

MEDIA RELEASE

POLITICAL THRILLER *BALIBO* OPENS MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

MUSICAL COMEDY *BRAN NUE DAE* TO CLOSE FESTIVAL WITH GALA EVENT

MELBOURNE 20 MAY 2009 – The **58th Melbourne International Film Festival** is pleased to announce that two stand-out Australian films will open and close this year's festival. The **Melbourne International Film Festival Premiere Fund** titles will present their World Premieres to eager MIFF audiences. "In only the second year of our film fund we are proud to be positioning the entire festival between the bookends of two new and very diverse Australian features. We open on a serious political note and will close in a riotous excess of colour and movement" said **MIFF Executive Director Richard Moore**.

On Friday 24 July, MIFF will open with the political thriller, *Balibo*, at Hamer Hall. Director **Robert Connolly** (*The Bank, Three Dollars*) brings to life the moving and true story of five Australian journalists who go to East Timor in 1975 to cover Indonesia's invasion. Their story is told through the eyes of a sixth Australian journalist, Roger East, who is lured to East Timor by José Ramos-Horta, to investigate the truth behind the death of the five men. *Balibo* features stand-out performances by **Anthony LaPaglia, Damon Gameau, Gyton Grantley** and **Nathan Phillips** among a large ensemble cast.

Director **Rachel Perkins'** (*Radiance, First Australians*) all singing all dancing music spectacular *Bran Nue Dae* will close the festival with a Gala event on Saturday 8th August (festival will screen encore sessions on Sunday 9th August). The film, based on the popular comedic musical of the same name, features a stella cast including **Geoffrey Rush, Ernie Dingo, Missy Higgins, Deb Mailman, Nigali Lawford, Tom Budge, Dan Sultan** and **Jessica Mauboy**.

The 2009 festival will screen almost 300 films from world-class festivals, including Cannes, Sundance, Rotterdam, Berlin and Toronto Festivals. The programme will feature the work of world-renowned filmmakers, and more than a couple of unknown gems, in its popular **Homegrown** and **Neighbourhood Watch, International Panorama, Backbeat, Animation Gallery, Next Gen** and **Documentaries** series. MIFF also hosts the most highly regarded short film competition in the Asia Pacific - **Best MIFF shorts** screens approximately 100 short films, competing for a prize money of AUD\$35,000.

The full program for MIFF 2009 will be announced on 7 July 2009, a selection of highlights will be announced on May 26. For further information visit www.melbournefilmfestival.com.au

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