



MEDIA RELEASE

Reflections and Celebrations: 25 years of Queer Storytelling

Queer Screen's 25th Mardi Gras Film Festival: 15 February – 1 March 2018

10 January 2018: Celebrating 25 years of queer stories on film, Queer Screen's 25th Mardi Gras Film Festival (Festival) is a glorious mix of retrospective treasures and the latest and greatest films celebrating love, life and the journey to equality across the LGBTIQ+ spectrum. Tickets are now on sale at queerscreen.org.au for the full program which runs from 15 February to 1 March in Event Cinemas George St and across Sydney.

With more than 60 Australian premieres, two World Premieres, abundant award-winning films and 12 different short film packages, the Festival will showcase 55 feature length films and 69 short films in 71 sessions.

"Screening the widest number of queer stories and giving a platform to as many different queer voices as we possibly can, particularly underrepresented voices, is our driving force this year and the reason why we are showing so many short films," explains Festival Director Lisa Rose. "It's not a hard task to double the number of short packages this year as the quality of the films is exceptional. I'm also proud that three sessions include differently abled protagonists and two screenings have Open Captions.

"In addition to showcasing our newest filmmakers, we are honouring our past through timeless classics such as **DESERT HEARTS** and **YOUNG SOUL REBELS** as well as an unmissable **My Queer Career Retrospective Gala** celebrating some of the most compelling short films created here in Australia since we established My Queer Career in 1994", continues Lisa.

This year's Festival will host a countdown of the **Top 25 LGBTIQ Films of All Time** as voted by Queer Screen fans, and discussed by local film experts Kate Jinx, Matt Ravier and Lisa Rose.

The Festival opens with **IDEAL HOME**, a hilarious dramedy about an extravagant bickering couple played by Steve Coogan and Paul Rudd who must look after a grandson they never knew they had.

Closing Night film is the quirky coming-of-age and award-winning **FREAK SHOW** featuring the camp and courageous Billy Bloom who is determined to live life as his fabulous self. With cameos from Bette Midler and Laverne Cox, it's a great celebration of being here and being queer!

"Our 25th anniversary is all about celebration", comments Queer Screen President Cheryl Kavanagh. "A celebration of who we are, of the people who have helped us get to where we are, and of the amazing diversity across our community here and globally. It's very exciting to be marking such an important milestone in our organisation while Mardi Gras celebrates its 40th anniversary, what a fantastic couple of months ahead!"



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Holding its World Premiere at the Festival is **BLACK DIVAZ**, the Australian documentary following the inaugural Miss First Nation pageant, providing an intimate portrait of what it means to be an Indigenous Drag Queen today.

In addition, we are one of the first countries in the world to showcase a special preview screening of **LOVE, SIMON** the hotly anticipated coming of age story about the thrilling ride of falling in love for the first time.

Visiting Sydney to help us celebrate our 25th anniversary are many international guests including renowned British filmmaker Isaac Julien who wrote and directed the iconic coming-of-age film **YOUNG SOUL REBELS**, winner of Best Film at the Cannes Film Festival in 1991. Will Sullivan and Derek Dodge, the US based writers and directors of this year's **THE RING THING** and 2016's **THAT'S NOT US**, will visit the Festival and conduct an interactive masterclass on writing and directing improvisational drama for local emerging filmmakers.

Natasha Negovanlis who plays Carmilla Karnstein in **THE CARMILLA MOVIE**, a sequel to the smash hit web series **CARMILLA**, is a special guest of the Festival where she will take part not only in a Q&A and Meet & Greet session but is also hosting an exclusive dinner event for some lucky fans! More guests will be announced soon.

The sheer diversity of this year's films ensures there is something for everyone whether you like your films dramatic, uplifting, thought-provoking, artistic or just plain sexy!

Award-Winners

I DREAM IN ANOTHER LANGUAGE – Sundance's World Cinema Audience Award winner is set in a remote jungle village in Mexico where the last two living holders of the indigenous language of Zikril have not spoken a word to each other in over 50 years.

BPM – Winner of the Grand Jury Prize and Queer Palm at Cannes as well as many other international awards, this French drama is a powerful story of the AIDS epidemic and the activists who fought for progress.

CALL ME BY YOUR NAME – with three Golden Globe nominations and numerous international awards, this is the film to watch in 2018.

RIFT - 2017 Outfest Artistic Vision Award winner- an utterly intriguing and eerie supernatural thriller set on the remote outposts of remote Iceland.

TEAM HURRICANE - Winner of the most innovative film award at the Venice International Film Festival, this 'punk chick flick' is an immersive, experimental look at several young girls' friendship over one summer.

BOYS FOR SALE – Multiple award winner for Best Documentary at LGBTIQ film festivals around the world, this unmissable documentary combines interviews with Tokyo's 'urisen'; young men who sell their bodies, with shots of an underground gay district and manga depictions of sexual acts. An immersive, one-of-a-kind experience.

IN BETWEEN – Best Film San Sebastian & NETPAC award Toronto winner - three strong Palestinian women challenge cultural expectations to find freedom and authenticity.



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Community Trailblazers

SUSANNE BARTSCH: ON TOP – an intimate look at the woman who has been making her mark in fashion and art for over 30 years, and gave some of the biggest names in drag their start.

THE UNTOLD TALES OF ARMISTEAD MAUPIN – the SXSW and FilmOut Audience Awards winner is an engrossing documentary profiling the life of gay American author Armistead Maupin, famous for the Tales of the City stories and including his friends Sir Ian McKellen, Olympia Dukakis and Laura Linney.

MCKELLEN: PLAYING THE PART – a rich biographical documentary that insightfully depicts both McKellen's rise to stardom and gay activism.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ANDRÉ – the story of André Leon Talley, the couture guru who hit NYC when it was the time of Andy Warhol and Studio 54, and is the former American editor-at-large of *Vogue* magazine.

Youth Focus

THE SUBSTITUTE - Simmering tensions grow between a Taiwanese actress and her stunt double in this beautifully realised film from acclaimed Taiwanese director Zero Chou, the first in her six-part Rainbow Cities series.

PULSE - Pulse is a speculative fiction tale of a gay teenager with a disability who undergoes a body transplant to become a beautiful woman. Pulse is a gritty portrayal of sexuality, gender and love.

JUST CHARLIE – Emotionally charged and powerful, this is an award-winning drama about a young soccer star who risks losing the love of family and community, to live as a girl.

Inspiring Journeys

IT'S NOT JUST ME - David, Simon, Logan, and Max have their female to male transition in common but for each man, the journey is different. A rare portrait of Aussie transgender men which won Best LGBT Feature Documentary at Atlanta.

A WOMB OF THEIR OWN – Six diverse masculine identifying individuals find their identities challenged by mainstream society and the LGBTIQ community as they undergo pregnancy.

STUMPED – Filmed over four years, film maker Will Lautzenheiser undergoes a rare double arm transplant after having a double leg and arm amputation.

MY WONDERFUL WEST BERLIN - Spanning four decades of queer life, music, art, and politics, Jochen Hick's documentary shines a light on gay culture in West Berlin in the years before the Wall came down.

100 MEN - Follow Kiwi filmmaker Paul Oremland as he counts down 100 sexual encounters that brings us on a journey of the last 40 years of gay history.

Kids

ZOOTOPIA – This year's kids film is a computer-animated comedy from Walt Disney Pictures that shows the unlikely partnership between a rabbit police officer and a red fox con artist as they uncover a conspiracy involving the disappearance of savage predators.



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Shorts

Doubling the number of shorts sessions this year, the stories cover a wide range of queer voices including: gay, lesbian, transgender, intersex, queer people of colour, senior and differently-abled characters as well as retrospective shorts, the Asia Pacific Queer Film Festival Alliance shorts and the My Queer Career finalist screenings.

Festival Faves

A MOMENT IN THE REEDS – Undoubtedly the sexiest film of the festival, Leevi a Finnish student and Tareq a Syrian asylum seeker and architect have a summer romance in the Finnish countryside.

DIE BEAUTIFUL - Miley Cyrus, Katy Perry, Shakira, Julia Roberts and more star in this multi-award-winning drama - or at least their likeness does as transgender beauty queen, played by Filipino superstar Paolo Ballesteros, is dressed for each day of her wake.

REBELS ON POINTE – This award-winning documentary introduces us to the male ballerinas of the world famous Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo in this playful documentary full of colourful characters, that blur the ballet world's gender lines.

QUEERCORE: HOW TO PUNK A REVOLUTION - Take a roller coaster ride through the birth of a DIY queer movement in the mid-1980s and '90s, when Queercore turned the punk scene on its head, putting butch-dykes and gay skinheads centre stage and influenced the wider world of music.

TODAY MATCH AT 3 - an utterly charming, low-fi indie which has all the heart, drama and action of a world cup qualifier as a group of girls in Buenos Aires are determined to get their match played.

THE LAST GOLDFISH - Sydney filmmaker Su Goldfish traces the broken links of her past and unearths family secrets in this moving autobiographical documentary about the search for identity and belonging.

The Festival Bar will be open during the Festival at Event Cinemas George Street.

Queer Screen's 25th Mardi Gras Film Festival is supported by American Express, AGL, Event Cinemas George St, Create NSW, Monash IVF, The Star Sydney and Accenture.

Tickets for all films are on sale now including flexi passes to 5 or 10 films. Please visit queerscreen.org.au or the Mardi Gras Film Festival app, or call (02) 9280 1533 to book. Become a Queer Screen member for discounted tickets and priority entry.

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Note to Editors:

- Directors and actors from most films, along with Festival Director Lisa Rose and Queer Screen President Cheryl Kavanagh are available for interview
- Screeners of most films are available for review and imagery is available for publication

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