

MEDIA RELEASE

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JAPANESE FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES 2019 PROGRAM

From a glitzy murder mystery with an ensemble cast of Japanese screen stars, to a sun-drenched romance from the animation genius behind cult hit *Night is Short, Walk on Girl*, the **Japanese Film Festival** (16 October – 1 December) returns with a brand new program jam-packed with the very best in contemporary Japanese cinema.

The 2019 Festival will screen 29 feature films and one captivating documentary across Canberra (16-20 October), Brisbane (23-27 October), Perth (30 October – 3 November), Sydney (14-24 November), and Melbourne (21 November – 1 December), plus a select FREE program in Adelaide (8-10 November). Each city features carefully curated programming by The Japan Foundation, Sydney.

The Festival has announced Sydney guest appearances and post-screening audience Q&As from two talented up-and-coming directors: **Yuko Hakota**, in support of her award-winning directorial debut *Blue Hour*; and **Shinzo Katayama** for his solo directorial debut *Siblings of the Cape*. Also announced is La Trobe University pop culture expert **Dr Emerald L King** who will attend the Melbourne screening of *Fly Me to the Saitama* for a post-screening discussion about 80s manga and forgotten classics.

“We’re excited to bring you the best Japanese cinema of 2019! This year’s program brings new perspectives in Japanese film, reviving the old and giving lesser-known stories a chance in the spotlight,” **Japanese Film Festival Programmer Simonne Goran** said. “From sensitive portrayals of modern everyday life to wild and vibrant alternate worlds, JFF 2019 celebrates the multifaceted landscape of Japanese cinema.”

The Festival opens with glitzy murder mystery *Masquerade Hotel*, featuring iconic actor Takuya Kimura (*Howl’s Moving Castle*) and Japanese Academy Award-winner Masami Nagasawa (*Your Name*). Adapted from Keigo Higashino’s bestselling novel, the film follows a detective who must go undercover at a high-end Tokyo hotel to solve a series of seemingly unconnected murders.

Closing the festival in Sydney and Melbourne is *A Girl Missing*, a gripping psychological crime-drama about the mysterious disappearance of a family’s youngest granddaughter. The film reunites director Koji Fukada with actress Mariko Tsutsui after their Cannes Un Certain Regard Jury Prize-winning collaboration *Harmonium*.

The Festival closes in Canberra, Perth and Brisbane with *Dance With Me*, starring former Japanese idol Ayaka Miyoshi (of J-Pop group Sakura Gakuin). Miyoshi delivers a stellar performance in this light-hearted musical-comedy about a successful businesswoman who must rid herself of a mysterious curse that forces her to dance whenever she hears music.

International award winners include: winner of Best Animated Feature at the Fantasia Film Festival *Ride Your Wave*, a vibrant anime-romance from critically-acclaimed director Masaaki Yuasa (*Night is Short, Walk on Girl* – JFF 2018); poignant drama *Blue Hour*, which won Best Film at the Shanghai International Film Festival; and winner of Best Director at the 2018 Tokyo International Film Festival *Melancholic*, a visceral thriller about a university graduate who unknowingly takes a job at a yakuza kill-house.

As always, this year's program features adaptations of beloved manga stories including: queer steampunk romantic comedy ***Fly Me to the Saitama*** featuring pop rock legend GACKT and Fumi Nikaido (winner of the Venice Film Festival Marcello Mastroianni Award for *Himizu*), based off Mineo Maya's 1982 shojo manga; and quirky comedy ***SAINT ☆ YOUNG MEN 2nd Century***, which poses the question: what if Jesus Christ and Buddha were housemates in the suburbs of Tokyo?

The program also shines a light on up-and-coming Japanese filmmakers: from Harika Abe's breathtaking slice-of-life directorial debut ***Moonless Dawn***, featuring three existential youths who connect through music; to rising star Momoko Fukuda's offbeat dramedy ***My Father, the Bride***, about a woman who returns home and is shocked to find her father in a dress.

2019 Japanese Film Festival screening dates

CANBERRA: 16 - 20 October at Dendy, Canberra Centre
Early bird tickets available from September 19

BRISBANE: 23 - 27 October at Event Cinemas Brisbane City Myer Centre
Early bird tickets available from September 26

PERTH: 30 October - 3 November at Event Cinemas Innaloo
Early bird tickets available from September 26

ADELAIDE: 8 - 10 November at GU Film House Adelaide
FREE! Bookings available 1 hour prior to screenings from JFF info desk at venue

SYDNEY: 14 - 24 November at Event Cinemas George Street
Early bird tickets available from September 26

MELBOURNE: 21 November - 1 December at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI)
Treasury Theatre & The Capitol Theatre
Early bird tickets available from October 10

Tickets will be available at www.japanesefilmfestival.net or at venue box offices.

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