



**33<sup>rd</sup> EDITION OF BFI FLARE: LONDON LGBTQ+ FILM FESTIVAL CLOSES WITH INCREASED ATTENDANCE & HIGHEST EVER DIGITAL REACH**  
**GUESTS INCLUDED GEMMA ARTERTON, TERENCE STAMP & JORDAN STEPHENS**  
**AND SPEAKERS TOMER HEYMANN, PRATIBHA PARMAR, KRISTIENE CLARKE & SAVANNAH KNOOP**

**LONDON – Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2019:** BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival – the UK’s leading LGBTQ+ film event – celebrated an extremely successful 33<sup>rd</sup> edition with increased audiences and press and industry delegates. Overall, the Festival, which opened with the UK Premiere of Chanya Button’s **VITA & VIRGINIA** and closed with the European Premiere of Justin Kelly’s **JT LEROY**, saw 27.3K attendances, which includes 25.5K attendances at screenings and talks and 1.8K attendances at BFI Flare’s packed Club Nights. BFI Flare Facebook Live launched with 160k viewers and through the global campaign **#FiveFilms4Freedom**, in partnership with the British Council, BFI Flare reached worldwide audiences who have viewed the five featured short films over 3.9 million times online.

This year BFI Flare welcomed 157 filmmaker guests from 23 countries worldwide, 279 industry delegates and 148 press delegates. 1,052 guests attended BFI Flare industry events over the eleven-day festival and BFI Flare’s popular Press & Industry screenings also enjoyed a 74% higher attendance than 2018, with 306 press and industry delegates.

The Festival offered an exciting industry programme alongside **The Makers** a series of one-to-one interviews with individuals who have made a major contribution to LGBTQ+ film and television. Participating speakers included award-winning documentary filmmaker Tomer Heymann (*Jonathan Agassi Saved My Life, Who’s Gonna Love Me Now?*), activist and filmmaker, Pratibha Parmar (*Alice Walker: Beauty in Truth, Warrior Marks*) and director and producer Kristiene Clarke (*Give Stigma The Index Finger, The Truth About Gay Sex, Sex Change: Shock! Horror! Probe!*). The Industry Programme also included events such as **Young Adult: Queer Teens on Screen, with Forever Young Film Club** and **In Search of the Truth: Filming Queer Biographies, with Directors UK** with speakers Elizabeth Karlsen (*Colette*), Robert Anderson Clift and Hillary Demmon (*Making Montgomery Clift*) and Melissa Fish (Founder, Paper & Chain).

For the first time, the Festival reached 160k viewers through the BFI Flare Facebook channel with specially produced **BFI Flare Live** events for Opening and Closing Nights. Made possible by Creative Europe funding, BFI Flare Live is a 12-month project using Facebook Live to generate exciting new online content and spark debate and meaningful interaction with audiences.

For the fifth year, BFI Flare and the British Council made five LGBTQ+ short films from the BFI Flare programme available to global audiences with the ground-breaking **#FiveFilms4Freedom** LGBTQ+ digital campaign. The project allows audiences worldwide to show solidarity with LGBTQ+ communities living in countries where human rights are restricted and marked with a high profile reception at the Houses of Parliament with BFI Flare filmmakers and industry in attendance. Over the past week, audiences worldwide in countries from Sudan to Uganda have viewed the five films over 3.9 million times across multiple online channels, up from 2.5 million views last year.

**Michael Blyth, BFI Flare Senior Programmer** said: “With BFI Flare Live and **#FiveFilms4Freedom**, the Festival is now reaching more people than ever. It is so important for us to be able to share the magic of BFI Flare with audiences outside of London, and these digital initiatives give millions of people worldwide the chance to access queer film and be part of the conversation.”

Highlights of BFI Flare in 2019 included the Opening Night UK Premiere of **VITA & VIRGINIA**, the true story of the passionate relationship between literary trailblazer Virginia Woolf (Elizabeth Debicki) and the enigmatic aristocrat Vita Sackville-West (Gemma Arterton). Director Chanya Button’s sophomore feature following *Burn, Burn, Burn*, was attended on Opening Night by Button and lead actress Gemma Arterton.

The Festival’s Closing Gala was the European Premiere of Justin Kelly’s **JT LEROY**. Powered by superb performances from Laura Dern and Kristen Stewart, the film is adapted from Savannah Knoop’s memoir *Girl Boy Girl: How I Became JT LeRoy* and tells the captivating real life story of the most compelling literary ‘hoax’ of our generation. Justin Kelly was joined by Savannah Knoop on BFI Flare’s Closing Night.

The Centrepiece Screening of the Festival was the UK Premiere of feature documentary **JONATHAN AGASSI SAVED MY LIFE**, introduced by acclaimed filmmaker Tomer Heymann, capturing both the highs and the lows of one of the world’s most successful gay porn stars, Jonathan Agassi, in an illuminating portrait. Standout events included **OPERATION SPANNER: THEN AND NOW**, about the infamous Spanner trial, as explored in two short films, **LASTING MARKS** (Dir. Charlie Lyne) and **BLUE BOYS** (Dir. Stuart Marshall), and followed by an in-depth discussion; **LETHAL LESBIANS**, a talk about the screen’s most ruthless lesbians and bisexuals; **TRANS CREATIVE AT THE MOVIES**, a panel event that ‘trans upped’ film history by repositioning mainstream movie moments; and an intimate reading and discussion with Savannah Knoop in the BFI Reuben Library in support of the Closing Night Gala **JT LEROY** and the re-release of Knoop’s memoir upon which the film is based.

157 filmmaker guests represented 23 countries, covering global LGBTQ+ cultures in Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Guatemala, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Lebanon, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden, UK, USA and Vietnam. Among the many filmmakers and cast members in attendance were: the legendary Terence Stamp on hand to introduce the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary screening of **THE ADVENTURES OF PRISCILLA, QUEEN OF THE DESERT, TELL IT TO THE BEES** director Annabel Jankel, alongside Lauren Lyle, Emun Elliot and Steven Robertson from her cast, Deborah Abate (**NO BOX FOR ME. AN INTERSEX STORY**), Gaston Re (**THE BLOND ONE**), Thom Fitzgerald (**SPLINTERS**), Vicente Alves do Ó (**SUNBURN**), Rodney Evans (**VISION PORTRAITS**), Sheila Munyiva (**RAFIKI**), PJ Raval (**CALL HER GANDA**), Frédéric Tcheng (**HALSTON**), Li Cheng (**JOSE**), Fiona Dawson (**TRANSMILITARY**), Robert Anderson Clift & Hillary Demmon (**MAKING MONTGOMERY CLIFT**), Laura Madalinski (**TWO IN THE BUSH: A LOVE STORY**) and director Jamie Patterson and his cast from **TUCKED**, Derren Nesbit, April Pearson and Jordan Stephens.

For further details about BFI FLARE, please visit: [www.bfi.org.uk/flare](http://www.bfi.org.uk/flare)

BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival was programmed by Jay Bernard, Michael Blyth, Zorian Clayton, Brian Robinson and Emma Smart, led by Tricia Tuttle, Director, BFI Festivals.

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## NOTES TO EDITORS

**BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival** is the UK's longest running LGBTQ+ film event. It began in 1986 as Gay's Own Pictures. By its 3<sup>rd</sup> edition it was tagged the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival and since then has grown to become the largest LGBTQ+ 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 Festivals Director, Tricia Tuttle.

The full programme of BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival included 53 feature films, an expanded industry programme, selected films on BFI Player VOD service, a series of special events and archive screenings. fiveFilms4freedom saw Flare offer five LGBT short films for free across the world and promoted through the British Council's global networks. The full programme was made available on 20<sup>th</sup> February. The festival ran from 21<sup>st</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup> March [www.bfi.org.uk/Flare](http://www.bfi.org.uk/Flare)

## BFI Flare Sponsors

In 2019 the Festival is delighted to introduce a number of new supporters and welcome back some of its most valued and enduring partners.

We are delighted to welcome back Pureland Foundation as our Main Supporter for the second year. Such significant and continued support we could not value more highly. We could not deliver BFI Flare without the continuing support of the Department for Digital, Culture Media & Sport. American Airlines are flying back in to ensure we can continue to bring some of the very best talent to the UK. The May Fair Hotel celebrate an amazing tenth year accommodating the Festival's special guests. We are thrilled to announce Mishcon de Reya and Amazon Prime Video who this year both join as new Official Partners. We would also like to thank our returning special screening sponsors, the Interbank LGBT Forum for their continued support of the Festival and we're particularly delighted to see a few new organisations supporting amongst their number. And special thanks to our Media partners Attitude and Diva, and our Distribution

Partner Impact. Similarly our sincere thanks go out to our new and returning in kind partners: Barefoot Wines, Dalston's Soda, Konditor & Cook, Maltsmiths and Pink Pepper Gin, and lastly, but by no means least, our other hugely important Funding Contributors, Venue Partners and Community Partners.

### **The Pureland Foundation**

The Pureland Foundation supports institutions, charities and programmes that promote social, spiritual and emotional wellness, with an emphasis on art and music.

Pure Land in Buddhism refers to the realm of higher consciousness, peace and harmony. Although not based in any religion, the Foundation seeks to create and promote the interconnectedness and sense of "pure land" in our daily lives.

The Pureland Foundation was founded by Bruno Wang, a Chinese philanthropist, cultural patron and businessman. The Foundation reflects Mr. Wang's well-established interests in meditation, holistic wellbeing, art and music.

[www.purelandfoundation.com](http://www.purelandfoundation.com)

### **About the BFI**

The BFI is the UK's lead organisation for film, television and the moving image. It is a cultural charity that:

- Curates and presents the greatest international public programme of World Cinema for audiences; in cinemas, at festivals and online
- Cares for the BFI National Archive – the most significant film and television archive in the world
- Actively seeks out and supports the next generation of filmmakers
- Works with Government and Industry to make the UK the most creatively exciting and prosperous place to make film internationally

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