

SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

4 – 15 JUNE 2025

SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES FAMILY FILMS AND SCREENABILITY PROGRAM

The 72nd Sydney Film Festival (4–15 June) today announces the 2025 Screenability program, showcasing six films by filmmakers living with disability, along with two feature films in the Family program, including the Australian Premiere of the live-action *How to Train Your Dragon*.

“Our Screenability program is a vital part of Sydney Film Festival’s commitment to making the Festival accessible and inviting - to both filmmakers and audiences. Fantastically entertaining films giving insight into the lives of people living with Disability, made by people living with Disability,” said **SFF Festival Director Nashen Moodley**. “Our Family program exists because we all remember those formative cinema experiences that turned us into lifelong film fans, and we want kids to have that experience at SFF.”

FAMILY FILMS

Bring the whole family to Sydney Film Festival for an unforgettable big-screen adventure, with two new family features.

The magic of dragons returns in *How to Train Your Dragon*, a live-action reimagining of the beloved animation. On the island of Berk, young Viking Hiccup (Mason Thames, *The Black Phone*) defies centuries of tradition when he befriends Toothless, a feared Night Fury dragon. Directed by three-time Oscar nominee and Golden Globe-winner Dean DeBlois (*Lilo & Stitch*), with cutting-edge visual effects and an all-star cast including Gerard Butler, this soaring tale of friendship, courage and destiny is a big screen family crowd-pleaser.

Adding a spooky twist to the family fun is *Night of the Zoopocalypse*, a wildly entertaining, kid-friendly zombie comedy. When a meteor crash turns the animals of Colepepper Zoo into zombies, a grumpy mountain lion (voiced by David Harbour, *Stranger Things*) and a feisty wolf (Gabbi Kosmidis) must team up to escape the chaos. Executive produced by horror legend Clive Barker (*Hellraiser*, *Candyman*), this colourful and hilarious animated adventure introduces younger viewers to the spooky delights of the horror genre.

SCREENABILITY

Sydney Film Festival proudly presents its **Screenability** program for a ninth consecutive year – showcasing a vibrant line-up of films created by filmmakers living with disability.

Curated by Screenability Programmer **Rebecca McCormack**, this year’s program features six titles, including three feature films and three Australian shorts.

The selection includes *Life After*, a Special Jury Award winner at Sundance by Reid Davenport (SFF 2022’s *I Didn’t See You There*), which investigates the tangled ethics of assisted dying through the story of Elizabeth Bouvia, a disabled woman who sparked a national debate on autonomy and the



value of disabled lives. Also featured is **Marlee Matlin: Not Alone Anymore**, a powerful documentary directed by Shoshannah Stern that reflects on the life, career and advocacy work of the Academy Award-winning actor. **Racewalkers**, winner of the Slamdance Grand Jury Prize, brings a heartfelt twist to the classic sports buddy comedy, following an unlikely coach-athlete duo united by ambition and resilience.

Three Australian short films also feature in the program: **Where the World is Quiet**, in which Australian of the Year Grace Tame shares a personal reflection on autism and finding solace through long-distance running; **Dark Matter**, Leo Berkeley's observational essay on living with multiple sclerosis; and **With Love, Lottie**, a charming exploration of a disabled teenager's search for love.

Rebecca McCormack said, "Screenability continues to celebrate the voices of filmmakers living with Disability, offering vital perspectives and fresh storytelling that challenge, move, and inspire. This year's line-up brings together award-winning international features and home-grown shorts that showcase a rich diversity of experience and creativity."

The full Sydney Film Festival program is announced on Wednesday 7 May 2025. The first titles from Sydney Film Festival's 2025 program alongside the Opening Night Gala screening and Jafar Panahi Retrospective strand can be found online at sff.org.au.

Flexipasses and Subscriptions to Sydney Film Festival 2025 are on sale now. Call 1300 733 733 or visit sff.org.au for more information.

For more information, visit sff.org.au.

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Sydney Film Festival Press Pack and Images Available [HERE](#)

EDITOR'S NOTES

ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

The Sydney Film Festival is one of the world's longest-running and most prestigious film festivals. The 72nd edition, taking place from 4 to 15 June 2025, will showcase the very best in contemporary cinema and offer audiences the chance to experience premieres, red carpet events, and exciting special programs across Sydney.

The Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Screen NSW and Destination NSW, the Federal Government through Screen Australia, and the City of Sydney.

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FILM INFORMATION

FAMILY FILMS

HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON

A stunning live-action reimagining of the beloved animation, with plenty of frolics, flying, and fire-breathing dragons on show. A definite big screen family crowd-pleaser.

On the rugged isle of Berk, where Vikings and dragons have been bitter enemies for generations, Hiccup (Mason Thames, *The Black Phone*), the inventive yet overlooked son of Chief Stoick the Vast (Gerard Butler, reprising his voice role from the animated franchise), defies centuries of tradition when he befriends Toothless, a feared Night Fury dragon. As an ancient threat emerges, Hiccup's friendship with Toothless becomes the key to forging a new future. Cutting-edge visual effects and sterling direction from three-time Oscar nominee and Golden Globe-winner Dean DeBlois (*Lilo & Stitch*) bring the epic adventures of Hiccup and Toothless to life as they discover the true meaning of friendship, courage and destiny.

NIGHT OF THE ZOOPOCALYPSE

An action-packed slice of spooks and laughs about a (kid-friendly) zombie animal uprising in a zoo, featuring a fabulous voice performance from David Harbour (*Stranger Things*).

When a chunk of meteor slams into the mountain lion exhibit at Colepepper Zoo one fateful night, a virus is unleashed, with the infected animals becoming zombies. Dan the grumpy Mountain Lion (Harbour) and Gracie the wolf (Gabbi Kosmidis) reluctantly team up in an attempt to stay one step ahead of the wonderfully CG-animated fiasco – but as more animals become infected, their chances of escape diminish. Based on a concept from writer and horror icon Clive Barker (originator of the *Hellraiser* and *Candyman* series), who also serves as the film's executive producer, *Night of the Zoocalypse* is a colourful, thrilling romp that will introduce younger viewers to the spooky and silly delights of the horror genre.

SCREENABILITY FEATURES

LIFE AFTER

Sundance Award-winning documentarian Reid Davenport exposes the tangled web of moral dilemmas and profit motives surrounding assisted dying in this gripping investigation.

Davenport (*I Didn't See You There*, SFF 2022) is raising the alarm about disability and the "right to die". In this powerful and personal film, he probes the life of Elizabeth Bouvia, a disabled Californian woman who sought the "right to die" in 1983, igniting a national debate about autonomy and the value of disabled lives. But what happened to Bouvia? In his search for answers, Davenport uncovers shocking abuses of power. *Life After* amplifies the missing voices of the disability community in the ongoing debate around assisted dying, platforming this fight for justice and dignity in what truly is a matter of life or death. Winner of a Special Jury Award at Sundance.

MARLEE MATLIN: NOT ALONE ANYMORE

The Academy Award-winning actor reflects on her life and career while exploring the complexities of what it means to be a trailblazer and disability advocate.

In 1987, aged just 21, Marlee Matlin (*CODA*) became the first deaf actor to win an Academy Award for her screen debut, starring opposite William Hurt in the romantic drama *Children of a Lesser God*. In this powerful biographical documentary by Shoshannah Stern – herself a deaf actor – Matlin looks back on her rise to fame, and how she channelled her sudden success into advocating for accessibility while pursuing a performing arts career. She candidly shares her struggles with



addiction, childhood experiences of sexual abuse, and her tumultuous romantic relationship with Hurt, as well as her ongoing advocacy for the disabled community, both on- and off-screen. In competition at Sundance and a hit with critics at SXSU.

RACEWALKERS

A struggling racewalking coach finds an unlikely walking protégé in a washed-up pro baseball player in this oddball yet heartfelt buddy comedy. Winner, Slamdance Grand Jury Prize.

Being of short stature, Will (Phil Moniz) could never compete in the sport he loved: racewalking. When he sets his sights on channelling his passion into coaching instead, everyone is quick to write him off – not least the national walking champ, Ched, a himbo coached by Will's own volatile uncle. Enter Matt (Kevin Claydon, *21 Thunder; The Girlfriend Experience*), a burnt-out baseball pitcher who happens to have an ideal racewalking stride. He and Will team up to take on Ched and all those who would dismiss them. Written and directed by stars Moniz and Claydon, this charming, *Happy Gilmore*-inspired sports comedy was a hit with audiences and critics – and the jury – at Slamdance, and now is racing its way to Sydney!

SCREENABILITY SHORTS

DARK MATTER

Wheelchair-bound and in the late stages of multiple sclerosis, Melbourne-based filmmaker Leo Berkley contemplates existence and observes his neighbours – who remain oblivious to him in this observational essay film. Winner, Best Documentary Short 2024 Global Shorts Awards.

WHERE THE WORLD IS QUIET

In this immersive and deeply personal documentary, former Australian of the Year Grace Tame explores her experience with autism and reflects on how long-distance running became a refuge for her.

WITH LOVE, LOTTIE

Lottie, a disabled teenager, fears she will never find love. When she enlists her friends to help her navigate the unpredictable world of dating, she discovers that love can sometimes be found in unexpected ways.

