

26 March 2013

## BFI Fellowship Award to John Boorman

Last night, 25th March, Director **John Boorman** was presented with a **BFI Fellowship** – the highest accolade that the nation's leading organisation for film can award. The Fellowship was presented to John on-stage at BFI Southbank in front of a public audience and invited guests by Amanda Nevill, BFI CEO and actress Sinéad Cusack, John was interviewed on-stage by Michel Ciment. This event launches a major retrospective of his work which will continue at BFI Southbank until 30 April.

Speaking at the presentation last night at BFI Southbank John Boorman said: *'I'm very grateful for this, the BFI has meant a great deal in my life. More than 60 years ago I haunted the place. It's where I saw all the great silent movies and it's always been an immense part of my life. Sight & Sound has always been my bible and I read it every month, and I've written for it too. I'm very, very grateful...I thank the BFI for this Fellowship and for everything that it does and I wish it well.'*

Amanda Nevill said: *'John Boorman is one of the most influential film directors to come out of the UK and we are thrilled to be honouring such a film legend. The presentation of the BFI Fellowship is testament to John's inspired body of work in television and film and across many genres; it is truly visionary. His legacy to date has rightly brought him international recognition as an independent filmmaker with a rare voice that continues to enthral and delight audiences.'*

Presenting John Boorman with his Fellowship, Sinéad Cusack said: *'When John came to Ireland it meant a huge amount to us because he embraced us and he stayed. He did something extraordinary, he nurtured young talent, he promoted directors, he wrote, he directed in our country. That is a huge part of why I think he is a genius and a hero; it was his passion and his politics and his poetic vision and his unpredictability – he's a wonder!'*

The BFI Fellowship is awarded by the BFI Board of Governors and it is presented for outstanding achievement in film and television. Previous recipients include Ralph Fiennes, David Cronenberg, Dame Judi Dench, Isabelle Huppert, Tim Burton and Martin Scorsese. The full list is a roll-call of the leading lights of the world of film and television.

According to film critic Philip French, John Boorman is *'one of the greatest filmmakers this country has produced'*. He began his career as a documentary director for the BBC

with programmes such as *Citizen 63* (BBC, 1963) and *The Newcomers* (BBC, 1964). He went on to direct *Catch Us If You Can* (1965), a showcase of the **Dave Clark Five**, which caught the attention and support of **Pauline Kael**. His major breakthrough in the US was the seminal *Point Blank* (1967) – released on 29 March and screening in an Extended Run at BFI Southbank – which gained him great critical acclaim and has become a classic title in crime cinema. Subsequent films include the Oscar-nominated *Deliverance* (1972), the mythical *Excalibur* (1981), the autobiographical *Hope and Glory* (1987), that won Boorman three **BAFTA** and three Oscar nominations, and *The General* (1998).

An exhibition of artefacts from Boorman's personal archive is now on display in the Mezzanine, and to complement this season there will be an exclusive run of *Me and Me Dad* (2011), an intimate insight of life in the Boorman family, directed by John's daughter **Katrine Boorman** (who herself will appear in conversation at BFI Southbank on 27 March, following a preview of her film). This programme of John Boorman's talents as a filmmaker provides the perfect opportunity to remind or familiarise audiences with his work. And with a new project in development now is the perfect time to reflect on the amazing and diverse career of one of the UK's most daring directors.

#### **Note to Editors:**

The Fellowship of the British Film Institute was created in 1983 to coincide with the BFI's 50th anniversary. On that occasion the British film industry gathered in the Guildhall for a televised event at which the first group of Fellows were created - Marcel Carné, David Lean, Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger, Satyajit Ray and Orson Welles.

Since its creation, the BFI Fellowship has been awarded to key figures in British cinema including Peggy Ashcroft, Dirk Bogarde, Alec Guinness, Maggie Smith, Laurence Olivier, Vanessa Redgrave, Mike Leigh and Helena Bonham Carter. Also recognised have been such film industry luminaries as Jack Cardiff, Sydney Samuelson and Jeremy Thomas, and some of the giants of world cinema, including Michelangelo Antonioni, Abbas Kiarostami, Akira Kurosawa, Jeanne Moreau, Elem Klimov and Bernardo Bertolucci.

The BFI Fellowship also celebrates achievement in the world of television with such names as Alan Yentob, Jeremy Isaacs, David Rose, Michael Parkinson, Lynda La Plante, Lord Bernstein and Verity Lambert all receiving the award.

Since 1983 a total of 74 Fellowships have been awarded.

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#### **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

There's more to discover about film and television through the BFI. Our world-renowned archival collections, cinemas, festivals, films, publications and learning resources are here to inspire you.

**\*\*\* PICTURE DESK \*\*\***

**A selection of images for journalistic use in promoting BFI Southbank screenings can be found at [www.image.net](http://www.image.net) under BFI / BFI Southbank / April 2013 / John Boorman**