

Five Australian projects selected for Toronto International Film Festival 2023

Friday 18 August 2023: Five Australian projects have been selected for the 48th edition of the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), which will be held from 7-17 September. Feature film [The Convert](#), an Australian/New Zealand Co-production will have its world premiere at the festival, while [The New Boy](#) and [Limbo](#) will have their North American premiere, [Shayda](#) and [The Royal Hotel](#) will have their Canadian Premiere.

Screen Australia's CEO **Graeme Mason** said, "I'm thrilled that these five extraordinary Australian projects have been selected for TIFF. This is a testament to the amazing talent and skill of our local screen industry. To have such unique and diverse films screening at the festival – exemplifies the depth and breadth of our filmmaking excellence on a global stage. This is a real win not only for the creative teams, but also the Australian industry, congratulations to everyone involved."

After making its world premiere at this year's Cannes Film Festival in May and opening the Sydney Film Festival, Warwick Thornton's *The New Boy* will have its North American premiere at TIFF. Starring Oscar winner Cate Blanchett, this spiritual drama film evokes Australia's colonial legacy through the story of one very special child, played by rising star Aswan Reid.

The New Boy writer/director **Warwick Thornton** said, "This is awesome news. It's such an honour to have our North American premiere at TIFF - we've always been looked after by them and can't wait to attend the festival."

Shayda, the highly anticipated debut feature from writer/director Noora Niasari, stars Iranian actress Zar Amir-Ebrahimi and follows a young Iranian mother who finds refuge in a women's shelter where her search for freedom brings her face-to-face with the violence that she has fled.

Shayda producer Vincent Sheehan said, "I have always loved the TIFF audience having screened *Little Fish* and *The Hunter* previously at the festival. So, I'm thrilled that Noora Niasari's *Shayda*, fresh from its closing night screening at Locarno, will play at Toronto as we prepare for our North American release with Sony Pictures Classics."

Making its world premiere in the Special Presentations section is *The Convert*, an Official Co-production between Australia and New Zealand. Lee Tamahori's action-filled historical drama stars Guy Pearce as a newly arrived preacher in a colonial town in early 19th-century New Zealand, who finds himself at the centre of a long-standing battle between two Māori tribes.

The Convert producers **Andrew Mason** and **Troy Lum** said, "We have been long-time admirers of Lee Tamahori's work and to be involved in *The Convert* – a film of such power and insight – is a great honour. Robin and Te Kohe, our New Zealand co-producers were generous and collaborative, and opened a window to a culture that we feel privileged to have experienced."

Director Kitty Green and actor Julia Garner (*The Assistant*) reunite in *The Royal Hotel*, which tells the story of two friends who run out of cash while backpacking in Australia, and are forced to take jobs in an exploitative pub to fund their trip home.

The Royal Hotel producer **Liz Watts** said, "We are thrilled that *The Royal Hotel* will take its place amongst the world's best cinema at TIFF this year. We can't wait to see the audience response to Kitty Green's finely crafted, edge of the seat thriller as well as the wonderful performances by the Australian and international cast, headed by the amazing Julia Garner."

Limbo is a searing commentary on justice and law enforcement, which investigates the cold case of a murdered Indigenous girl in an outback mining town.

Limbo producers **David Jowsey** and **Greer Simpkin** said "Ivan Sen wrote, directed, shot, edited, composed and was a producer of the film. Simon Baker delivered a sublime performance in *Limbo*. He and Ivan formed



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a deeply creative partnership that generated this mesmerising work. We are thrilled *Limbo* will have its North American premiere at TIFF.”

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The Convert

World Premiere

Jump Film and Television Ltd / Brouhaha Entertainment Australia P/L

Director: Lee Tamahori

Writers: Shane Daniels, Lee Tamahori

Producers: Robin Scholes, Te Kohe Tuhaka, Andrew Mason, Troy Lum

Executive Producers: Maria Logan, Anne Sheehan, David Garrett, David Mepham

Cast: Guy Pearce, Tioreore Ngatai-Melbourne, Antonio Te Maioha, Jacqueline McKenzie, Lawrence Makoare

International Sales: Mister Smith Entertainment

Australian Distributor: Kismet

Synopsis: When a lay preacher arrives at a British settlement in 1830s New Zealand, his violent past is drawn into question and his faith put to the test as he finds himself caught in the middle of a bloody war between Māori tribes.

Media contact: Emma Mason, Mister Smith Entertainment: emason@mistersmithent.com

Limbo

North American Premiere

Bunya Productions Pty Ltd

Writer/Director: Ivan Sen

Producers: David Jowsey, Rachel Higgins, Greer Simpkin, Ivan Sen

Executive Producers: Simon Baker, Cecilia Ritchie, David Chiem

Cast: Simon Baker, Rob Collins, Natasha Wanganeen, Nicholas Hope, Mark Coe, Joshua Warrior

International Sales: Dark Matter Media Pty Ltd

Australian Distributor: Dark Matter Media Pty Ltd

Synopsis: Travis, a jaded detective, arrives in the remote outback town of Limbo to investigate the cold case murder of local Indigenous girl Charlotte Hayes 20 years ago. As truths about the murder begin to unfold, the detective gains a new insight into the unsolved case from the victim’s fractured family, the surviving witnesses and the reclusive brother of the chief suspect.

Media contact: Greer Simpkin: info@bunyaproductions.com.au

The New Boy

North American Premiere

Dirty Films & Scarlett Pictures

Writer/Director: Warwick Thornton

Producers: Cate Blanchett, Deborah Mailman, Wayne Blair, Aswan Reid

Executive Producers: Gretel Packer, Coco Francini

Cast: Aswan Reid, Deborah Mailman, Wayne Blair, Cate Blanchett

International Sales: The Veterans

Australian Distributor: Roadshow Films

Synopsis: When an Aboriginal child arrives in the dead of night at a remote monastery run by a renegade nun, the new boy’s presence disturbs a delicately balanced world in this story of spiritual struggle and the cost of survival.

Media contact: Roadshow: stefan_sgarioto@roadshow.com.au

The Royal Hotel

Canadian Premiere

See-Saw Films Pty Ltd

Director: Kitty Green

Writers: Kitty Green, Oscar Redding

Producers: Liz Watts, Emile Sherman, Iain Canning, Kath Shelper

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Cast: Julia Garner, Jessica Henwick, Toby Wallace and Hugo Weaving

International Sales: HanWay Films

Australian Distributor: Transmission Films

Synopsis: US backpackers Hanna and Liv take a job in a remote Australian pub for some extra cash and are confronted with a bunch of unruly locals and a situation that grows rapidly out of their control.

Media contact: HanWay Films - Tejinder Jouhal: tj@hanwayfilms.com

Shayda

Canadian Premiere

Origina 45 Pty Ltd

Writer/Director: Noora Niasari

Producers: Vincent Sheenhan, Noora Niasari

Executive Producers: Cate Blanchett, Andrew Upton, Coco Francini

Cast: Zar Amir Ebrahimi, Osamah Sami, Mojean Aria, Jillian Nguyen, Rina Mousavi, Selina Zahednia, Leah Purcell

International Sales: HanWay Films

Australian Distributor: Madman Entertainment

North American Distributor: Sony Pictures Classics

Synopsis: Shayda, a brave Iranian mother, finds refuge in an Australian women's shelter with her six-year-old daughter. Over Persian New Year, they take solace in Nowruz rituals and new beginnings, but when her estranged husband re-enters their lives, Shayda's path to freedom is jeopardised.

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