



MEDIA RELEASE

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CinefestOZ 2018 Film Prize Winner Announced

CinefestOZ, Australia's premier destination film festival, is delighted to announce JIRGA as the winner of the highly coveted \$100,000 Film Prize.

Jirga, directed by Benjamin Gilmour and produced by John Maynard, has been named the winner of the 2018 CinefestOZ \$100,000 Film Prize, Australia's greatest film prize.

Both Benjamin Gilmour and John Maynard were presented with the film prize this evening as part of CinefestOZ's dazzling Gala Night celebrations in Busselton, in the South West of Western Australia.

"We (Benjamin and I) went on this crazy journey together, that has ended up here at CinefestOZ and it really is quite surprising. This prize will actually help the people to see the film', said Maynard.

Gilmour added, "We really need a film like this in the world at the moment, thank you CinefestOZ and all the other films in competition. Hopefully this film prize will put more people into the cinema to see this film. Thank you", said Gilmour.

Modern fable *Jirga* tells the story of former Australian soldier, Mike Wheeler, who returns to Afghanistan seeking redemption from the family of a civilian man he accidentally killed during the war. Seeking forgiveness, he puts his life in the hands of the village justice system – the *Jirga*. *Jirga* releases Australia-wide September 27.

The film was selected from fellow finalists *1 %*, *Ladies in Black*, and *The Merger*.

The prize is awarded each year to an Australian feature film for excellence in film-making. In 2017 the winning film was the entertaining and moving comedy, *Ali's Wedding*, based on the unbelievable true story which has since gone on to international critical and box office success.

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Tourism Minister Paul Papalia said the State Government, through Tourism WA’s Regional Events Program, was proud to sponsor CinefestOZ, including the nation’s richest film prize.

“I would like to congratulate the winner of the coveted Australian Film Prize, and also acknowledge all the talented finalists.

“It is fantastic to see the event grow to not only showcase more than 150 films and events, but also attract thousands of people to the South West region.

“Supporting regional events is a key part of the State Government’s Two-Year Action Plan to increase visitors to WA, and encourage them to stay longer and do more while they are here.

“Events also help support short-term accommodation, small businesses and other tourism services, diversifying the economic base of regional areas.”

The value and reputation of this prize continues to grow and in 2018 CinefestOZ received an incredible 34 submissions for consideration. The winner was decided by a jury of five esteemed members of the film industry. Jury Chair, Australian screen and stage icon **Sigrid Thornton**, was joined by Animal Logic CEO and film producer **Zareh Nalbandian** (*Peter Rabbit*, *The Lego Batman Movie*), Logie Award-winning West Australian actress **Tasma Walton**, (*Cleverman*, *Looking for Grace*, *Mystery Road*), West Australian Producer **Tania Chambers OAM** (*Kill Me Three Times*, *A Few Best Men*) and one of Australia’s most loved actors and television hosts, **Michael Caton** (*The Castle*, *Packed to the Rafters*, *Hot Property*, *Hot Auctions*).

The jury watched each of the finalists with an audience at CinefestOZ before coming together to deliberate and determine the winner.

On behalf of the Jury, Thornton said “In the spirit of all great film festivals, this was an extremely difficult decision to make. We salute all the film makers for their very fine work. *Jirga* is a singular and courageous film, which gives us a visceral insight into an age-old culture. It explores the nature and definition of forgiveness, leaving us with truly unforgettable cinematic moments.”

Chair of CinefestOZ Helen Shervington said, “This has been an outstanding year for Australian film, and we are delighted that CinefestOZ has once again delivered an incredibly

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diverse program of quality films to audiences, including these four deserving finalists. It is our great pleasure to award this prize to *Jirga*.”

Sigrid Thornton was also recognised for her outstanding contribution to the Australian film industry, and named the CinefestOZ 2018 Screen Legend.

Throughout her career Sigrid has been awarded numerous film, television, theatre awards and nominations including Silver and Gold Logie, AFI, Mo and IF awards and is widely acknowledged as a legend of Australian screen, television and stage. Over the years Sigrid has been a key player in an unusually diverse range of formats and genres, with the national press coining the phrase ‘The Sigrid Factor’

Previous recipients of the CinefestOZ Screen Legend include Jacqueline McKenzie, Hugo Weaving, Jack Thompson, Bryan Brown, David Wenham, Gillian Armstrong and director Scott Hicks.

The festival wraps on Sunday August 26, having delivered more than 150 screenings and events in Western Australia's South West, including 11 World Premieres, 18 Australian Premieres and 33 WA Premieres. An industry program incorporating the nation's peak film industry bodies was a key part of the festival offering. Guests to the festival included Patron David Wenham, Myles Pollard and actors Emma Booth, John Howard, Lucy Durack, Sophia Forrest and Celia Massingham.

CinefestOZ is supported by the State Government through Tourism WA’s Regional Events Program. Rio Tinto is a proud Premium and Community Partner of CinefestOZ. The festival acknowledges its strong partnership with Screenwest; Western Australia’s screen funding and development agency.

MEDIA LINKS

Download Festival Images [here](#).

Download JIRGA Images [here](#).

Download Screen Legend Images [here](#).

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