

Melbourne International
Film Festival
2020 Year in Review

MIFF



INTRODUCTION

In any year, the Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) is iconic to Melbourne: an extraordinary annual survey of the world of cinema, the world's largest celebration of Australia's own filmmaking, and a pure point of togetherness for our city and creative communities. It is a terrible thing to lose – and a necessary thing to reimagine when that happens.

The cancellation of MIFF's traditional winter delivery in Melbourne, amid the developing COVID-19 situation, was an imperative and responsible decision for public health and community safety. In this setting, MIFF 68½ is what, unexpectedly, came between MIFF's 68th and 69th editions.

For a festival almost seven decades old, 2020 was a year of firsts. Our festival, for the first time, was presented digitally. For the first time, seen nationally. An entirely new way to sustain MIFF's amazing film programming in the most unique and challenging of circumstances – a new way to connect with and foster audiences in the most difficult of moments, produced and seen under Stage 4 lockdown conditions.

MIFF 68½ showcased 118 films from 56 different countries, along with incredible virtual guests and online talks. Out of the cinema and into the lounge room, our audiences embraced the possibilities of cinema, with the festival achieving a 370K+ viewership across the country. And we achieved the aspiration of gender parity in the program.

In the process, we found that art's compelling properties – to see beyond ourselves, to inhabit the imaginations of others, to cultivate a spark of response and an inspiration within us as viewers – remain so for our community, regardless of the world around us.

In 2020, during an unthinkable point of vulnerability for festival culture, for the arts and for those at home disconnected from all of it – we thank you for your interest, your engagement, your contribution. Your support continues to be an unforgettable, indelible reason that MIFF is able to break new ground and build new possibilities each year.



Al Cossar
Artistic Director



Victoria Pope
General Manager

MIFF 68½

18
DAYS

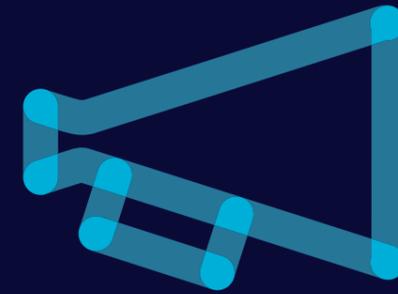
56
COUNTRIES

118
FILMS

32
LANGUAGES

86

Australian premieres



12

world premieres

17

spotlights and special events

7

First Nations-led projects

59 films

with one or more female directors (50%)



47 local and international virtual festival guests

3

Australian First Nations-led projects

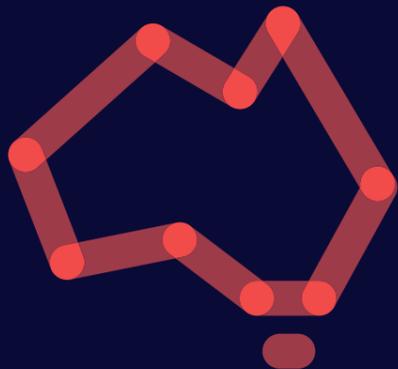


14

MIFF Ambassadors

12 pre-recorded Q&As

3 talks and a table read of the *Death in Brunswick* script



32%

Australian content



8 audio-described films
8 closed-captioned films
41 100%-subtitled films



Program Spotlights & Special Events

MIFF's digital festival proved to be a stunning success, surpassing all participation expectations.

A strong part of what made MIFF 68½ so memorable to audiences was the selection of Program Spotlights, which recreated the experience of coming together for an evening of glamour and great film in a streaming context. Galas were transformed into virtual presentations, with audiences treated to Opening Night Film *First Cow*, Centrepiece Film *Wendy* and Closing Night Film *Ema* – MIFF's largest-ever closing-night title. These films were presented alongside the rest of the spotlights suite.

First Cow

Opening Night Film

Director: Kelly Reichardt
Presented by Chandon

Boys State

Program Spotlight

Directors: Amanda McBaine and Jesse Moss

On the Record

Special Preview Screening

Directors: Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering

Black Bear

Program Spotlight

Director: Lawrence Michael Levine

Corpus Christi

Special Preview Screening

Director: Jan Komasa

Wendy

Centrepiece Film

Director: Benh Zeitlin
Presented by Abercrombie & Kent

Looky Looky Here Comes Cooky

Special Preview Screening

Director: Steven McGregor

Ellie & Abbie (& Ellie's Dead Aunt)

Program Spotlight

Director: Monica Zanetti
Presented by Up

Last and First Men

Program Spotlight

Director: Jóhann Jóhannsson
Presented by *The Saturday Paper*

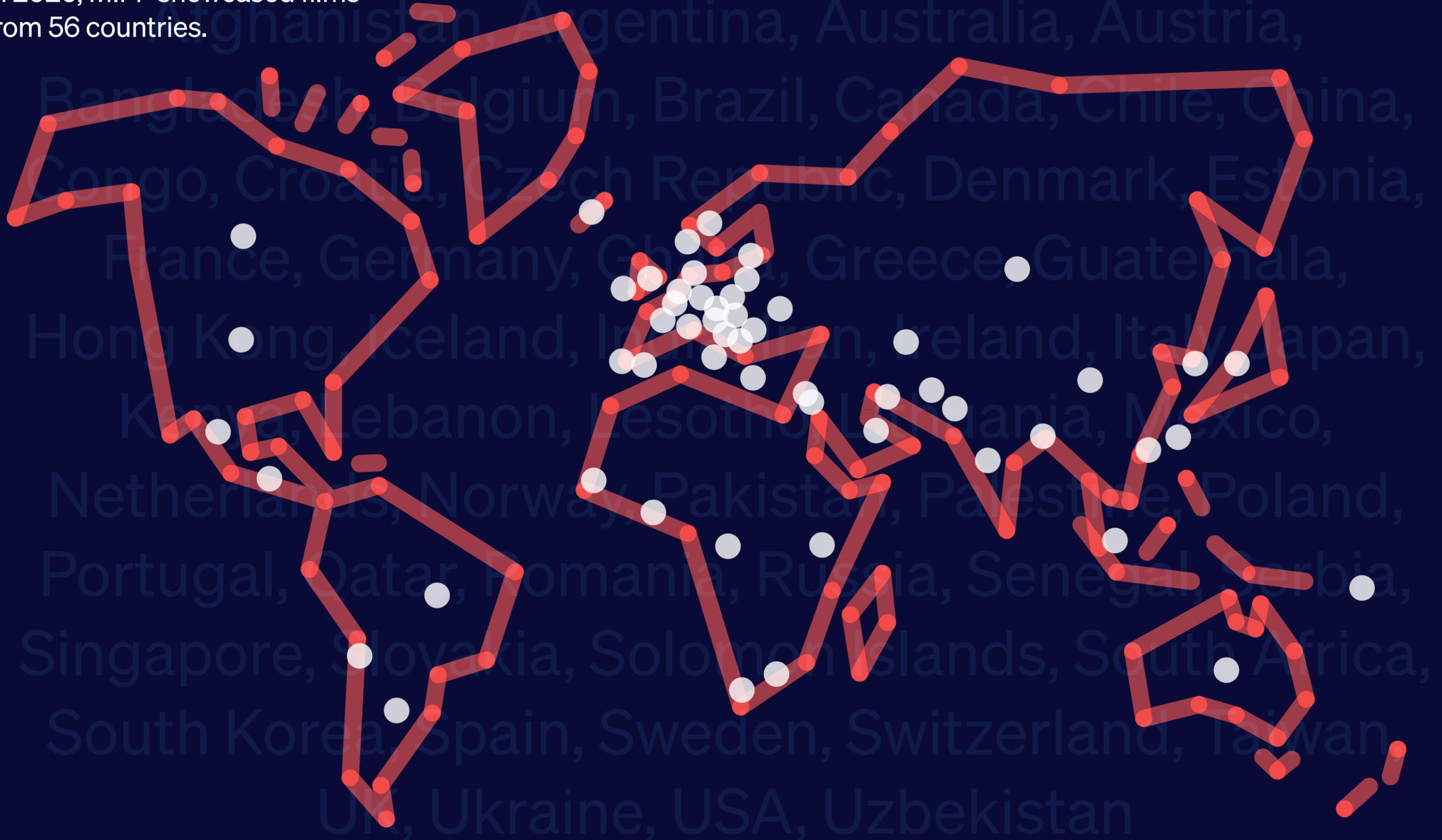
Ema

Closing Night Film

Director: Pablo Larraín

The Story of the World

In 2020, MIFF showcased films from 56 countries.



First Nations

MIFF has a proud history of amplifying Indigenous Australian and other First Nations films and filmmakers, and the 2020 program once again included a diverse array of new films.

One of MIFF 68½'s Program Spotlights was Steven McGregor's *Looky Looky Here Comes Cooky*, which was screened with a post-film Q&A and a performance by singer/songwriter Alice Skye. Two of the 2020 Shorts Awards winners shone a spotlight on Indigenous Australian stories: Jon Bell's *The Moogai* and the Karrabing Film Collective's *Day in the Life*. And MIFF's Ambassadors from Indigenous backgrounds – Uncle Jack Charles, Aaron Pedersen and Steven Oliver – were integrally involved across the program.

Audiences also enjoyed stories about First Nations peoples from elsewhere in the world: *Kuessipan*, *The Fever*, *La Llorona*, *Kapaemahu* and *Sky Aelans*.



Women in Film

In this noteworthy year, MIFF achieved gender parity in its programming, with 59 of the festival's 118 films (50%) having at least one female director attached to them. Additionally, more than 60% of Critics Campus participants this year were women.

"I think it's fantastic that MIFF has achieved equal gender parity in the MIFF 68½ program. In a context where only 17% of films made in Australia are directed by women, this sends a very strong message to filmmakers, audiences and other festivals everywhere. We should be doing all we can to encourage more women to make and direct films."

Gillian Armstrong

Director and 2020 MIFF Ambassador

LGBTQIA+

Every year, MIFF presents a range of films by and about members of the LGBTQIA+ community from all over the world – and 2020 was no different.

On top of Program Spotlight *Ellie & Abbie (& Ellie's Dead Aunt)*, an Australian coming-of-age and coming-out tale, the MIFF 68½ program included the fiction features *Suk Suk*, *No Hard Feelings*, *Two of Us* and *Shiva Baby*; the documentaries *Born to Be* and *Welcome to Chechnya*; and the shorts *Darling*, *Instructions to Let Go*, *Kapaemahu* and *Playback*, among others.

Ellie & Abbie (& Ellie's Dead Aunt)



Maddy the Model

Access

8 audio-described films

8 closed-captioned films

41 100%-subtitled films

MIFF is committed to enhancing the scope, format and quality of its offerings to ensure that people of all abilities can participate.

In 2020, this took shape in a suite of accessible offerings, including a fully audio-described Opening Night film and a special dance party (co-presented with Arts Access Victoria) to celebrate the disability-themed film *Maddy the Model*.

Free Content

For the first time ever, MIFF made select titles available to view for free – boosting the festival’s reach to new audiences.

Content offered free of charge included newly restored or revisited cinematic treasures such as Rolf de Heer’s 1991 Australian classic *Dingo* and Djibril Diop Mambéty’s 1992 Senegalese drama *Hyenas*, as well as the entire MIFF Shorts program. On top of these, students and teachers were able to enjoy the MIFF Schools program at no cost.



Festival Guests



Despite filmmakers and actors not being able to come to the city in person this year, MIFF connected artists to audiences through a selection of innovative appearances, from Q&As to film introductions to panel discussions.

The guests who virtually attended the 2020 festival included Kelly Reichardt, Pablo Larraín, Benh Zeitlin, Steve James, Aubrey Plaza and Riz Ahmed, among others.



L-R: Kelly Reichardt, Aubrey Plaza, Pablo Larraín, Riz Ahmed



MIFF Shorts

The 2020 MIFF Shorts program screened 44 films, which were largely presented across five bundles free of charge: Australian Shorts, International Shorts, Documentary Shorts, Animation Shorts and the MIFF Shorts Retrospective: Connections.

Of these 44 films, 37 competed for the MIFF Shorts Awards, one of the most highly regarded and longstanding short-film competitions in both the Asia-Pacific region and the Southern Hemisphere. The competition is Academy Awards®, BAFTA and AACTA accredited.

The 59th MIFF Shorts Awards were presented by Mountain Goat Beer and, with thanks to MIFF's Shorts Awards partners, the eligible shorts competed for a total cash prize pool of \$35,500. In 2020, the jury comprised Arrernte and Arabana actor Aaron Pedersen; actor, writer and producer Chris Pang; and actor and filmmaker Rachel Griffiths.

City of Melbourne Grand Prix for Best Short Film

Da Yie
(Ghana/Belgium)
Director: Anthony Nti

Film Victoria Erwin Rado Award for Best Australian Short Film

The Moogai
(Australia)
Director: Jon Bell

Abercrombie & Kent Award for Best Documentary Short Film

The Weight of All the Beauty
(Estonia)
Director: Eeva Mägi

HP & Storm FX Award for Best Animation Short Film

Inès
(France/Switzerland)
Director: Élodie Dermange

Blackmagic Design Award for Best Cinematography in a Short Film

Outside the Oranges Are Blooming
(Portugal/Serbia)
Director: Nevena Desivojević

Special Mention for Best Australian Short Film

Day in the Life
(Australia)
Directors: Karrabing Film Collective

Jury Award for Outstanding Performance

Matilda Enchil
Film: *Da Yie*

MIFF Talks

MIFF Talks events complement and expand on the themes, ideas and talent attached to various films in each year's program. These panel and conversation events feature a range of local and international guests, from filmmakers and academics to critics and commentators.

In 2020, the MIFF Talks slate – presented in partnership with the University of Melbourne – comprised three panel discussions and one table read. All were presented to audiences free of charge.



Stories from *The Leadership*: Women in STEM

Speakers: Samantha Grover, Fern Hames and Songqiao Yao
Moderator: Natasha Mitchell

Right Here, Right Now: Movements & Activism on Screen

Speakers: Shalini Kantayya, Que Minh Luu and Steven Oliver
Moderator: Larissa Behrendt

Art of the Score: The Film Music of Jóhann Jóhannsson

Speakers: Nicholas Buc, Dan Golding and Andrew Pogson, with Seja Vogel

Table Read: *Death in Brunswick*

Cast: Paula Arundell, Daniel Henshall and John Leary
Director: John Sheedy
Co-presented by The Wheeler Centre

Critics Campus

Established in 2014, Critics Campus is MIFF's intensive week-long lab of panels, workshops, mentoring and writing, designed to provide emerging Australian screen critics a unique professional-development platform to nurture their talents in a live festival setting.

In 2020, MIFF welcomed a culturally and gender-diverse cohort of eight emerging critics to the Critics Campus program, which was conducted online for the first time and attracted a stellar line-up of local and international speakers and mentors.



The members of the 2020 cohort were Angus McGrath, Annika Morling, Bruce Koussaba, Isabella Mahoney, Jack Rowland, Merryana Salem, Michelle Wang and Shaheen Ahmed. During the program, each participant was paired up with an established critic; this year saw an all-Australian mentor line-up of Philippa Hawker (*The Australian*), Jason Di Rosso (ABC), Wenlei Ma (news.com.au), Craig Mathieson (Fairfax / *The Monthly*), Anwen Crawford (*The Monthly*), and freelancers Adolfo Aranjuez, Dan Golding and Sarinah Masukor.

The program also included panel discussions and workshops featuring some of the best international film critics and programmers – many of whom are former Critics Campus mentors – from such outlets as *Variety*, *Vanity Fair*, *Film Comment*, the New York Film Festival, the BFI and the *Los Angeles Times*.



MIFF Schools

5 films

77 schools

20% regional schools

4.8K distributed streams

MIFF Schools is an initiative to enrich the cinema experience for younger viewers. In 2020, films were curated with a view to presenting high-quality, diverse films in some of the languages commonly taught in Victorian schools: French, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin and Spanish.

In partnership with the Modern Language Teachers' Association of Victoria, MIFF released supporting web-based materials aligning with the Victorian curriculum.

We also welcomed MIFF Schools' inaugural Youth Jury, which bestowed the honour of 2020 Outstanding Film to *Marona's Fantastic Tale* (France/Romania, dir. Anca Damian). The jury members were selected from the list of finalists for Top Screen 2020.

AUDIENCE

373.8K 
total viewership

 **225.8K**
distributed streams

 **135K**
distributed free streams

 **24%**
new audiences

 **69%**
female

20%
interstate



12%
regional Victoria

 **44%** aged
under 45

14% speak a language
other than English at home



34% earn over \$100K annually
71% are employed full-time
or part-time, or self-employed

Satisfaction

- 95% were satisfied with the quality of films on offer
 - 93% were satisfied with the range of films on offer
 - 88% were satisfied with the digital platform
 - 82% would be highly likely to return to MIFF in future years
 - 1.6 viewers per stream on average, with those watching in groups of more than 2 seeing more films than those watching alone or in couples
 - Audiences watched an average of 6 films, with under-25s and over-65s watching an average of 8 films
- Key motivations for attending MIFF are to experience culture, to be entertained, to experience something new and to watch a specific film or event
 - Young audiences are more motivated by having fun and learning about themselves through film
 - Mature audiences are more motivated by experiencing culture



SOCIAL MEDIA & WEBSITE



87.1K *Widescreen* eDM subscribers
34% open rate
17% click rate (CTOR)



72.2K Facebook followers
83.5K peak daily Facebook reach



20K Instagram followers
51K peak daily Instagram reach



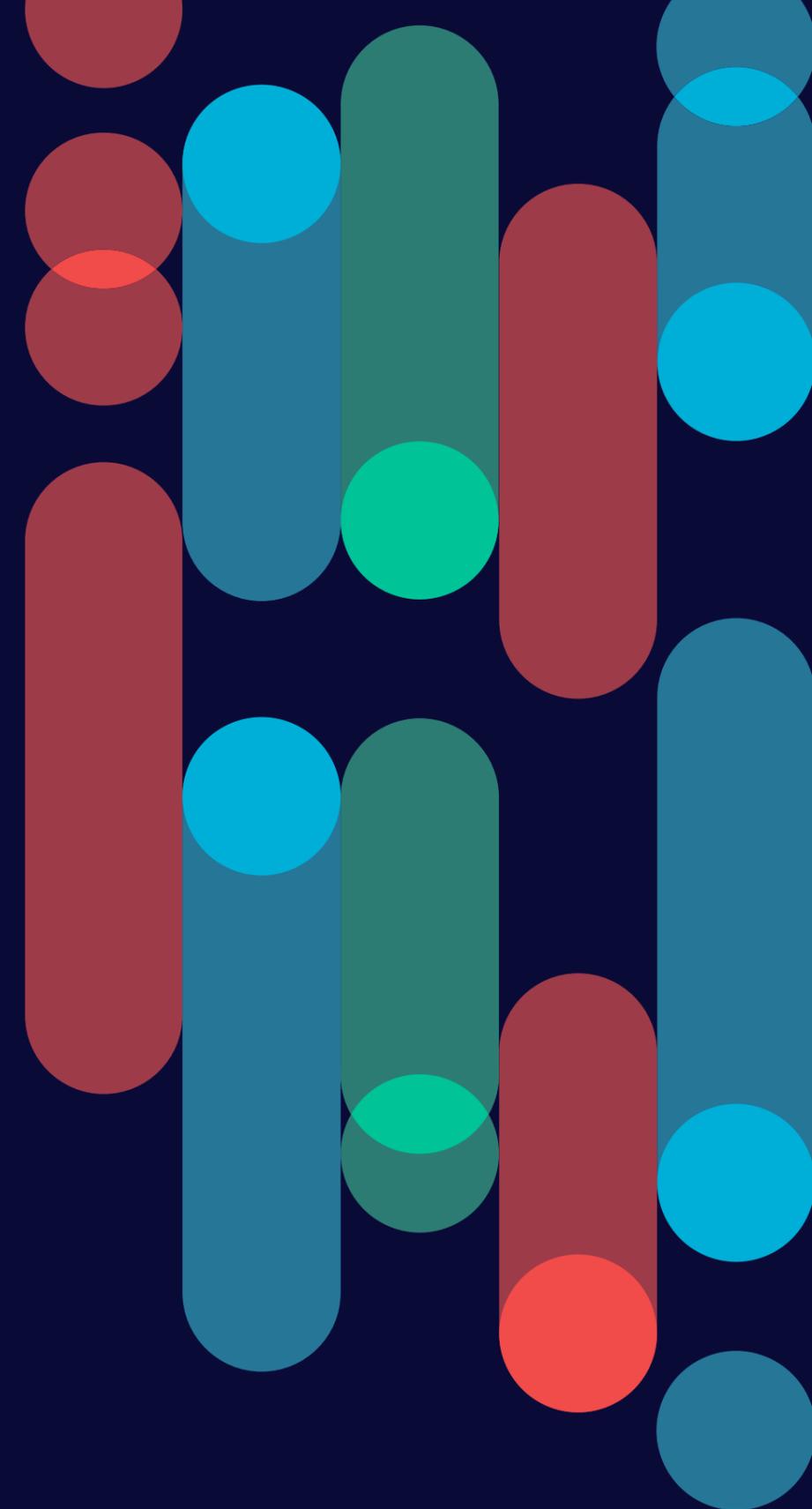
23.7K YouTube subscribers
24.7M YouTube views



52.7K Twitter followers



3M website page views
541K website sessions



PUBLICITY

2K pieces of media coverage
\$35.1M estimated PR value

“With such hurdles overcome, the result is the moviegoing balm we need in the middle of a tumultuous year.”

Doug Wallen, *Broadsheet*



Paper Champions

In the Press



“It’s great, isn’t it? That in this new limbo of lockdown, the festival will deliver as much as director Al Cossar has managed to harvest from international cinema pre-COVID, opening with Kelly Reichardt’s melancholy frontier drama *First Cow* and ending with *Last and First Men*.”

Stephanie Bunbury, *The Age*

“Even while confined to your home, you can expand your worldview well beyond scrolling through tweets, thanks to the robust Activism & Social Justice collection of this year’s digitally streaming Melbourne International Film Festival.”

Doug Wallen, *Broadsheet*

“The voices in *Looky Looky Here Comes Cooky* offer the possibility of a different Australia with a more truthful engagement with its history ... Part comedy, part a tale of survival and resistance, part poetry and dance.”

Heidi Norman, *The Conversation*

“Queer cinema has broadly sought to make those who may have felt invisible, visible. While *Suk Suk* and *Ellie & Abbie* (& *Ellie’s Dead Aunt*) exist in contrasting genres and cultures, they share a desire to shed light on those often unseen even within the LGBTQIA+ community itself.”

Merryana Salem, *Kill Your Darlings*

“Even its naming – MIFF 68½ – acknowledges the spectral space in which the event is occurring, as if taking a step sideways out of time. It will be nothing like the usual whirlwind festival experience, but as these blank months stretch on it feels good to have something to mark in the calendar, an experience to share with someone else other than the cat.”

Annabel Brady-Brown, *The Monthly*



“If you’re looking for a gloriously frenetic way to whip up your weekend, then treat yourself to *Dark City Beneath the Beat*. Currently screening digitally as part of MIFF 2020 it’s rising star rapper and producer TT the Artist’s propulsive love letter to Baltimore’s banging music scene. Not since the Pope of Trash himself, John Waters, has a director captured with such irreverent glee the crackling creative energy emanating from that city’s streets.”

Stephen A Russell, *Time Out*

MIFF AMBASSADORS



MIFF 68½ invited a number of actors, filmmakers and creatives to join the festival as Ambassadors. Hailing from all over Australia, they helped create MIFF's first truly national celebration of film and the moving image.

Some participated in filmmaker Q&As, panel discussions and special events, while others shared their top picks or joined the 2020 Shorts Awards jury.

- Aaron Pedersen
- Ben Shewry
- Chris Pang
- Fayssal Bazzi
- Gillian Armstrong
- Hannah Gadsby
- John Sheedy
- Justin Kurzel
- Mirrah Foulkes
- Rachel Griffiths
- Remi Kolawole
- Stanislava Pinchuk
- Steven Oliver
- Uncle Jack Charles

From top:
Chris Pang,
Hannah Gadsby,
Uncle Jack Charles

MEMBERSHIP



The Metamorphosis of Birds

MIFF's Members are passionate cinema-lovers whose commitment to MIFF is rewarded with privileges and benefits both during festival time and throughout the year.

In 2020, despite the setbacks posed by the pandemic, membership numbers remained strong. The majority of MIFF Members renewed their membership this year, evidencing the strength of their ongoing support for MIFF.

This year also saw the introduction of the Deluxe Membership tier, a more accessible evolution of what was previously the Premium Membership.

The MIFF Circle, established in 2020, is a vital and dynamic philanthropic giving program that invites devoted, film-loving Patrons to play a part in strengthening the festival's future.

Contributors stepped in at one of four levels: Silver Patron, Gold Patron, Platinum Patron or Major Supporter. An especially transformative donation was provided by Susie Montague, MIFF's first Major Supporter, whose generosity ensured that MIFF 68½ could proceed despite turbulent economic circumstances.

We are extremely grateful to everyone who has supported MIFF during this challenging year. The 2020 Founding MIFF Circle Patrons are:

Major Supporter

Susie Montague

Platinum Patrons

Anna Griffiths

Gold Patrons

Mark Dorset
Ray Montague

The Pratt Foundation
Ricci Swart

Silver Patrons

Jim and Angela Andreadis
Ling Ang
Elizabeth Bromham
Ian A. Chapman
Josh Chye
Bernie Clifford
Peter Cole and Dahle Suggett
Paul and Samantha Cross
Scott Dicker
Claire Dobbin AM
Zahava Elenberg
Niels Endres
Rosemary Forbes and
Ian Hocking
Iona Goodwin
Jirra Lulla Harvey
Gregory Hughan and
Teresa Cianciosi

Richard Keddie
Dr Andrew Lu OAM and
Dr Geoffrey Lancaster AM
Pamela Macklin and Vic Zbar
Tim McGregor
Vlad Mijic
Natalie Miller AO
Joel Pearlman
Stephen Rogerson
Martina Schaerf
Anna Schwartz
Anthony Scott
Maria Sola
Daniel and Tanja Stoeski
Twenty3 Group
Pinky Watson
Paul and Sarah Wiegard
Teresa Zolnierkiewicz

PARTNERSHIPS

MIFF could not have accomplished what it has during this difficult year without the strength, loyalty and support of its many Partners. From co-presented screenings, to integrated visual engagement, to activations in the form of ‘food and film’ offerings, MIFF’s Partners went over and above to ensure that the festival not only pushed ahead, but offered audiences truly memorable, enriching cinematic experiences.

“We were delighted by the extraordinary efforts of the team at MIFF to deliver a digital festival, MIFF 68½. This was a fantastic first experience for us as a MIFF Partner, and a treat for our guests at a time when an A&K adventure wasn’t possible. MIFF gave us all a unique window onto the world – challenging, provocative, inspiring, enlightening, memorable, like the best journeys. We’re looking forward to MIFF 69 in 2021 almost as much as we’re looking forward to taking our guests out into the world again.”

Sujata Raman
Regional Managing Director
Abercrombie & Kent Australia / Asia Pacific

Principal Government Partner



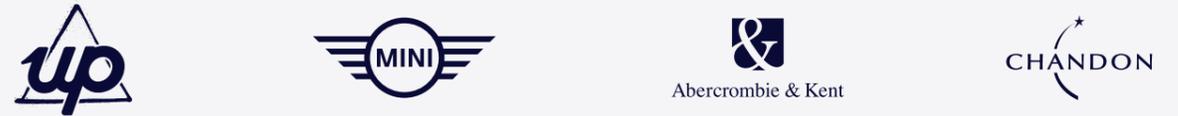
Major Government Partners



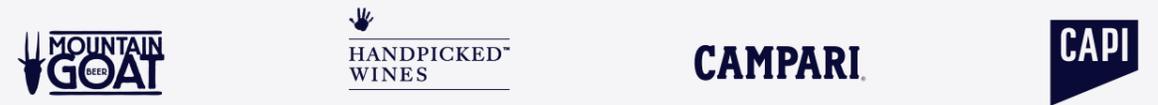
Learning Partner



Major Partners



Partners



Media Partners



Industry & Cultural Partners



Board & Staff

MIFF Board

Teresa Zolnierkiewicz – Chair
Tim McGregor – Deputy Chair
Dr Andrew Lu OAM
Jirra Lulla Harvey
Joel Pearlman
Zahava Elenberg
Josh Chye

MIFF Staff

Management

Al Cossar – Artistic Director
Mark Woods – Industry Director / Premiere Fund Executive Producer
Victoria Pope – General Manager
Amanda Sole – Finance Manager

Programming

Kate Fitzpatrick – Programmer
Mia Falstein-Rush – Programmer, Shorts & VR
Kate Jinx – Programmer
Liam Carter – Programming Trainee
Luke Goodsell – Critics Campus Coordinator

Marketing & Communications

Claire La Greca – Head of Marketing & Communications
Adolfo Aranjuez – Publications & Content Manager
Damon Branecki – Digital Content Producer
Aayushi Parikh – Marketing & Communications Coordinator
Boruk Gradman – Graphic Designer
Elwyn Murray – Graphic Designer

Partnerships

Sarah Wild – Head of Partnerships
Harry Seward – Partnerships

Philanthropy

Brad Macdonald – Head of Philanthropy & Festival Development

Finance & Administration

Cecily Wallace – Accounts

Systems & Operations

Simon Bedford – Head of Systems & Ticketing
Liv Fay – Membership & Admin Coordinator
Yun Bond – Ticketing Coordinator

MIFF Industry

Eddie Coupe – Industry Programs Officer

Publicity

Common State