



BFI Flare: London LGBT Film Festival 30th anniversary

Opening Night - World Premiere

The Pass, directed by Ben A. Williams, starring Russell Tovey and Arinze Kene



London, Thursday 11th February 2016. The BFI is thrilled to announce that the opening night gala of the 30th edition of BFI Flare: London LGBT Film Festival (Wed 16th March 2016 at London's Odeon Leicester Square) will be the world premiere of THE PASS, a new British drama directed by first-time feature filmmaker Ben A. Williams, starring Russell Tovey (*Looking, Being Human, The History Boys*) and Arinze Kene. Adapted for the screen by John Donnelly from his hit play first presented at the Royal Court Theatre, THE PASS is produced by renowned British film producer Duncan Kenworthy (*Four Weddings and a Funeral, Notting Hill, Love Actually, The Eagle*).

THE PASS is the story of three very different nights over 10 years in the life of a Premier League Footballer. Jason (Russell Tovey) is at the beginning of his career, and on the night before his first big international match he and long-time friend and team-mate Ade (Arinze Kene) share a hotel room, trying to beat the inevitable pre-match tensions with locker-room banter and teenage high-jinks. Out of nowhere Jason kisses Ade. The emotional repercussions of this pass, and the decisions that follow on and off the pitch, have a major impact on every aspect of the public and private lives of both men across the next decade.

The cast includes Hollyoaks heart-throb Nico Mirallegro and theatre and TV actress Lisa McGrillis.

Tovey, McGrillis and Mirallegro all reprise the roles they originally performed on stage. Michael Billington in The Guardian praised the play's *"sharp wit and visceral power"* and especially Tovey's *"commanding performance"*... *"What Tovey captures superbly, apart from Jason's physical fitness, is his shift from a nervy but determined teenager into a...figure who has paid the price of fame."* Jim White in The Telegraph wrote that *"in Russell Tovey's turn as football superstar Jason, it delivers quite an astonishing central performance"*.

Duncan Kenworthy said *"As a season ticket holder of a major Premier League Club, I know just how much interest there is in the question of why no currently-playing Premier League player has come out – or has felt able to come out - as gay. THE PASS is by no means an issue film, but John Donnelly's wonderful screenplay puts very handsome flesh on the bones of this modern anomaly, imagining the pain, passion and complexity of the lives of elite footballers always inches away from fame or failure, and wondering whether honesty is worth the price."*

Clare Stewart, BFI Head of Festivals, said *"Featuring compelling performances and a smart, punchy script, THE PASS boldly tackles a forbidden topic, outlining one man's struggle to embrace his sexuality within the hyper masculine and very public world of professional football. We are excited to be launching the 30th edition of BFI Flare – a Festival that prides itself on a programme which captivates hearts, bodies and minds – with an impressive and very topical British directorial debut."*

NOTES TO EDITORS

BFI Flare: London LGBT Film Festival is the UK's longest running LGBT film event. It began in 1986 as Gay's Own Pictures. By its 3rd edition it was tagged the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival and since then has grown to become the largest LGBT film event in the UK, and its most anticipated. The Festival changed its name to BFI Flare was 2014 to reflect the increasing diversity of the audience. Last year's festival saw admissions of over 23,000. The festival is programmed by Jason Barker, Jay Bernard, Michael Blyth, Brian Robinson and Emma Smart, led by Deputy Head of Festivals, Tricia Tuttle and Head of Festivals, Clare Stewart.

The full programme of BFI Flare: London LGBT Film Festival will include 50 feature films, an expanded industry programme, selected films on BFI Player VOD service, a series of special events and archive screenings. fiveFilms4freedom will see Flare offer five LGBT short films for free across the world and promoted through the British Council's global networks. The full programme will be available on Thursday 18th February 2016. The festival runs 16th March – 27th March 2016. www.bfi.org.uk/Flare

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Images available for press use: www.image.net/BFI/Flare 2016

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About the BFI

The BFI is the lead organisation for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK - investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world

Accenture and the BFI

The festival is delighted to continue its long term relationship with Accenture and in 2016 we welcome them back as Principal Sponsor. We also look forward to welcoming back a number of other long term supporters to the Festival, to be announced.

Accenture is an Official Partner of the BFI and Main Sponsor of the BFI London Film Festival in partnership with American Express®. 2016 marks 10 years of Accenture's association with BFI Flare: London LGBT Film Festival and the longevity of this partnership demonstrates their longstanding commitment to both the LGBT Community and to supporting inclusion and diversity in the workplace, with the festival providing a perfect backdrop to showcase these values.

As an employer of choice for LGBT people, Accenture has been named as a Stonewall Star Performer in 2016 for the second year running. This award recognises Accenture as one of nine UK organisations that has consistently demonstrated exemplary practice to support lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender staff and who lead the development of best practice in Britain and around the world.

Since 2012, Accenture has provided value-in-kind consulting to support the BFI fulfil its vision for the future. Most notably this involved the BFI's ambition to increase access to its National Film and Television Archive. The BFI also worked with Accenture experts on how a BFI branded Player could serve a growing video-on-demand audience. More recently, Accenture has helped the BFI to explore and undertake measures that deliver energy, carbon and cost reductions, supporting its continued growth in a sustainable way. Accenture and the BFI will explore new digital solutions in order to enable more innovative and efficient capabilities that will benefit the film industry, staff, and audiences alike.

Accenture is proud to continue to support the BFI and its vision for the future of UK film, including driving greater understanding, appreciation and access to film heritage in the UK.

<http://www.accenture.com/bfi>



About Accenture

Accenture is a leading global professional services company, providing a broad range of services and solutions in strategy, consulting, digital, technology and operations. Combining unmatched experience and specialized skills across more than 40 industries and all business functions – underpinned by the world’s largest delivery network – Accenture works at the intersection of business and technology to help clients improve their performance and create sustainable value for their stakeholders. With approximately 373,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries, Accenture drives innovation to improve the way the world works and lives. Visit us at www.accenture.com.