

Three Australian films selected for South By Southwest Festival 2021

Thursday 11 February 2021: Three Australian films have been selected for South By Southwest (SXSW) Festival, which will be held online next month from 16 - 20 March, including two world premieres.

Announced overnight with the full programme, feature film [The Drover's Wife the Legend of Molly Johnson](#) and feature documentary [Under The Volcano](#) will have their world premieres at the festival, with short film [The Moogai](#) also screening as part of the festival line-up.

Screen Australia Chief Executive Office **Graeme Mason** said, "SXSW is a festival known for uncovering an eclectic mix of ground breaking screen content and we are delighted to have three Australian films included in this year's programme. Congratulations to Leah Purcell on having her feature directorial debut selected, this is a remarkable feat and it's fantastic to have this powerful First Nations story celebrated on the world stage. In a festival known for showcasing bold content we're thrilled to have *Under the Volcano* premiering in the 24 Beats Per Second section and *The Moogai*, a distinctive Aboriginal psychological horror, selected as part of the Midnight Shorts section."

Leah Purcell's highly anticipated feature directorial debut *The Drover's Wife The Legend of Molly Johnson*, based on the award-winner play of the same name, will have its world premiere in the Spotlight Narrative section. Based on the Henry Lawson short story and re-imagined for a modern audience by Leah Purcell, *The Drover's Wife The Legend of Molly Johnson* tells the story of a woman and her stubborn determination to protect her family from the harshness of a life in 1893, Snowy Mountains township. Both a searing thriller and a stark revisionist Western, the film offers a powerful new interrogation of Australian history and culture through the determination of a woman to ensure her children are given a future filled with hope.

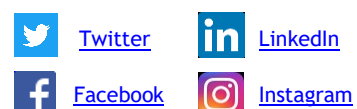
The Drover's Wife The Legend of Molly Johnson writer and director **Leah Purcell** said, "I am excited and proud that my debut feature is World Premiering at SXSW in Austin TX USA. I've seen and heard so much about the festival over the years so to be following in the footsteps of the amazing films and filmmakers that have gone before me is humbling. As an Indigenous Australian woman and filmmaker, I am proud to be sharing a story that literally has mine and my family's DNA all over it and to be able to share our cultural practise as storytellers through film to the world. I wish I could be at SXSW for the film's premiere but I'll be with you in spirit."

Enjoying its world premiere in the 24 Beats Per Second section, which showcases the sounds, culture and influence of music and musicians, is music documentary *Under the Volcano*, directed by Gracie Otto. A celebration of the creative process, *Under The Volcano* charts the rise and fall of AIR Studios Montserrat, the recording studio at the centre of the pop universe in the 1980s. Built by Beatles' producer Sir George Martin in 1979, AIR Studios Montserrat was a custom-built, state-of-the-art recording facility tucked away on a Caribbean paradise. In the shadow of an active volcano, the studio not only attracted the biggest musical talent on the planet, but was the birthplace of mega-hits such as that defined the sound of the 80s. For a decade, AIR Montserrat formed the backdrop to monumental events in music history including the break-up of The Police, the reunion of The Rolling Stones, and the reinvigoration of Paul McCartney after the tragic murder of John Lennon. After a decade of hits, and at the peak of its popularity, the studio was destroyed when the island was hit by a series of devastating natural disasters.

Under The Volcano producer **Cody Greenwood** said, "We are thrilled to be included alongside a stellar lineup of local and international films at SXSW. The festival is universally recognised for its music documentaries, so to have *Under The Volcano* premiere at this festival is a huge honour. Our whole team worked tremendously hard to pull the film together and I can't wait for it to be shared with audiences."

After receiving impressive accolades locally, including an AACTA Award 2020 nomination for Best Short Film and winning the Erwin Rado Award for Best Audience Short Film at Melbourne International Film Festival 2020, *The Moogai* will make its international premiere at SXSW in the Midnight Shorts section. From writer/director Jon Bell, this powerful horror short film explores post-natal depression, transgenerational trauma and Australia's stolen generation. But it is also a story of the value of children and the power of family.

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The Moogai writer and director Jon Bell said, “Being a part of SXSW is a huge thrill. The festival pulls from a number of mediums and speaks to multiple disciplines. I think *The Moogai* will find an audience with the patrons of SXSW because they’re up for the kind of story we’re telling. A story of loss from an Indigenous point of view. I’m not sure what the reaction from an international audience will be but there are many similarities between Australian Aboriginal and Native American connection to country and the clash of cultures with the western world that I think it will feel familiar and foreign to American audiences. But no matter what we’re thrilled to be screening there.”

The filmclip for *Break*, from Award-winning Australian folk singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Julia Stone with direction by Jessie Hill, has also been selected to screen in the Music Video Competition section.

Billed as SXSW Online, the festival will be a digital experience from 16 - 20 March, 2021 including keynotes, Conference sessions, Music Festival showcases, Film Festival screenings, world-class networking, and the unexpected discoveries that are always a part of SXSW.

SPOTLIGHT NARRATIVE

THE DROVER’S WIFE THE LEGEND OF MOLLY JOHNSON

World Premiere

Oombarra Productions and Bunya Productions

Director/Writer: Leah Purcell

Producers: Bain Stewart, David Jowsey, Angela Littlejohn, Greer Simpkin, Leah Purcell

Cast: Leah Purcell, Rob Collins, Sam Reid, Jessica de Gouw, Tony Cogan, Harry Greenwood and Malachi Dower-Roberts

International Sales: Memento Films International

Australian Distributor: Roadshow Films

Synopsis: Based on the Henry Lawson short story and re-imagined for a modern audience by Leah Purcell, *The Drover’s Wife The Legend of Molly Johnson* tells the story of a woman and her stubborn determination to protect her family from the harshness of a life in 1893, Snowy Mountains. Both a searing thriller and a stark revisionist Western, the film offers a powerful new interrogation of Australian history and culture through the determination of a woman to ensure her children are given a future filled with hope.

24 BEATS PER SECOND

UNDER THE VOLCANO

World Premiere

Rush Films

Director: Gracie Otto

Writers: Ian Shadwell, Cody Greenwood, Gracie Otto

Producer: Cody Greenwood

Co-Producer: Richard Harris

Features: Sting, Mark Knopfler, Midge Ure, Jimmy Buffet, Nick Rhodes

International Sales: Universal Pictures

Australian Distributor: Universal Pictures

Synopsis: *Under the Volcano* charts the rise and fall of AIR Studios Montserrat, the recording studio at the centre of the pop universe in the 1980s. Built by Beatles’ producer Sir George Martin in 1979, AIR Studios Montserrat was a custom-built, state-of-the-art recording facility tucked away on a Caribbean paradise. In the shadow of an active volcano, the studio not only attracted the biggest musical talent on the planet, but was the birthplace of mega-hits such as that defined the sound of the 80s. For a decade, AIR Montserrat formed the backdrop to monumental events in music history including the break-up of The Police, the reunion of The Rolling Stones, and the reinvigoration of Paul McCartney after the tragic murder of John Lennon. After a decade of hits, and at the peak of its popularity, the studio was destroyed when the island was hit by a series of devastating natural disasters.

MIDNIGHT SHORTS

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MEDIA RELEASE

THE MOOGAI

International Premiere

Causeway Films, No Coincidence Media

Director/Writer: Jon Bell

Producers: Samantha Jennings, Kristina Ceyton, Taylor Goddard, Mitchell Stanley

Cast: Shari Sebbens, Meyne Wyatt

Synopsis: An Aboriginal psychological horror, *The Moogai* is the story of a family terrorised by a child-stealing spirit

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