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#CINEMAFORTHESENSES 11th Annual Byron Bay Film Festival October 6-15

'You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll tap your feet,'

Digby Hildreth explores some of the incredible films on offer at this year's dazzling and diverse festival.

THAT'S NOT ME

Polly has a problem: she's an actor with big aspirations, but it's her identical twin Amy who is scoring all the good roles and screen time in the career they have in common.

It's humiliating and it hurts, being "the other one", mistaken for a rising-star sibling and rejected when her true identity is revealed. Polly's parents, her agent, even lovers make their preference clear, in not so subtle ways.

Alice Foulcher does a brilliant comic job as the fall girl in *That's Not Me*, one of the comedies screening at the Byron Bay International Film Festival in October.

When Polly decides to make the most of her sister's celebrity, and seize some of the perks of fame for herself – free clothes, booze, casual sex – she's headed for trouble. Then, against all good advice and realistic hope, she flies to Hollywood.

Foulcher and husband **Gregory Erdstein** – Victorian College of the Arts alumni – collaborated on this, their first feature, which has been called "a deceptively sophisticated character study about a person coming to terms with their dreams".

It's hilarious and heart-rending at once; economical, astute, and with a nice line in satire on the shallowness of "the industry".

Featured is an Australian actor who really is "making it" in Hollywood – **Isabel Lucas** (Home and Away and Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen), who plays Polly's glamorous LA-based actor friend, Zoe.

View the trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcdxeF1UUDA>

JUNGLE

Another familiar face appears in an Australian story of a very different flavour. **Daniel Radcliffe**, star of the Harry Potter series, helps to bring to life Byron local **Yossi Ghinsberg's** story, a real-life tale as dark and scary as the Amazon jungle it is named after, with added malice.

Jungle is set in the early 1980s when young Israeli-born backpacker Ghinsberg (Radcliffe) and two friends set off from the Bolivian city of La Paz on what was supposed to be the adventure of a lifetime.

Spurning the well-travelled tourist paths – Machu Picchu and the rest – they head out into uncharted Amazon rainforest, their guide an Austrian expat named Karl Rupprechter, who they'd met just days before.

The dream trip soon turned into a wilderness nightmare from which not all of the men returned.

Wolf Creek director **Greg McLean** says he played it straight on the film, with no exaggerations and Ghinsberg concurs: "Usually movies are bigger than life. This movie is smaller than life. Everything you see is on a smaller scale than what really happened."

Yet what we see is big enough, as Radcliffe battles brain-burrowing, blood-sucking worms, scorpions, spiders and snakes.

While 20-somethings will know Radcliffe's face as well as their own, the gnarled features of **Harvey Keitel** and the understated Dublin purr of **Gabriel Byrne** will be more familiar to their parents.

LIES WE TELL

These two are also involved a life and death struggle, but *Lies We Tell* is set in the urban jungle, where evil wears a human face. This edge-of-the-seat thriller set across ethnic lines is the work of debut writer and director **Mitu Misra**. Born in Punjab, India he was raised in Bradford, where he faced appalling racism, which he escaped by going to the theatre.

Byrne says of the film, "the subject matter is most original and unique, the culture clash between the Asian and the Western perspective of the world. That's very relevant and pertinent in today's world".

Misra says he felt a new "force" in society following 9/11 "which I later realised divided Muslim and non-Muslim souls" and his film reflects the "New Now" of suspicion.

Once reserved for strangers, it's now prevalent among friends and neighbours across all classes and races, one critic said.

“But what most impresses is the uniformly excellent cast and the utterly credible dialogues they are given and the flair and conviction with which they make their journey,” they added.

ONE LESS GOD

How the issue affects Australians is brought home in ***One Less God***, a high-octane drama made by Australian director **Liam Worthington** and set in the luxury Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in Mumbai, following the series of co-ordinated attacks around the city in 2008. The hotel was the last site to be made safe, and trapped guests experienced days of terror and the film raises pertinent questions around faith and terrorism.

THE GO-BETWEENS: RIGHT HERE

On a lighter note, but with a poignant undercurrent is ***The Go-Betweens: Right Here***, made by **Kriv Stenders**, the Brisbane-raised, Sydney-based director of the Red Dog films.

The Go-Betweens were Australian indie rock trailblazers, with a legacy that has influenced countless bands in their home country and abroad.

The Brisbane band emerged in the late 1970s and attained cult status in the early 1980s.

Around a nucleus of singer-songwriters **Robert Forster** and **Grant McLennan** and drummer **Lindy Morrison**, other musicians came and went until the band dissolved in acrimony in the late '80s. From 2000, Forster and McLennan resurrected the Go-Betweens and released three more critically acclaimed albums before McLennan died, aged 48, in 2006.

"There was something in the Go-Betweens' music and their story that has always haunted me," says Stenders, who first met them in his late teens. "There's always been a bitter-sweet quality about them, and I've always wanted to make a film about them."

“Stenders has made an emotional, rolling thunder of a film, one this extraordinary band deserves”, said Guardian reviewer Pdraig Collins.

View the trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDjJERFu2xI>

THE FESTIVAL

As well as films, from fun and laughter to fraught, BBFF 2017 provides the opportunities for guests to immerse themselves in virtual reality technology.

Last year saw the creation of two awards: the Best Achievement in a Virtual Reality Experience for filmmakers engaging in the relatively new 360 degree film capture techniques, and the Best Achievement in an Interactive Virtual Experience.

“While our event remains focused on creating a shared screen experience for our audience we’re keen to explore the possibilities that Digital Immersion creates as this new technology evolves,” said festival director **J’aimee Skippon-Volke**.

The 11th Annual Byron Bay Film Festival is held on Friday 6 – Sunday 15 October 2017 in multiple venues throughout Byron Bay and surrounding suburbs.

Program will be released over the coming weeks.

View the festival trailer: <http://bit.ly/2iA5jJ5>

Tickets are on sale now via www.bbff.com.au

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