



James Franco in I AM MICHAEL to open BFI Flare: London LGBT Film Festival



James Franco & Zachary Quinto in I Am Michael, dir. Justin Kelly, USA 2014

Embargoed until 00:01 Monday 9 February

The BFI is delighted to announce the Opening Night of BFI Flare: London LGBT Film Festival is the UK premiere of I AM MICHAEL, directed by Justin Kelly, starring James Franco and Zachary Quinto, and executive produced by Gus Van Sant. Also announced is a new pilot mentorship programme for emerging LGBT filmmakers which will launch at the Festival in partnership with Creative Skillset (full details below). I AM MICHAEL receives its European premiere tonight at the Berlin Film Festival.

Adapted from Benoit Denizet-Lewis' New York Times Magazine article "My Ex-Gay Friend", I AM MICHAEL tells the real-life story of Michael Glatze, formerly a leading US journalist for prominent gay magazine XY, and also an activist working for LGBT rights. After a profound and life-changing epiphany, Glatze gradually renounced his homosexuality and turned to Christian ministry, becoming outspokenly opposed to queer lifestyles.

Guaranteed to provoke discussion about the complexities of sexual identity in the 21st Century, this is a bold and provocative debut from Justin Kelly.

BFI Head of Cinemas and Festivals Clare Stewart says, "We're thrilled to be opening BFI Flare with such strong new work from Justin Kelly straight from its highly applauded and hotly discussed debut in Sundance. This is provocative, probing cinema that avoids easy assumptions and judgements and it's sure to be a major talking point at the Festival."

The BFI's Deputy Head of Festivals Tricia Tuttle adds: "We can think of no better film to open the 2015 edition of the Festival than I AM MICHAEL, Justin Kelly's audacious and assured directorial debut. This follows the great success of last year's Opening Night, the European Premiere of Hong Khaou's *Litling* which went on to earn Hong a BAFTA nomination. I AM MICHAEL is an equally powerful new work, and it's a real testament to the growing regard within the industry for BFI Flare: London LGBT Film Festival".

The full programme of BFI Flare: London LGBT Film Festival (formerly London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival) will be announced on 18 February. The Festival's 29th edition will run **19 - 29 March 2015** at BFI Southbank with over 50 features and 100 short films representing the best in contemporary and archive LGBT cinema from around the world. BFI Flare is the UK's longest running and most popular LGBT film festival with over 22,000 admissions. Accenture is the festival's principal sponsor. Films are selected by a team of five programmers (Michael Blyth, Jason Barker, Jay Bernard, Brian Robinson and Emma Smart) working with Deputy Head of Festivals, Tricia Tuttle and Head of Cinemas and Festivals, Clare Stewart.

BFI's commitment to LGBT cinema is year round and UK-wide, with monthly BFI Flare branded programme at BFI Southbank and also a dedicated BFI Flare collection on BFI Player, the BFI's acclaimed online VoD platform: <http://player.bfi.org.uk/collections/bfi-flare-london-lgbt-film-festival-presents/bfi-flare-presents/>

Full programme available from 18th February 2015 at www.bfi.org.uk/flare

CREDITS:

I AM MICHAEL dir. Justin Kelly, USA 2014, 101min

SCREENWRITER

Justin Kelly, Stacey Miller

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Gus Van Sant, Lauren Selig

PRODUCER

Vince Jolivet, Michael Mendelsohn, James Franco, Scott Reed, Ron Singer

CINEMATOGRAPHER

Christopher Blauvelt

CAST

James Franco, Zachary Quinto, Emma Roberts, Charlie Carver

BFI FLARE: LGBT FILM MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME PILOT

In partnership with Creative Skillset, BFI Flare: London LGBT Film Festival is launching a mentorship pilot that will offer five emerging LGBT filmmakers from the UK the opportunity to develop industry knowledge, professional connections, their passion for cinema and an overview of LGBT features entering the marketplace. From March to December 2015, selected filmmakers will have one-to-one support from a senior industry figure who will act

as a mentor over the nine-month programme. They will also have access to a one-of-a-kind package that includes a wide range of BFI festival screenings and BFI Flare events, as well as filmmaker-focused events and talks.

The programme is open to writer/directors/producers who have previously screened a short or a feature film in any of BAFTA's qualifying film festivals or in BFI Flare (formerly LLGFF). Filmmakers will be chosen by an invited panel of industry professionals. The first events in this programme include a series of talks and events within an expanded BFI Flare Industry programme for all of the Festival's accredited industry professionals.

The deadline for receipt of applications for the 2015 scheme is 23rd February 2015 and applications are available here:

http://www.jotformpro.com/LFF/BFI_Flare_Film_Mentorship

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Accreditation

Applications for press accreditation open on 18 February 2015, please visit the website to apply online. For any accreditation enquiries please contact: Lucy Aronica 020 7 957 4833

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Accenture and the BFI

The festival is delighted to continue its long term relationship with Accenture and in 2015 we welcome them back as Principal Sponsor. We also look forward to welcoming back a number of other long term supporters to the Festival, to be announced.

Accenture has enjoyed a longstanding relationship with the BFI (British Film Institute) and was delighted to extend the connection to become An Official Partner of the BFI until 2016. Accenture is proud to continue as principal sponsor of BFI Flare: London LGBT Film festival and its on-going partnership with the festival demonstrates Accenture's longstanding commitment to supporting diversity. As an employer of choice for LGBT people, Accenture has been recognised in the new Stonewall programme, Stonewall Star Performers – recognising Accenture as one of eight UK organisations who have consistently demonstrated exemplary practice to support gay staff and who will lead the development of best practice in Britain and around the world.

In 2012, Accenture supported the BFI as it worked to define its vision for the future of the BFI National Archive access and respond to the changing needs of the film watching public. The BFI worked with Accenture experts across digital strategy, customer experience and digital video services on how a BFI branded player would be able to robustly serve a growing video-on-demand audience with an evolving catalogue of old and new content, while retaining the BFI's unique curatorial values. Accenture continues to support the BFI and its vision for the future of UK film.

<http://www.accenture.com/bfi>



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BFI Flare Sponsors

In 2015 the Festival is delighted to welcome back a number of its most valued and longstanding partners. Accenture joins us for a third year as Principal Sponsor, Renault returns as Flare's valued car partner and the May Fair Hotel, for a sixth successive year, will be accommodating some of the festival's special guests. We would also like to thank our special screening sponsors the LGBT Interbank Forum for their continued support of the Festival and are thrilled to welcome Be Freixenet as a new partner for this year. Thanks also go to Konditor & Cook, Green and Blacks, Christie, Unique Digital, Spotlight and other funding contributors. Finally, thanks goes to our returning Media partners, G3 and Attitude and our Distribution Partner Impact.

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

About Accenture

Accenture is a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company, with approximately 319,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries. Combining unparalleled experience, comprehensive capabilities across all industries and business functions, and extensive research on the world's most successful companies, Accenture collaborates with clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments. The company generated net revenues of US\$30.0 billion for the fiscal year ended Aug. 31, 2014. Its home page is www.accenture.com.

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