



Wednesday 20 September

## #CINEMAFORTHESENSES

### 11th Annual Byron Bay Film Festival proudly showcasing: **WOMEN IN FILM**

As part of its massive ten day program this October, **Byron Bay Film Festival** (BBFF) proudly highlights the incredible work of women behind and in front of the camera.

Festival Director J'aimee Skippon-Volke herself has blazed a trail for the industry and her local region of the NSW Northern Rivers.

Now producing Virtual Reality Experiences (VR) as well as events J'aimee started in TV Production in the UK, and has a reputation for cutting-edge curation and developing of rich programmes of films, VR experiences and events which provide more meaningful screen-culture experience for both audiences and filmmakers.

Early in the year she established Collective Reality, a VR Production Company, which brings together some of the Australia's finest VR talent to work on projects which use VR/MR to enhance the human experience. Her work has taken her around the globe, including the Cannes Film Festival where she both exhibited an Animated VR piece she helped bring to life '**Coral and I**' and curated a popular session of Australian VR Experiences.

J'aimee's work also allows her to highlight important social issues and start community conversations through the film medium, such as her festival's committed support of Marriage Equality, which has been proudly stamped with the Opening Night screening of '**Freedom to Marry**', environmental issues with films such as '**Blue**', mental health conversations with films like '**Crazywise**', and one close to her own heart: Women in Film.

J'aimee says "Gender diversity is a driving issue for the global film industry at the moment, but BBFF has been championing female-driven filmmaking for a number of years as our audience, and that of most Film Festivals consists of more women than men, and the same must be said of our team, which is supported very much through the support of volunteers".

"Women should have the space and support to be able to share their stories, and if the mainstream media is unable to create the space to achieve this than that's where festivals

like ours should be positioned. The State and Federal Film Bodies have run a number of strong initiatives that will see gender balance evolve in the future, but there is still a lot of room to grow”.

The level of talent brimming just from the female filmmakers and performers in this year’s festival is mind-blowing. From all-female stories, to strong female performances, to brilliant directing and breakthrough works from Young Australian Filmmakers, the Byron Bay Film Festival is highlighting the powerful messages that can be delivered when women are in the drivers’ seats, and what this ultimately means for the wider community conversations, and our cultural tapestry.

J’aimee’s list of films that showcase female talent, not to be missed this year include:

## Female Driven Stories

### ***Amplify Her***

Music heals, right? Depends on the depths of the wounds. In *Amplify Her*, three Electronic Dance Music artists battle demons from their painful pasts to emerge as beacons in the global festival scene. Blondtron, Applecat and Lux Moderna overcome isolation, illness, and gender bias to give life to their creativity.

This visually dynamic film weaves animated motion comics created by the characters to offer intimate access into the colourful worlds of emerging female artists. Rather than ask the expected: “why aren’t there more women in this male dominated scene?”, we wonder: “what is unique about feminine expression and how might we all benefit when it flourishes?”

### ***City of Joy***

This film follows the first class of students at a remarkable leadership centre in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, a region often referred to as "the worst place in the world to be a woman." These women have been through unspeakable violence spurred on by a 20 year war driven by colonialism and greed. In the film, they band together with the three founders of this centre: **Dr. Denis Mukwege** (2016 Nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize), radical playwright and activist **Eve Ensler** ("*The Vagina Monologues*") and human rights activist, **Christine Schuler-Deschryver**, to find a way to create meaning in their lives even when all that was meaningful to them has long been stripped away. In this ultimately uplifting film, we witness the tremendous resilience as these women transform their devastation into powerful forms of leadership for their beloved country.

### ***That's Not Me***

Polly’s dreams of making it as an actor are shattered when her identical twin sister Amy lands the lead role in huge TV show. Mistaken for her famous sister at every turn, Polly decides to use Amy’s celebrity for her own advantage – free clothes, free booze, and casual sex... with hilarious and disastrous consequences for them both.

Raw and refreshing in its humour, *That's Not Me* is a feel-good comedy about the difference between failure and disappointment.

## Films with Female Directors

### ***Roller Dreams***

*Directed by: Kate Hickey*

It's 1984 and Venice Beach, California is at the epicentre of a pop culture explosion. Young people of colour seeking refuge from the turmoil of inner city life flock to the eclectic ocean community to create a brand-new phenomenon: roller dancing!

The talent and vibrant personality of this multicultural roller 'family' draws massive crowds and influences Hollywood. But while the roller dancing flourishes, politics, money and gentrification conspire to take their dreams away.

### ***Blue***

*Directed by: Karina Holden*

BLUE takes us on a provocative journey into the ocean realm, witnessing a critical moment in time when the marine world is on a precipice. Featuring passionate advocates for ocean preservation, BLUE takes us into their world where the story of our changing ocean is unfolding.

BLUE shows us there is a way forward and the time to act is now.

The Filmmakers and some of the Film's Ocean Guardians will be at some screenings.

### ***The Cinema Travellers***

*Directed by: Shirley Abraham and Amit Madheshiya*

Cannes prize-winning The Cinema Travellers is a journey with the traveling cinemas of India, which bring the wonder of the movies to faraway villages annually. Seven decades on, as their lorries and cinema projectors crumble and film reels become scarce, their audiences are lured by slick digital technology.

Filmed over five years, The Cinema Travellers accompanies a shrewd exhibitor, a benevolent showman and a maverick projector mechanic who bear a beautiful burden – to keep the last traveling cinemas of the world running.

### ***Melanie***

*Directed by: Suzanne Helmer*

The model on the 1970s cardboard box of an inflatable hair-drying hood looks a little shy; somehow not eager to be a model. This triggers filmmaker Susanne Helmer to start an experiment by guessing how this woman's picture appeared on this hood dryer box and what kind of life she led. And then, after searching for the model, to compare these suspicions with the real life story.

The imaginary, suspected life -partly played by the filmmaker herself- is leading the documentary story and sometimes provides the film with a feeling of playing a game. The visual means to create both fiction and documentary are similar: family photographs, home-video's and film scenes, pictures of places, houses, rooms, streets; consequently intensifying the notion that not only in fiction but also in documentary the representation of reality and truth is very much constructed.

The result is a thoroughly made, humorous film about expectations, human life in general, a vanished past era and film construction itself.

### ***Des Jours et des Nuits sur L'aire (Rest Stop)***

*Directed by: Isabella Ingold*

This film traces out the portrait of a motorway rest area located in the countryside in the North of France. It looks like a dream, filled with the whispering thoughts and the lives of those who work here, as well as those who are just passing through. It is also a very concrete place, a perfect spot to observe today's Europe, the violence carried by the free competition of a single market, the nostalgia carried by uprooted lives, and all the solitude engendered by our modern world.

## **Films Featuring Key Women**

### ***Journeys to ADAKA***

Journeys to Adäka is the story of seven indigenous artists who look to the past for the strength to overcome a legacy of hurt, becoming cultural giants and leaders in the process.

### ***Rumble: The Indians Who Rocked the World***

**BBFF2017's Closing Gala Film**

This powerful documentary about the role of Native Americans in contemporary music history-featuring some of the greatest music stars of our time-exposes a critical missing chapter, revealing how indigenous musicians helped shape the soundtracks of our lives and, through their contributions, influenced popular culture.

## Australian Female Actresses in Overseas Films

### ***An American in Texas***

#### **World Premier**

*Stars:* Charlotte Best

As 1990 comes to a close, lifelong friends in a punk band, SGW (Surgeon General's Warning) look to bust out of small town Texas. While the 24 hour newscasts pitch Operation Desert Storm and devotion to country at any cost, the band drops acid, plays gigs and carries out calculated acts of vandalism around town.

Faced with the reality of a dead end job at the chemical plant, a life in the oil field or fighting a war that has no meaning to them they see their band as the one ticket out of a dead end life. As they plot their escape to Los Angeles, the boys find out what holds them together could be the one thing that can tear them apart.

### ***Lies We Tell***

*Stars:* Sibylla Deen

The only men who get caught are those who don't love their wives enough.

A trusted driver must deal with his dead boss's Muslim mistress. Her dark past draws him into a life-and-death showdown with her notorious gangster cousin/ex-husband.

### **THE FESTIVAL**

The 11th Annual Byron Bay Film Festival is held on Friday 6 – Sunday 15 October. It spans across ten days in six venues, featuring over 175 independent films, and attracting filmmakers and film-lovers from all over the world; it is the Australia's most loved regional film festival.

**Tickets are on sale now via [www.bbff.com.au](http://www.bbff.com.au)**

**End.**

Artwork credit: Osvaldo Alfaro

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