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Local talent storms Brisbane festival

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1 - First with the news

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Des Partridge lines up the Australian content at the 16th Brisbane International Film Festival

TEN new Australian feature films -- more than half of them with strong Brisbane connections -- are included in the 16th Brisbane International Film Festival, which opens on Thursday night.

New Australian films Bra Boys, Romulus My Father, Clubland and the just-released Lucky Miles have been popular on national circuits this year.

BIFF executive director Anne Demy-Geroe says she's just as impressed by the quality of the Australian films she has included in the 11-day festival.

The Courier-Mail is sponsoring this year's Australian program at the festival, for which filmmakers and actors associated with most of the new titles will come to Brisbane.

Four Australian films will have world premieres at BIFF: All My Friends Are Leaving Brisbane, directed by Louise Alston; Donkey in Lahore, by Brisbane-based Faramarz K-Rahber; Unfinished Sky, directed by Peter Duncan for Brisbane-based New Holland Pictures; and Brisbane filmmaker Michael **Noonan**'s feature-length documentary, Unlikely Travellers.

Alston's romantic comedy All My Friends Are Leaving Brisbane has almost sold out for its premiere next Saturday night, and will be repeated at noon on August 9 at the Regent. Based on a play by local writer Stephen Vagg and shot in Brisbane, it features Charlotte Gregg and **QUT** acting graduate Matt Zeremes, seen recently in Burke and Wills, which he wrote, co-directed and acted in with his friend Oliver Torr.

Queensland College of Art graduate K-Rahber's Donkey in Lahore has been a labour of love over several years, and has a soundtrack in English and Urdu. It focuses on the relationship between Brisbane man Brian and a young Muslim woman, Amber, he meets on a visit to Lahore in Pakistan, where he's performing at a puppet festival.

The film has one screening at the Gallery of Modern Art at South Bank at noon on the festival's closing day.

The drama *Unfinished Sky*, New Holland Pictures' first local production, was filmed around Beaudesert with principals William McInnes, Dutch actor Monic Hendrickx, David Field and Brisbane actor Bille Brown. It screens at the Regent next Saturday at 7pm, and the next day at the Palace Centro, Fortitude Valley, at 3.40pm.

Michael **Noonan**, who has been at the centre of an ethics debate at the Queensland University of Technology, made *Unlikely Travellers*, screening at GoMA on August 12 at 2.40pm, about the adventures of a group, including intellectually **disabled** men, during a trip to Egypt.

BIFF programming manager Matthew Kesting, who previewed the film, says the process of preparing for the trip, and its unexpected setting of Egypt, enables an audience to gain a very different perspective on intellectual disability rather than the usual portrayals.

Ex-Brisbane filmmaker Kriv Stenders (his film *Blacktown* screened at BIFF 2005) returns with *Boxing Day*, screening on August 10 at 4pm at GoMA. It was chosen for this year's Adelaide Film Festival and is about a man sentenced to home detention. Stenders, who was also director of cinematography, made the film with a cast of non-professional actors apart from Syd Brisbane, and is expected to present it in Brisbane.

After making several short films, Ben Hackworth, who grew up in Brisbane and is the son of the late David Hackworth and restaurateur Peter Hackworth, has graduated to his first feature, *Corroboree*. It was included in this year's Perth, Sydney and Melbourne film festivals and will have its screening on August 10 at GoMA, starting at 6.15pm.

The title disguises an unusual film that was developed as a homage to late theatre director Richard Wherrett and performed by Conor O'Hanlon, who reprises his role in Hackworth's film.

The most experienced Australian filmmaker involved this year is Australian Film Institute and Chauvel award-winner, Adelaide-based writer-director Rolf de Heer, who will present his black-and-white "silent" film, *Dr Plonk*.

The film, which de Heer made using expired and scratched film stock, will screen as part of the CineSparks program for young people at the Regent at 10am on Friday, and again at night at Palace Centro.

There will be a function for ticketholders at 6.30pm, then the film at 7pm, followed by a Q&A with de Heer.

Dr Plonk will have its final screening at the Regent next Saturday at noon.

Employing slapstick comedy in the style of American comedians Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd, the film has Nigel Lunghi in the title role with a supporting cast including Magda Szubanski and South Australian Premier Mike Rann. BIFF audiences will see it ahead of its theatrical release on August 30.

Macau-born Australian filmmaker Tony Ayres, whose *Walking on Water* screened at BIFF 2002, is back this year with his autobiographical drama, *The Home Song Stories*, starring international star Joan Chen.

Screening on August 11 at 7.10pm at the Regent, and Palace Centro at noon on August 12, the film, releasing in cinemas on August 23, also features Steven Vidler and Kerry Walker.

Lawrence Johnston, who grew up in Brisbane, made his feature, *Night, with Broken Highway* director Laurie McInnes, sister of actor William McInnes, as director of cinematography.

Night, mostly in black and white, with a score by Cezary Skubiszewski, screens next Sunday at the Regent at 6.10pm.

Melbourne filmmaker Dee McLachlan's *The Jammed*, a drama which deals with sex-trafficking and was seen last month at the Sydney Film Festival, screens at Palace Centro at 4pm on August 9, and again on August 12 at 11.30am. The cast includes Emma Lung and Saskia Burmeister.

This year the Queensland New Filmmaker Awards are included in the festival program. Finalists will be screened at the Regent in sessions at 2.30pm and 5pm on August 4.

The award ceremony will be held at The Tivoli in Costin St, Fortitude Valley, on August 11 at 7pm (tickets \$25, and \$20 under-18, including after-party).

The winner of this year's The Courier-Mail Fast Film competition will be announced on the closing night of the festival immediately before the screening of the closing night film, Michael Winterbottom's *A Mighty Heart*.

More details on BIFF at www.biff.com.au, where tickets can be bought online. Tickets for single sessions at BIFF cost \$15, \$13.50 concessions. A variety of passes is available. Take 5 costs \$62.50, or \$57.50 for concessions. Take 5 Off-Peak (valid for any daytime session) costs \$50. Take 25 passes are \$225, Take 40 \$340 and Take 50 \$412.50.

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