

Mardi Gras Film Festival

February 15
- March 1

MEDIA RELEASE

Check out the first of many surprises coming to Queer Screen's 25 th Mardi
Gras Film Festival

**A celebratory festival to pay homage to our history and look defiantly towards the future
15 February – 1 March 2018, Sydney**

09 November 2017: Queer Screen's 25th Mardi Gras Film Festival is a celebration of our creativity and homage to our history as we bring the best and most diverse LGBTIQ content to the big screen. Announcing the first 10 'teaser' films today, tickets are now on sale at queerscreen.org.au for the Festival which screens from 15 February to 1 March, 2018.

We put the spotlight on Australia's established and up and coming filmmakers with a retrospective of *My Queer Career* – Australia's largest competition for LGBTIQ short films, hosted each Mardi Gras Film Festival by Queer Screen. For more than two decades, *My Queer Career* has unearthed the latest and greatest Aussie queer filmmakers.

Looking towards the future, we present *Jade of Death*, a supernatural thriller which was recently awarded Best Drama Series by the International Academy of Web Television. Made with assistance from the Queer Screen Completion Fund, the cast includes rising young star Bernie Van Tiel.

The 2018 Festival will of course occur in the context of the 40th anniversary of the Sydney Mardi Gras and the aftermath of the Same Sex Marriage Postal Survey.

Festival director Lisa Rose said: "When these two momentous events collide, what else could we do but shine?"

"Queer Screen's values – diversity, creativity, inspiration, inclusiveness and pride – have guided us through the last 25 years of producing film festivals for LGBTIQ communities and current circumstances mean they are now more valid than ever. We are delighted to be presenting our silver jubilee festival in what we hope will be the year when same sex marriage becomes law."

With more than a few parallels to Australia, *The 34th* recounts Ireland's campaign for marriage equality, which culminated in the country's historic 2015 referendum. The festival will also pay homage to Mardi Gras with a screening of a fully restored version of the renown documentary *Witches and Faggots, Dykes and Poofers* – about the 78ers, the group of protesters whose march for equality morphed into one of the biggest gay and lesbian parades in the world.

Gayle Lake, senior film curator at the National Film and Sound Archive, said: “We are proud to digitally preserve and restore *Witches and Faggots*, *Dykes and Poofers*. Our NFSA Restores program ensures that important films such as this are preserved at the highest standards, making them available to cinema audiences once again.”

As always, MGFF18 will showcase the most impressive films from around the world.

We’ve locked in *Signature Move*, the most played lesbian film on the LGBT festival circuit this year. A multicultural rom-com, it’s about Zaynab, a Pakistani-American lawyer whose mother wants nothing more than for her daughter to find a husband and experience the love and happiness she once had. But Zaynab has other ideas and escapes to the world of Mexican lucha libre women’s wrestling instead!

The girls wrestling with their feelings in *Signature Moves* are joined by a young man walking a fine line between machismo and homoeroticism in *Beach Rats*, our Sundance-award winning gay coming of age pick for the boys. Frankie, who has a new girlfriend, is torn between real world hyper-masculinity and the hidden homoeroticism of flirting with older men online in this moody, angsty teen drama, set during a sultry summer.

They, a non-binary/trans arthouse title from Cannes, tells of 14-year- old J, who has been on hormone blockers to delay puberty while they explore their gender identity, and now must finally decide if they want to transition. It’s a stunning meditation on the nature of gender, cultural identity, and the importance of family, crafted by Iranian director Anahita Ghazvinizadeh and executive producer Jane Campion.

French feel-good romp *Kiss Me!* brings all the charm as Oceane, who has had her fair share of broken hearts, meets Cecile and goes to any lengths to get the girl and keep her.

Meanwhile *Body Electric*, a sexy slice of life narrative from Brazil, brings the raunchiness. It takes an intimate look at the lives of a racially and sexually diverse group of friends as they take to the streets of Sao Paulo with carefree (dare we say “gay”?) abandon.

Saturday Church introduces us to Ulysses, who is expected to become “man of the house” after his father’s death, but clad in red high heel pumps, he finds himself pulled in another direction, specifically, towards a weekly meetup of gay and trans youth. Based on a real-life program in NYC’s West Village, *Saturday Church* is a musical drama about finding acceptance and understanding and, unashamedly, being who you are.

Queer Screen’s 25th Mardi Gras Film Festival is proudly supported by AGL Energy, Event Cinemas George Street, Monash IVF, Accenture, Create NSW, SBS, ACON and the Star Observer.

The full festival program will be launched on 10 January, 2018.

Tickets for the first 10 films are on sale now including flexi passes to 5 or 10 films. Queer Screen members receive discounted tickets and priority entry to movies. To become a member or to book tickets visit queerscreen.org.au or call (02) 9280 1533.

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Festival director Lisa Rose is available for interview

Directors and actors from most films are available for interview

Screeners of most films are available for review and all imagery is available for publication

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