

## MEDIA RELEASE

WEDNESDAY 17 MAY 2017

## THE YEAR OF WOMEN IN SCIENCE CINEMA

**Hot on the heels of the Hollywood blockbuster *Hidden Figures*, another film celebrating women in the space race has received the award for Best Director at the 2017 SCINEMA International Science Film Festival.**

*The Purple Plain* is a short film inspired by the little known story of the Mercury 13, the first American women who tested for space travel in the 1960s. Completing the same rigorous testing, their results surpassed the handful of men chosen by NASA to be the first in space - the Mercury 7 - yet the world knows little of these women.

*The Purple Plain* is just one of eight winners chosen from over 1,194 entries from 90 countries, for awards in Best Film, Best Short Film, Best Documentary, Best Director, Best Experimental/Animation Film, Award for Technical Merit, Award for Scientific Merit and a Special Jury Award.

Established in 2000, SCINEMA International Science Film Festival is the largest science film festival in the southern hemisphere. Presented by Australia's Science Channel and supported by major sponsor BBC Earth, SCINEMA provides a platform for filmmakers, professional, amateur and student, to showcase their science films, series and documentaries.

"The high caliber and cultural diversity of entries into this year's festival, coupled with the BBC supporting us for the second year in a row, is a great tribute to the international strength of SCINEMA," said Dr Paul Willis, Director of The Royal Institution of Australia.

The winning films will be shown exclusively at Festival premiere screenings in Palace Cinemas across Australia from 7-19 June 2017.

"The Festival premiere screenings are open to the public and will feature the best entries of 2017," said Dr Willis. "A special selection of shortlisted films will also be available for our community screenings to be held during National Science Week in August".

"We are so proud of the audience the event reaches through both premiere and community screenings – the schools, the community groups – it's a great vehicle for engaging students and the public with great science films from around the world," said Dr Willis.

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The 2017 SCINEMA International Science Film Festival award winners include:

### SCINEMA BEST FILM

**OWSIA (Darkened Water)** by Alireza Dehghan (Iran)

The aqueduct in the central Iranian city of Yazd has supplied water to the city for 2,500 years, now rots away due to bureaucracy and corruption.

Jury comment: *A fascinating well-made film about this living UNESCO heritage site, social politics and the complex issue of water rights.*

### SCINEMA BEST DOCUMENTARY

**Fix and Release** by Scott Dobson and Jono Nemethy (Canada)

An amazing team at a turtle trauma centre in Ontario, Canada is determined to battle to even the odds for freshwater turtle survival in the modern world.

Jury comment: *An important story, well told and beautifully shot.*

### SCINEMA BEST DIRECTOR

**The Purple Plain** by Kim Albright (United Kingdom)

How different would things have been if it had been one small step for a woman, and one giant leap for mankind? The inspiring true story of the Mercury 13; the first women who tested for space flight.

Jury comment: *Superbly crafted and well-executed storytelling that combines a fictional narrative thread with a factual account of a little-known story about women and their place in spaceflight history.*

### SCINEMA BEST SHORT FILM

**Einstein-Rosen** by Olga Osorio (Spain)

It's the summer of 1982. Teo claims he has found a wormhole. His brother Óscar does not believe him... at least not for now.

Jury comment: *A quirkily charming and entertaining film.*

### SCINEMA AWARD FOR BEST EXPERIMENTAL/ANIMATED FILM

**Think like a scientist: Natural Selection in an Outbreak** by Nathan Dappen and Neil Losin (USA)

Computational geneticist Pardis Sabeti and disease ecologist Lina Moses bring us to the front line of the 2013-15 Ebola epidemic and explain the science behind how this event became the largest Ebola outbreak in history.

Jury comment: *Great example of role models for women working in STEM fields.*

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### SCINEMA AWARD FOR TECHNICAL MERIT

**Nex** by Philipp Buschauer, Michael Loithaler and Marlene Raml (Austria)

A visually stunning film illuminating the minute battles of nature from the micro to macro scale as a rhinoceros beetle, attacked by a fungus, struggles between life and death. Even the tiniest things can have a huge impact.

### SCINEMA AWARD FOR SCIENTIFIC MERIT

**Pangolins in Peril - A story of rare scales** by Muhammad Ali Ijaz (Pakistan)

The rare secretive Pangolin plays a vital ecological role but is on the verge of extinction. Two brave and passionate wildlife watchers fight against the odds to save the endangered Pangolin. Jury comment: *Simply and beautifully produced film that shows conservation biology in a political and social setting.*

### SCINEMA SPECIAL JURY AWARD

**Test Tube Babes** by Alice Wade (United Kingdom)

Two sisters that are the outcome IVF, explain the amazing science of reproductive biology with wit and charm.

Jury comment: *You'll never look at a paw-paw the same way again!*

Tickets to the Festival premiere screenings are available for booking at <http://scinema.australiascience.tv/>

**Tickets to the Festival premiere screenings are available to media for promotional giveaway.**

For more information contact **Julie LeMessurier, 08 7120 8636, [jlemessurier@riaus.org.au](mailto:jlemessurier@riaus.org.au)** or visit [scinema.australiascience.tv](http://scinema.australiascience.tv)

*SCINEMA International Science Film Festival is presented by Australia's Science Channel and supported by major partner BBC Earth.*



Australia's Science Channel is Australia's first dedicated publishing platform for science stories. Bringing together compelling video, audio and written content from Australia's top Universities, Research Institutions and Scientific Organisations as well as the independent production sector, this ground-breaking web platform is free to all Australians. Australia's Science Channel is developed and operated by The Royal Institution of Australia.