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MIFF PREMIERE FUND LINES-UP FIVE WORLD PREMIERES FOR MIFF 2009

MELBOURNE: Tuesday 28 April 2009 – Just 18 months after its first funding announcements, the **Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) Premiere Fund** has concluded its spending on a slate of 14 films with combined production budgets of A\$32.5 million. Five **MIFF Premiere Fund** films will have their world premieres at this year's **MIFF**, with a further three confirmed for **MIFF 2010**, while six **MIFF Premiere Fund** films had their world premieres at **MIFF 2008**.

The **MIFF Premiere Fund**, which commenced in September 2007 with a A\$1.6 million grant over two years from the Victorian State Government, provides strategic minority financial supports to a range of local theatrical documentaries and narrative feature films that will have their premieres at **MIFF**. At **MIFF 2008**, Victorian Premier **John Brumby** and Innovation Minister **Gavin Jennings** announced that the **MIFF Premiere Fund** would continue with a further A\$1.6 million grant over two years from July 2009.

The **Premiere Fund** slate for **MIFF 2009**, which runs 24 July – 09 August, comprises four narrative drama features and one feature-length documentary.

- **Blessed**: from director **Ana Kokkinos** (*Head On*) and producer **Al Clark** (*Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*) and Executive Producer Marian Macgowan (*Death Defying Acts*), starring **Frances O'Connor, Miranda Otto, Deborra-Lee Furness** and **William McInnes**, based on the acclaimed Melbourne play *Who's Afraid of the Working Class?*
- **Bran Nue Dae**: from director **Rachel Perkins** (*Radiance, First Australians*) and producer **Robyn Kershaw** (*Looking for Alibrandi, Kath & Kim*) and Graeme Issac, starring **Geoffrey Rush, Ernie Dingo, Missy Higgins, Deb Mailman, Nigali Lawford, Tom Budge, Dan Sultan** and **Jessica Mauboy**, based on the popular comedic musical of the same name;
- **Balibo**: from director **Robert Connolly** (*The Bank*), producers John Maynard (*The Boys*) and Rebecca Williamson and executive producers Andrew Myer, Paul Wiegard, Andrew Barlow, starring **Anthony La Paglia**, inspired by Jill Jolliffe's book about the East Timorese events of 1975;
- **The Loved Ones**: a horror film from debut feature director **Sean Byrne** (a 2007 **MIFF Accelerator** alumni), producer **Mark Lazarus** (*Australian Rules*) and Executive Producer: Bryce Menzies, starring **Xavier Samuel** (*September*) and **Victoria Thaine** (*Caterpillar Wish*).
- **Indonesia Calling – Joris Ivens in Australia**: a signature feature documentary from director/producer **John Hughes**.

"The world premieres of these five new local feature films from the Premiere Fund greatly enriches **MIFF's** line-up this year for audiences at Australia's largest film festival," said **MIFF Executive Director Richard Moore**. "The **MIFF Premiere Fund** takes the festival's long-standing relationship with Victorian filmmakers to a new level and has secured an exciting pipeline of new local content for **MIFF**."

Thus far, the **Premiere Fund** slate for **MIFF 2010** comprises two feature films and one feature-length documentary as follows:

- **Kin**: a romantic comedy from feature debut director **Amanda Jane** and producer **Nicole Minchin**, starring **Steve Bisley, Rhonda Burchmore, Essie Davis, Geoff Paine, Adam Zwar, Nadine Garner, Josh Lawson** and **Isabel Lucas**.
- **Love & Mortar**: a romantic family drama from veteran Melbourne director **Nadia Tass** and producers **David Parker** and **Richard Keddie**, starring **James Nesbitt**.

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- **Ben Lee: Catch My Disease:** a feature documentary from **Amiel Courtin-Wilson** (a 2003 **MIFF Accelerator** alumni) about pop music, spirituality, fame, family and celebrity which paints an intimate portrait of the 29 year-old Australian star through a wealth of archival, performance and interview footage with **Ben Lee, Winona Ryder, Claire Danes, Jason Schwartzman, Michelle Williams** and others.

Ben Lee, which is produced by Richard Lowenstein, follows Courtin-Wilson's **MIFF Premiere Fund** co-financed feature documentary **Bastardy**, which won the Jury Prize for Best Documentary at the 2009 Film Critics Circle of Australia Awards, was one of several well-received **MIFF Premiere Fund** co-financed feature documentaries premiering at **MIFF 2008**, which also included:

- **Rock n Roll Nerd**, which won the Audience Award at London's 2009 Australian Film Festival;
- **Not Quite Hollywood**, which winning the Best Documentary Feature prize at the 2009 Film Critics Circle of Australia Awards and was selected for the Toronto, Sitges, Rotterdam and London Film Festivals,
- **Whatever Happened to Brenda Hean?**, which was selected for the 26th Festival International du Film d'Environnement last year in Paris;
- **Celebrity: Dominick Dunne**: which was selected for the Hampton's International Film Festival

"It is pleasing to see such richly diverse outcomes from the MIFF Premiere Fund, which provides financial support to Victorian films to assist their production and premiere at Australia's most popular film festival," said Victorian Innovation Minister **Gavin Jennings**. "The MIFF Premiere Fund boosts local production by providing more opportunities for Victorian filmmakers to bring their stories to the big screen and these films also benefit from an international showcase through their association with **MIFF**, which exposes Victoria's filmmaking talent to a large audience of local film-goers and international film co-financiers attending MIFF 37°South Market."

With the first **MIFF Premiere Fund** now fully expended, the second **Premiere Fund** will have its first call for applications in August after **MIFF 2009**. Guidelines and application forms will be available at www.miffpremierfund.com.

"The **MIFF Premiere Fund** and **MIFF 37°South Market** are important initiatives of the Victorian State Government to build on Melbourne's position as a centre for creative industries and screen business and MIFF will continue to deepen links between each of the MIFF industry programs of the **MIFF Premiere Fund, MIFF 37°South Market** and the **MIFF Accelerator** emerging director workshop" said MIFF Chair **Claire Dobbin**. "These initiatives mirror the development of other international film festivals which, like **MIFF**, have extended their remit to become important creative and financing hubs."

For further information on **MIFF**, visit www.melbournefilmfestival.com.au. The full program for **MIFF 2009** will be announced on 07 July 2009 with a selection of highlights to be announced on May 20 and 26.

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