

2024 MIFF AWARD WINNERS REVEALED: FINAL FESTIVAL WEEKEND DRAWS TO A TRIUMPHANT CLOSE

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Universal Language

Press release

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MIFF Media Centre

The Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) has unveiled its 2024 MIFF Award winners this evening, presenting over \$250,000AUD in prize money across a suite of five categories. The flagship Bright Horizons Award, presented by VicScreen and amounting to \$140,000AUD – making it one of the most lucrative film prizes globally – is awarded to a film by an outstanding filmmaker on the rise. This year's winner is *Universal Language*, directed by Matthew Rankin.

Of the awards and this year's blockbuster festival season, **MIFF Artistic Director, Al Cossar** said: "It's been such a thrill to see the enthusiasm and outright cinematic maximalism with which Melbourne audiences have taken to the MIFF program this year – across over 280 films, we've seen audiences celebrate incredible new Australian filmmaking with us, discover the year's cinematic highlights, explore unseen corners of the history of film, and meet over 130 attending guests and artists. A special alchemy always happens at our festival between film and film-goers, and this year it's been particularly special to see the momentum MIFF-goers have brought to our festival, and to see those special 'only-at-MIFF' moments manifest throughout the last couple of weeks."

"And it's all been leading to this – our celebration and recognition of exceptional films and filmmakers. Finding and fostering talent is an indelible purpose of the festival, and seeing these talents be recognised throughout MIFF's suite of awards, and at our festival, is a wonderful privilege. We hope that it creates new opportunities that will be transformative to the professional pathways of those awarded – our congratulations to all."

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Minister for Creative Industries Colin Brooks, added: "The Allan Labor Government is proud to support one of the world's biggest film prizes, MIFF's 2024 Bright Horizons Award. This award brings global attention to the winner and to this festival and is part of our commitment to backing Victoria's screen industry at all levels – from our incredible community of local filmmakers to world class facilities and iconic events like MIFF."

The recipient of the **Blackmagic Design Australian Innovation Award** is **Jaydon Martin**, awarding his distinctive cinematic blend of documentary and fictional filmmaking for *Flathead*. Recognising Martin's directing, the \$70,000AUD award recognises an Australian filmmaking talent for their work within an Australian feature film screening at the festival.

*Flathead*

Deliberating 2024's **Bright Horizons Award** and the **Blackmagic Design Australian Innovation Award** was an esteemed international jury who were all in the room at Rydges Melbourne this evening to name their winners firsthand, alongside other esteemed guests of the festival.

As one of Australia's most revered filmmakers, **Ivan Sen** (*Limbo*, *Mystery Road*) led this year's **Bright Horizons Jury** as President, alongside visionary writer and director, **David Lowery** (*The Green Knight*, *A Ghost Story*, *Ain't Them Bodies Saints*); Oscar-winning costume designer, **Deborah L. Scott** (*Avatar*, *Titanic*, *Back to the Future*); pioneering Indonesian filmmaker **Yulia Evina Bhara** (*Tiger Stripes*, MIFF 2023), and much-loved Australian actress, **Jillian Nguyen** (*Shayda*, MIFF 2023; *Scarygirl*, MIFF 2023).

On selecting the **Bright Horizons Award** winner, the jury said: "Our task as jury was joyful, invigorating and inspiring. It was also incredibly arduous, heartbreaking and some might even say cruel, because how could anyone choose a favourite or pick a winner from such an incredible lineup of films, all worthy of accolades in their own ways, all testaments to the fact that the future of cinema is bright indeed".

"One movie represented all of the facets of the Bright Horizons Award; a film whose cultural specificity transcends borders; whose cinematic playfulness is matched equally by its sensitivity; and whose very form is in conversation with cinema past, present and future. This is why the Bright Horizons Award goes to *Universal Language* by Matthew Rankin."

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The **Bright Horizons Jury** added: "We would also like to recognise a movie that not only had a profound impact on us as jury members, but which through its grace, empathy and universality will leave a mark on cinema and the world at large; the Special Jury Award goes to *Flow* by Gints Zilbalodis."

On the **Blackmagic Design Australian Innovation Award**, they continued: "We were captivated and affected by Jaydon Martin's visually arresting and very moving portrait of individuals often forgotten about in society; in this case the real people of small town Bundaberg. *Flathead's* seamless merging of realities and fiction, both so raw yet so cinematic, had a profound effect on our jury. We hope all of you have a chance to watch this brilliant, sensitive examination of survival, of humanity and of mortality, which will stay with you for days to come."



kajoo yannaga (come on let's walk together)

Recently named in honour of the late, great actor and activist, the **Uncle Jack Charles Award**, presented in collaboration with **Kearney Group**, was awarded to director and Wiradjuri-Scottish woman of the Galari/Kalari peoples, **April Phillips**, for her groundbreaking XR work titled, ***kajoo yannaga (come on let's walk together)***. Phillips receives \$20,000AUD in prize money and financial services provided by Kearney valued at \$25,000AUD.

Recognising an outstanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creative whose work is included in the MIFF 2024 program, nominees in contention were drawn from creative departments including directing, XR, screenwriting and animation.

This year's Jury for the **Uncle Jack Charles Award** included **Davey Thompson**, Bidjara, Wakka Wakka and Gubbi Gubbi producer, writer and actor, and VicScreen Executive (*All My Friends are Racist*); Kamilaroi actor and writer **Thomas Weatherall** (*Heartbreak High* and soon to be seen in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*); and Kurnai/Gunai, Gunditjmara, Wiradjuri and Yorta Yorta writer, actor and activist **Nayuka Gorrie** (*Black Comedy*, *The Heights*).

Impressed by the calibre of all the nominated works for the **Uncle Jack Charles Award**, on behalf of the jury, **Thompson** and **Gorrie** said: "This bold and refreshing animation made us all feel a child-like sense of wonder with its stunning technicolour visuals and immersive sound design that built a world that felt ancient and futuristic all at once. Lead artist April Phillips has a strong and clear artistic vision and we were all left wanting more. Congratulations to the team at *kajoo yannaga*."

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Paul Kearney, CEO & Founder, Kearney Group added: "We're so pleased for April and their brilliant work *kajoo yannaga*. The Uncle Jack Charles Award is a celebration of culture, creativity, and the stories that help us understand who we are, where we come from, and what it means to belong. Congratulations to each of this years' nominees and to April. We cannot wait to see how your storytelling will continue to inspire and challenge us all."

Always a highly contested category, this year's **MIFF Audience Award**, presented by **Intrepid**, was a tie between two films – ***Voice*** by **Krunal Padhiar** and ***Semara Jose*** and ***Left Write Hook*** by **Shannon Owen**. Voted by festival-goers from across the in-cinema season, film buffs this year were also tempted by the chance to win an Intrepid trip for two to Vietnam simply by selecting their favourite film in the program.

Intrepid Travel Managing Director ANZ, Brett Mitchell said: "Intrepid is truly honoured to celebrate the exceptional talent shown by all the nominees this year. Congratulations to this year's joint winners – *Voice* and *Left Write Hook* – on winning the Intrepid Audience Award. Both films showcased powerful storytelling and engaging narratives which deeply moved and inspired audiences. As an Australian-owned business, we are so proud to be highlighting the outstanding work within our local film industry. Our heartfelt congratulations to both film teams on this well-deserved recognition."

*Voice and Left Write Hook*

Presented by **Collarts**, the **MIFF Schools Youth Jury Award** recognises the best title from the MIFF Schools program and was this year awarded to **Maria Zanetti's** tender coming-of-age film, ***Alemania***.

Reminiscent of thoughtful dramas such as *Lady Bird* and *Eighth Grade*, the film follows a teenager who must choose between family and a life-changing adventure abroad, immersing viewers in the milieu of Buenos Aires at the turn of the century. Complete with the era's fashion, TV sets, hairstyles and cassette tapes – ***Alemania*** is both nostalgic for a recent past and deeply relatable for teens of all ages.

Selected by a jury composed of students from the 2024 Top Screen cohort, this year's **MIFF Schools Youth Jury** was composed of **Fynn Williams, Gabe Hartshorne** and **Jasmine Lui**.

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MIFF Schools Youth Jury statement: "We felt that of all the amazing movies presented, *Alemania* really felt like it achieved what it was aiming to do. It ticked all the boxes for a coming of age film whilst remaining engaging the whole way through. The visuals and cinematography were beautiful and felt really in tune with the overall aesthetic, as well as the fact that the character depth, relationships, themes and the plot felt really grounded and flowed beautifully throughout the film."

*Alemania*

Sam Jacob, CEO, Collarts said: "At Collarts, the Australian College of the Arts, we believe that stories change the world, and that creativity is vital. We provide students with industry-leading opportunities to learn, including our partnership with the biggest film festival in the southern hemisphere."

"We're thrilled to have MIFF as a long-term creative partner, and to be presenting the 2024 MIFF Schools Youth Jury Award, which provides mentorship to the Youth Jury members, and a prize of \$10,000 for the winning film."

The **MIFF Awards** were also a chance to celebrate some of this year's breakout talent and crowd pleasers on the eve of the festival's final day of in-cinema activity for 2024.

Tonight's winners join the 2024 **MIFF Shorts Awards** class, including Grand Prix winner **Nebojša Slijepčević** for *The Man Who Could Not Remain Silent*, with the shorts-format award winners announced in a special standalone ceremony at ACMI last Saturday.

With MIFF's 72nd edition drawing to a close, audiences still have the chance to catch final in-cinema sessions, encore screenings, immersive film experiences and exclusive **MIFF Talks** featuring international guests for one last day of cinema revelry.

A number of this year's competition titles will screen for the last time across Sunday, including **Bright Horizons Award** winner – *Universal Language* – **Matthew Rankin**'s absurdist dramedy feature, along with **Leonardo Van Dijn**'s tense *Julie Keeps Quiet*, and the Un Certain Regard-awarded animated wonder, *Flow*, by **Gints Zilbalodis**.

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With her **Bright Horizons Jury** duties officially in completion, Oscar-winning costume designer **Deborah L. Scott** will also host an intimate masterclass at The Wheeler Centre on the festival's last day, sharing insights from her illustrious career overflowing with iconic wardrobe moments, from Marty McFly's orange vest in *Back to the Future* and the complicated costumes of Pandora in *Avatar* to Elliott's red hoodie in *E.T: The Extra-Terrestrial* and the historical accuracy required on the set of *Titanic*.

Menus-Plaisirs Les Troisgros – the 44th feature documentary of 94-year-old **Frederick Wiseman** – follows the team and suppliers at Le Bois Sans Feuilles ("The Woods Without Leaves"), a family-run French restaurant that's been Michelin-starred for over 50 years. As part of MIFF's **Food & Film** series, the final festival screening of Wiseman's 4-hour gastronomic spectacular offers a unique extended dining experience in collaboration with **Bossley Bar and Restaurant**, where film-loving foodies can enjoy free-flowing champagne and European-inspired dishes post-screening.

Quintessential festival moments from the August MIFF season include the buzzy arrival of **Sarah Snook** at this year's **Opening Night Gala** to celebrate **Adam Elliot's *Memoir of a Snail*** – the pair were reunited on the red carpet alongside fellow cast member, **Kodi Smit-McPhee** (who also appeared in this year's restoration of *Romulus, My Father*).



Kodi Smit-McPhee, Sarah Snook and Adam Elliot at the MIFF Opening Night Gala screening of *Memoir of a Snail*

Victorians were eager to champion their own, with local features ***The Organist*** and ***Us and the Night*** selling out multiple sessions across the festival. The MIFF Regional showcase also brought World Premiere titles and international highlights to all corners of Victoria, including ***Memoir of a Snail***, ***Janet Planet***, ***La Cocina*** and more.

Shannon Owen's affecting ***Left Write Hook*** shone bright mid-festival, powerfully embodying MIFF's inaugural **Premiere with Purpose**, presented by DECJUBA, and hosted by broadcaster and ***Left Write Hook*** ambassador **Jo Stanley**. The project's founder and producer **Donna Lyon** proudly took to the stage, standing strong, alongside the film's real-life participants in an unforgettable evening of film and solidarity.

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Audiences clamored to be among the first to see some of the year's big-name releases, including **Jane Schoenbrun's** *I Saw The TV Glow*; **Francis Ford Coppola's** hotly talked about *Megalopolis*; **Coralie Fargeat's** gory body horror *The Substance*; and *Fungi: Web of Life* by **Gisela Kaufmann** – a hot ticket that allured audiences with its 3D IMAX treatment and narration by **Björk**.

Other highlights came from this year's curated **MIFF Talks** program, with iconic music luminaries and international guests such as **Ellis Park's Justin Kurzel** and **Warren Ellis** speaking to a venn of music and film-lovers during the Festival's opening weekend, and Emmy-nominated filmmaker **Ondi Timoner**, who was in town to present the reconstructed redux of her pioneering rock doc, *Dig! XX*.

This year's gloriously 4K restored **Godzilla 70th Anniversary Marathon** brought the house down with a night of nostalgia and terror at St Kilda's beloved Astor Theatre, and fans young of age and young at heart also attended in droves for the much-loved Family Gala of **Rob Connolly's Magic Beach**, based on Alison Lester's iconic children's book.

Wintry nights were once again warmed up thanks to the lively **Campari Cinema Lounge**, returning for a second year as the Festival's home for late-night cinema conversation. This year the **Festival Hub** also extended the Festival's hospitality and late-night footprint with its unique dining offering immersing visitors with food and drink aplenty, positioned directly opposite the Cinema Lounge in following the glow of the neon lit bar.



MIFF Talks: In Conversation with Justin Kurzel and Warren Ellis hosted by Zan Rowe

2024 MIFF AWARD WINNERS**Bright Horizons Award presented by VicScreen**

Universal Language directed by Matthew Rankin

Bright Horizons Special Jury Award

Flow directed by Gints Zilbalodis

Blackmagic Design Australian Innovation Award

Jaydon Martin, *Flathead* – directing

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MIFF Media Centre**The Uncle Jack Charles Award in collaboration with Kearney Group**April Phillips, *kajoo yannaga (come on let's walk together)* – director, lead artist**Intrepid Audience Award (joint winners)**

Voice co-directed by Krunal Padhiar and Semara Jose

Left Write Hook directed by Shannon Owen**MIFF Schools Youth Jury Award, presented by Collarts***Alemania* directed by Maria Zanetti

– ENDS –

NOTES TO EDITOR

- MIFF 2024 runs in-cinema from 8-25 August
- The 2024 MIFF Awards will take place on Saturday 24 August at Rydges Melbourne
- The flagship MIFF Bright Horizons Award is supported by VicScreen. The winner receives \$140,000AUD
- The Uncle Jack Charles Award is presented in collaboration with Kearney Group. The winner receives a \$20,000AUD cash prize and \$25,000AUD worth of financial services with Kearney Group
- The Blackmagic Design Australian Innovation Award is supported by Blackmagic Design and awards the winner with a prize of \$70,000AUD
- The 63rd MIFF Shorts Awards, presented by Campari took place Saturday 17 August at ACMI
- MIFF's Audience Award is supported by Intrepid. Audiences can still vote for their favourite film from the program via the MIFF app or online to enter the prize draw – more details [here](#)
- MIFF Schools Youth Jury Award, returns for its fourth year at the festival and presented by Collarts The jury is a comprised of three Top Screen 2023 filmmakers who will select a winner from within the MIFF Schools Program
- To purchase tickets, including the Bright Horizons Pass, and explore the full program visit miff.com.au



The 2024 Bright Horizons Jury and attending filmmakers in Melbourne

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**VICSCREEN**