



UNDER EMBARGO WEDNESDAY 29TH MARCH, 9AM LONDON

31ST EDITION OF BFI FLARE: LONDON LGBT FILM FESTIVAL CLOSES

- REACHED UK AUDIENCES OF OVER 27,000 AT BFI SOUTHBANK AND BFI PLAYER
- INDUSTRY AND FILMMAKER DELEGATE NUMBERS INCREASE
- INDUSTRY PROGRAMME DEVELOPS UK LGBT FILM TALENT
- #FiveFilms4Freedom INCREASES GLOBAL REACH
- BFI FLARE TO HAVE PRESENCE AT THIS YEAR'S PRIDE IN LONDON PARADE

LONDON – Wednesday 29th March 2017

BFI Flare: London LGBT Film Festival – the UK's leading LGBT film event, celebrates a hugely successful 31st edition, launching a number of new works as part of a diverse film programme to strong audiences. The Festival also saw an increase in industry and filmmaker delegate numbers and wider global reach for FiveFilms4Freedom.

The festival came to an end on Sunday 26th March with the Closing Night Gala, the International Premiere of **SIGNATURE MOVE** with director Jennifer Reeder and producer, screenwriter and lead actress Fawzia Mirza in attendance. The cross-cultural romance about a Pakistani Muslim lesbian living in Chicago with her recently widowed mother delighted audiences. Over the ten-days of the Festival, BFI Flare screened 58 features and 80 short films and reached UK audiences of over 27,000 at BFI Southbank and through BFI Player.

Highlights of BFI Flare in 2017 included the Opening Night World Premiere of **AGAINST THE LAW**. Dir. Fergus O'Brien. Lead actors Daniel Mays, Mark Gatiss and Charlie Creed-Miles & the real-life contributors to the film were present on the night. The BBC Two film production is a sensitive adaptation of Peter Wildeblood's bestselling memoir, telling the story of his affair with a handsome serviceman, and the subsequent court case which led to his imprisonment and eventually influenced the 1967 Sexual Reforms Act.

Special Presentations at BFI Flare included Clyde Peterson's return to the festival with the European premiere of their captivating semi-autobiographical animated road trip **TORREY PINES**, featuring a live score on the night. Director Vincent Gagliostro and lead actor Zachary Booth visited the festival for the World Premiere of the passionate and inspirational **AFTER LOUIE**, which also stars Alan Cumming. BFI Flare also screened the World Premiere of

DIFFERENT FOR GIRLS (dir. Campbell X), a sassy, sexy lesbian web series set in West London, with principle cast in attendance, including Rachel Shelley (**THE L WORLD**) and Guinevere Turner (**AMERICAN PSYCHO** and **GO FISH**).

BFI Flare 2017 also saw a substantial increase in accreditation, including 187 Visiting Filmmakers and 381 Press and Industry delegates. The Festival offered an expanded industry programme alongside talks with an LGBT focus on development, production and distribution with speakers including author Sarah Waters (**THE HANDMAIDEN**, based on her novel *Fingersmith*), film and TV director Jamie Babbit (**THE L WORD, BUT I'M A CHEERLEADER**) & BFI Film Fund Director Ben Roberts. There was a 12% increase in industry and student delegates from 2016.

Tricia Tuttle, Deputy Head of Festivals, BFI said:

“BFI Flare: London LGBT Film Festival offered quality international film programming with an extremely strong edition in 2017, including a number of key World, International and European Premieres in our Special Presentation section. We also continued to identify and develop UK LGBT filmmaking talent with our BFINETWORK@FLARE Mentorships in partnership with BAFTA. That we had 24 impressive UK short films in the Festival is also an indicator of strength in depth and a truly thrilling emerging generation of new talent”.

187 filmmakers represented 13 countries, covering global LGBT cultures including Iraq, India, France, Austria, Indonesia, Ireland, UK, Brazil, Canada. Among the many other filmmakers in attendance were: Jakob M Erwa (**CENTRE OF MY WORLD**), John Butler (**HANDSOME DEVIL**), Maura Anderson (**HEARTLAND**), Chris McKim (**OUT OF IRAQ**), Marco Berger (**TAEKWONDO**), Stephanie Fabrizi (**BELOW HER MOUTH**), Marcelo Caetano (**BODY ELECTRIC**), Nathan Adloff (**MILES**), Tom E Brown (**PUSHING DEAD**), Dante Alencastre (**RAISING ZOEY**), Ashley Joiner (**PRIDE?**), Morgan White (**THE SLIPPERS**), Mark Kenneth Woods & Mike Yerxa (**TWO SOFT THINGS, TWO HARD THINGS**), Deva Smith (**SEAT IN SHADOW**) and Katharina Lampert, Cordula Thym (**FTWTF: FEMALE TO WHAT THE FUCK**) and Hyun-ju Lee (**OUR LOVE STORY**).

For the third time, BFI Flare and the British Council made five short films available to audiences worldwide as part of the ground-breaking #FiveFilms4Freedom initiative. The films were free to watch online during the Festival period and were promoted under the banner, ‘Love is a Human Right’ in solidarity with LGBT across the globe. As the world’s first – and widest reaching – digital celebration of LGBT film, this year’s #FiveFilms4Freedom were viewed in 202 countries, principalities and protectorates including Yemen, Uganda, Afghanistan, Iraq, Russia, China. Overall, there were more than 1,700,000 views of the film around the world.

For the first time – and in commemoration of the fact that 2017 marks 50 years since the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in the UK – all five of the selected films were British. The collaboration was launched with a high-profile reception at the Houses of Parliament with Flare filmmakers and delegates in attendance.

Also marking the 50th anniversary of 1967 Sexual Offences Act, the Festival hosted a day of free presentations and discussions on **Fifty Years of Queer History through the Moving Image and Beyond**, a unique afternoon of illustrated talks, screenings and storytelling from a wide range of historians, archivists and individuals who had lived through the period.

UPCOMING

In July and August 2017, BFI Southbank will continue to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the beginning of decriminalisation with **Gross Indecency**, a season exploring the pioneering - and sometimes problematic - depictions of LGBT lives in British film and TV in the years immediately before and after the 1967 Sexual Offences Act. Spanning two decades, from the earliest surviving gay-themed television drama (*South*, 1959) to Britain's first explicitly gay feature film (*Nighthawks*, 1978), the season encompasses opinion-changing classics like *Victim* (1961) and *The Naked Civil Servant* (1975) alongside early milestones in queer cinema (*The World Ten Times Over*, 1963; *The Leather Boys*, 1964) and underground experimenta (*Dream A40*, 1965). The main programme, including special events and guest speakers will be announced in due course.

Furthermore, the BFI will be taking part in the PRIDE in London Parade on 8th July for the first time with its own open top double decker bus to join in the annual celebrations.

For further details about BFI FLARE please visit

www.bfi.org.uk/flare

BFI Flare: London LGBT Film Festival was programmed by Jay Bernard, Michael Blyth, Zorian Clayton, Brian Robinson and Emma Smart, led by Tricia Tuttle, Deputy Head of Festivals and Clare Stewart, BFI Head of Festivals.

PRESS CONTACTS

Chris Lawrance, Publicity Consultant, BFI Flare
Chris@chrislawrance.com / Mob: 07967 647726

Victoria Millington, Press & PR Co-ordinator and Flare Accreditation, BFI
Victoria.millington@bfi.org.uk / Tel: 020 7957 4833

Elizabeth Dunk, Press Office Assistant, BFI Elizabeth.dunk@bfi.org.uk / Tel: 020 7957 8986

Images available for press use: www.image.net > BFI > Flare 2017

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 in 2014 to reflect the increasing

diversity of its films, filmmakers and audience. The festival is programmed by Jay Bernard, Michael Blyth, Zorian Clayton, Brian Robinson and Emma Smart, led by Deputy Head of Festivals, Tricia Tuttle and Head of Festivals, Clare Stewart.

About the BFI

The BFI is the lead body 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
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

The BFI is a Government arm's-length body and distributor of Lottery funds for film. The BFI serves a public role which covers the cultural, creative and economic aspects of film in the UK. It delivers this role:

- As the UK-wide organisation for film, a charity core funded by Government
- By providing Lottery and Government funds for film across the UK
- By working with partners to advance the position of film in the UK.

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter. The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger CBE.