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MAKE MORE NOISE! SUFFRAGETTES IN SILENT FILM

UK 1899 – 1917, 75 mins approx, PG
A BFI Release

New archival compilation from the BFI National Archive, with music composed and performed by Lillian Henley



**Opening on 23 October 2015 at BFI Southbank,
Filmhouse Edinburgh and selected cinemas UK-wide**

***'You have to make more noise than anybody else, you have to make yourself more obtrusive than anybody else, you have to fill all the papers more than anybody else. In fact you have to be there all the time and see that they do not snow you under if you are really going to get your reform realised.'* Emmeline Pankhurst**

Suffragette leader Emmeline Pankhurst's legendary speech of November 1913 reflected the energetic and determined tactics of suffragette women, which was to stand up at every public event and cry out '*votes for women!*' Cinema was born just as their campaign was gathering momentum and so they made it their business to get in front of the cameras. **Make More Noise! Suffragettes in Silent Film** which opens in selected cinemas UK-wide on **23 October**, two weeks after Sarah Gavron's feature film *Suffragette*, is a fascinating compilation of 21 short films from the BFI National Archive that show how women were being portrayed on the screen, while their battles were being waged on the streets outside. It will be premiered at the BFI London Film Festival with screenings on 11 October (with live music accompaniment) and 18 October.

Make More Noise! combines documentary footage of the suffragettes' public activities with comedy films of the period, which joyously pushed the boundaries of what was considered acceptable behaviour. These gloriously anarchic pre-war

comedies are full of bright sparks like the Tilly girls (starring Alma Taylor and Chrissie White) who gleefully disobey society's strictures. Women are seen acting like men, dressing in men's trousers and even leaving the men at home minding the babies. The films reveal how girls and women were already acting differently, had higher aspirations and expected more freedom than their grandmothers could have imagined, going against conventional wisdom that female emancipation was a result of war-time changes.

The actuality footage includes the well organised mass demonstrations of the suffragists; the riot in Whitehall in August 1913 at which Sylvia Pankhurst was arrested and a vast procession of women led by Emmeline Pankhurst marching through London in 1915 to show the Minister of Munitions their offer of help for the war service. There is also the shocking image of suffragette Emily Davison being knocked down by the King's horse on Derby Day. Not realising the significance of this incident, she didn't die until three days later, the news cameras continued to film the day's events. Cameras also capture the huge, sombre crowds that gathered for her funeral in Bloomsbury, London and burial in Morpeth, Northumberland.

The short documentary *A Day in the Life of a Munition Worker* shows the dangerous and uncomfortable yet vital work of women in munitions factories (filmed in Nottinghamshire) and *Scottish Women's Hospital* is about a hospital funded and run by the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, behind the lines in France.

Bryony Dixon, BFI curator of silent film, says:

"What I like most about this selection is the combination of films showing the serious business of campaigning for the vote – the real women who did it – with these joyful comedies which are about unrestrained girl power. Comedy was a test bed for all possible outcomes of female emancipation – they visualised the inconceivable."

To enhance these silent films, the BFI has commissioned the young composer and pianist Lillian Henley, one of Britain's up and coming silent film accompanists, to create a new improvised score, which reflects the spirit in which the films were made. Lillian comments:

"I am thrilled to be working with the BFI and doubly thrilled to be scoring Make More Noise! Suffragettes in Silent Film. The BFI's lovingly curated archive film shows female strength, brilliance, comedy and the harsh realities that the suffragettes faced during their long fight for equality. I found the films to be everything from shocking, heart-breaking and uplifting and it's been a thought provoking and exciting journey creating the music for this film collection."

Bryony Dixon, co-programmer of Make More Noise! and composer and pianist Lillian Henley are available for press and radio interviews.

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For further information and interview requests please contact:

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Images are available at www.image.net >BFI>Theatrical releases

More details on venues at www.bfi.org.uk/releases

Notes to editors

- During the BFI London Film Festival, *Make More Noise! Suffragettes in Silent Film* will be screened on Sunday 11 October at 18.45 in NFT3, BFI Southbank, with live musical accompaniment by Lillian Henley. It will be screened with recorded music on Sunday 18 October at 16:00 at Rich Mix Cinema.
- *Make More Noise! Suffragettes in Silent Film* will be released on DVD by the BFI on 23 November.

About the BFI National Archive

The BFI National Archive was founded in 1935 and has grown to become the one of the largest and most important collections of film and television in the world with over 180,000 films and 770,000 television programmes. For over 80 years the BFI has been an international leader in film preservation and guardian of Britain's unparalleled film and TV heritage. The BFI is an innovator in presenting films to audiences in new and dynamic ways, from cinemas to film festivals, outdoor events to online video-on-demand. At the heart of all its activities is the BFI's central aim to ensure that everyone in the UK has access to the widest possible range of film and their own film heritage.

That heritage includes all time great British directors Alfred Hitchcock, David Lean and Powell and Pressburger; and the rich vein of documentary filmmaking, in which Britain led the world, including the lyrical work of Humphrey Jennings. The archive also boasts significant Special Collections of filmmakers' papers, including the papers of David Lean, Ken Loach and David Puttnam, as well as extensive stills, posters and production and costume designs along with original scripts, press books and related ephemera.

Expert teams undertake the time-consuming and complex task of restoring films at the BFI John Paul Getty Jr Conservation Centre in Hertfordshire. The BFI's most precious film materials are kept in optimum conditions in the world-leading Master Film Store in Warwickshire.