



Press release:

Key features of 2009 Reel Earth environmental film festival

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Over 62 documentary films and animations from 13 countries are set to make their premieres in New Zealand during the 5th season of the Reel Earth Environmental Film Festival. The films cover a range of genre ranging from hard hitting social justice through to journeys of breath-taking natural beauty.

The films will be screened in Palmerston North starting with a Gala Opening, featuring celebrities, music, awards and, of course, film.

The Opening night is on Saturday 16 May at the Regent Theatre and will gala evening will be hosted by actress Robyn Malcolm, famous for playing the role of Cheryl West in *Outrageous Fortune* and a keen environmental campaigner. The entertainment will include live music from Raglan-based singer songwriter Anna Coddington.

The opening evening will also include announcement of this year's winning films and guest appearance by visiting international film directors.

The Festival Director, Brent Barrett, said the decision to hold a gala opening at the Regent was made to broaden the appeal of the festival.

"While most people care deeply about the planet, we know we're competing with other activities in busy lives so we're going high profile, high impact with a gala opening complete with celebrity star power and live music. We aim to attract the nation's attention to the premieres of these outstanding global films"

The budget of these independent films has dramatically increased this year, topping \$50 million, with a corresponding increase in quality. Heading the big budget titles is the \$10M *Wild Oceans*, shot on large format off the wild southern coast of West Africa.

Another high profile title is Sundance nominee *Crude*, the latest offering from award winning director Joe Berlinger, taking the viewer front and centre in the high-stakes chase to bring big oil companies to justice in the Amazon rainforests.

A number of films have strong connection with New Zealand including the epic new adventure of Tara, formerly Sir Peter Blake's ship, in *Tara - Journey to the Heart of the Climate Machine*.

Screenings of the award winning films will start on Sunday 17 May at Downtown Cinema and continue through to 30 May. See the full program and film synopses at www.reearth.org.nz . Tickets to the gala opening are available from TicketDirect in April. Programs and tickets for films are available from Downtown Cinemas.