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## BYRON BAY INTERNATIONAL SCREENPLAY CONTEST FINALISTS USE COVID-19 DOWNTIME TO CAPTURE HEARTS AND MINDS WITH DEEPLY IMMERSIVE SCRIPTS

October 15<sup>th</sup> was set to be the opening night of the 2021 Byron Bay International Film Festival (BBFF) – and whilst the red carpet wasn't rolled out this year, organisers are celebrating the craft of screenwriting by announcing the finalists for the 2021 Byron Bay International Screenplay Contest.

Screenplays are designed to evoke an emotional response in readers; the deeper the reader feels, the more they will become immersed into the screenplay's world and the characters within it. As the American writer and literary editor Gordon Lish once said, "It's not what happens to people on a page; it's about what happens to a reader in his heart and mind."

It's fair to say that the finalists in this year's Contest have once again succeeded in capturing both the hearts and minds of readers.

According to Screenplay Contest Director Pim Hendrix, while the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the film festival, it's failed to dampen the creative output of many talented screenwriters around the globe.

"If anything, it seems that during the lockdowns and restrictions many writers have used that valuable time to produce scripts of excellent quality," he said.

Demonstrating again that the festival is a truly global event, this year's top three finalists are from Australia, Italy and the United Kingdom.

Australian screenwriter Lyndal Simpson has been awarded first place and AUD\$1,000 in prize money for her screenplay *SUN WOMAN, MOON MAN*. After a mass shooting reveals an interracial couple's illicit affair, they flee into the desert and are transported back in time by a lunar eclipse to colonial-era Australia. Addressing themes of modern and colonial racism in Australia, this thrilling screenplay's ingenuity and heart deeply impressed the voting committee.

"Spending the last two years homeschooling young children during multiple COVID-19 lockdowns has been particularly challenging, but writing has been an invaluable outlet that's helped me maintain a positive outlook for the future. Byron Bay International Film Festival is a wonderfully inclusive event that does a fantastic job in bringing together some of the world's most exciting talent. The opportunity provided to showcase your work and connect with others within the film industry is unrivalled in Australia, with the location and welcoming vibe second to none!" Ms Simpson remarked.

Second place has been awarded to Lorenzo Guarnieri from Florence, Italy for his screenplay *THE GREEK PASSAGE*. Following a photojournalist from the Middle East to the Greek islands in pursuit of a ruthless human trafficker and murderer, it deals with themes of trauma and facing personal demons.

In third place is Russell Knight of the UK for his heart-pounding thriller *HORIZON CALLING*. It details the story of a grieving young man who embarks upon an ill-advised sailing trip to find himself embroiled in the violent world of international smuggling.

The Competition is generously supported by Final Draft, the world's leading screenwriting application used by industry giants including J.J. Abrams, Bong Joon Ho, Sofia Coppola, Guillermo Del Toro, Issa Rae and Aaron Sorkin. All three finalists receive the latest screenwriting software from Final Draft, valued at over USD\$700.

The festival extends its thanks to everyone who entered and supported the contest this year, in particular Alex Mankiewicz for her hard work and invaluable insight.

Entries for the 2022 Screenplay Contest will open later this year, with further information provided in coming weeks. For the latest news, visit [www.bbff.com.au](http://www.bbff.com.au) or follow the festival's social media channels.

### ENDS

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#### About BBFF

Established in 2005, the Byron Bay International Film Festival exists to empower creatives and expand audience horizons, fostering connectivity and innovation. Its mission is to provide audiences and global industry professionals access to the best film and immersive experiences which move, motivate and resonate with viewers. Showcasing a mixture of mediums that incorporate the latest cinematic and immersive technologies, it connects passionate filmmakers and audiences while pushing cinema's technological boundaries.

#### Hashtags

#BBFF2021 #ByronBayFilmFestival

## 2021 BYRON BAY INTERNATIONAL SCREENPLAY CONTEST



SECOND PLACE  
LORENZO GUARNIERI



FIRST PLACE  
LYNDAL SIMPSON



THIRD PLACE  
RUSSELL KNIGHT