

BFI marks 50th anniversary of landmark in LGBT rights with major film and TV programme

Monday 15 May 2017, London.

The BFI today announces its full programme marking the 50th anniversary of the Sexual Offences Act 1967 from June onwards. This includes a major two month film and TV season **GROSS INDECENCY** and a one month **JOE ORTON** season at BFI Southbank, a new online **BFI Player** collection **LGBT BRITAIN ON FILM**, a **UK-wide touring programme of archive film** kicking off at **Pride in London**, an **international touring programme of classic LGBT shorts** from directors including Derek Jarman, Isaac Julien and Terence Davies and a new BFI release of Stephen Frears' and Hanif Kureishi's groundbreaking Oscar nominated *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) on Blu-ray for the first time.

Though the '67 Act, which saw the partial decriminalisation of male homosexuality in England and Wales, didn't put a stop to persecution, it was a step forward in a climate of fear and ignorance. The films and television programmes presented reveal Britain's pioneering yet problematic relationship with on-screen homosexuality.

BFI Southbank will host a major two month film and television season from **1 July – 31 August**; **GROSS INDECENCY** will span two decades from the late 50s, around the time of the Wolfenden Report, to the late 70s. **Sheffield Doc/Fest** will offer a sneak preview of the season with a **Drag Double-bill** capturing the UK drag scene of the late 60s, from the northern drag circuit to London's legendary Royal Vauxhall Tavern. Also taking place at BFI Southbank in August will be a season dedicated to the masterful **JOE ORTON**, a playwright and author whose work was imbued with themes of sex, death and homoeroticism, and whose life was cut brutally short when he was murdered in 1967. As part of the BFI's ongoing **Britain on Film** project, there will be a new online collection of films available to view on **BFI Player from 1 June**; **LGBT BRITAIN ON FILM** will comprise more than 50 films, shorts and features, fiction and documentary, looking at LGBT life in the UK.

The BFI will also partner with the **Independent Cinema Office (ICO)** to present a feature length compilation of material drawn from the **BFI National Archive** in partnership with the **Media Archive for Central England (MACE)**. The curated programme will launch on **Tuesday 27 June** as part of the **Pride in London Festival** before touring cinemas and community groups nationally. The BFI will also take part in the PRIDE parade on the **Saturday 8 July** with a **BFI Pride Bus**. Hanif Kureishi and Stephen Frears' groundbreaking Oscar®-nominated drama *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) will be presented on Blu-ray in the UK for the first time, released by the BFI on **21 August**. Internationally, the BFI will partner with the **British Council** to present a touring programme of classic British LGBT features and shorts including films by Derek Jarman, Terrence Davies, Isaac Julien, Bill Douglas, Ron Peck and John Maybury.

GROSS INDECENCY – TWO MONTH SEASON AT BFI SOUTHBANK (JULY – AUGUST)

British cinema boasts a long history of carefully coded queers, but taboo-busting gathered steam from the late 1950s. The two-month season **GROSS INDECENCY: QUEER LIVES BEFORE AND AFTER THE '67 ACT** spans two decades, bracketed by the 1957 Wolfenden Report and the onset of AIDS. A highlight of the season will be a screening of Daisy Asquith's *Queerama* (2017), the **World Premiere** of which will open this year's **Sheffield Doc/Fest**. Created from historical footage held by the **BFI National Archive**, Asquith's film tells the story of gay life in Britain since the end of the First World War, taking us into the relationships, desires, fears and expressions of gay men and women throughout the 20th Century, against a soundtrack that includes **John Grant, Goldfrapp and**

Hercules & Love Affair. Also included in the season will be special previews of BBC documentary *The People's History of LGBT+* (2017) and new drama *The Man in the Orange Shirt* (BBC, 2017).

Part one of the season in July looks at the lead-up to the Act, notable for the cinematic milestone *Victim* (Basil Dearden, 1961), which will be re-released by Park Circus on **Friday 21 July** and screen on extended run during the season. *Victim* denounced the poisonous, institutionalised homophobia gay men of all classes faced, and cleverly packaged the politics within an accessible crime-thriller. The film, and Dirk Bogarde's courageous appearance in it, helped propel public discourse towards the 1967 Act and beyond – changing lives in the process. This period also saw major progress on the small screen. Britain's earliest surviving gay TV drama *South* (Play of the Week, Granada Television, 1959), starred Peter Wyngarde as Lt Jan Wicziewsky, who visits a southern plantation as the American Civil War looms; **Peter Wyndgarde** will take part in a **Q&A** following a screening of the drama on **Monday 3 July**. The season will be launched with a screening of *On Trial: Oscar Wilde* (Granada Television, 1960), the gripping recreation of one of the most infamous trials in British legal and queer history. The screening will be followed by a stimulating discussion with experts who will explore the significance of Wilde as a queer historical icon and discuss the role of TV and film in shaping public moral attitudes towards homosexuality in the UK. Other highlights of part one will be two provocative BBC documentaries broadcast just weeks before the legislation was passed (*Consenting Adults 1. The Men* and *Consenting Adults 2. The Women*), British cinema's first film to hint at a lesbian relationship *The World Ten Times Over* (Wolf Rilla, 1963) and a story of 'Romeo and Romeo in the south London suburbs' *The Leather Boys* (Sidney J Furie, 1964).

Part two in August will focus on television and film made after the Act, showing that it was a double-edged sword in its effect on real lives and on depictions of the LGBT community. Queer London was reimagined to misanthropic, even exploitative effect on foreign soundstages for *The Killing of Sister George* (Robert Aldrich, 1968) and *Staircase* (Stanley Donen, 1969); a world away from the tender bisexual love triangle of *Sunday Bloody Sunday* (John Schlesinger, 1971). We hope to welcome star of *Sunday Bloody Sunday* **Glenda Jackson** to take part in a **Q&A** following a screening of the film in August. TV mined the drag renaissance for anarchic performances and we'll screen some of the best in a special **drag double-bill** of the riotous *What's a Girl Like You...* (LWT, 1969) and *Black Cap Drag* (Dick Benner, 1969); the screenings will be followed by an after-party in BFI Southbank hosted by alternative queer East End night-spot *The Glory*. Audiences will also be able to see television's first gay kiss between Ian McKellen and James Laurenson in the BBC's broadcast of the Prospect Theatre Company production of Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II* (BBC, 1970), *Two Gentlemen Sharing* (Ted Kotcheff, 1969) featuring a rare black gay character, and *I Want What I Want* (John Dexter, 1972), which saw cinema highlight trans issues. In 1975, **Quentin Crisp** put queerness on our cultural radar and the season will feature a screening of the newly remastered *The Naked Civil Servant* (Thames TV, 1975) starring the late **John Hurt**, as well as a screening of documentary *World in Action: Quentin Crisp*. Completing this survey, as the tragedies and triumphs of the 80s beckoned, will be Britain's first explicitly gay feature film *Nighthawks* (Ron Peck, Paul Hallam, 1978).

JOE ORTON SEASON (AUGUST)

Original, controversial and obscenely witty, these are just some of the descriptions used to reference the work of playwright **Joe Orton**. Like all great geniuses, Orton was ahead of his time, as the initial failure of the theatre production of *Loot* attests (the 1970 film version will screen here), but as the austerity of the 50's gave way to the sexual revolution of the 60's, his work caught the spirit of the age. Ruthlessly exposing the hypocrisies of the establishment his delight in causing offence is palpable in every play, but always harnessed to a razor sharp wit and purpose. Across the TV plays and films presented in this season it is possible to chart his ever growing mastery of both stage and screen as he sets out his overriding themes of sex, death and homoeroticism from their first incarnations in *The Ruffian on the Stair* (ITV, 1973) to his perfectly formed last great masterpiece

What the Butler Saw (BBC, 1985). 50 years since Orton's bizarre murder that so strangely mirrored the world of his plays, he deserves reassessment as a most singular talent.

The season will include an extended run of Stephen Frears' ***Prick Up Your Ears*** (1987), re-released on **Friday 4 August** by Park Circus and starring Gary Oldman, Alfred Molina and Vanessa Redgrave. Based on the life of Orton and his relationship with Kenneth Halliwell (his lover who ended up killing Orton), the screenplay was written by Alan Bennett and won acclaim on its initial release, including the prize for Best Artistic Contribution at Cannes in 1987. Other titles screening in the season will include ***Funeral Games*** (ITV, 1968), ***Entertaining Mr Sloane*** (Douglas Hickox, 1970) and an *Arena* documentary ***Genius Like Us A Portrait of Joe Orton*** (BBC, 1982).

LGBT BRITAIN ON FILM

LGBT life is explored in an online collection of over 50 newly digitised archive film and television titles taken from the BFI National Archive and other regional archive partners. **LGBT Britain on Film** will be made accessible to audiences in the UK **via the BFI Player**, with many titles free to view. These newly digitised titles from 1909 through to the mid-1980s, span film and television drama, documentary, current affairs and amateur footage. The collection includes ***Miss Norah Blaney*** (1932), where the pioneering lesbian music hall star performs 'Masculine Women and Feminine Men', and ***David is Homosexual*** (1978), a **new BFI National Archive acquisition**. This Super8 educational film made by the Lewisham branch of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE) follows David and the support he receives in coming out as well as featuring rare footage of the 1976 Gay Pride march in London.

ITV's leading current affairs TV slot, *This Week*, broadcast two groundbreaking LGBT documentaries; ***This Week: Homosexuals*** (1964) and ***This Week: Lesbians*** (1965). This was the first time that the topic of homosexuality was directly addressed on British television, including interviews with gay men and women about their experience of social ostracism, miserable marriages and homophobia, as well as some tales of contentment. Although presented through a conservative lens, these documentaries marked a broadcast watershed moment in representation, and a major step for visibility.

LGBT Britain on Film also includes material from the **Yorkshire Film Archive (YFA)**; ***We Who Have Friends*** (1969), looking at contemporary views on homosexuality and gay life in Leeds and London in the wake of the Sexual Offences Act, plus from **Media Archive for Central England (MACE)**; ***What Am I?*** (1980), a very rare regional television documentary about the life of a trans woman and ***Gay Black Group*** (1983), exploring the formation of the landmark group in gay black history, featuring interviews with members about their experience, including filmmaker Isaac Julien. All of these archive offerings will be **available to view on the BFI Player from June** alongside contemporary queer hits such as ***Weekend*** (Andrew Haigh, 2011) and classic LGBT shorts and features including the work of **Derek Jarman, Terence Davies** and more.

The Independent Cinema Office (ICO) will tour a special feature length compilation of archival material from LGBT Britain on Film to cinemas and community groups nationally, in partnership with **MACE**, launching with a special screening at Pride in London Festival on **Tuesday 27 June**.

MY BEAUTIFUL LAUNDRETTE

Presented on Blu-ray in the UK for the first time, **Hanif Kureishi's and Stephen Frears' Oscar®-nominated, *My Beautiful Laundrette*** (1985) will be released by BFI as a Dual Format Edition on **Monday 21 August**. Their first film collaboration, Kureishi and Frears's cross-cultural gay love story starring Gordon Warnecke and Daniel Day-Lewis was a cultural landmark of Thatcher-era film representing South Asian British experience on screen.

– **ENDS** –

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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

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.

The BFI Southbank is open to all. BFI members are entitled to a discount on all tickets. BFI Southbank Box Office tel: 020 7928 3232. Unless otherwise stated tickets are £12.10, concs £9.70 including Gift Aid donation. Members pay £2.00 less on any ticket - www.bfi.org.uk/southbank.

Young people aged 25 and under can buy last minute tickets for just £3, 45 minutes before the start of screenings and events, subject to availability - <http://www.bfi.org.uk/25-and-under>.

Tickets for FREE screenings and events must be booked in advance by calling the Box Office to avoid disappointment

BFI Shop

The BFI Shop is stocked and staffed by BFI experts with over 1,200 book titles and 1,000 DVDs to choose from, including hundreds of acclaimed books and DVDs produced by the BFI.

The benugo bar & kitchen

Eat, drink and be merry in panoramic daylight. benugo's décor is contemporary, brightly lit and playful with a lounge space, bar and dining area. The place to network, hang out, unpack a film, savour the best of Modern British or sip on a cocktail.

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 under BFI / LGBT50