

# Australian films on the world stage at Venice and Toronto film festivals

## Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

Post by Stephanie Bunburry

With three Australian films screening in the Venice Film Festival and four features and a short film at Toronto International Film Festival, September will be something of a bumper month for the local industry.

Venice is the worldâ??s oldest film festival, with a prestigious competition. Torontoâ??s only prize is its audience award, but it has set a precedent as the effective launching pad for Hollywoodâ??s awards seasons, with many of the industryâ??s most Oscar-worthy films screening there first. The mass conversation about movies may have shifted to the internet but, for films that are not part of a critic-proof comic franchise, that has only made the stamp of approval from a top festival more important.

In Venice, the Mel Gibson war drama *Hacksaw Ridge*, crime thriller *Hounds of Love* and *Boys in the Trees*, a supernatural coming-of-age film, will all have their world premieres. *Hacksaw Ridge* is about an American conscientious objector (played by British actor Andrew Garfield) whose bravery as an unarmed medic on the field of battle earned him a Congressional medal of honour. It was written, financed and filmed in Australia. â??Itâ??s an Australian film about America,â?• said Gibson in a recent interview. â??Itâ??s a fully Aussie-funded film. Itâ??s really interesting.â?•

*Hacksaw Ridge* is also â?? along with opening-night film *La La Land*, directed by Damien Chazelle of *Whiplash* fame, Denis Villeneuveâ??s sci-fi *Arrival* and Pablo Larrainâ??s *Jackie*, which features Natalie Portman as the former First Lady â?? one of the few really big-ticket films showing on the Lido. Increasingly, Venice is largely a showcase for European arthouse, with a few high-end Hollywood films adding glitter to the festivalâ??s red carpets in exchange for some take-away Euro gravitas. The studios are not even bothering to do press in Venice for *La La Land* or *Jackie*; that all happens in Toronto.



Tom Sherbourne (Michael Fassbender) and Isabel (Alicia Vikander) in *Light Between Oceans*, which opens at the Venice Film Festival. Photo: Davi Russo

The Venice festivalâ??s most hotly-anticipated film comes from an experimental American director; coincidentally, it also has its origins in Australia. Derek Cianfranceâ??s *Light Between Oceans*, starring Michael Fassbender and Alice Vikander, is based on Western Australian writer M.L. Stedmanâ??s hit historical romance novel of the same name. It is set in a fictional lighthouse somewhere near Cape Leeuwin, although it was shot in New Zealand and Tasmania.

Nicholas Versoâ??s *Boys in the Trees*, which is screening in Horizons, the more experimental section, is more the kind of film festivals expect from Australia: smaller, quirky, peopled with ordinary Joes who could be our neighbours. It features a couple of quarrelling skater boys who get lost after a school leaving party unwisely held on Halloween. *Hounds of Love*, which screens as part of the Venice Days program that runs alongside the main festival, is another story from WA. In a different way from *Boys in the Trees*, it is also a horror film. It revolves around a young woman abducted by a strange couple who realizes she must play mind-games with her captors to survive.



Australian film *Boys in the Trees* screens in the Venice Days program at the Venice Film Festival. Photo: Mushroom Pictures

*Boys in the Trees* has been selected for Toronto too, along with three other features. Ivan Senâ??s cop drama *Goldstone*, already seen in Australia, is one of them. Sotiris Dounoukisâ?? *Joe Cinqueâ??s Consolation*, which recently screened at the Melbourne Film Festival, is based on Helen Garnerâ??s closely argued examination of the real-life case of a Canberra student whose mounting insanity plans to kill her boyfriend were simply ignored by her circle of friends.

The most prominent film in the Toronto pack is *Lion*, directed by Garth Davis from Saroo Brierleyâ??s book about his return from his home in Australia to India to search for his birth parents. Nicole Kidman stars as his adoptive mother in Australia; Dev Patel, who rose to international fame in *Slumdog Millionaire*, is the searching son. The short film *Trespass*, about an encounter between two women in the bush and directed by *Animal Kingdom* actor Mirrah Foulkes, rounds out Torontoâ??s Australian contingent.



Emma Booth and Stephen Curry in *Hounds of Love*. Photo: Australia on Screen/Jean-Paul Horr

First comes Venice, however, which officially begins on Wednesday night. The usual gala opening party has been cancelled out of respect for the Amatrice earthquake victims; there will be no fireworks over the lagoon this year. The Venice Film Festival, even more than Cannes, has always been unrepentantly glamorous. How much the overall tone of the event will change in the wake of the disaster only 500 kilometres away remains to be seen; it is hard to imagine, however, that the flow of prosecco will stop entirely.

(Source: http://www.smh.com.au)

**Category**

1. Venice International Film Festival

**Tags**

1. Actor
2. Boys in the Trees
3. Cinema
4. Director
5. Festival

6. Film
7. Filmmaking
8. Hacksaw Ridge
9. Hounds of Love
10. Jackie
11. La La Land
12. Producer
13. Program
14. The Light Between Oceans
15. Toronto International Film Festival
16. Venice Film Festival
17. Venice International Film Festival

**Date Created**
August 30, 2016
**Author**
hollywoodglee