

SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

4 – 15 JUNE 2025

SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL ADDS NINE NEW FILMS TO 2025 PROGRAM, INCLUDING TWO SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

The 72nd Sydney Film Festival (4–15 June) today announces the addition of nine exceptional new films to the 2025 program — including two Special Presentations: *Sentimental Value*, the Cannes Grand Prix winner from Joachim Trier; and *Sîrat*, a Cannes Jury Prize-winner produced by Pedro Almodóvar.

These new titles join the Festival's official line-up and will have their Australian premiere screenings across the Festival, which kicks off this Wednesday 4 June.

"The Festival starts in just two days, but we think it's never too late to add the most exciting new films to the Festival, fresh from their international premieres," said **SFF Festival Director Nashen Moodley**. "From sweeping historical epics and urgent political dramas to intimate portraits and unforgettable performances, these films continue our commitment to showcasing the most exciting cinema from around the world."

Among the newly announced are two Special Presentations. *Sentimental Value* reunites director Joachim Trier with *The Worst Person in the World* (SFF 2021) star Renate Reinsve in an intimate family drama about the power of art, also starring Stellan Skarsgård and Elle Fanning. Meanwhile, *Sîrat*, set in a near-future Morocco, follows a father and son as they travel from rave to rave in search of a missing daughter, driven by a propulsive techno soundtrack.

Sergei Loznitsa (*In The Fog; Austerlitz*, SFF 2017), delivers a chilling study of justice under Stalin in *Two Prosecutors*. Screened in competition at Cannes, the film is set in 1937 and follows a young official whose pursuit of fairness within a brutal regime leads to harrowing consequences. Another film direct from Cannes Competition, Tarik Saleh's (*The Nile Hilton Incident*, SFF 2017; *Boy from Heaven*, SFF 2022) incisive satirical thriller *Eagles of the Republic* follows an Egyptian movie star as he's coerced by shady political forces.

Magellan stars Gael García Bernal as the famed Portuguese explorer in this Cannes-selected, visually resplendent epic from Filipino auteur and SFF regular Lav Diaz. Produced and co-starring Joel Edgerton, *The Plague* is a horror-tinged thriller about a shy preteen losing his grip on reality as he succumbs to toxic peer pressure at summer camp.

Winner of both the Cannes Queer Palme and Best Actress award, *The Little Sister* is a moving portrait of a French-Algerian woman attempting to reconcile exploring her sexuality with her cultural identity. With *Young Mothers*, Cannes Screenplay Prize winners the Dardenne brothers (*Two Days, One Night*, Sydney Film Prize 2014) return with an affecting drama, about five young mothers housed in a Belgian shelter.



It's Never Over, Jeff Buckley, the poignant new documentary from Amy Berg (*Janis: Little Girl Blue*, SFF 2016), draws on rare, never-before-seen footage and intimate insights from friends, family and lovers to celebrate the life and legacy of the beloved alt-rock icon.

The full Sydney Film Festival 2025 program can be found online at sff.org.au.

Sydney Film Festival runs from 4-15 June 2025. Tickets and Flexipasses to Sydney Film Festival 2025 are on sale now. Please call 1300 733 733 or visit sff.org.au for more information or to book.

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Sydney Film Festival Press Pack and Images Available [HERE](#)

EDITOR'S NOTES

ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

The Sydney Film Festival is one of the world's longest-running and most prestigious film festivals. The 72nd edition, taking place from 4 to 15 June 2025, will showcase the very best in contemporary cinema and offer audiences the chance to experience premieres, red carpet events, and exciting special programs across Sydney.

The Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Screen NSW and Destination NSW, the Federal Government through Screen Australia, and the City of Sydney.

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FILM INFORMATION

EAGLES OF THE REPUBLIC

Direct from the Cannes Competition, Tarik Saleh's (*The Nile Hilton Incident*, SFF 2017; *Boy from Heaven*, SFF 2022) incisive satirical thriller follows an Egyptian movie star as he's coerced by shady political forces. George Fahmy (played by the always-excellent Saleh regular Fares Fares) is Egypt's biggest actor: known as the "Pharaoh of the Screen", Fahmy appears in everything from historical dramas to sci-fis. He lives with his much younger lover and leads a charmed existence, despite being estranged from his wife and son. When he's approached by the Egyptian government to star in a propaganda film, he recognises that he's not really being asked but being instructed. Finding himself embedded in a whole new strata of influence and power, Fahmy unwisely begins an affair with the wife of the dangerous general supervising the film, with grave repercussions. Utilising scathing satire, Saleh portrays an authoritarian society rife with paranoia, corruption and power games in this riveting political thriller.

IT'S NEVER OVER, JEFF BUCKLEY

The adored alt-rock star released just one album, 1994's *Grace*, before his untimely death. This poignant documentary draws on insights from friends, family, and lovers combined with exclusive, never-before-seen footage in a celebration of his singular talent. Sundance 2025. Loved by everyone from Dylan to Bowie, Jeff Buckley was a once-in-a-generation talent. This moving



documentary traces his journey from early childhood, and a complicated relationship with his absent father, through to the vibrant 1990s New York art scene and the bidding war over his debut album. Directed by Amy Berg (*Janis: Little Girl Blue*, SFF 2016), *It's Never Over* is a comprehensive and heartfelt portrait, weaving together electrifying live performances, intimate archival footage and excerpts from his personal notebooks, alongside interviews with those who knew him best. The title captures the spirit of the film: it's a testament to a legacy that continues to inspire.

THE LITTLE SISTER

This year's Cannes Queer Palme and Best Actress winning film showcases a remarkable breakout performance in this deeply moving portrait of a French-Algerian woman attempting to reconcile exploring her sexuality with her cultural identity. Grounded by astounding lead performances, Hafsia Herzi's film gently navigates the internal conflict between sexuality and religion. Fatima (Nadia Melliti) is at the precipice of graduating high school. She dresses and acts like "one of the boys", but gets into a fight one day when her sexuality is challenged. The altercation triggers an emotional asthma attack for Fatima – which serendipitously leads to an unexpected meet-cute with a Korean nurse, Ji-Na (Park Ji-Min; *Return to Seoul*, SFF 2022). While she dives into the dating apps, partaking in chatty drinks and steamy hook-ups, Fatima slowly falls in love with Ji-Na. But she is compelled to find a way to square this newfound love – for Ji-Na, for herself, and for dating women – with her Muslim faith.

MAGELLAN

Gael García Bernal stars as famed Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan in this Cannes-selected, visually resplendent epic by Filipino auteur and SFF regular Lav Diaz.

Early in the 16th century, Magellan (García Bernal) falls out with the Portuguese king. He instead turns to the Spanish Crown to fund an expedition to the faraway Spice Islands, and bids his wife Beatriz farewell. At sea with his crew, violence, sabotage, mutiny and more unfurl, captured in stark, stunning tableaux. When Magellan at last reaches the Philippines, he becomes set on conquest and converting the Indigenous people to Christianity, but is met with powerful defiance. Seen from Diaz's forcefully anticolonial gaze, Magellan is no hero. Shot in brilliant colour and featuring a major star in Bernal, *Magellan* is an inviting point of entry to this contemporary master's body of work, whilst being just as uncompromising as ever.

THE PLAGUE

Fresh from a lauded premiere at Cannes, this horror-tinged thriller finds a shy preteen losing his grip on reality as he succumbs to toxic peer pressure at summer camp. Produced by and co-starring Joel Edgerton. Summer, 2003. Twelve-year-old Ben is forced to attend an all-boys water polo camp with his coach father (Edgerton). Ben is smart, shy, and relatively innocent, but also overly self-conscious and desperate to climb the group's ruthless social hierarchy. He sees his window of opportunity through the in-joke game of teasing fellow camper Eli, referring to his bubbling skin rash as "the plague". The rules are clear: if Eli touches you, you have to shower immediately. Amidst this pre-teen hazing ritual, Ben secretly develops a genuine bond with Eli. But when Ben realises his kindness has resulted in him catching "the plague", the line between game and reality is broken, and Ben spirals out of control.

SENTIMENTAL VALUE

Winner of the Cannes Grand Prix. Joachim Trier and Renate Reinsve reunite following *The Worst Person in the World* (SFF 2021) in this intimate family drama about the power of art. Stellan Skarsgård and Elle Fanning also contribute to an excellent ensemble cast. The always superb Reinsve (*Armand*, SFF 2024) plays Nora Borg, an accomplished stage actress experiencing deep anxiety about performing. When she and her sister Agnes are reunited with their estranged father, the once-revered director Gustav (Skarsgård), he asks Nora to take the lead role in a new, deeply personal film – his comeback, he hopes. With Gustav having abandoned his family decades prior,



Nora angrily declines his artistic overtures. He instead casts eager Hollywood star Rachel Kemp (Fanning), and begins work on the ambitious and risky film. But filial connections run deep, and the personal and the artistic intersect in ways that transcend the practicalities of creation. Profound, funny and deeply moving, *Sentimental Value* finds Trier at the height of his considerable directorial powers.

SÎRAT

Winner of the Cannes Jury Prize, this cinematic shockwave, produced by Pedro Almodóvar, will cause a stir everywhere it screens. Energised by Kangding Ray's propulsive techno soundtrack, *Sîrat* explores existence, loss and grief in ways that will leave you breathless. In the tumultuous near future, amidst the mountains of Morocco, a father (Sergi López, *Pan's Labyrinth*) and his young son Esteban (Brúno Nuñez) go from rave to rave. They're searching for Mar, the daughter who disappeared at one such event months ago. On their travels they encounter a diverse group of revellers escaping the harshness of the world in favour of the freedom they find in desert and in the hypnotism of the music. Finding a sense of community, father and son join the ravers for one last party in the hope that they will finally find Mar. What follows is wild, unpredictable, dizzying and utterly visceral. Beguiling and disturbing, *Sîrat* (referring to the bridge said to connect heaven and hell) is bravura filmmaking and absolutely unforgettable.

TWO PROSECUTORS

Sergei Loznitsa's (*In The Fog; Austerlitz*, SFF 2017) masterful Cannes Competition contender follows a local prosecutor who dares question injustice in Stalinist Russia. Soviet Union, 1937. In a dismal prison, letters from prisoners, begging for an intervention in their cases, are burned by the thousands. Somehow, one letter – written in blood – reaches the new local prosecutor, Korniyev (Aleksandr Kuznetsov, superb). With naïve determination and an enthusiasm for justice, Korniyev sets out to meet the letter's author – a man who has suffered torture at the hands of the secret police. It is a meeting with staggering repercussions. A vital chronicler of oppression in Russian history, Loznitsa has moved fluidly between fiction and documentary over his career. Here, working with phenomenal actors in a meticulously, beautifully staged film, he provides a terrifying snapshot of an era of extreme oppression and paranoia that speaks clearly to the present. The highest scored film on the *Screen International* 2025 Cannes Jury Grid.

YOUNG MOTHERS

The Dardenne brothers (*Two Days, One Night*, Sydney Film Prize 2014) return with another superbly affecting drama, about five young mothers housed in a Belgian shelter. Winner of Best Screenplay at Cannes. In their latest work – also one of their most acclaimed – the revered Belgian filmmakers explore the hopes and vulnerabilities of five young mothers at a shelter in Liège with tender clarity. Jessica craves the acceptance of her own mother, while Perla hopes that a baby will draw her delinquent boyfriend closer. Recovering addict Julie sees a brighter future for herself as a mother alongside her caring fiancé, but Ariane feels desperately unprepared for the challenges ahead. Single mother Naïma, meanwhile, is newly employed and hopes to repair relations with her disapproving family. Working from observations of a real shelter, the Dardennes skilfully interweave these narrative strands into a beautifully observed study of motherhood's upheaval and the precious fragility of humanity.

