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Four Australian films selected for Toronto International Film Festival 2021

Thursday 12 August 2021: Four Australian films have been selected for the prestigious Toronto International Film Festival 2021 (TIFF), which will be held next month from 9 to 18 September.

Announced late last month, Jane Campion's [The Power of the Dog](#) will screen in Special Presentation and documentary *Burning*, directed by Academy® and Emmy® award-winning filmmaker Eva Orner will make its world premiere in the TIFF Docs program. Overnight it was announced Nash Edgerton's short film *Shark*, starring Edgerton and Rose Byrne, will make its world premiere and Madeleine Gottlieb's short film *You and Me, Before and After* will make its international premiere, both as part of TIFF Short Cuts.

Screen Australia Chief Executive Officer **Graeme Mason** said, "TIFF is one of the world's most respected film festivals and I congratulate each of the filmmaking teams on their achievement. *The Power of the Dog* is set for international success with Jane Campion once again leading a team of Australians, New Zealanders and international participants to global recognition, landing selections at several leading international film festivals. Eva Orner shines a light on the devastating effects of the 2019 Black Summer bushfires across Australia and is sure to inspire conversation around the world with *Burning*. It's exciting to see Nash Edgerton return with *Shark*, a follow on from *Spider* and *Bear* both of which received global acclaim. Madeleine Gottlieb continues to prove she is an Australian filmmaker to watch, with *You and Me, Before and After* building on the success of her previous short films, all of which have screened at international film festivals. These selections show the immense pool of talent we have in Australia and the breadth of our stories, and I look forward to Australian films continuing to captivate audiences around the globe."

An Official Australian New Zealand Co-production and Netflix film, *The Power of the Dog* is directed by Oscar-winning filmmaker Jane Campion ([The Piano](#)) and produced by Big Shell's Campion, See-Saw Films' Emile Sherman and Iain Canning (*The King's Speech*, [Lion](#)), Bright Star's Tanya Seghatchian (*Cold War*) with Max Films' Roger Frappier. *The Power of the Dog* will make its world premiere in Competition at Venice Film Festival this September, will screen as Special Presentation at Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) before screening in the 59th New York Film Festival's (NYFF) Centerpiece selection.

Adapted for the screen by Campion from Thomas Savage's 1967 novel of the same name, *The Power of the Dog* tells the story of severe, pale-eyed, handsome Phil Burbank (Benedict Cumberbatch) who is brutally beguiling. All of Phil's romance, power and fragility is trapped in the past and in the land: He can castrate a bull calf with two swift slashes of his knife; he swims naked in the river, smearing his body with mud. He is a cowboy as raw as his hides. The year is 1925. The Burbank brothers are wealthy ranchers in Montana. At the Red Mill restaurant on their way to market, the brothers meet Rose (Kirsten Dunst), the widowed proprietress, and her impressionable son Peter (Kodi Smit-McPhee). Phil behaves so cruelly he drives them both to tears, revelling in their hurt and rousing his fellow cowhands to laughter - all except his brother George (Jesse Plemons), who comforts Rose then returns to marry her. As Phil swings between fury and cunning, his taunting of Rose takes an eerie form - he hovers at the edges of her vision, whistling a tune she can no longer play. His mockery of her son is more overt, amplified by the cheering of Phil's cowhand disciples. Then Phil appears to take the boy under his wing. Is this latest gesture a softening that leaves Phil exposed, or a plot twisting further into menace?

The film also includes Australia's Genevieve Lemon and Sean Keenan, with Australian cinematographer Ari Wegner, editor Peter Sciberras and assistant director Phil Jones working on the film. *The Power of the Dog* was filmed in New Zealand, with the support of the NZFC, and post-produced in Australia.

The Power of the Dog writer, director and producer **Jane Campion** said, "*The Power of the Dog* is a film of the pandemic. In March 2020 our production was shut down. We were unsure if that was it, the film was over and we would never be finished. When we did get back up we were freshly aware of the gift of our project and all of us poured our heart and souls into the film. We hoped so much to be able to make something people would sense as a treat; a cinematic feature. We thank the festivals for including us in their lineups and congratulate all the other filmmakers working in the pandemic conditions of uncertainty."

Australian documentary *Burning*, Amazon Prime Video's first feature-length Australian documentary production, will make its world premiere in the TIFF Docs strand. From the lens of Academy® and Emmy®

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award-winning Australian director/producer Eva Orner, comes an unflinching look at the 2019 Black Summer bushfires. The feature length documentary delves into the catastrophe that unfolded across Australia, analyzing the irreversible damage sustained, and the roles played by the federal government and media in the lead up to the crisis. Revisiting the devastation that impacted both native flora and fauna across several regional communities, the film focuses on individuals affected by the fires and concerned parties including residents, firefighters and environmental activists. The preceding years of drought plays directly into the ongoing hot-button issue of climate change, with the film drawing comparisons between government inaction and media perceptions, and a bushfire season that would wreak an unprecedented level of destruction upon the landscape - as well as posing questions about how we move forward as a nation to ensure this piece of history is never repeated.

On making this documentary, *Burning* director and executive producer **Eva Orner** said, “Along with the rest of the world, I watched in horror as Australia burned over what has become known as ‘Black Summer’. Visiting home and family during the fires, I saw Sydney shrouded in thick smoke, watched friends lose their home and bore witness to a 47 degree Celsius day in Melbourne in December. This was not normal! The scale of devastation, loss of life and toll on wildlife was beyond comprehension.

“Fires are certainly not new in Australia, but the magnitude, impact and ferocity was shocking and unprecedented. I was determined to make a film about our ‘Black Summer’ and climate change. What we knew and what we urgently must do moving forward. I’m thrilled to be partnering with Propagate Content and the Amazon Studios team to tell this urgent and important story to a global audience.”

Australian filmmaker and stuntman Nash Edgerton’s short film *Shark*, will make its world premiere as part of TIFF Short Cuts. *Shark* follows the continuing adventures of Jack, who loves to prank. But in his latest relationship he may have finally met his match. As well as directing, Edgerton wrote the film with David Michôd, and stars alongside Rose Byrne. Michele Bennett produces, with cinematographer Aaron McLisky and editor David Whittaker. *Shark* is a follow up to Edgerton’s multi-award winning short films [Spider](#) (2007) and [Bear](#) (2011), both of which have received accolades around the world.

Shark writer, director and star **Nash Edgerton** said, “We are very excited to share Jack’s latest dating misadventures in *Shark*, our sequel to *Spider* and *Bear*, and even more excited to premiere the film in Toronto.”

You and Me, Before and After will make its international premiere in TIFF Short Cuts, following its world premiere this month at Melbourne International Film Festival. Written and directed by Madeleine Gottlieb and produced by Liam Heyen and Cyna Strachan, *You and Me, Before and After* stars Yael Stone (*Orange Is The New Black*) and Emily Barclay ([Please Like Me](#)) as Hannah and Rachel, adult sisters with baggage. Today, they have agreed to get their first tattoos together. Stuck side-by-side in the chair with nothing to do but talk, they are forced to confront a shared history that’s as painful as it is hilarious. Touchingly told, and tinged with the inherent relational comedy of banter between siblings, *You and Me, Before and After* is a heartwarming portrait of a late-blossoming relationship.

You and Me, Before and After writer and director **Madeleine Gottlieb** said, “We are thrilled that *You and Me, Before and After* will have its international premiere at TIFF 2021 and can’t wait to unleash our story about fierce, feuding sisters on the world. Making this film was a deeply personal labour of love which I couldn’t have done without my tireless producers Liam Heyen and Cyna Strachan, the inimitable Yael Stone and Emily Barclay whose talent and generosity knows no bounds, and our tremendous crew of majority female / non-binary filmmakers.”

The 46th edition of TIFF will be an in-person and digital festival featuring exciting films, special events, talks, tributes, and interactive experiences from 9 - 18 September 2021. Other Australian talent featured at TIFF include Philip Noyce’s thriller *Lakewood*, starring Naomi Watts, which screens in Gala Presentation.

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