



MEDIA RELEASE

Create your Own LGBTIQ+ Film Festival Experience

Queer Screen's 28th Mardi Gras Film Festival in-cinema and on-demand for the first time

13 January 2021: Queer Screen's 28th Mardi Gras Film Festival (Festival) has changed its format to offer audiences for the first time, both an online or in-cinema experience for maximum safety and personal comfort. Running from 18 February to 4 March in Sydney, and nationally on-demand, the Festival will screen with restricted and socially distanced viewings at Event Cinemas (George Street), Ritz Cinemas (Randwick) and the Hayden Orpheum (Cremorne), Event Cinemas (Hurstville) and the Moonlight Cinema (Centennial Park), before touring to Canberra and the Blue Mountains in late March. Tickets are on sale now at queerscreen.org.au.

"The current on-going challenges of the pandemic has helped us evolve our Festival model to deliver a world class film Festival to the widest audience and in the safest ways possible", explains Queer Screen Festival Director Lisa Rose. "After successfully delivering Queer Screen Film Fest mostly online in September 2020, we have expanded on that with a truly hybrid model to provide the collective in-cinema community experience that we all love, alongside a strong on-demand offering. With more than half of the program available online Australia-wide, and over 60 cinema screenings in Sydney, there are so many ways to experience the Festival this year".

Despite a slow-down in film production and distribution in 2020, this year's Festival will screen 94 feature, documentary, short and episodic films, with 70 percent of those available on-demand. The program includes 3 World premieres, 60 Australian premieres and 15 Sydney premieres showcasing LGBTIQ+ storytelling from 30 different countries.

The Festival opens under the stars for the first time at the Moonlight Cinema with the moving and funny Irish film *DATING AMBER* which follows a special friendship between a gay man and a lesbian, still an unexplored experience in narrative film. Dating so the high school bullies will think they are straight, Eddie and Amber come to realise that being someone's beard has its own issues. This Sydney premiere is a refreshing look at coming out in the 90s, and what it means to be a true mate.

Closing the festival is the Australian premiere of New Zealand dramedy *RŪRANGI*, audience award winner at Frameline, the world's largest LGBTIQ+ film festival. Starring, written, and produced by members of New Zealand's queer, Māori, and gender-diverse communities, this film perfectly balances drama, humour and heart and shows the power of embracing one's identity in all its forms when gay transgender activist Caz returns to his isolated hometown in New Zealand.

Two past recipients of the Queer Screen Completion Fund, Queer Screen's grant program that provides financial assistance to worthy Australian LGBTIQ+ screen projects, are in the Festival. *THE GREENHOUSE*, screening as a World premiere from filmmaker Thomas Wilson-White is a magic-realist film asking what would you do, if you could go back in time? *UNDER MY SKIN* is an insightful film featuring a very modern love story and a non-binary experience as portrayed by four separate non-binary-identifying actors, including Australian Liv Hewson (*Bombshell*) and Bobbi Salvor Menuez (*Transparent*).

Queer Screen Co-Chair Cheryl Kavanagh says supporting Australian LGBTIQ+ filmmakers is a key priority for the organisation. “We’re not just focused on sharing stories with our community but also helping filmmakers produce those stories through financial support. We know the Queer Screen completion fund is an important asset for local filmmakers and we will continue to help create stories that reflect our community”.

The World premiere of THE MAN WITH THE ANSWERS introduces us to uptight Victor who is on a road trip to Germany after his grandmother dies. On the way, he meets the handsome, free-spirited Matthias who charms him into giving him a ride.

SHOWCASE

The Showcase program strand has been expanded this year to include five international narratives, one international documentary and two Australian narrative features covering a range of themes including immigration, racism, sexuality, long-term relationships, and historical examinations.

As well as THE GREENHOUSE, the showcase includes the Sydney premiere of the gorgeous, Australian lesbian coming-of-age film MY FIRST SUMMER. A sometimes dark, and always stunning film about first love, womanhood and discovering your sexuality.

Acting powerhouses Colin Firth and Stanley Tucci deliver two understated, career-best performances in SUPERNOVA, a drama about a couple dealing with the effects of early-onset dementia on their twenty-year relationship. Whilst the Australian premiere of THE WORLD TO COME gives us outstanding performances from Katherine Waterston and Vanessa Kirby, as it explores the astonishment and joy of finding yourself through connection with another.

Set in an isolated caravan park in Cornwall, MAKE UP is an immersive debut feature from Claire Oakley that defies genre and ramps up the atmosphere to draw you into the startlingly sensual sexual awakening of its protagonist Ruth.

I CARRY YOU WITH ME is an epic love story uniquely weaving fiction and documentary to tell a tale of two Mexican men and the love that colours their lives. The winner of the NEXT Audience and NEXT Innovator Awards at Sundance 2020, this Australian premiere has been brought to life beautifully by award winning director Heidi Ewing.

Two other Australian premieres see a gay African American teenager forced to relive May 28th, 2020 over and over again in THE OBITUARY OF TUNDE JOHNSON, a timely and urgent film about racism, homophobia and police brutality in the USA; and a documentary on American Jazz musician Billy Tipton whose story is reclaimed and performed by trans artists as they collectively paint a portrait of an unlikely hero in the beautiful and groundbreaking NO ORDINARY MAN.

DIRECTORS SHOWCASE

The 2021 Director’s Showcase features Eytan Fox, the leading Israeli director and trailblazer in the depiction of gay characters in Israeli cinema. Presenting the Australian premiere of his latest film SUBLET, which follows fifty-something travel columnist Michael and sexy film student Tomer who form an unlikely bond spanning different generations and cultures.

In addition, the Festival will screen some of his classic films on-demand including: TIME OFF, his little-seen debut set in 1982 which was the first Israeli film to seriously address homosexuality in the military; YOSSI & JAGGER, the award-winning romantic drama of two male soldiers secretly in love that established his reputation worldwide; and THE BUBBLE which was first screened at the Festival in 2008.

YOU'LL BE TALKING ABOUT

THE DILEMMA OF DESIRE – this powerful documentary uses Sophia Wallace’s ground-breaking ‘The Cliteracy Project’ to explore what reclaiming female sexuality means to a variety of women from a diverse range of backgrounds. This sex-positive documentary is sure to spark conversation!

BRING DOWN THE WALLS – Comparable in its uniqueness to PARIS IS BURNING and WHEN THE BEAT DROPS, this is an enjoyable, insightful, and complex analysis of the intersection of ethnic, societal, and pop cultures in the United States exploring of the legacy of Black, Latinx and queer culture on 1980s house music and its connection to the US prison industrial complex.

LA LEYENDA NEGRA –Aleteia is a teenager from El Salvador, whose scholarship in a US high school is at risk with the introduction of Trump’s forced deportation orders. A big hit at Sundance, this is a careful and authentic film using beautiful black and white cinematography to show the turbulent forces that shape the lives of queer immigrant youth.

DAYS (RIZI) – Celebrated auteur of Taiwanese Second Wave cinema, Tsai Ming-liang is back with a captivating piece of observational cinema. A methodical and meditative, subtitled witnessing of two gay men in Bangkok.

SAINT-NARCISSE - The 22 year-old Dominic has a fetish... for himself. When his grandmother dies he discovers a deep family secret: he has an identical twin named Daniel. The iconic Bruce LaBruce embraces humour and the taboo in this fresh take on the myth of Narcissus.

SEXY STUFF

DRY WIND - Against a backdrop of rural Brazil, explicit sexuality is beautifully depicted with stunning cinematography. When Sandro meets new colleague Maicon, he is thrown into a spiral of sexually depraved fantasies as he contemplates what he is willing to do to get what he wants.

AMMONITE – the most talked about lesbian film of 2020, Mary (Kate Winslet) and Charlotte (Saoirse Ronan) share a passionate love affair that will defy all social bounds in the stunning Ammonite. On the southern English coast, the two women’s initial dislike of one another develops in unexpected ways.

THE PRINCE - The recipient of the 2019 Venice Film Festival Queer Lion, this film introduces us to Jaime, a troubled young man grappling with his sexuality, who finds himself in a violent, sexually charged world of a Chilean prison in the 1970s.

DOCUMENTARIES

CURED - This riveting documentary examines the pivotal, yet largely unknown chapter in queer history that saw gay liberation activists successfully overturn the US psychiatric profession’s classification of homosexuality as a mental illness. Screens with Open Captions.

PS BURN THIS LETTER PLEASE - The discovery of a collection of letters inspired the filmmakers to track down some of the authors and reminisce about their lives as drag queens in New York in the 1950s.

MARCH FOR DIGNITY - A captivating documentary following a group of LGBTIQ+ activists in Tbilisi, Georgia as they organise their nation’s first pride march.

EPISODICS & SHORTS

The Festival will feature two episodic programs about young queer people finding their way in a modern world, the comedic THESE THEMES from the USA and hip Dutch series ANNE+.

Australia's richest prize for LGBTIQ+ short films, My Queer Career is the only shorts package to screen in-cinema with the rest of the shorts program available on-demand including Gay Shorts, Lesbian Shorts, Trans & Gender Diverse Shorts, and Mixed Shorts. Both the Queer Doc Shorts and Asia Pacific Queer Film Festival Alliance (APQFFA) Shorts packages are free to view.

ONLINE EVENTS

The Festival will include many filmmaker Q&As on social media and will live stream a free panel on 'Inclusive and Authentic Casting' on Facebook and YouTube. Hosted by Monique Schafter, Editorial head of ABC Queer, panellists Lucky Price, a casting director and proud trans man and trans rights and visibility advocate, writer and comedian Alistair Baldwin, and writer, director, and producer Bee Cruse, a Cabrogal woman will discuss what it takes to get this right.

In the wake of #MeToo and the industry's continuing battle with widespread sexual misconduct, there is a growing need for intimacy coordinators to safely create intimate sex scenes for Film & TV productions. Intimacy Coordinator Leah Pellinkhof will host a Zoom online workshop, demonstration and Q&A for filmmakers and actors on 'Intimacy Coordinating: Safe Sex in Film'.

This year the Festival welcomes a new Major Partner in Crown Sydney. "We are thrilled to partner with Crown Sydney for our 28th Festival", says Queer Screen Co-Chair Abs Osseiran. "Support from our partners is vital to the success of the festival and without it we would not be able to produce one of the world's most highly regarded LGBTIQ+ film festivals each year. Crown Sydney is a strong supporter of their LGBTIQ+ staff and Australia's LGBTIQ+ community and it's great to have them in the picture."

Peter Crinis, Chief Executive Officer Crown Sydney, adds: "Diversity is at the heart of who we are at Crown, and we are proud to be supporting the Queer Screen Mardi Gras Film Festival. Mardi Gras is a special time of year in Sydney, and a time for all of us to come together to celebrate pride, diversity and inclusion in the community. We look forward to supporting the Festival in its 28th year."

Queer Screen's 28th Mardi Gras Film Festival is presented by AGL, Crown Sydney, Celebrity Cruises, Accenture, IVF Australia, SBS and Create NSW.

Tickets for all films are on sale now including festival passes. 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 Abs Osseiran are available for interview
- Screeners of most films, and imagery are available for review on request

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