

BFI LAUNCHES NEW PITCHING SESSIONS FOR UK DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKERS

- *Documentary filmmakers to pitch for production funding from the BFI Film Fund, bringing valuable expert feedback directly to selected applicants*
- *BFI Film Fund works with Sheffield Doc/Fest to bring twice yearly public pitching sessions to Sheffield and London*

LONDON – Thursday 28 February 2012: Applications to the BFI Film Fund for documentary production funding will now be considered through twice yearly pitching sessions, the first taking place at Sheffield Doc/Fest on 15 June and the second in London later in the year. The new process will enable selected documentary filmmaking teams to access feedback directly from senior executives within the BFI Film Fund and wider documentary funding community, and also to benefit from an intensive day of expert-led development ahead of the pitch.

Documentary is a form in which the UK excels; nine documentaries with UK involvement appeared in Sundance Film Festival's prestigious and highly competitive documentary sections in January, the BAFTAs saw Bart Layton and Dimitri Doganis take the Outstanding Debut award for their box office hit *The Imposter*, and British-produced documentary, *Searching For Sugar Man*, recently won both the BAFTA and Oscar® for Best Documentary. The BFI's new process aims to help lay the foundations of future success by providing targeted support and feedback to documentary filmmakers, and making expert-led advice about theatrical documentary filmmaking more widely accessible through public pitching sessions.

The BFI Film Fund pitching sessions will be delivered in conjunction with the UK's leading documentary film festival, Sheffield Doc/Fest. A shortlist of applicants will be invited to present their projects to a panel of experts from the BFI Film Fund and the wider documentary funding community on two occasions per year. The new process will provide more detailed feedback and advice for all applicants, and the public nature of the pitches will allow for greater transparency – helping to benefit the documentary filmmaking community at large.

Lizzie Francke, Senior Executive within the BFI Film Fund comments: “We’re absolutely committed to supporting the UK’s visionary documentary filmmakers and we’re pleased to be working with Sheffield Doc/Fest on this new way to deliver support directly to the sector. Documentary is the punk of the film industry - it so often fuels innovation and creativity in filmmaking and in distribution. No one can bring a film to life with more conviction than the filmmakers driving the project, so we’re really excited to hear about new stories and characters directly from the talented filmmakers who are so passionate about bringing them to the big screen.”

Charlie Phillips, Marketplace Director, Sheffield Doc/Fest comments: "We're delighted that the BFI is showing a renewed commitment to supporting documentary, especially documentaries being made by emerging talent. This is a totally new opportunity for UK filmmakers to pitch on a biannual basis to the BFI, and we're honoured to be working with them to make sure they hear from the best talent from all regions of the UK."

The BFI Film Fund has previously backed a range of innovative documentaries from UK filmmakers, including Carol Morley’s haunting *Dreams Of A Life*, Clio Barnard’s distinctive *The Arbor* and Sophie Fiennes’ philosophical cinematic critique, *The Pervert’s Guide To Ideology*.

Today’s announcement builds on the BFI’s already wide-ranging commitment to UK documentaries. The BFI National Archive includes approximately 120,000 documentary items, a number of which have been featured in lyrical essay documentaries from some of the UK’s foremost filmmakers, including Terence Davies in *Of Time And The City*, Julien Temple in his BFI Film Fund-backed *London – The Modern Babylon* and Ken Loach in his upcoming *The Spirit of ’45*, also backed through the BFI Film Fund and set for release in

the UK on 15 March. The BFI also regularly releases documentary films both theatrically and on DVD, with films from recent DVD release *This Working Life: Steel* – the third BFI DVD from a series exploring Britain’s rich industrial heritage – this week completing a successful run at BFI Southbank.

The move to change the process follows an increase in the volume of applications to the BFI Film Fund for theatrical documentary proposals, and is in recognition of the specialised consideration the genre requires, particularly for emerging talent.

More information about the BFI’s new documentary funding application process:

Following an initial assessment of their funding application by key staff from the BFI Film Fund and Sheffield Doc/Fest, a shortlist of teams will be invited to present their projects to a panel of industry experts at a public 10 minute pitching session which will take place on Saturday 15 June at the Sheffield documentary festival for the first session (and an event to be confirmed in London for the second session).

Documentary filmmaking teams that are invited to pitch to the BFI Film Fund will benefit from specialist advice from Sheffield Doc/Fest’s pitch trainer, including how to clearly communicate their story and characters, how to structure their presentations for maximum impact, and how to develop the best teaser clips to accompany their pitch.

The new application process for documentaries is now live. Filmmakers wishing to apply for production funding for documentaries should go to the BFI website and apply through this new process using the BFI Film Fund online application mechanism.

For more information about the process and making an application for funding from the BFI Film Fund, please go to: www.bfi.org.uk/documentaryfunding

For more information about Sheffield Doc/Fest and pitching for the BFI documentary production fund please go to: <http://sheffdocfest.com/view/bfipitch>

– Ends –

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NOTES TO EDITORS

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 now 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 Greg Dyke.

About Doc/Fest:

Sheffield Doc/Fest is the UK's premiere documentary and digital media festival. It is the place to see world and UK premieres of the best creative documentaries from the cinema, television and online arenas, and to hear from and meet filmmakers at Q&A sessions. Highlights of the film programme are honoured with an award programme including the Sheffield Special Jury, Crossover Innovation, Green, Youth Jury, Inspiration, Student Doc, Short Form and Audience Awards. In 2012, 2,657 delegates from 67 countries attended the Festival alongside over 20,000 members of the film-loving public.