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## The Queer Film Festival in Australia

There have been lesbian and gay film festivals in Sydney since 1978. Initially these were run by the Australian Film Institute (AFI). In 1986, the AFI partnered with what was then the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, to present an annual "Sydney Gay Film Week". The film festival was taken over by commercial concerns in 1991, but still screened as a highlight of the Mardi Gras festival. In 1993, a group of queer Sydney filmmakers, students, and supporters approached Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras to establish an independent organisation whose focus would be queer film and screen culture. This organisation was Queer Screen. Their central aim was to reclaim Sydney's LGBTIQ film festival as owned and operated by the community. From that time, Mardi Gras was the principal funding body of Queer Screen.

This agreement came to an end with the 2001 Mardi Gras Film Festival. The Mardi Gras Film Festival has grown considerably since 1993. It is now one of Australia's largest film festivals of any kind, and one of the top five queer film festivals in the world. It is highly regarded by filmmakers all over the world, and is the most important platform for promoting LGBTIQ titles to distributors and exhibitors in this territory. For ten years, Queer Screen's documentary festival, queerDOC, was the first and only LGBTIQ documentary festival in the world.

The annual My Queer Career competition pioneered queer short film competitions exclusively for locally produced work. Both events are now part of the Mardi Gras Film Festival. In recent years, new initiatives have grown to include special events and curated programs right across Australia, and with strong links across the world. Queer Screen is now one of only LGBTIQ film organisations in the world to operate a continual and national program of events throughout the year. Since 2013, a new film festival, the Queer Screen Film Fest, has become a major event that delivers the latest LGBTIQ movies to Sydney's screens in the month of September.

The vision of Queer Screen is based on fostering the diversity of sexualities and gender identities through queer storytelling on screen, by inclusive and respectful communities full of creativity, inspiration and pride and to transform and engage individuals and communities through queer storytelling on screen. The 5th Queer Screen Film Fest was held at Event Cinemas in Sydney from 19th – 24th September, will continue in the Blue Mountains: at Mount Vic Flicks: 6th – 8th October and in Adelaide at GU Filmhouse Adelaide 3rd – 4th November.

The Sydney incarnation features 20 films from four continents, including 16 Australian premieres, Queer Screen Film Fest showcases a diverse range of LGBTIQ stories across narrative features, documentaries and shorts as well as a free outdoor Rainbow Families screening of the Disney animated film Moana? at Sydney Park.

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