

Revelation Perth International Film Festival Director Richard Sowada On Perth's Enthusiasm And Love For Film

From humble beginnings in the basement of a Perth jazz bar and showing 12 short films, Richard Sowada started the Revelation Perth International Film Festival in 1997.

From the one-man band that organised and advertised the festival, curated the films, built the website, wrote programme notes, arranged to get films in and out of the country. . . Revelation Perth International Film Festival is now a non-for-profit organisation that employs multiple staff and offers internships, and funding and mentorship opportunities. This year's festival focuses on collaboration and the power of uniting audiences, and presents more than 30 feature films and documentaries as well as more than 80 short films.

Designed to showcase work that is on the cutting edge, contemporary, and pushes the boundaries, Festival Director Richard Sowada talks about the festival's film selection process which prioritises platforming adventurous, bold, enthusiastic, thought-provoking, experimental work.

"We're constantly looking for really distinctive, individual voices who have an idiosyncratic approach to their craft," Richard says.

The festival embraces supporting local, vibrant work and provides funding and mentorship support to WA filmmakers, having funded approximately \$350,000 of work since 2020: "It's to encourage local production for new filmmakers. We love them; showing them, being able to financially support them, it's a very strong movement."



'Kid Snow'

“I love the enthusiasm in Perth, it has a really distinctive vibe, different to work coming out of other cities. I can look at a film and know if it’s been made in WA – they have such a unique sensibility and way of working with space and connecting with the environment.”

Presenting work all across the city, the film festival has spaces in the WA Museum Boola Bardip, State Library, Backlot Cinema, Scitech Planetarium, Kings Park, and more. The legendary film ‘2001: A Space Odyssey’ will be presented at the WA Museum Boola Bardip, including access to To The Moon, an exhibition where you can immerse yourself in lunar art. ‘The Earth Above’ is a 30-minute, full-dome planetarium show at Scitech which shows our ancestors as stars, shining through holes in the cover of the dome. ‘Westralia’ is a showcase of short films which explore the possibilities of cinema and storytelling by some of the best and emerging talents in WA.



'Birdeater'

Additional to film screenings, there are special events held throughout the festival which offer insight around what happens behind the scenes and the intricate workings of the WA film industry, including post-film Q&As, an academic conference and family-friendly events. Some other initiatives happening during this festival include ‘Pitch’d Battle’ which gives creatives the opportunity to pitch a short film idea based on a selected prompt; ‘Life in Pictures’ which is a short film competition in collaboration with Department of Communities that aims to encourage discussion around ageism and to promote positive ageing; City of Vincent Film Project, which is an initiative run with Revelation Perth International Film Festival for short, documentary-style films made in and about the area, that offers funding to up to three finalist projects as well as mentoring; and RevStream, which is a streaming service for short films, with more than 500 titles in the library, most of which have streamed in Revelation Perth International Film Festival.

Opening night of the festival will see the presentation of 'Kid Snow' which recently had its premiere in Sydney Film Festival.

Filmed on the outskirts of Kalgoorlie amid lockdowns and border closures, the work is about the sweat-drenched world of tent boxing in outback Western Australia. The production provided economic and creative opportunities for WA cast and crew, as well as local businesses and the region.



'Stubbornly Here'

The programme also includes other Australian features 'Birdeater' a drama-thriller, a black and white film 'Stubbornly Here' about becoming an adult, and 'The Lies We Tell Ourselves', a part mockumentary, part experimental piece about a director trying to complete a new art house film.

International films playing through the festival include 'The Visitor' from legendary director Bruce La Bruce which is a raw and explicit commentary on gender roles, particularly in the queer space, and 'Sasquatch Sunset' which follows a family of Sasquatch living in California.

Art and music enthusiasts will revel in the documentary offerings including 'Blak Douglas vs The Commonwealth' about the Archibald-winning artist, and 'Green: The Fight For Rock And Roll' about rock singer Wayne Green.

"There are a lot of low-budget feature films and documentaries being made in Western Australia, of which we've shown quite a few, that can often go quite unnoticed by the commercial side of the industry," Richard explains. "There's a real undercurrent happening in WA that is very collaborative and creative, there's a whole sub-culture there."



'The Lies We Tell Ourselves'

When it comes to the challenges of maintaining audiences in a cinema environment, the festival is offering different viewing experiences to connect with all different film-lovers, as well as introducing people to non-mainstream content.

“The feature programme is about collaborating – that’s the power of uniting audiences and bringing new audiences in.”

Free family screenings, Q&As with creators, interactive screenings, panel discussions happening in bars around the city, and events in unique venues are just some of the ways Revelation Perth International Film Festival is keeping the industry exciting and engaging for audiences of all ages, tastes and backgrounds.

Revelation Perth International Film Festival 2024 takes place from 3-14 July.

Originally published at <https://scenestr.com.au/movies-tv/revelation-perth-international-film-festival-director-richard-sowada-on-perths-enthusiasm-and-love-for-film-20240625>