home soil to present the deeply personal **Ellis Park**, premiering at MIFF's **Music on Film Gala** presented by RRR on Saturday 10 August.

Supported by the MIFF Premiere Fund, **Ellis Park** follows Warren as he returns to his childhood home in Ballarat before embarking on a very different passion project in his efforts to establish a wildlife sanctuary in the forests of Sumatra. Ellis will be joined by acclaimed Australian filmmaker and director of **Ellis Park**, **Justin Kurzel** (*Nitram*, MIFF 2021; *Snowtown*), and his wildlife park co-founder, the indomitable **Femke den Haas** at the screening.

Earlier in the day, **Justin Kurzel** and **Warren Ellis** will appear in conversation at The Edge in Fed Square to discuss their individual work and recent collaboration for a special one-off **MIFF Talks** event presented by University of Melbourne and hosted by **Zan Rowe**.

The first of MIFF's expansive international guest list will arrive in Melbourne over opening weekend, including award-winning poet and photographer **Raven Jackson** who'll meet with audiences to introduce her debut feature **All Dirt Roads Taste of Salt**. Shot in gorgeous 35mm, the visceral and visual beauty will be made even more powerful in its Australian Premiere screening in IMAX on Friday 9 August.



All Dirt Roads Taste of Salt

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That same evening at The Capitol, US documentarian **Ondi Timoner** will be on hand to show ***Dig! XX***, her restaged rock doc about **The Dandy Warhols** and **The Brian Jonestown Massacre** presented by RRR. With 40 minutes of never-before-seen footage, this expanded remix digs deeper into the archives to share a new take on the original Sundance-winning feature. Ondi will later appear in a free **MIFF Talks** event at The Wheeler Centre on Sunday 11 August to reflect on her storied documentary career.

Amidst a program brimming with must-see cinema, further opening weekend standouts include ***La Cocina***, a gorgeously shot, righteously angry study of New York City kitchen workers starring **Rooney Mara**; the striking Berlinale Golden Bear-winning documentary, ***Dahomey***, which follows a stolen statue return home to Republic of Benin; and the epic, darkly comic snapshot of Franzen-esque family dysfunction in **Matthias Glasner's *Dying*** presented by MINI as part of the MIFF Headliners strand.

*Dahomey*

Personal Shopper (MIFF 2016) director **Olivier Assayas** shares the bittersweet, intimate lockdown-set ***Suspended Time***; **Aubrey Plaza** leads **Megan Park's** endearing coming-of-age comedy-fantasy ***My Old Ass***; Shakespeare comes to the violent gaming landscape of GTA in ***Grand Theft Hamlet***; and MIFF's ***Yvonne Rainer: Autobiographical Fictions*** retrospective gets underway with Rainer's early masterpiece, ***Film About a Woman Who...***

A bounty of brilliant Australian documentaries lead the local line-up over weekend one at MIFF, including the radical, love-fuelled deep dive into 1970s counterculture in ***Aquarius*** by **Wendy Champagne**; **Jaydon Martin's** directorial feature debut, ***Flathead***, which scooped a Special Jury Award as part of Rotterdam's Tiger Competition; and the intimate and uplifting dance documentary, ***Rewards of the Tribe***, featuring **Chunky Move** and **Restless Dance Theatre**.

The first of the **Bright Horizons** competition screenings will also commence at IMAX with the World Premiere of Short Film Palme d'Or winner **Charles Williams'** prison drama, ***Inside***, starring **Guy Pearce**, **Cosmo Jarvis** and **Vincent Miller**. Later in the weekend **Ena Sendjarević's** surreal portrait of the absurdities of colonisation, ***Sweet Dreams***, will also make its Australian Premiere at IMAX.

The full slate of ten **Bright Horizons** competition titles will screen across the festival period with the winner of the \$140,000AUD flagship **Bright Horizons Award**, presented by VicScreen, announced at the annual **MIFF Awards** ceremony on Saturday 24 August at Rydges Melbourne.

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INTERNATIONAL GUESTS

Connecting audiences and filmmakers in-person, MIFF will play host to an expansive guest list of overseas filmmakers and industry experts across August.

Arrivals throughout the month include **Shiori Itō**, director and subject of the powerful Japanese #MeToo documentary, **Black Box Diaries**; **Tracie Laymon**, director of multiple SXSW Prize-winner **Bob Trevino Likes It**; and co-directors **Nick Dwyer** and **Tu Neill** who'll bring the serene surrounds of Japanese 'listening cafés' to Melbourne with their episodic documentary, **A Century in Sound** presented by RRR.

New Zealand director **Ant Timpson** will travel to Australia with his magical father-daughter quest, **Bookworm** starring **Elijah Wood**; as will US co-directors **Julia Greenberg** and **Dianna Dilworth** whose documentary **Dory Previn: On My Way to Where** chronicles the life and music of the genius songwriter and is presented by RRR.



Bookworm

Many of the **Bright Horizons** filmmakers will be in attendance, with animator and director **Gints Zilbalodis** and producer **Matiss Kaza** (*Flow*), **India Donaldson** (*Good One*), **Luna Carmoon** (*Hoard*), **Leonardo Van Diji** (*Julie Keeps Quiet*), director **Matthew Rankin** and screenwriter and actor **Ila Firouzabadi** (*Universal Language*), **Mo Harawe** (*The Village Next to Paradise*) and Australian filmmaker **Charles Williams** (*Inside*) all on hand in support of their debut or second features screening in competition at MIFF.

International members of the **Bright Horizons Jury** will also travel to Melbourne to join their local counterparts for deliberations in-person. The 2024 **Bright Horizons Jury** is led by Jury President **Ivan Sen** and includes US filmmaker **David Lowery**, Oscar-winning costume designer **Deborah L Scott**, Indonesian film producer **Yulia Evina Bhara** and Australian actress **Jillian Nguyen**.

Jury member and visionary American director, **David Lowery** will appear in conversation in a special Masterclass session on Saturday 24 August discussing his diverse filmmaking output, from the Sundance Grand Jury Prize-winner *Ain't Them Bodies Saints* (MIFF 2013); *A Ghost Story* starring Rooney Mara (*La Cocina*, MIFF 2024) and Casey Affleck; and the Dev Patel-led fantasy epic *The Green Knight*.

Later, Lowery's fellow jurist Deb Scott will host a costume design masterclass on the festival's final Sunday 25 August, sharing insights from an award-winning career

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overflowing with iconic wardrobe moments, from Marty McFly's orange best in *Back to the Future* and the complicated costumes of Pandora in *Avatar* to Elliott's red hoodie in *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* and the historical accuracy required on the set of *Titanic*.

SPECIAL EVENTS AND OFFERINGS

Mid-next week MIFF will present the festival's inaugural **Premiere with Purpose** with the World Premiere of **Shannon Owen's** compelling ***Left Write Hook*** at ACMI on Wednesday 14 August. Presented by DECJUBA, the black carpet event will be hosted by broadcaster and *Left Write Hook* ambassador **Jo Stanley**.

*Left Write Hook*

The following weekend, **Alison Lester's** beloved children's classic will be brought to life as a hybrid live-action animation feature at the Astor Theatre with the **Family Gala** screening of **Rob Connolly's** Premiere Fund-supported ***Magic Beach***.

Spanning virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR) and mixed reality (MR), the annual **MIFF XR** program proudly returns to ACMI from Tuesday 13 August. These immersive experiences transport audiences to worlds real and imagined, from a mortal middleground in ***The Memphis Chronicles: Water's Edge*** to a walk on Country in First Nations work ***kajoo yannaga (come on let's walk together)***, co-presented by Now or Never and ACMI.

Everyone's favourite giant reptilian stomps into town with the ***Godzilla 70th Anniversary Marathon*** at the Astor Theatre on Saturday 17 August presented by Asahi. Seven films screen back-to-back, from a 4K restoration of the original 1954 feature right through to 2016's *Shin Godzilla*.

Returning to the big screen in MIFF's **Restorations** program are new 4K productions of the AFI Award-winning ***Romulus, My Father*** with director **Richard Roxburgh** in attendance, and Aussie cult-classic horror ***Lake Mungo***. Plus an expansive survey of ***Iranian New Wave: 1962-79*** expertly curated by the The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and a look back at the work of local queer cinema pioneer, **Stephen Cummins**.

The latest iteration of **Hear My Eyes** will showcase landmark Australian psychological thriller ***Wake in Fright*** in its World Premiere NFSA 4K restoration, complemented by a fresh score from instrumental jazz-funk group **Surprise Chef** at Arts Centre Melbourne.

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The **Campari Cinema Lounge** makes its return to ACMI, offering cocktails, DJs and specialty cocktails. Pre or post-screening, it provides a stylish and relaxed retreat for festival-goers to unwind and mingle with delicious Campari beverages served late into the night.

Nearby the new look **MIFF Festival Hub** has everything to keep audiences caffeinated, full and smelling good throughout August. Featuring a menu curated by Miss Pearl, coffee from St ALi, fragrances by Aesop, and drinks from Yering Station, Asahi, and Campari, the **MIFF Festival Hub** is the go-to spot for a festival pitstop. Or stay a while for **MIFF Trivia Nights** with Alexei Toliopoulos and Umbrella Entertainment, filmmaker conversations and **MIFF Food & Film** dining experiences.

MIFF ONLINE AND MIFF REGIONAL

To supplement, expand and extend the festival fun for audiences near and far, **MIFF Online – streaming via ACMI** will provide digital access Australia-wide to a limited selection of festival highlights from **9-25 August**. Titles available to stream include **Tawfik Alzaidi's *Norah*** arriving direct from Cannes and the perfect post-Olympics bookend in ***Copa 71***, which tells the unbelievable and previously untold story of the 1971 Women's Soccer World Cup.

*Copa 71*

The **MIFF Regional** showcase heads statewide on **16-18 August** and **23-25 August** with screenings in Bendigo (Star Cinema, Eaglehawk), Castlemaine (Theatre Royal), Echuca (Paramount), Geelong (Village and Pivotonian), Rosebud (Peninsula Cinemas), Morwell (Village) and Shepparton (Village).

Regional venues will screen ***Memoir of a Snail*** as their shared opening night feature on Friday 16 August, just a week after its Australian Premiere at the **MIFF Opening Night Gala**. Other not-to-be-missed films screening regionally (and in metro venues) include **Julio Torres'** sardonically absurdist ***Problemista*** starring **Tilda Swinton**; the **Jane Squibb**-led crowdpleaser ***Thelma***; and rowdy hip hop biopic, ***Kneecap*** that tracks the Belfast trio's fictionalised origins and their real-life crusade to protect the Gaeilge language.

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

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- A limited selection of festival highlights will be available digitally across Australia from 9-25 August through MIFF Online – streaming via ACMI. Book and watch via ACMI's dedicated streaming platform [Cinema 3](#). Registration is free with a mix of free and pay on demand content available
- Tickets and passes to all MIFF screenings, talks and events are on sale now
- Visit miff.com.au to explore the full program

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