



## P IS FOR PREMIERE FUND FILMS

STORIES THAT NEED TELLING

### SEVEN PROJECTS TO PREMIERE AT MIFF 2019

With a record number of films on its annual slate, the **MIFF Premiere Fund** brings seven premieres to the 68<sup>th</sup> Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF), including Maziar Lahooti's highly anticipated directorial debut *Below*, as well as the joyous *H is for Happiness* for the festival's Family Gala.

The Premiere Fund, which provides minority co-financing to new Australian quality theatrical (narrative and documentary) feature films that then premiere at MIFF, has invested in more than 70 projects including the MIFF 2019 slate.

Four of this year's slate of seven Premiere Fund films are directed by alumni from the [MIFF Accelerator Lab](#) for emerging screen directors, including three red-carpet world premieres as follows:

- Director John Sheedy's *H is for Happiness* tells the story of a relentlessly optimistic and hilariously forthright girl who hatches a variety of outlandish schemes to make her fractured family happy again. This charming adaptation of award-winning novel *My Life as an Alphabet* stars Miriam Margolyes (*Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries*), Emma Booth (*Hounds of Love*), Richard Roxburgh (*Rake*), Deborah Mailman (*The Sapphires*) and Joel Jackson (*Jungle*) alongside newcomers Daisy Axon and Wesley Patten.
- Ryan Corr (*Holding the Man*) and Anthony LaPaglia (*Balibo*) star alongside Phoenix Raei (*The Heights*), Alison Whyte (*The Kettering Incident*), Morgana O'Reilly (*Offspring*) and Zenia Star (*The Merger*) star in Maziar Lahooti's pitch-black comedy *Below* with a unique, and uniquely provocative, take on Australia's controversial asylum-seeker detention system.
- Deadpan to its core, Jayden Stevens' *A Family* is an offbeat comedy shot in the Ukraine that ventures into the home of a lonely man who hires actors to play his parents, brother and sister.

The Premiere Fund's other three red-carpet world premieres comprise:

- A reimagining of *Measure for Measure*, Shakespeare's play about morality, mercy and justice into a topical, multi-cultural tale of love and loyalty by director Paul Ireland (*Pawno*) and his co-writer, the late Damian Hill (*West of Sunshine*), starring Hugo Weaving (*The Dressmaker*), Harrison Gilbertson (*Hounds of Love*), Megan Hajar (*Breath*), Fayssal Bazzi (*The Merger*) and Daniel Henshall (*Acute Misfortune*)
- Featuring appearances from rock sensation Courtney Barnett, local punk trio Cable Ties and Sikh-Australian slam poet Sukhjit Khalsa, *No Time for Quiet*, from directors Hylton Shaw and Samantha Dinning, joins a group of girls and gender-diverse youths as they discover the empowering strength of music through a GIRLS ROCK! camp in Melbourne.
- Featuring Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, Cheng Pei-pei (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*), Cynthia Rothrock (*China O'Brien*), Jessica Henwick (*Game of Thrones*) and Australian stuntman Richard Norton (*Mad Max: Fury Road*), Serge Ou's *Iron Fists & Kung Fu Kicks* is a sweeping kick of action-packed moviemaking mayhem that uncovers how Kung Fu movies spread from Hong Kong to Hollywood, and spanned *Five Fingers of Death* to *The Matrix*.

Finally, Accelerator Lab alumnus director Rodd Rathjen's *Buoyancy* has its international premiere at MIFF following its world premiere at this year's Berlin International Film Festival where it was hailed a "terse minimalist thriller" for its portrayal of a Cambodian boy's enslavement on a Thai fishing trawler.

“The Premiere Fund champions stories that need telling and we are so proud of this year’s slate of wonderfully diverse and inclusive premieres,” said MIFF Premiere Fund Executive Producer Mark Woods. “With a record number of films on the slate this year, we take our hats off to the talented filmmakers that we have the privilege of working with and we look forward to the Fund continuing to play its part in supporting quality new Australian cinema.”

Across its 12 years, the Premiere Fund has a proud history of assisting a wide range of stories that need telling from a diverse range of talent and voices.

Of the 70 films co-financed thus far by the Premiere Fund:

- 30% were directed by women (versus reported industry average of 16%)
- 61% had female producers (versus industry average of 32%);
- 44% included youth themes (including [Paper Planes](#));
- 32% had elements portraying Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Communities (CALDs), with 7% having CALD creative principals (director and/or producer(s));
- 15% included Indigenous themes and/or characters (including [Bran Nue Dae](#)), with 6% having Indigenous creative principals;
- 13% included LGBTIQ characters and/or issues, with 20% involving LGBTIQ creative principals
- 45% involved regional themes and/or regional shoots
- 51% of Premiere Fund movies were helmed by first time directors, with 22% of the overall tally being directed by alumni of the MIFF Accelerator Lab emerging director program and 48% securing part of their financing from MIFF 37<sup>th</sup> South Market.

Other key milestones include:

- Children’s film ***Paper Planes*** grossed almost \$10 million at the Australia/NZ box office and won the inaugural CineFest \$100,000 film prize in 2014
- Premiere Fund titles have won more than **60 awards** and more than 285 key festival selections including **Berlin** (*Buoyancy, Make Hummus Not War, The Turning, Galore, Paper Planes, Bran Nue Dae, Monsieur Mayonnaise, Emo The Musical*); **Cannes** (*These Final Hours*); **Rotterdam** (*Electric Boogaloo, Not Quite Hollywood, Have You Seen the Listers?*); **Toronto** (*Cut Snake, Electric Boogaloo, Paper Planes, Downriver, Balibo, Blessed, Bran Nue Dae, Not Quite Hollywood, Blame, Machete Maidens Unleashed, Mother of Rock, Loved Ones, The Butterfly Tree*)
- Indigenous-themed feature documentary ***Putuparri & The Rainmakers*** won the 2015 CineFest \$100,000 Film Prize, with Cinefest Jury Chair David Wenham remarking: "A story and characters so compelling and emotionally engaging that it reinforced the power of cinema to entertain, touch us deeply and stay with us forever."

#### **NOTES:**

- **The 2019 Melbourne International Film Festival runs 01 – 18 August**
- **Tickets for the Family Gala, *H is for Happiness* are on sale now at [miff.com.au](http://miff.com.au).**
- **For detailed information on the MIFF Premiere Fund slate and background, visit [www.miff.com.au/premierfund](http://www.miff.com.au/premierfund)**
- **For information on the Premiere Fund for film practitioners, visit: [www.miffpremierfund.com](http://www.miffpremierfund.com)**
- **For the MIFF Premiere Fund highlights reel, click [here](#)**
- **The full festival program will be launched on 09 July with all general public individual session tickets on sale 12 July 2019.**

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