

CAPITAL
FILM FESTIVAL

2025



OFFICIAL FESTIVAL PROGRAM
OCTOBER 29 – NOVEMBER 2

D=NDY
CINEMAS

capitalfilmfestival.com.au

CAPITAL FILM FESTIVAL

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

In my first year as Festival Director, I am bursting with joy to announce the line-up for this year's CAPITAL FILM FESTIVAL.

Each film has been selected because it stirred something in me that I needed to share. Over the five festival days, I hope you will be shocked and moved; that you will snort laugh and ugly cry; that your brain will be set alight with inspiration and curiosity.

In a world full of turmoil, what connects many of these films is optimism; strength through kindness and compassion; the resilience and hopefulness of young people; finding solace, comradeship, and yourself through art.

More than just the films though, the festival also brings the opportunity to hear filmmakers speak; attend panels, parties and more; to share time with friends; and to bump shoulders with industry.

Film festivals are a special place for collective experiences – where we celebrate, (respectfully) argue, draw a deeper understanding of ourselves and each other, and escape into another world for a little while. And I'm deeply excited and honoured to share this one with you.

KARINA LIBBEY
festival director

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		CLOSING NIGHT \$60

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PRIME MINISTER opening night gala

English

OPENING NIGHT GALA | WEDNESDAY OCT 29

6PM ARRIVAL | 7PM FILM COMMENCE

Dir. Lindsay Utz, Michelle Walshe | 102min | New Zealand | 2025

Garnering accolades and laurels from Sundance to Sydney, we are thrilled to open Capital Film Festival with this intimate and rousing documentary portrait of Jacinda Ardern.

Remarkably candid and vulnerable, we follow the journey of New Zealand's youngest ever Prime Minister – taking up the position at just 37 – as she steered the country through a particularly tumultuous period while also navigating being a mum to a young daughter.

Crafted from news coverage, home videos shot by her partner Clarke Gayford, contemporary interviews, and audio diaries recorded during her time in office, we are given rare access into Ardern's experience, insights and approach to leadership. Her calls for – and demonstration of – kindness, empathy, compassion and a re-humanising of a fractured society shows us what true strength looks like.

**SFF Audience Award Best International Documentary,
Sundance Film Festival Audience Award World Cinema Documentary Competition**

Join us before the screening for our Opening Night Gala,
kicking off the Festival with music, canapes, cocktails from
Ambrosia Distillery and wines from Moppity Vineyards.

ENCORE SCREENING: SATURDAY NOV 1 | 8.30PM



ACT
PREMIERE



NOUVELLE VAGUE

French | Subtitled

THURSDAY OCT 30 | 6.15PM

Encore Screening | Sunday Nov 2 | 12.00pm

Dir. Richard Linklater
105min | France | 2025

With *Nouvelle Vague*, Linklater has written a love letter to the making of Godard's iconic *Breathless*, recreating the essence of the time and cinematic movement, the films' effervescent and kinetic energy is a joyful and evocative watch for lovers of cinema history.

In 1959, after years of writing for Cahiers du Cinéma, Jean-Luc Godard decides he must join his contemporaries in becoming a director, convincing producer George de Beauregard to fund his feature film debut about a gangster and his girlfriend. On set Godard is unpredictable and chaotic, dismissing conventional filmmaking, but slowly bringing even the most stubborn resisters onboard with his new vision...

**Selected: Cannes Film Festival,
Toronto International Film Festival**

THE COLLEANO HEART

English

THURSDAY OCT 30 | 6.45PM

Dir. Pauline Clague
82min | Australia | 2025

Before Hollywood, the circus was the world's grandest stage, and the Colleano Family some of its brightest stars. But to keep their family together as they rose to international stardom, they concealed their Aboriginal identity, joining the little-talked-about 'Hidden Generation' of Aboriginal Australians.

Beautifully told through the family's remarkable home movies, never-before-seen footage, personal interviews and archival recordings, their extraordinary story – spanning multiple countries and significant historical moments – is brought to life as their descendants reunite across continents to reveal the hidden secrets of their circus royalty family.

Selected: Adelaide Film Festival

**Screens with short film
*Entropy***



BREATHLESS

French | Subtitled

SUNDAY NOV 2 | 2.15PM

Dir. Jean-Luc Godard
90min | France | 1960

Relive the masterpiece with this stunning 4K restoration of *Breathless*!

Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless* and the French New Wave changed cinema forever.

A small-time thief steals a car and impulsively murders a motorcycle policeman. Wanted by the authorities, he reunites with a hip American journalism student and attempts to persuade her to run away with him to Italy.

**1960 Berlin Film Festival
Silver Bear for Best Director**



THE SECRET AGENT

Portuguese | Subtitled

THURSDAY OCT 30 | 8.30PM

Dir. Kleber Mendonça Filho | 160min
Brazil, France, NL, Germany | 2025

Brazil, 1977, and 'Marcelo', a university professor, has escaped to Recife, taking refuge from the ruling military dictatorship. Hoping to reunite with his son – and under the colour and excitement of Carnival – he finds safe haven and a new life with a group of outsiders, while deftly dodging rife corruption, surveillance and hitmen the State has sent for him.

Kleber Mendonça Filho's taut political thriller is a visually stylistic feast, that walks a line between wicked humour and wicked horror, presenting a mesmerising portrait of Brazil during a turbulent time.

**Winner: Cannes Film Festival
Best Director, Best Actor,
International Critic's Prize**



SNATCHERS + Q&A

English

FRIDAY OCT 31 | 6.00PM

Dir. Craig Alexander, Shelly Higgs | 81min | Australia | 2025

In a not-so-distant dystopian future, two lifelong friends and hospital orderlies devise a scheme to sell organs from a fresh corpse on the black market. But once they get their Jane Doe onto the makeshift operating table in their isolated warehouse, she unexpectedly opens her eyes...

Snatchers is a unique blend of horror, comedy, social commentary – and even featuring a dance number for good measure – where Hannah McKenzie is excellent as the sharp-witted and mysterious corpse who manipulates her predators into prey as they spiral through paranoia, desperation and questions of morality.

This locally made debut feature boasts a Canberran cast and crew, and we are thrilled to host a **Q&A** following the screening with co-director and producer Shelly Higgs; co-director, writer and actor Craig Alexander; and actor Hannah McKenzie.

Screens with short film *The Punt*

Selected: Raindance Film Festival, Sydney Underground Film Festival

DO IT YOURSELF! INDUSTRY PANEL

THURSDAY OCT 30 | 5.30PM | 60MIN

Making an independent film takes courage, creativity and skill. This panel spotlights filmmakers who carved their own path to the big screen, bypassing traditional hurdles and proving there's more than one way to get your work seen. Their features have screened at festivals including SXSW, Raindance, Sydney, Adelaide, Melbourne and more. – showing that with the right mix of craft and determination, the DIY route is not only possible, but powerful.

Presented by **AFTRS**

MISTRESS DISPELLER

Mandarin | Subtitled

FRIDAY OCT 31 | 6.30PM

**Dir. Elizabeth Lo
94min | China | 2024**

This deeply absorbing documentary allows intimate access into the lives of its subjects, as Mrs Li enlists Wang Zhenxi, a 'mistress dispeller', to break up her husband's affair.

Zhenxi's unique profession, increasingly popular in modern China, is an expensive and at times extreme method for finding resolution. But as Zhenxi ingratiates herself with Mr Li and his girlfriend, and Lo allows conversations to slowly unfold without quick judgement, we come closer to understanding – and even sympathising with – the complexities of their relationships.

**Selected: Venice Film Festival,
Toronto International Film Festival,
SFF, MIFF**

PRESENTED BY
**STRONGER
THAN FICTION**
DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL



AMBROSIA
DISTILLERY



IT WAS JUST AN ACCIDENT

Persian | Subtitled

FRIDAY OCT 31 | 8.30PM

Encore Screening | Sunday Nov 2 | 5.45pm

Dir. Jafar Panahi | 102min
Iran, France, Luxembourg | 2025

Through a chance encounter, Vahid believes he has found the officer who tortured him in prison years ago. Planning revenge, he kidnaps the man, but is stopped short by his conscience and the simple question – can he be sure it's him? Over a chaotic 24 hours, Vahid finds other ex-prisoners to help identify the man, forcing them to face the morality of retribution versus forgiveness. Thrilling, shocking, and with moments of deeply black humour, Panahi's award-winning film is a testament to his humanism, and his defiance of censorship and oppression.



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SONGS INSIDE + Q&A

English

SATURDAY NOV 1 | 1.00PM

Dir. Shalom Almond
93min | Australia | 2024

Follow the transformative six-month journey of a group of women inside an Adelaide prison, a journey where they learn to play the ukulele and write original songs, led by Barkindji singer-songwriter Nancy Bates. The process allows them to share, to be vulnerable, to explore struggles with trauma and addiction, but also to build their confidence and self-worth. Their journey culminates in a historic performance – the largest concert ever staged within an Australian prison – accompanied by the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, demonstrating that even within the complexities of prison life, music can help us heal.

Join us for a Q&A with guests from
the film following the screening.

**Winner: AFF Audience Documentary Award,
SFF Documentary Australia Award**

DJ AHMET

English, Turkish, and Macedonian | Subtitled

SATURDAY NOV 1 | 1.15PM

Dir. Georgi M. Unkovski | 99min
**North Macedonia, Czechia, Serbia,
Croatia | 2025**

Teenager Ahmet dutifully works on his family's farm, and lovingly looks after his younger brother, as they navigate their mother's passing.

A secret rave that Ahmet discovers invigorates his already burgeoning love for music and for the captivating Aya, who has recently returned to the village for an arranged marriage. Together they find freedom in music but are restrained by traditional expectations.

Peppered with intergenerational gaffs, charming encounters, and bold, infatuation-driven decisions, *DJ Ahmet* pits community expectation against individual desires, and celebrates the liberating power of art.

**Winner: Sundance Film Festival
World Cinema Audience Award**



PUT YOUR SOUL ON YOUR HAND AND WALK

English, French, and Arabic | Subtitled

SATURDAY NOV 1 | 3.30PM

Dir. Sepideh Farsi | 110min
France, Iran, Palestine | 2025

Pieced together from video calls between Fatma Hassona and director Sepideh Farsi as Israel's war on Gaza raged, Farsi's film builds a visual diary showing the realities Hassona's people were facing and the suffering being inflicted upon displaced and orphaned children. Despite the horrific conditions, her youthful enthusiasm and optimism delivered a message of dignity and hope.

The day after it was announced the film would premiere at Cannes, an Israeli missile killed Hassona and her family in what was alleged to have been a targeted assassination. This powerful documentary pays tribute to Hassona and the people of Palestine, and reminds us not to look away from injustice.

Selected: MIFF, Toronto
International Film Festival



CACTUS PEARS

Marathi | Subtitled

SATURDAY NOV 1 | 6.00PM

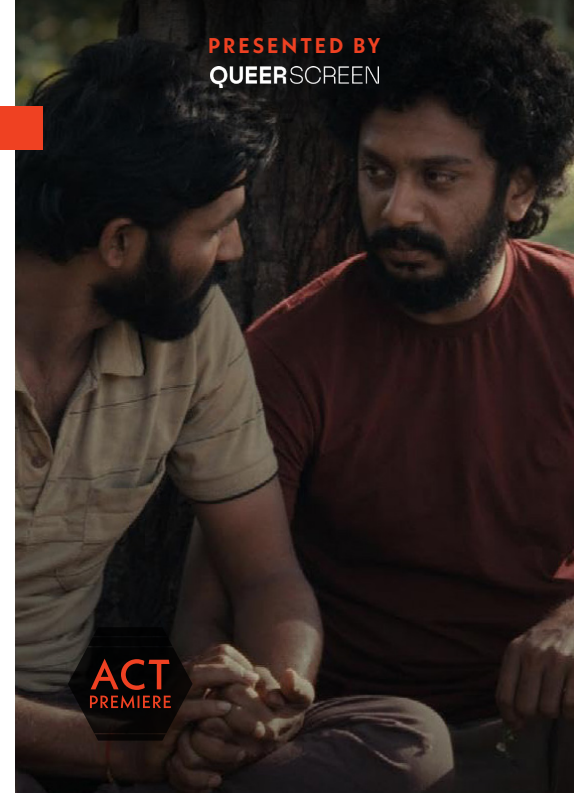
Dir. Rohan Parashuram Kanawade
112min | India, UK, Canada | 2025

Following the death of his father, Anand returns to his family's Maharashtra village for the requisite 10-day period of mourning. Beyond the ceremonial traditions, Anand finds himself under a multitude of cultural pressures, forcing him to hide his sexuality.

Reconnecting with childhood friend Balya – a farmhand who desires the freedom of Anand's life in the bustling city of Mumbai – the pair find solace, and the beginnings of a relationship, in each other.

The first film in Marathi to premiere at Sundance, Kanawade's debut feature is a semi-autobiographical and profoundly subtle exploration of culture, sexuality, urban and rural tensions, and love.

Winner: Sundance Film Festival
Grand Jury



PRESENTED BY
QUEERSCREEN



THE PRESIDENT'S CAKE

English and Arabic | Subtitled

SATURDAY NOV 1 | 3.45PM

Dir. Hasan Hadi
103min | Iraq | 2025

Set in 1990's Iraq, under the iron fist of Saddam Hussein, the population suffers sanctions, extreme poverty and food shortages. Despite this, all are expected to celebrate the President's birthday and Lamia's name is pulled out at the student draw: she is to make a cake for the class in his honour.

Fearing the consequences of failure, Lamia; her grandmother; and their rooster Hindi depart their rural home for the city to – somehow – find and purchase the ingredients.

This rare insight into the culture and time it is set in shows the hardship and resilience of Lamia with a subtle care and an unblinking eye.

Winner: Cannes Film Festival
Caméra d'Or

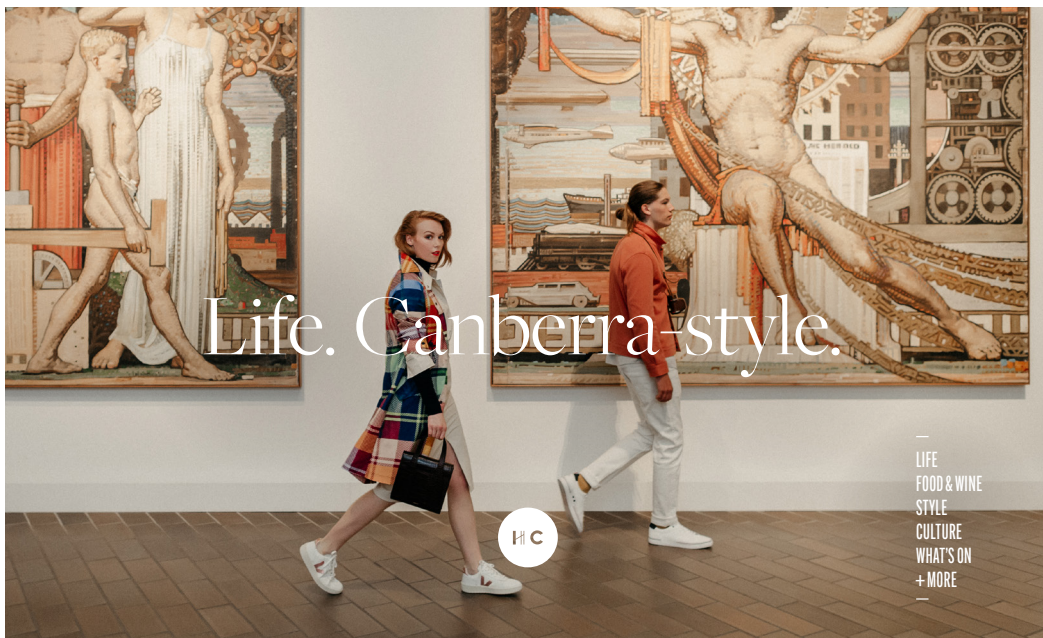
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ACT
PREMIERE

IF I HAD LEGS I'D KICK YOU

English

SATURDAY NOV 1 | 6.00PM

Dir. Mary Bronstein
113min | USA | 2025

Working mum and therapist Linda is straining under the weight of her demanding life, her daughter's medical issues, her hypercritical and absent husband, her challenging clients, and an endless list of errands, when the roof caves in. Literally.

Through a rising sense of claustrophobia and cut through with glimpses of unconditional love, director-writer Mary Bronstein crafts an unflinchingly honest and darkly funny account of modern motherhood, delivered magnificently by Rose Byrne and supported by great turns from Conan O'Brien, A\$AP Rocky and Danielle Macdonald.

Winner: Berlin Film Festival
Best Leading Performance

Screens with short film **THE MEANINGLESS
DAYDREAMS OF AUGIE & CELESTE**



ACT
PREMIERE

MY FATHER'S SHADOW

Nigerian Pidgin, Yoruba, and English | Subtitled

SUNDAY NOV 2 | 1.00PM

Dir. Akinola Davies Jr.
94min | Nigeria, UK | 2025

Young brothers Remi and Akin are whiling away a quiet day in their rural town when their estranged father, Folarin, returns and abruptly whisks them away with him into the city. As he chases money owing to him, the boys are taken across a buzzing and pulsating city on the brink of change: it's 1993, and Nigeria is on the cusp of the promise of new democratic elections, after years of military rule.

This debut feature expertly balances an intimately personal experience of family and an epic time of a tumult in the country, set over one transformative day.

Special Mention:
Cannes Film Festival *Caméra d'Or*



ACT
PREMIERE

SIRÂT

French and Spanish | Subtitled

SATURDAY NOV 1 | 8.30PM

Dir. Oliver Laxe
115min | France, Spain | 2025

Luis and his young son, Esteban, travel through Morocco to a string of rural raves where Luis' missing daughter, Mar, was last seen. There they find a community of outsiders who come to the desert to escape and find release in the music. Joining the ravers for one last party in hopes of finding Mar, their journey becomes something else entirely.

Produced by Pedro Almodovar, *Sirât*, meaning the bridge connecting heaven and hell, explores the depths of grief and existence. Featuring Kangding Ray's award-winning techno soundtrack, this must-see cinematic experience is daring, profoundly shocking filmmaking at its finest.

See it on the biggest screen in Canberra!

Winner: Cannes Film Festival
Jury Prize

THE MYSTERIOUS GAZE OF THE FLAMINGO

Spanish | Subtitled

SUNDAY NOV 2 | 4.15PM

Dir. Diego Céspedes
104min | Germany, France, Belgium,
Spain, Chile | 2025

In a remote Chilean mining town in 1982, 11-year-old orphan Lidia is raised by a fierce and loving queer community who perform at their local cantina, Alaska House.

The violence, fear and hatred the trans women and drag queens experience from the male mining clientele amplifies as they are blamed for a mysterious 'plague' spreading through the town, said to be passed through a single gaze.

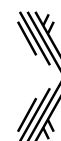
Director Céspedes delivers a beautiful modern Western: at times tender, brutally harsh, and poetically surreal. This Un Certain Regard winner is a touching story of queer strength, and the power of love in many forms.

**Winner: Cannes Film Festival
Un Certain Regard**

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RENTAL FAMILY closing night & party



Japanese and English | Subtitled

CLOSING NIGHT PARTY | SUNDAY NOV 2

6PM ARRIVAL | 7PM FILM COMMENCE

Dir. Hikari | 103min | Japan, USA | 2025

Fresh from its world premiere at TIFF, we close the Festival with *Rental Family*, a charming comedy-drama starring Brendan Fraser as Philip, an American actor living in Tokyo.

Philip's career peaked several years prior with a fantastical toothpaste commercial, until he meets Shinji and joins his company's cast of surrogates: actors who help clients through life's challenges – from impersonating husbands in complex family situations to attending funerals, seemingly to the benefit of all.

However, Philip becomes emotionally attached to some of his clients, and is plagued by the morality of what he and his colleagues are doing, as he also begins to blur the line between his performance and real life.

Funny, witty, emotionally complex, and intelligent, Hikari's debut feature explores the roles we play in each other's lives – and our own – while deftly handling the coming together of cultures. A beautiful love letter to Japan and to life.

Screens with short film *Octopus Banana Hotchpotch*

Selected: Toronto International Film Festival

Join us before the screening for our Closing Night Party
with Japanese-inspired snacks, sake tasting, themed cocktails
from Ambrosia Distillery, wines from Moppity Vineyards,
and immersive activations.



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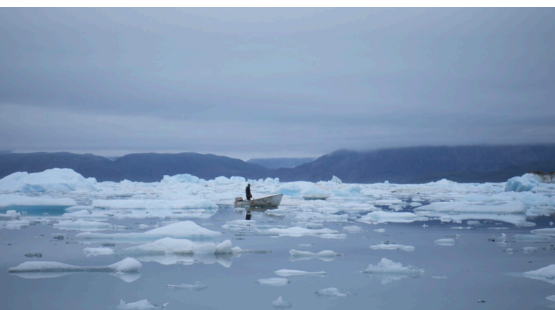
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SHORT FILMS award-winning shorts

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ENTROPY

SCREENS WITH
THE COLLEANO HEART

Dir. Inuk Jørgensen
10min | English, Greenlandic | 2023



THE PUNT

SCREENS WITH
SNATCHERS

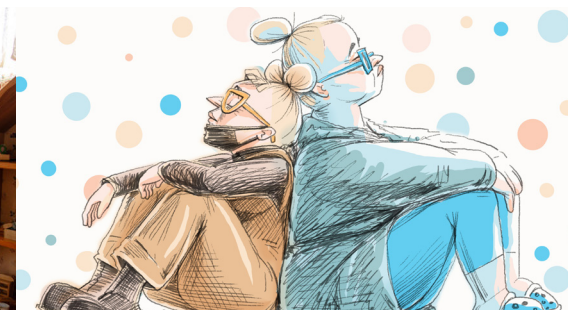
Dir. Rob La Terra
2min | English | 2024



THE MEANINGLESS DAYDREAMS OF AUGIE & CELESTE

SCREENS WITH
IF I HAD LEGS I'D KICK YOU

Dir. Pernell Marsden
7min | English | 2024



OCTOPUS BANANA HOTCHPOTCH

SCREENS WITH
RENTAL FAMILY

Dir. Milanka Fabančič
8min | Slovenian | 2023



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CAPITAL FILM FESTIVAL PROGRAM GUIDE 2025

WEDNESDAY OCT 29

Prime Minister + Opening Night Gala

TIME

7.00pm

LENGTH

102min

RATING

M

THURSDAY OCT 30

DO IT YOURSELF! Industry Panel

5.30pm

60min

All Ages

Nouvelle Vague

6.15pm

105min

Unclassified 18+

The Colleano Heart

6.45pm

82min

All Ages

The Secret Agent

8.30pm

160min

Unclassified 18+

FRIDAY OCT 31

Snatchers + Q&A

6.00pm

81min

Unclassified 18+

Mistress Dispeller

6.30pm

94min

Unclassified 15+

It Was Just An Accident

8.30pm

102min

Unclassified 15+

SATURDAY NOV 1

Songs Inside + Q&A

1.00pm

93min

Unclassified 15+

DJ Ahmet

1.15pm

99min

Unclassified 15+

Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk

3.30pm

110min

Unclassified 18+

The President's Cake

3.45pm

103min

Unclassified 15+

Cactus Pears

6.00pm

112min

Unclassified 18+

If I Had Legs I'd Kick You

6.00pm

113min

Unclassified 18+

Sirât

8.30pm

115min

Unclassified 18+

Prime Minister – Encore

8.30pm

102min

M

SUNDAY NOV 2

Nouvelle Vague – Encore

12.00pm

105min

Unclassified 18+

My Father's Shadow

1.00pm

94min

Unclassified 15+

Breathless

2.15pm

90min

PG

The Mysterious Gaze of the Flamingo

4.15pm

104min

Unclassified 18+

It Was Just An Accident – Encore

5.45pm

102min

Unclassified 15+

Rental Family + Closing Night Party

7.00pm

103min

Unclassified 15+

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