

MEDIA RELEASE:

EMBARGOED UNTIL WEDNESDAY 12 SEPTEMBER

THE JAPANESE FILM FESTIVAL UNVEILS 2018 PROGRAM

The **Japanese Film Festival** (17 Oct. – 2 Dec.) today announced its full program and first two guests for 2018: Australian-born rising star **Shioli Kutsuna** (*Deadpool 2*), delivers a stellar performance in highlight indie comedy ***Oh Lucy!*** and renowned Japanese auteur **Isao Yukisada**, for his turbulent coming-of-age drama ***River's Edge***.

The 2018 Festival will showcase 30 features and one fascinating documentary across Canberra (17 – 21 Oct.), Brisbane (24 – 28 Oct.), Perth (31 Oct. – 4 Nov.), Adelaide (9 – 11 Nov.), Sydney (15 – 25 Nov.) and Melbourne (22 Nov. – 2 Dec.).

Each city features carefully curated programming by The Japan Foundation, Sydney, from star-studded drama ***Yakiniku Dragon*** and tear-jerking true story ***The 8 Year Engagement***, to viral genre-bender ***One Cut of the Dead***, and one of the latest works from master filmmakers including Hirokazu Kore-eda (*Shoplifters* – winner of the Cannes Palme d'Or in 2018).

The Festival in Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra and Perth kicks off with romantic detective mystery ***DESTINY: The Tale of Kamakura***, touted as the live-action version of the Ghibli classic *Spirited Away*. An adaptation of Ryohei Saigan's popular *Kamakura Monogatari* manga series by Takashi Yamazaki (*Always: Sunset on Third Street*), this modern fairy tale follows a writer into a netherworld of supernatural creatures to save his wife.

Sydney and Melbourne will open with viral microbudget genre-bender ***One Cut of the Dead***. Direct from sold-out screenings across Japan, this action-packed spectacle is a brilliantly-disguised low-budget, high-concept take on the zombie comedy genre. Flowing seamlessly from monster mayhem, to hilarious satire, into a family comedy-drama, Shinichiro Ueda's debut follows a film crew shooting a zombie flick, during which they are attacked by real zombies.

"With sophisticated thrillers, captivating romance, and sexuality in the censorship era, the Festival is proud to present this handpicked selection of diverse Japanese cinematic gems," said **Japanese Film Festival Programmer Alison Groves**.

"This year's program is a provocative cross-section of modern Japanese filmmaking, and stunning works from the country's 'New New Wave' of cutting edge filmmakers: *Summer Blooms* by up-and-comer Ryutaro Nakagawa, and *Goodbye, Grandpa!* by Yukihiro Morigaki," she said.

Rising star Shioli Kutsuna will attend the Festival to introduce ***Oh Lucy!***, and engage in audience Q&As. Kutsuna stars alongside Golden Globe-nominated actress Megan Mullally (*Will & Grace*) and Josh Hartnett (*Pearl Harbor*) in the full-length adaptation of director Atsuko Hirayanagi's Sundance Short Film Jury Prize-winning short, about a lonely Japanese woman who awakens her alter ego in an English class.

Other program highlights include ***Yakiniku Dragon***, featuring a star-studded cast including Jeong-eun Lee (*Okja*), Yoko Maki (*The Grudge*), and Yo Oizumi (*Bread of Happiness*). Based off Wui-Sin Chong's award-winning 2008 play, the heart-warming story of resilience draws on Chong's own experiences as a Korean-Japanese immigrant.

Top cinephile picks include two films from Official Competition in Venice: ***The Third Murder***, a probing courtroom drama by master filmmaker Hirokazu Kore-eda (*Shoplifters*); and Shinya Tsukamoto's ***Killing***, starring Yu Aoi (*Japanese Girls Never Die*) and Sosuke Ikematsu (*Shoplifters*); plus ***Love At Least***, about a hypersomniac recluse and her boyfriend, whose lives are turned upside down by a scheming ex-girlfriend.

The edgy and erotic take centre stage in ***River's Edge***, with Festival guest Isao Yukisada (*Crying Out Love in the Centre of the World*) introducing the film and engaging in an audience Q&A; ***Call Boy***, a portrayal of female sexuality as navigated by a male prostitute searching for purpose; and ***Dynamite Graffiti***, a biopic on Akira Suei, whose photography mag Photo Age became a pornographic source in Japan's censorship era.

The Festival will also showcase the versatility of pink film maestro Takahisa Zeze with three distinct films: ***The Chrysanthemum and the Guillotine***, about militant anarchists who fall in love with a female sumo troupe; tear-jerking drama ***The 8-Year Engagement***, the viral true story of a man standing by his fiancée after a coma erases her memory; and ***My Friend 'A'***, following a failed journalist uncovering his colleague's murderous past.

Not to be missed is a delectable 4K restoration of iconic 1985 foodie classic ***Tampopo*** featuring the breakthrough role of Oscar-nominated actor Ken Watanabe (*The Last Samurai*). Dubbed a "ramen Western," the comedy explores the relationship between love and food through a truck driver who helps save a family's run-down noodle shop.

The Festival will also presents a FREE classic film program from 29 September – 2 December in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra. Featuring works adapted from novels by celebrated authors such as Junichiro Tanizaki and Kyoka Izumi, the program showcases influential works from cinematic masters from the Japanese Golden Age and New Wave.

2018 Japanese Film Festival screening dates:

CANBERRA: 17 - 21 October at Dendy, Canberra Centre
Early bird tickets available from September 20

BRISBANE: 24 - 28 October at Event Cinemas Brisbane City Myer Centre
Early bird tickets available from September 27

PERTH: 31 October - 4 November at Event Cinemas Innaloo
Early bird tickets available from September 27

ADELAIDE: 9 - 11 November at GU Film House Adelaide
Early bird tickets available from September 27

SYDNEY: 15 - 25 November at Event Cinemas George Street
Early bird tickets available from September 27

MELBOURNE: 22 November - 2 December at Melbourne Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) & Hoyts Melbourne Central
Early bird tickets available from October 11

Tickets will be available at www.japanesefilmfestival.net or at venue box offices.

-- ENDS --

Stay up to date with JFF:

Website: www.japanesefilmfestival.net

Facebook: www.facebook.com/japanesefilmfest

Twitter: www.twitter.com/japanfilmfest

Instagram: www.instagram.com/japanesefilmfest

MEDIA ENQUIRIES: Cardinal Spin P: 02 8065 7363

Amy Owen: amy@cardinalspin.com.au M: 0404 977 338

Genvin In: genvin@cardinalspin.com.au M: 0449 939 864

EDITOR'S NOTES

ABOUT THE JAPAN FOUNDATION, SYDNEY

The Japan Foundation, Sydney is the Australian arm of the Japan Foundation, which was established by the Japanese government to promote cultural and intellectual exchange between Japan and other nations. It runs a diverse range of programs and events, including exhibitions, talk events, grant programs and Japanese language courses for all levels from beginner to advanced. The Japan Foundation was established in 1972 with a global network of 25 offices in 24 countries. The Australian office was founded in 1978.