



Sydney Australia, Wednesday 26 February 2014



MARDI GRAS FILM FESTIVAL AUDIENCE DOUBLES

The **Mardi Gras Film Festival** has grown from strength to strength since its inception, with the latest incarnation eclipsing previous years to make the 2014 festival the best and most fabulous yet. When the glittery curtain closed on Sunday night, overall attendance had doubled that of last year's festival, with most films attracting sellout crowds.

Presented by Queer Screen, the 11-day festival offered an eclectic selection of classic and contemporary queer films from across Australia and around the world, with Queer Screen director, Paul Struthers stating that the festival explored a wide array of "incredible stories of love, loss, politics and pride". Five films made their world premiere at the festival, with a further 19 making their Australian premiere.

For over 21 years the festival has proven itself to be a massive cultural draw card, as colourful and inclusive as the Mardi Gras parade itself.

The final sell out screening was that of **Croc-A-Dyke Dundee, The Legend of Dawn O'Donnell**, a documentary exploring the life of iconic Sydney business woman and gay pioneer Dawn O'Donnell, who was a key figure in the shaping of the gay scene of the Sydney new know today.

The festival also featured retrospective screenings of **Muriel's Wedding** and **Priscilla, Queen of the Desert**, both of which celebrated their twentieth anniversaries this year.

Another festival highlight was My Queer Career, an awards night which celebrated queer short films and filmmakers working in Australia today. Judged by ABC's Margaret Pomeranz, SBS's Sandy George and American filmmaker Jesse Archer, Best Film was awarded to **All God's Creatures**, directed by Brendon McDonall. The film is an adaptation of Christos Tsiolkas' short story "Disco at the End of Communism". McDonall also won the Metro Screen Award for Best NSW Director for the film.

The Audience Award for My Queer Career Short Films was won by **The Language of Love** a film written and performed by 17-year-old Kim Ho under the mentorship of Australian playwright Tommy Murphy. The film can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4Y1qTSqmgI>. Audience Awards also went to director Ian Thomson and **Out in the Line-up** for Best Documentary and Bruno Barreto's **Reaching for the Moon** for Best Film.

"The board and I are overwhelmed by the success of the 21st Mardi Gras Film Festival presented by Queer Screen," said Festival Director, Paul Struthers. "This was a team effort and we must thank our exclusive venue partner Event Cinemas George Street, our major partner LA Tourism, and all our patrons, volunteers and partners. We look forward to Mardi Gras Film Festival 2015, and welcoming audiences to The Best Of Mardi Gras Film Festival at Riverside and many more events throughout the year."

Audience demand has led to further screenings at Parramatta's Riverside Theatre, with **The Best of Mardi Gras Film Festival** where five of the highlights will be screened. The selected films include **G.B.F.**, a laugh-out-loud high school comedy featuring Megan Mullally (*Will & Grace*), and **Born This Way**, a moving documentary on the underground gay and lesbian community in the West African country of Cameroon.

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ABOUT MARDI GRAS FILM FESTIVAL

The Mardi Gras Film Festival has grown considerably since 1993. It is now one of Australia's largest film festivals of any kind, and one of the top queer film festivals in the world. It is highly regarded by filmmakers all over the world, and is the most important avenue for promoting gay and lesbian titles to distributors and exhibitors in this territory. Los Angeles Tourism and Convention Board are the major partner for Mardi Gras Film Festival 2014, and Event Cinemas George Street are their exclusive venue partner.

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