NZIFF, the New Zealand International Film Festival, now entering its 45th year, claims pride of place as the cultural highlight of Wellington’s winter. (See this year’s dates below.) Designed to whet your appetite for the annual winter splurge, NZIFF Autumn Events present a lively mix of restored big screen classics, freshly minted documentaries – and an unforgettable skirmish with hellfire and damnation. Our spotlight shines on New Zealand filmmakers too: Tickled, a funny, dramatic and totally surprising exposé conducted by David Farrier and Dylan Reeve, gets the Embassy treatment it richly deserves.

If you’re a Wellingtonian, the chances are you know the thrill of a movie on the giant Embassy screen. If you’re a visitor, don’t miss this quintessential Wellington experience. This year’s programme spills over to the Paramount, Wellington’s oldest cinema and longstanding bastion of independent film exhibition in Courtenay Place.

NZIFF is operated by a non-profit charitable trust intent on expanding the options of filmgoers and filmmakers in Aotearoa New Zealand. Our selection criterion is to head for the ‘best’ across a great variety of genres and styles. Any one of our Autumn Events choices would have been equally at home at NZIFF itself. Big thanks to Event Cinemas and the Paramount for encouraging our expansion into April and May. Enjoy!

Bill Gosden
Director

ON THE WEB www.nziff.co.nz
Register on the website for news updates and the chance to win movie tickets and other great prizes. The site also features more extensive information about NZIFF Autumn Events programmes.
Ran

Director/Editor: Kurosawa Akira  |  Japan/France 1985  |  162 mins  |  DCP  |  PG violence  |  In Japanese with English subtitles

Screenplay: Kurosawa Akira, Oguni Hideo, Ide Masato  |  Photography: Saito Takao, Ueda Masaharu, Nakai Asakazu

Production designers: Muraki Yoshiro, Muraki Shinobu  |  Costume designer: Wada Emi  |  Music: Takemitsu Toru

With: Nakadai Tatsuya, Terao Akira, Nezu Jinpachi, Ryu Daisuke, Harada Mieko, Peter

“The great, climactic work in a formidable oeuvre, Kurosawa’s Ran draws on both King Lear and Macbeth to observe the monumental chaos (‘ran’ in Japanese) unleashed when an ageing warlord hands over the reins to his warrior sons.

Completed when the director was seventy-five years old, the film was long in gestation and meticulous in its spectacular execution. Raging battles are delineated with rare clarity and dispassion, while court intrigues are captured with an intimacy that is electrifying. As the old man’s daughter-in-law, Harada Mieko is so intent on mayhem that the mere brush of her lavish robes against the floor can induce dread. Takemitsu Toru’s brilliant score is just as spare and unnerving. This stunning 4K digital restoration premiered at Cannes last year and demands the monster screen we are delighted to provide.

“Kurosawa’s late-period masterpiece, transposing King Lear to period Japan, is one of the most exquisite spectacles ever made, a color-coordinated epic tragedy of carnage and betrayal – passionate, somber, and profound.” — New York Magazine

“IT's a stunning achievement in epic cinema…
Both landscape and weather seem to bend to Kurosawa’s will as he constructs an imaginary 16th-century Japan.” — Dave Kehr, Chicago Reader

EMBASSY
Sunday 8 May, 4.00 pm
The Iron Giant
Signature Edition

Director: Brad Bird | USA 1999 | 88 mins | DCP | PG cert, some scenes may scare very young children
Screenplay: Tim McCanlies, Brad Bird | Based on the book by: Ted Hughes
Animation Director: Tony Fucile | Voices: Jennifer Aniston, Harry Connick Jr, Vin Diesel, James Gammon

```
In a small American town at the height of the Cold War in the 50s, a gigantic extraterrestrial robot with an appetite for cars, railroad tracks and TV antennas crash-lands near the home of nine-year-old Hogarth Hughes. Befriending the enormous visitor, Hogarth tries frantically to keep his new pal's existence a secret from both his mother and a paranoid government agent.
```

Based on a children's book by Ted Hughes, this all-ages sci-fi from animator Brad Bird (The Incredibles, Ratatouille) has amassed a lot of love since its release in 1999. Hughes' book addresses some big questions – can a machine have a soul? – and the film's anti-gun agenda is so expertly dramatized that certain right-wing commentators consider it downright treason. Loaded with discussion points, The Iron Giant always remains at heart a movie about an excitable little boy and the biggest toy any child could wish for.

Two new scenes have been added for this spectacular 2015 “Signature Edition”.

---

**Fargo**

Director: Joel Coen | USA 1996 | 103 mins | DCP | R18 violence
Producer: Ethan Coen | Screenplay: Ethan Coen, Joel Coen
Photography: Roger Deakins | With: Frances McDormand, Steve Buscemi, William H. Macy, Peter Stormare, Harve Presnell

```
Two murderous goons meet their match in a Minnesota cop, the inimitable Frances McDormand as Detective Marge Gunderson, chirpy, relentless and seven months pregnant. You can’t beat the original recipe: the Coen’s landmark ‘true crime’ put-on still tastes mighty flavoursome in this 20th anniversary 4K digital restoration.
```

“The Coens’ masterpiece… Rarely have the Coens’ sensibilities coalesced more exquisitely than in this alternately comic and brutal caper set in the brothers’ native Minnesota and capped with Frances McDormand’s Oscar-winning performance as the sensible, pregnant police chief Marge Gunderson. Once more into the Midwestern winter? Oh, ya, you betcha.” — Andy Webster, NY Times

“A deep dark American feast of red blood, white fields and police blues… Riveting every crime with their trademark humour, the Coens get career-best performances all round.” — Mark Cubey, Auckland International Film Festival 1996

---

"A dazzling mix of mirth and malice… A terrific twisted comedy.” — Peter Travers, Rolling Stone

"Like E.T., like Babe, the movie has a child’s heart and an adult’s wit.” — F.X. Feeney, LA Weekly
The Philadelphia Story

Director: George Cukor | USA 1940 | 112 mins | DCP | PG cert
Producer: Joseph L. Mankiewicz | Screenplay: Donald Ogden Stewart
Based on the play by: Philip Barry
Photography: Joseph Ruttenberg
Costume designer: Adrian | With: Cary Grant, Katharine Hepburn, James Stewart, Ruth Hussey, John Howard

"George Cukor and Donald Ogden Stewart’s evergreen version of Philip Barry’s romantic farce, centring on a socialite wedding threatened by scandal, is a delight from start to finish… Katharine Hepburn’s the ice maiden, recently divorced from irresponsible millionaire Cary Grant and just about to marry a truly dull but supposedly more considerate type. Enter Grant, importunate and distinctly sceptical. Also enter James Stewart and Ruth Hussey, snoopers from Spy magazine, to cover the society wedding of the year and throw another spanner in the works.

Superbly directed by Cukor, the film is a marvel of timing and understated performances, effortlessly transcending its stage origins… The wit still sparkles; the ambivalent attitude towards the rich and idle is still resonant; and the moments between Stewart and Hepburn, drunk and flirty on the moonlit terrace, tingle with a real, if rarely explicit, eroticism.” — Geoff Andrew, Time Out

Stop Making Sense

Director: Jonathan Demme | USA 1984 | 88 mins | DCP | G cert
Producer: Gary Goetzman | Photography: Jordan Cronenweth
Editor: Lisa Day
Music: Talking Heads | With: David Byrne, Chris Frantz, Jerry Harrison, Tina Weymouth, Edna Holt, Lynn Mabry, Steve Scales, Alex Weir, Bernie Worrell

In 1983, legendary art rockers Talking Heads set out to make a concert film like no other. Independent of their record company, they hired Jonathan Demme, a then-relatively unknown filmmaker, to direct. Working closely with Byrne and the band, he counteracted the MTV style of the era, avoiding quick cuts or cutaways to the crowd in the certain knowledge that the more we see of what’s happening on stage, the more immersed and mesmerised we will be.

The dazzling set list aside, it’s their film’s formal inventiveness that is amazing, beginning with the conceptual crescendo of the concert’s construction. It starts with genius frontman David Byrne performing ‘Psycho Killer’ alone on stage, then adds instruments, stage machinery and musicians with each successive number. That’s to say nothing of Byrne’s expanding white suit.

Frequently cited ever since as the perfect concert movie, Stop Making Sense is a pop cultural dispatch from 1983 that stays forever thrilling.
“If you don’t go to see it, believe us, you’ll be missing a grand and moving thing.”
— Bosley Crowther, NY Times

“Shall we dance?” This perennial favourite of Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals, even now a hot ticket on Broadway, found its definitive production (and cast) in 1956, lavishly scaled for the vast Twentieth Century Fox sound stages. In its gilded fantasy of palace life in 19th-century Siam, an English governess (Deborah Kerr), imported to tutor the King’s many children, famously stands up to the autocratic monarch. In the role of his lifetime the mercurial Yul Brynner commands the screen, his animal grace rendered all the more enticing by his quizzical take on Western novelties. As polygamous monarch and proto-feminist school teacher clash, sparks of forbidden attraction fly. Their chaste consummation on the dance floor is super-charged, an iconic late highpoint in old-school Hollywood romance. The score abounds with songs that have become standards: ‘Hello, Young Lovers’, ‘Something Wonderful’, ‘We Kiss in a Shadow’. Yul Brynner’s performance won him an Oscar but did nothing to endear the film’s breezy disregard for historical accuracy to the Thai monarchy. The film remains banned in Thailand.

“All the ingredients that made Rodgers & Hammerstein’s The King and I a memorable stage experience have been faithfully transferred to the screen. The result is a pictorially exquisite, musically exciting, and dramatically satisfying motion picture.” — Variety
Michael Moore, still the baseball-hatted scourge of corporate America, is back with his first film in six years – and his funniest and most optimistic ever. The invasion promised in the title is a total ruse: he crosses Europe, Scandinavia and the Middle East to reconnoitre social welfare programmes that might usefully be plundered for export to the US, or to any other bastion of free market ideology.

Adopting the posture of an incredulous free marketer himself, he elicits highly amusing responses from the contented beneficiaries of government intervention in numerous… er, nanny states. A super-fit Italian couple proclaim the benefits of six weeks of paid vacation and five months maternity leave. Their boss concurs. French public-school kids learn about nutrition, lunch on lamb skewers and tomato salads and say yuck to Coke and ketchup. Elsewhere successful approaches to addiction, crime and punishment, women’s rights, defence budgets and school homework are expounded to the marauding Moore.

Such a hand-picked round-up of patently sane interview subjects is more than enough to make Moore’s parade of Good Examples a buoyant experience for any progressive spirit.

“A more stimulating, thought-provoking and entertaining call to arms than anything we are likely to hear from an aspiring President over the next year.” — Allan Hunter, Screen Daily
A proud symbol of Russian culture, the Bolshoi Ballet took that symbolism to a very sinister place in 2013: artistic director Sergei Filin was disfigured in an attack ordered by a dancer from his own company. British filmmakers Nick Read and Mark Franchetti were at work in Moscow at the time and secured access to dancers and administrators as the company weathered the fallout. The ballet we see here is glorious in its muscularity and panache. But dramas off-stage take the foreground, and they are enacted with a ferocity that is just as breath-taking.

“As new broom [GM] Vladimir Urin takes steps to clean up the mess, cannily managing both his own and the company’s image through his cooperation with the filmmakers, it becomes clear just how many interested parties there are eager to influence the company’s future, going all the way up to President Vladimir Putin.” — Leslie Felperin, Hollywood Reporter

Ingrid Bergman, the young Swedish actress who crossed the Atlantic to become the star of such classics as Casablanca and Notorious, always appeared strikingly natural amongst the glamorous stars of Hollywood’s Golden Age. Radiant on the Cannes poster in 2015, her directness still feels authentic and refreshing. No slave to studio artifice or public opinion, she abandoned stardom and her family to work with, then marry, the Italian neo-realist Roberto Rossellini. In due course Hollywood and Sweden too would welcome her back.

Swedish filmmaker Stig Björkman has drawn on the vast trove of Bergman’s never-before-seen home movies, personal letters and diary extracts to make this extremely charming and revealing portrait.

“This remarkable material paints a portrait of a strong, liberated, opinionated and accomplished woman, but also someone with a great sense of fun... A wonderful testament to her as a pioneer, mother and icon.”

— Sarah Lutton, London International Film Festival
This admiring, perceptive, richly researched and performance-studded celebration of 60s icon and white soul singer supreme, Janis Joplin, was beautifully crafted by Amy Berg (West of Memphis).

“For an intelligent portrait of Janis Joplin, head straight for Amy Berg’s superb new documentary, which incorporates revelatory interviews with family, friends, band members and associates (some long since dead), a good deal of stirring live and archive footage, and a lot of insight from people who knew her well...”

Best of all is the chance to reacquaint oneself not only with the real Janis – so naturally charming and funny – and her gigantic voice, but also with Janis the unexpectedly magnificent fashion icon, decked out in boas, tons of rings, big pink sunglasses, gold dresses, striped bellbottoms, the works... To quote a Facebook meme I spotted recently: ‘In a world of Kardashians, be a Janis!’” — John Patterson, The Guardian

“A telling reminder of the strength inherent in 40,000 years of tradition and how such a culture resists the cold indifference of economic rationalism.” — Steve Dow, The Guardian

A beautifully interlaced account of connection between an Indigenous Australian and his community’s contested traditional land, Putuparri and the Rainmakers draws us along on the journey of Wangkatjungka man Tom “Putuparri” Lawford and his family. Based in the tiny Kimberley town of Fitzroy Crossing, and subjected to many of the challenges facing displaced indigenous people, they wend their way back over a period of 20 years to their sacred waterhole at Kurtal in the vast Great Sandy Desert. In 1994 Lawford took a video camera with him as he accompanied his grandparents and several elders on an expedition to find Kurtal. His footage as they locate the site, dig into the dry earth to release the spring, then enact a ritual rainmaking, is spellbinding. It was also to play a significant role in a long campaign to claim back traditional land, and serves as ground zero for Nicole Ma’s film, where we see successive return visits. As his grandparents grow old, Tom feels increasingly compelled to pass on their values and traditions to his own grandchildren.
“The Witch is one of the most genuinely unnerving horror films in recent memory.” — David Ehrlich, Time Out

Puritan terrors of devilry and damnation come screaming to life in this impeccably crafted and thrillingly scary debut. Set in 1630, the film follows a deeply religious family living in self-imposed isolation on the edge of the New England wilderness. As mysterious events occur, not least the sudden vanishing of their newborn son, the family is engulfed in dread. An evil spirit has invaded the forest and the farmyard – or does it lurk within their own sinful hearts?

Writer-director Robert Eggers immerses us in densely researched period recreation and the visual shadings of a 17th-century etching. The actors seem to have emerged from a time capsule, speaking the language of King James and, as Lorde has tweeted, “surrendering their characters’ bodies to possession.”

“One of several recent genre standouts to emerge from the indie-art cinema crowd to chill audiences with more than forgettable gore and cheap jump scares. The Witch makes exceptional use of a seldom-tapped Puritanical setting to build riveting, slow-burn terror.” — Jen Yamato, The Daily Beast

“Eggers manages to create a sense of mood and dread that is so suffocating at times that it feels like we’re watching something genuinely transgressive, something we should not be seeing… He has created something that feels like it cuts deep, that gets past simple genre definitions to become something unique.” — Drew McWeeny, Hitfix
“An alarming cautionary tale… what sounds like a fun look at a particularly outré subculture turns out to be no laughing matter.”
— Dennis Harvey, Variety

When pop-culture journalist David Farrier came across a website seeking young men to travel to Los Angeles to participate in endurance tickling competitions, he sensed a good story for TV3’s Newsworthy. He didn’t know he’d just bought himself a fight with a clutch of “bullies with too much money.” That fight and the investigation it provoked make for gripping viewing in his remarkably deft debut feature film, co-directed with Dylan Reeve. The left-field hit at this year’s Sundance Film Festival, Tickled is poised for international release later in the year. We are beyond tickled to celebrate its success with this New Zealand Premiere screening at the Mighty Civic.

“Captivating and jaw-dropping… Farrier’s dry Kiwi humour infuses the proceedings with a relaxed energy that somehow makes the underlying tension all the more effective.” — Sheri Linden, Hollywood Reporter

Facebook: www.facebook.com/nzfilmfestival
Become a friend, watch trailers and take part in competitions and discussions.

Twitter: www.twitter.com/nzff
Keep up-to-date with our Twitter feeds.

YouTube: www.youtube.com/nzintfilmfestival
Watch trailers, interviews and much more.
NZIFF AUTUMN PREMIERES
AT THE EMBASSY AND PARAMOUNT
16 APRIL–3 MAY

BOOK AT NZIFF.CO.NZ