



Monday 2 October 2017

#CINEMAFORTHESENSES BYRON BAY FILM FESTIVAL 6 – 15 OCTOBER 2017

Film feature: *Undertow* Byron Bay from every angle

The short film *Undertow* tells us a lot about Byron Bay, including the dark undercurrents beneath the region's picture postcard appeal. Tyson Yates meets filmmaker **Peter Spann**.

With more than 100 films screening as part of **Byron Bay Film Festival**, there's no lack of complex characters featuring at this year's event. Perhaps most prominent of all of these will be Byron Bay itself. *Undertow* is one such film that showcases all that is Byron, taking the postcard perfect beauty of the region and marrying it with heavy themes of addiction, loss and resilience.

Undertow tells the story of surfer girl Bella on her first day out of rehab as she is confronted with friends, by tragedy as well as her past. The film takes us on a journey around some iconic locations in Byron and explores the typical by-the-beach lifestyle that director Peter Spann says is an important aspect of the film.

"While the themes that are in the film are universal to young people's experiences everywhere in the world, to me Byron was an essential part of the character," Peter said.

"Byron Bay Film Festival was the one we always wanted. We always said if we got selected, which we have, we wanted it to be a world premier there. While we have been accepted into other festivals, Byron was the one we were really excited about because Byron is really the home of this film."

Shot across a total of seven days and captured using the very best Arri camera technology, the film gives the region's natural beauty every chance to shine, however it is not the only reason Byron was first choice for the location, according the Peter.

"The film comes out of a story of a girl I met in Byron," Peter said.

"I used to live in Lennox and came to Byron quite frequently and I was actually sitting on Main Beach when this girl came out of the water, she'd just been stung by something and she came up to me and she asked me for help and so we wandered up and got some vinegar and put it on.

"I still to this day don't know whether that's the right cure, and she said let's have lunch and we're still friends to this day.

"Over a period of time as we got to know each other she told me all of these stories from her life. She had come to Byron out of high school and she sort of got in with that Byron Bay teenage elite crowd... and she met a guy called Jonny and he was heavily into the party scene and together they spiraled down into heavier drugs."

Being such a personal story, Peter said one of the main concerns for him was how much of the real-life detail to include.

"One of the challenges of the film actually was knowing how much of this to depict. Some of the earlier versions of the script were much darker than the final cut of the film but for me it wasn't about all that, it was about her resilience and about her coming back from it all," he said.

Undertow's lead actor, 21-year-old **Jacqui Purvis**, has been onboard the project from the very beginning and said the challenge of playing such a complex character was what first attracted her to the role.

"For me the film is about relationships and how an addiction can take over in the sense that, for Bella and Jonny, it's not really about love anymore, it's about the fact that I'm (Bella) addicted to the connection, the relationship we've formed around drugs and how that connection with someone can take over your own self-control," Jacqui said.

"What first drew me to it was that I could sink my teeth into such a complex role, that is an actor's dream. She's not just a surfer chick, there's so much more to her and it was so much fun to play that. I love playing people who are so far from me that I can jump into them and she was that."

Undertow screens at the Byron Bay Film Festival, Saturday 14 October, 11am at the Byron Community Theatre.

THE FESTIVAL

The Byron Bay Film Festival is illuminated with two dazzling red carpet gala events in the heart of town. Opening Night offers a chance for industry networking and a taste of the flavour of the festival to come, and features a highlight film screening. The culminating celebration event is an exciting night of recognition for filmmakers, the festival, Byron Bay, and the international film industry, and not to be missed. Early ticket purchases are recommended to avoid disappointment to these two popular events.

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 is OUT NOW.

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

End.

Stay connected:

Facebook @byronbayfilmfestival
Instagram @byronbayfilmfestival

#BBFF2017
#ByronBayFilmFestival
#CinemafortheSenses

Media enquiries:

Local – Digby Hildreth
media@bbff.com.au

National/International – Monique Hartman and Abbie Gibson
pr@bbff.com.au