

Big and small to face off at AFIs

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Article from: AAP

KATHERINE FIELD
July 25, 2008 11:50am

HOLLYWOOD hit *Death Defying Acts* and a small production of *Hamlet* made for just \$20,000, are among a broad range of Australian films in contention for this year's AFI Awards.

Twenty-five films are under consideration for nomination - 10 more than last year.

Thanks to a broadening of criteria, for the first time many low budget films have made the cut.

They include *The Tragedy of Hamlet Prince of Denmark*, thriller *The Jammed*, *Bitter and Twisted*, Men's Group and comedy *Rats and Cats*.

On the big budget production end are period epic *Children of the Silk Road* and Gillian Armstrong's *Death Defying Acts*, which stars Catherine Zeta-Jones and Guy Pearce and cost nearly \$20 million to make.

AFI general manager Damian Trehwella said this year's films were more diverse than ever and included dramas, comedies and thrillers.

The 2008 awards have been expanded to include feature films made with a budget of less than \$1.5 million that have been exhibited in any capital city.

Lower budget films had been included because improvements in technology had allowed better films to be made for less, he said.

"We're noticing a real boom in production at the lower end, independent film makers are starting to make more and more films as technology provides them the opportunity to do that with less resources," Trehwella told AAP.

"We're finding less and less is the quality of the film linked to the budget in the film.

"Until recently technology didn't allow you to make really good films for much less money.

Mid range budget films in contention include a movie about mental illness *The Black Balloon*, Matthew Newton's *Three Blind Mice* and Joel and Nash Edgerton's thriller *The Square*.

The crocodile horror film *Black Water*, which has been a hit overseas but would not have made the cut last year due to its limited release, is in contention this year.

The 25 feature films, and 12 non-features, will be available for the public to see from August at special screenings, where filmmakers and cast will mix with the audience.

The first screenings will be in Melbourne on August 19. They will also go to Canberra, Adelaide, Sydney, Brisbane, Perth and Hobart.

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