



Australian Government



MEDIA RELEASE

## Four Australian projects selected for historic Venice Film Festival contingent

**Friday 26 July 2019:** Four Australian projects have been selected to screen at the 76<sup>th</sup> [Venice International Film Festival](#) in August and September. [Babyteeth](#), the debut feature from director Shannon Murphy, will have its World Premiere in competition. The selection of *Babyteeth* means Australia has had a feature in competition at Venice three years in a row - the first time this has happened since the festival began in 1932.

*Babyteeth* is a bittersweet comedy produced by Alex White, written by Rita Kalnejais, and starring Ben Mendelsohn ([Animal Kingdom](#)) and Essie Davis ([The Babadook](#)). Also having its World Premiere in the Orizzonti Shorts competition is short film *The Diver* from directors Michael Leonard and Jamie Helmer.

These films are joined by two virtual reality (VR) shorts, Film Camp's *Passenger* (International Premiere) about a migrant arriving in a new country and navigating unfamiliar terrain; along with Callum Cooper's *Porton Down* (World Premiere), which explores the experiences of a military test subject who unwittingly finds himself in a bizarre, mind-altering trial.

Screen Australia's Head of Content, **Sally Caplan** said: "It's incredibly impressive that Australia not only has four films in the Venice Film Festival, but this year's program marks three consecutive years of having a feature in competition. This is a remarkable achievement and evidence of the demand for Australian content internationally, whether it's distinctive features, compelling short films or immersive VR storytelling."

"We are also very proud to see an Australian female-directed feature in competition for the second year in a row with *Babyteeth*, as well as the all-female creative team behind *Passenger*. This is sign of welcome progress both in our local sector and in the broader industry."

Of the selection, *Babyteeth* director **Shannon Murphy** said, "I am absolutely beside myself with excitement to be premiering my debut feature film in competition at Venice. It is a dream come true to have such a prestigious festival launch this new Australian film into the world."

Australian films have had an impressive run at Venice, having taken out the Special Jury Prize two years in a row, with Jennifer Kent's *The Nightingale* in 2018 and Warwick Thornton's *Sweet Country* in 2017.

The Venice International Film Festival runs from 28 August - 7 September 2019.

### AUSTRALIAN FILMS AT VENICE FILM FESTIVAL 2019:

#### [Babyteeth](#)

**Whitefalk Films Pty Ltd**

**Genre:** Comedy, Drama

**Director:** Shannon Murphy

**Writer:** Rita Kalnejais

**Producer:** Alex White

**Executive Producer:** Jan Chapman

**Australian Distributor:** Universal Pictures International Australasia

**International Sales:** Celluloid Dreams

**Synopsis:** When seriously ill teenager Milla falls madly in love with smalltime drug dealer Moses, it's her parents' worst nightmare. But as Milla's first brush with love brings her a new lust for life, things get messy and traditional morals go out the window. Milla soon shows everyone in her orbit - her parents, Moses, a sensitive music teacher, a budding child violinist, and a disarmingly honest pregnant neighbour - how to live like you have nothing to lose. What might have been a disaster for the Finlay family instead leads to letting go and finding grace in the glorious chaos of life. *Babyteeth* joyously explores how good it is not to be dead and how far we will go for love.

**Production credit:** *Babyteeth* is a Whitefalk Films production. Major production investment from Screen Australia, in association with Create NSW. Financed with support from WeirAnderson.com, Whitefalk Films, Jan Chapman Films and Spectrum Films. Developed by Whitefalk Films in association with Katherine Slattery and Jan Chapman with the assistance of Screen Australia, Create NSW and Waking Dream Productions.

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MEDIA RELEASE

**Venice Film Festival: World Premiere**

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***Passenger***

**Film Camp Pty Ltd**

**Genre:** Drama

**Writers/Directors/Animators:** Isobel Knowles, Van Sowerwine

**Producer:** Philippa Campey

**Synopsis:** *Passenger* is a 360 degree stop-motion VR film that tells the story of arriving in a new country to live. Your taxi driver, himself a migrant to Australia, navigates the new terrain with you, acting as your guide while also revealing small parts of his own story. *Passenger* recreates and investigates the geographic and visual dislocation of arriving somewhere unfamiliar, and beginning the journey of finding a new home in a foreign land.

**Production credit:** *Passenger* is a Film Camp production. Principal production investment from Screen Australia.

**Venice Film Festival:** International Premiere

**Australian Media Contact:** Philippa Campey [pip@filmcamp.com.au](mailto:pip@filmcamp.com.au)

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***The Diver***

**Golden Moss Films, Les Valseurs**

**Genre:** Drama

**Directors:** Michael Leonard, Jamie Helmer

**Writer:** Michael Leonard

**Producers:** Michael Leonard, Justin Pechberty, Damien Megherbi

**Synopsis:** Rage, chaos and confusion consume Callan's mind, creating a destructive environment for all those around him. Only the solitude of the underwater world and the compassion of an eccentric older friend are capable of soothing his volatility. But when his base instincts are left unchecked, the violence he is capable of displays its full potential.

**Production credit:** *The Diver* is a Golden Moss Films and Les Valseurs production. Principal production investment from Centre National du Cinéma et de l'image animée, in association with Arte.

**Venice Film Festival:** World Premiere

**Australian Media Contact:** Michael Leonard [goldenmossfilms@gmail.com](mailto:goldenmossfilms@gmail.com)

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***Porton Down***

**Callum Cooper**

**Genre:** Documentary, Game, VR

**Producers:** Callum Cooper, Constance Nuttall

**Associate Producers:** Michael Latham, Naima Abed, Bobby Kapur

**Writers:** Don Webb, Callum Cooper

**Director:** Callum Cooper

**Synopsis:** A psychedelic VR descent into the chequered past of the British government's human experimentation programmes. This genre-bending tale explores the disquieting experiences of Don Webb, who found himself unwittingly entangled in a secret British Cold War program, an experience that mystified him for the next 50 years. Participants in the experience become subjects of another kind of testing, as the project critically investigates its own medium.

**Production credit:** *Porton Down* is financed with support from Mozilla and Open Society Foundations.

**Venice Film Festival:** World Premiere

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