

MEDIA RELEASE

Embracing Your Story

Queer Screen's 26th Mardi Gras Film Festival: 13 – 28 February 2019

10 January 2019: Queer Screen's 26th Mardi Gras Film Festival (Festival) has searched high and low to create a powerful fusion of LGBTIQ+ characters, stories and filmmakers from all over world. The brilliance and the challenges of being queer will be screened from 13 – 28 February in Sydney before touring to Canberra, Parramatta, Lismore, Newcastle and the Blue Mountains in March and April. Tickets are now on sale at queerscreen.org.au.

The Festival boasts five world premieres, 75 Australian premieres and 15 Sydney premieres, screening 54 feature-length films and 66 short films across 70 sessions in Event Cinemas George Street and venues across Sydney.

“This year we are asking people to ‘Embrace Your Story’,” explains Queer Screen Festival Director Lisa Rose. “With this year’s program we are owning and exploring where we stand as individuals and as a community – both here and across the world. It’s so important for us to see our own story shared on screen and equally as important to explore and understand the stories of others.

“In this year’s LGBTIQ+ selection of films we are extremely excited to see the growing screen visibility of members of our community who are not always centre stage. The excellent calibre of films allows us to broaden our inclusive focus, with 22 films showing transgender, non binary or intersex characters and subjects in films such as **ZEN IN THE ICE RIFT**, **SIDNEY AND FRIENDS** and **MISS ROSEWOOD**”, adds Rose.

BECOMING COLLEEN, a Queer Screen Film Fund recipient, honours the recently deceased Colleen, who waited a lifetime to become the woman she was always meant to be. At the age of 82, Colleen transitioned while living in an aged-care facility in Coffs Harbour and she allows us to witness that journey. A panel discussion on diversity in aged care will be held after the screening and will include transgender advocate and subject of multi award winning book *The Trauma Cleaner* Sandra Pankhurst.

We pay tribute to Anthony 'Big Tony' Davis, who also recently passed away subject of **WHEN THE BEAT DROPS** the award-winning documentary about the African-American dance subculture of 'bucking' in the American South. When Big Tony and his legendary dance crew Phi Phi find their bucking crown had slipped, there was only one way to get it back – a jaw-dropping, seat-shaking battle for bucking supremacy.

The Festival opens with **GIANT LITTLE ONES** from Canada in its Australian premiere. A coming-of-age film featuring Kyle MacLachlan and Maria Bello, it explores how 17-year-old Franky begins to question his sexuality after an incident at his birthday party. This touching drama looks at the pressure to pick a label when maybe you don't need one.

RAFIKI will close the Festival. A bold and powerful story about young lesbian love in a conservative society in Nairobi, it was the first Kenyan film selected for Cannes and was initially banned in its home country where homosexuality is still illegal.

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For the very first time, Queer Screen welcomes a Presenting Partner, luxury car manufacturer Jaguar.

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“We are thrilled to partner with Jaguar to bring you our 26th Festival”, says Queer Screen Co-Chair Cheryl Kavanagh. “It takes an incredible amount of resources to create one of the world’s most important LGBTIQ+ film festivals and we would like to thank Jaguar for taking on that task with us. They have proven to be a very strong ally for our community here and internationally and we warmly welcome them to our family”.

Adds Mark Cameron, Managing Director of Jaguar Land Rover Australia, “We’re extremely proud to announce that Queer Screen’s 26th Mardi Gras Film Festival is Powered by Jaguar. Inclusion is integral to the way that we do business at Jaguar and in 2018, we established the Jaguar Land Rover PRIDE LGBTQI global network. We are excited to celebrate creativity, equality and diversity and honoured to align with the incredible line-up of LGBTQI talent and films in this year’s festival”.

The world premiere of **THE BLONDE ONE** will screen at the Festival with prolific Argentinian director Marco Berger joining us as a special guest to deliver his most assured film to date with this sexy, slow burn drama that celebrates the gay male gaze.

Also screening in our Latin America focus are exquisite feature narratives from Argentina (**MY BEST FRIEND**), Brazil (**GOOD MANNERS**), Chile (**WOMAN COMING OUT OF THE SEA**), Colombia (**EVA + CANDELA**), and from Guatemala (**JOSÉ**).

Winner of the Queer Lion at the 2018 Venice Film Festival, this the first LGBTIQ+ festival screening for **JOSÉ**. A quiet and beautifully told story of first love unfolding against the harsh reality of life in contemporary Guatemala, with an unforgettable bittersweet quality that lingers long after the film ends.

Other Festival highlights include:

Award-Winners

1985 Winner of the 2018 Outfest Grand Jury Award, Champs-Élysées Film Festival Audience Award and Barcelona International Gay & Lesbian Film Festival Jury Award this film is a flashback to 1985 when closeted Adrian decides to return to his hometown in Texas to tell his estranged conservative parents that he has AIDS.

ANCHOR & HOPE This multi award winning film is a striking portrait of two young women trying to hold on to the love they feel for each other when their expectations of the future begin to unravel.

BELIEVER Winner of the 2018 Hollywood Film Documentary Award, and featuring Dan Reynolds of rock group Imagine Dragons, this is a heartfelt, moving documentary about the intersection of faith and sexuality, exploring what it means to be an LGBTIQ ally, and the power of music to create social change.

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CARMEN & LOLA Premiering at Cannes Film Festival 2018, this vibrant debut feature is the story of two teenagers living in Madrid's small Romani community and a look at the consequences people must face in intimate communities when they choose to go against tradition, even if it is for something as remarkable as love.

CONSEQUENCES This hard-hitting emotional portrayal of teenage angst and toxic masculinity takes an unflinching look at the raw impulses of adolescence and the insecurity that lies beneath.

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Icons

MAPPLETHORPE Matt Smith (*Doctor Who*, *The Crown*) gives a charismatic and sexy performance in this much-anticipated biopic of Mapplethorpe, one of the most important artists and gay figures of the 20th century.

MAKING MONTGOMERY CLIFT Showing that you should never stop questioning history, the nephew of famously gay actor Montgomery Clift presents a refreshing portrait of his famous ancestor in this stylish and savvy doco.

THE HAPPY PRINCE Rupert Everett writes, directs, and stars in *The Happy Prince*, a passion project about the scandalous life and sorrowful death of London's once most famous playwright, Oscar Wilde.

WILD NIGHTS WITH EMILY American poet Emily Dickinson shakes off the shackles of her historically maligned reputation in this whip-smart comedy that imagines a much gayer 19th century, awash with absurdist humour and starring Molly Shannon in the titular role.

Festival Faves

MAURICE This special 4K digital restoration of Merchant-Ivory's 1987 adaptation of E.M. Forster's classic of gay literature is a lavish and sensual telling of a young man coming to terms with his homosexuality during the repressive Edwardian era in Britain.

CHEDENG AND APPLE Bristling with charm and irreverent humour, the Filipino Thelma and Louise style comedy will have you rooting for the protagonists all the way across the Philippines. Chedeng has just come out at 60 and is looking for her long-lost love. Apple is along for the ride after relieving her abusive husband of his head.

LIGHT IN THE WATER The story of the first gay swim team in America, this is a rousing documentary highlighting the bravery of the LGBTQ sporting community and its fight against intolerance.

SCOTTY AND THE SECRET HISTORY OF HOLLYWOOD Beneath the veneer of Hollywood's Golden Age, it seems there was plenty of gay and lesbian action happening away from the headlines. Scotty Bowers, now in his nineties, looks back at his somewhat salacious past where he matched up Hollywood stars with same-sex flings – quite often joining in himself.

BOYS Félix Maritaud (*BPM* and *Savage*) delivers another knockout performance as Jonas, a man haunted by his past

EVA + CANDELA This intimate film weaves a tapestry of love and desire, with director Ruth Caudeli masterfully capturing the essence of Eva and Candela as they meet, fall for one another, and slowly, over time, begin to unravel.

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Thanks to an accessibility grant from Create NSW, the Festival increases its touring to five regional NSW locations and doubles the number of films shown with Open Captions: **1985, THE COMING BACK OUT BALL, SNAPSHOTS** and **TRANSGENDER SHORTS**.

For the first time the Festival will screen a Feminist Shorts package and a Horror Shorts (Queer Scream) as well as Transgender, QueerDoc, Asia Pacific Queer Film Festival Alliance, Hot Boys, Lesbian and Gay Shorts in addition to the always popular My Queer Career finalist screenings and additional regional screenings of the Best of Lesbian, Gay and MGFF Shorts.

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

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Queer Screen's 26th Mardi Gras Film Festival presented by Jaguar is supported by American Express, AGL, Event Cinemas George St, Create NSW, 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 Queer Screen Mardi Gras Film Festival app, or call (02) 9280 1533 to book. Become a Queer Screen member for discounted tickets and priority entry.

-ENDS-

Note to Editors:

- Directors and actors from most films, along with Festival Director Lisa Rose and Queer Screen Co-Chairs Cheryl Kavanagh and Joe Duggan are available for interview
- Screeners of most films are available for review on request
- Imagery is available for publication on request

Media Enquiries:
Louise Nealon
T: + 61 403 569 177
E: louise@calliduspr.com