



**NEW DIRECTION FOR  
56th BFI LONDON FILM FESTIVAL in Partnership with American Express**

**NEW FESTIVAL DIRECTOR CLARE STEWART  
INTRODUCING COMPETITION SECTIONS AND  
NEW PROGRAMMING APPROACH**  
*New partnership with Nintendo announced today*

**Sunday 20th May 2012, Cannes** The BFI London Film Festival in partnership with American Express today announced two significant changes to its programme sections in advance of the 56<sup>th</sup> edition in October 2012). Under the new creative leadership of BFI's Head of Exhibition and Festival Director, Clare Stewart, the Festival is boosting its competition and awards elements and introducing 7 new focused categories to its programme to reach new audiences. The Festival, which attracted audiences of 133,000 in 2011, also today announces a new partnership with Nintendo, which includes a Gala premiere screening and a short filmmaking competition using the 3D video recorder built in to the Nintendo 3DS.

**Awards and Competitive Sections**

BFI London Film Festival is re-positioning an existing element of the Festival – its high profile awards event – and enhancing the relevance for audiences, filmmakers, industry and festival partners by introducing competitive sections that are given much more prominence in the Festival campaign and programme.

The Best Film Award (since 2009) in partnership with American Express; first feature film prize the Sutherland Award (since 1958); and the documentary prize, the Grierson Award (since 2005) will now be presented to the winning films from three programme sections: Official Competition, First Feature Competition and Documentary Competition. Each selection will be open to international film, including British films, and 10-12 films will be chosen for each programme section.

Since they were introduced 3 years ago the BFI London Film Festival's Awards have grown considerably in profile. Leading figures in the film world that have supported the event include previous award presenters Martin Scorsese and Ridley Scott. The awards will continue to be presented at a stand-alone event at the end of the Festival along with the prize for Best British Newcomer and the BFI Fellowship. In 2011 Ralph Fiennes and David Cronenberg were both awarded this most prestigious of BFI accolades at the award ceremony.

Speaking at the Cannes Film Festival, BFI Head of Exhibition and Festival Director of BFI London Film Festival Clare Stewart said:

*This significant change to the way we present the films competing for the Festival's awards will be a boost for both the film industry and UK cinema goers. London's profile as both a dynamic global capital and a gateway to Europe combined with the Festival's strategic, awards-season position in the international calendar together provide a great foundation for launching and cementing a film's campaign.*

*Introducing the awards as audience-facing programmes also gives our Festival punters more to tweet, chat and shout about. This is essential to the festival experience and indeed to expanding our already thriving audience base."*

### **New Programme Categories**

BFI London Film Festival will also change its broad festival sections and introduce seven new focused categories that are clustered around the themes of love, adrenalin, challenge, debate, cult, journeys and laughter - the titles of these sections will be announced in the lead-up to the festival in October. With over 200 features during the Festival this new approach will help film fans find the films that mean the most to them and open up possibilities to new audiences. The new categories are based on research (see Notes to Editors) that show people choose which films to watch based primarily on story and genre. As well as guiding audiences smoothly through the programme, the new festival selection is also designed to support the films the festival champions for their transition into the marketplace.

Lisa Gregg, Vice President, Luxury Marketing, American Express said

*"American Express is thrilled to continue its support for the third year of the BFI London Film Festival and are excited to embrace the new energy Clare Stewart brings to the festival. We look forward to a festival of extraordinary film experiences."*

The 56th BFI London Film Festival runs from 10-25<sup>th</sup> October and is now open for entries:

Short films deadline is 22 June

Features films deadline is 6 July

<http://www.bfi.org.uk/lff/node/2104>

BFI Head of Exhibition and Festival Director, Clare Stewart, is in Cannes for meetings and screenings along with Michael Hayden (Festival Programmer), Andrea Bigger (Festivals Programmes Manager), Helen Dewitt (Festivals Producer) and Michael Blyth (Programmer).

**Press contact: Judy Wells, Head of Press and PR BFI [judy.wells@bfi.org.uk](mailto:judy.wells@bfi.org.uk) or 00447984180501**

### **Notes to Editors**

#### **London Film Festival's Awards**

- Best Film Award in partnership with American Express – most original, intelligent and distinctive film (since 2009)
- Sutherland Award – most imaginative and original First Feature Film (since 1958)

- Grierson Award – most outstanding Documentary (since 2005 at LFF)
- Best British Newcomer – in recognition of new and emerging talent (since 2009)
- BFI Fellowships – a career achievement award, presented to individuals in recognition of their outstanding contribution to film or television culture (since 1983)

#### **LFF Jury alumni include:**

Anjelica Huston, Gabriel Byrne, Patricia Clarkson, Sandy Powell, Michael Winterbottom, Paul Greengrass, Kevin Macdonald, John Madden, Charlotte Rampling, Nick Broomfield, Andrew Eaton, and Jarvis Cocker.

#### **LFF Award Presenters have included:**

Ridley Scott, Martin Scorsese, Danny Boyle, Liam Neeson, Ralph Fiennes and Michael Fassbender.

***Opening Our Eyes*** cultural impact report (Commissioned by UK Film Council, published September 2011):

This report outlines the most commonly identified aspects that are considered important in the decision whether or not to watch a film, on any media, were the story (68%) followed by the genre or type of film (62%) and the actors (58%).

#### **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
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of filmmakers and audiences

#### **The BFI London Film Festival**

BFI London Film Festival is an iconic international film festival that supports London's position as the world's leading creative city. It presents the best new British and international films to an expanding London and UK-wide audience. It provides career-enabling opportunities for British and international filmmakers through its industry and awards programmes.

We are delighted to continue to work with American Airlines, the Festival's long-standing Official Airline and returning Official Hotel The May Fair.

#### **Clare Stewart biography**

Clare Stewart's sixteen year programming career has encompassed leadership roles as Festival Director, Sydney Film Festival (2006-2011) and the inaugural Head of Film Programs at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image in Melbourne (2002-2006) as well as various roles at the Australian Film Institute (1996-2001), including Exhibition Manager, and programmer and Committee Member of the Melbourne Cinémathèque (1995-2002).

#### **About American Express**

American Express Company is a diversified worldwide travel, financial and network services company founded in 1850. It is a leader in charge and credit cards, Travellers Cheques, travel and insurance products. The American Express award-winning 'Preferred Seating Programme' provides cardmembers with access to some of the best seats and exclusive experiences at many of the country's most sought after music concerts, film premieres and other entertainment events, often before they go on sale to the general public. The company has multi - year partnerships with a range

of entertainment institutions including AEG Live, Ticketmaster, Live Nation and the British Film Institute. For full details, or to sign up to receive the free eNewsletters visit [www.amex.co.uk/music](http://www.amex.co.uk/music)

**About Nintendo:**

The worldwide pioneer in the creation of interactive entertainment, Nintendo Co., Ltd., of Kyoto, Japan, manufactures and markets hardware and software for its Wii™ home console, Nintendo 3DS™ and Nintendo DS™ family of portable systems. Since 1983, when it launched the Nintendo Entertainment System™, Nintendo has sold more than 3.9 billion video games and more than 620 million hardware units globally, including the current-generation Wii, Nintendo 3DS, Nintendo DS, Nintendo DSi™ and Nintendo DSi™ XL, as well as the Game Boy™, Game Boy Advance™, Super NES™, Nintendo® 64 and Nintendo GameCube™ systems. It has also created industry icons that have become well-known, household names such as Mario™, Donkey Kong™, Metroid™, Zelda™ and Pokémon™. A wholly owned subsidiary, Nintendo of Europe, based in Grossostheim, Germany, was established in 1990 and serves as headquarters for Nintendo's operations in Europe.