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THE 64th BFI LONDON FILM FESTIVAL DRAWS TO A CLOSE WITH THE VIRTUAL LFF AUDIENCE

AWARDS CEREMONY AND UK-WIDE SCREENINGS

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USPA NEWS - THE 64th BFI LONDON FILM FESTIVAL DRAWS TO A CLOSE WITH THE VIRTUAL LFF AUDIENCE AWARDS CEREMONY AND UK-WIDE SCREENINGS OF FRANCIS LEE´S AMMONITE MAKING THE FILM NUMBER ONE IN UK ON SATURDAY : Over 315,000 attendances from across the UK and internationally - highest attendance on record
54 Virtual Premieres and 17 in-cinema Premieres across the UK
Free tickets for audiences around the UK to the LFF Opening film Mangrove
237 screenings at BFI Southbank and 12 partner cinemas across the UK
350 cinemas across the UK participated in the LFF Closing premiere of Ammonite, courtesy of Lionsgate UK
Virtual LFF Audience Awards went to ANOTHER ROUND, THE PAINTER AND THE THIEF, SHUTTLECOCK and TO MISS THE ENDING
Cathy Brady (WILDFIRE) awarded the 2020 IWC Schaffhausen Filmmaker Bursary Award

The 64th BFI London Film Festival (LFF) in partnership with American Express closed this weekend with the Virtual LFF Audience Awards Ceremony and Francis Lee´s highly anticipated biopic AMMONITE. The film, which is a fictionalised account of 19th century paleontologist Mary Anning starring Kate Winslet and Saoirse Ronan, was preceded by a virtual introduction from Lee and the key cast. Through the Festival´s partnership with distributor Lionsgate, AMMONITE went out to over 350 participating cinemas including BFI Southbank on Saturday 17th October and was the UK´s number one film that day with nearly 14k admissions.The Festival opened with Steve McQueen´s MANGROVE screening for free in 13 cinemas across the UK, and as a surprise late addition, also presented LOVERS ROCK at BFI Southbank on Sunday 18th October. Both films are from McQueen´s Small Axe anthology for BBC1.----------
Over 12 days, this edition of the Festival was more accessible to audiences around the UK than ever, with 54 virtual premieres and 17 in-cinema premieres at BFI Southbank and 12 partner cinemas across the country. The Festival achieved audiences of over 141,253 for both physical and virtual screenings and XR programme attendances across public, education and press and industry screenings. The entire events and talks programme was delivered digitally for the first time ever and achieved over 174,285 engagements, with highlights including over 8K views of Tsai Ming-liang´s Screen Talk, nearly 9K views of the Female Horror panel and 11K views of Riz Ahmed´s Screen Talk across all platforms. All events were closed captioned and most included BSL interpretation. The Festival was also accessed virtually across the UK with over 40% coming from outside of London and from key cities with Bristol, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Manchester seeing the biggest audiences.Together, these figures make attendances at BFI London Film Festival the highest on record with an overall attendance of over 315K.*----------
Tricia Tuttle, BFI London Film Festival Director said: “To say we surpassed our own expectations is an understatement. From the feedback we received from audiences and professional colleagues, we all feel LFF came at an important time for the industry, as we all rally together in the face of incredible challenges. While difficult to compare this hybrid model to previous years´ attendances, to have reached audiences of over 315K, and with filmmakers, films and XR works from around the world is amazing, even more so when we consider that many home views are more than one person. I´m so proud of the team but also so happy we could connect audiences and filmmakers in this way at a time when we all need shared cultural moments that bring us together.“The LFF also welcomed 1,136 industry and 1,038 press delegates who participated in the Industry programme and press offering. The programme featured a diverse selection of 60 feature films (including 3 TV projects) and 57 short films from established and emerging talent. It hosted 6 World Premieres, 2 International Premieres, 8 European Premieres and 43 UK Premieres. A total of 41 countries were represented throughout the programme and 39.6% of the features were directed or co-directed by women.

The final day of the Festival featured a Screen Talk with George Clooney discussing his latest feature THE MIDNIGHT SKY at a free event that was accessed by UK and international audiences via the BFI YouTube channel. This concluded an insightful Screen Talks programme featuring actors Riz Ahmed and Letitia Wright, filmmakers Michel Franco, Miranda July, Tsai Ming-liang, Christian Petzold, musician and performer David Byrne and artist Es Devlin.Throughout the Festival, filmmakers and onscreen talents were

invited to take part in virtual introductions and Q&As that were screened both in cinemas and as part of virtual screenings across BFI Player, including:----------
Steve McQueen, Francis Lee, Phyllida Lloyd, Clare Dunne, Harriet Walter, Josephine Decker, Frances McDormand, Elisabeth Moss, Bassam Tariq, Harry Macqueen, Christian Petzold, Thomas Vinterberg, Spike Lee, Aleem Khan, Chloé Zhao, Pedro Almodóvar and Tilda Swinton.Over the course of the Festival the BFI also welcomed the following filmmakers, cast and special guests to BFI Southbank:----------
Afraz Hussain, Aleem Khan, Amarah-Jae St. Aubyn, Annika Summerson, Aiysha Hart, Bennett McGhee, Colin Firth, Emily Morgan, Geraldine O'Flynn, Graham Norton, Harry Macqueen, Hussain Manawer, Joanna Scanlan, Kingsley Ben-Adir, Letitia Wright, Malachi Kirby, Michael Ward, Nabhaan Rizwan, Nubiya Brandon, Phyllida Lloyd, Raffy Bushman, Rochenda Sandall, Sharon Horgan, Shaun Parkes, Steve McQueen, Thomas Benski, Toby Coffey and Tristan Goligher.
A series of in-depth talks took place virtually during the Festival designed to get audiences thinking and engaged in debate around the pressing issues explored in a number of the Festival titles this year. Highlights included: THE FEMALE HORROR RENAISSANCE, a conversation exploring the female horror renaissance with some of the most exciting women working in horror today; an exploration of the cultural significance of sneakers with director of ONE MAN AND HIS SHOES Yemi Bamiro, sneaker archivist Kish Kash and Jason Coles, author of "˜Golden Kicks: The Shoes that Changed Sport´; QUEER AND PLEASANT LAND, a panel discussion exploring cinematic answers to the question: what does it mean to be queer in a rural community?; ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE, which offered a rare chance to discuss the possibilities for disabled people to create and provoke with their art, and WHAT´S STOPPING YOUNG PEOPLE GETTING INTO THE FILM INDUSTRY? an event that aimed to undo some of the barriers disadvantaged young people face in breaking into the film industry.----------
For the first time, the Festival was delighted to bring audiences LFF Expanded: a new dedicated strand of XR and Immersive Art and a new long term partnership with The National Theatre. LFF Expanded featured Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, Mixed Reality and live immersive performance, showcased in a virtual museum space called THE EXPANSE, which was free to access to UK and international audiences for the duration of the festival and visited by a total of 7,751 people from home and at BFI Southbank. LFF Expanded presented a number of original and thought-provoking panel discussions and talks around the medium of VR and very special opportunities to meet the artists and explore pioneering new works. CHILL OUT "" EXPANSIVELY also offered audiences a moment to unwind in THE EXPANSE and guests were invited to listen to chill-out music and exchange their impressions, thoughts and findings with other visitors, industry colleagues and filmmakers.This year, the Festival Awards were in the hands of the public who took the place of the Festival´s Official Jury and were invited to vote in four categories: Best Fiction Feature, Best Documentary Feature, Best Short Film, and Best XR. The following winners were announced at the Virtual LFF Audience Awards Ceremony by film critic Rhianna Dillon in which Best Film was presented to Thomas Vinterberg for ANOTHER ROUND, Best Documentary was presented to Benjamin Ree for THE PAINTER AND THE THIEF, Best Short Film was presented to Tommy Gillard for SHUTTLECOCK and Best XR/Immersive Art was presented to Anna West and David Callanan for TO MISS THE ENDING.----------
The IWC Schaffhausen Filmmaker Bursary Award in association with the BFI was also announced at the awards ceremony. The judging panel, led by acclaimed actor, director, screenwriter, producer and poet Michaela Coel, announced that Screen International Star of Tomorrow and first-time feature director of WILDFIRE, Cathy Brady, had won the £50,000, which was presented to her by Christoph Grainger-Herr, CEO of IWC Schaffhausen. Aleem Khan, writer/ director of his debut feature AFTER LOVE and Francis Lee, writer/director of his sophomore feature AMMONITE, were also shortlisted for the bursary, which is the most significant of its kind in the UK film industry and awarded annually.----------
This year the Treasures strand presented two events based around a key film screening as part of the strand: REFLECTIONS ON FRIENDSHIPS´S DEATH which saw actors Bill Paterson and Tilda Swinton, producer Rebecca O'Brien and cinematographer Witold Stok discuss Peter Wollen's FRIENDSHIP´S DEATH, which has been newly restored by the BFI National Archive and PETER WOLLEN: WRITING, DIRECTING, POLITICS, FILM is an appreciation of the great auteurs work with academics and filmmakers' Laura Mulvey and Kodwo Eshun and BFI Archivist Wendy Russell.

INDUSTRY PROGRAMME----------
International creative leaders reflected on the central themes of the unprecedented level of change facing the screen industries arising from the rupture of business models accelerated by the pandemic and also as a response to demands to tackle systemic bias in the cultural industries.Highlights included the Festival Spotlight conversations with Filmmaker and ARRAY Founder Ava DuVernay and the ARRAY team, President Tilane Jones, Director of Programming Mercedes Cooper, Alliance Executive Director Regina Miller, Filmworks President Sarah Bremner and Filmworks Head of Physical Production Paul Garnes with writer, broadcaster and artistic director Gaylene Gould; and with Bad Wolf studio co-founder Jane Tranter. Screenwriter and playwright Kemp Powers (Soul, One Night in Miami) talked about bringing Black stories to the screen with Artistic Director of the Young Vic Kwame Kwei-Armah and the Young Vic and Festival also hosted on an active pitching event for Black writers with commissioners and financiers led by Kwei-

Armah, Alby James and Shantelle Rochester following an introduction from filmmaker Amma Asante.----------

The Festival´s Question Time session with BFI Chief Executive Ben Roberts was a huge draw for delegates offering the opportunity to raise important themes for the industry and Roberts´ vision for the future of the BFI; and the BFI´s Research and Statistics Unit shared the latest audience research. Producers Ed Guiney (Normal People) and Allon Reich (Devs) discussed their leap from feature filmmaking to now developing work for television; Fodhla Cronin O´Reilly (Ammonite), Ameenah Ayub Allen (Rocks), Matthew Wilkinson (Yesterday), Elhum Shakerifar (A Syrian Love Story), Helen Simmons (Chubby Funny) and Joy Gharoro-Akpojotor (Blue Story) explored challenges and opportunities facing independent producers and their plans for weathering the storm. Producer Ted Hope, Tabitha Jackson, Sundance Film Festival Director Anna Serner, CEO of the Swedish Film Institute and Bérénice Vincent, Co-Founder, Totem Films, imagined the kind of future we might want to emerge into from the pandemic and what could or should be changed. Toby Coffey, Head of Digital Development at the National Theatre, Nell Whitley, Executive Producer at Marshmallow Laser Feast, Jane Alison, Head of Visual Arts at the Barbican and Ali Hossaini, Artist and Co-Director of the National Gallery´s Digital Studio, discussed how they are seeking to immerse audiences in new ways with BBC journalist and presenter Razia Iqbal; and Birds´ Eye View brought their members from across the UK to discuss their Pandemic Response Programme.----------

The Festival´s new works-in-progress showcase which is to become an annual event for presenting new cinema, television and immersive platforms by UK emerging talents, introduced seven new projects with clips and Q&As with their respective producers and directors to invited international buyers and programmers. Filmmakers with three films in the festival also discussed their experiences within the Festival´s talent development programme NETWORK@LFF programme: Natalie Erika James (Relic); Yemi Bamiro (One Man and His Shoes); Aleem Khan (After Love).----------

Sessions are still accessible online to delegates and from Friday 23 October will be available to the public on the Festival´s Youtube channel.The LFF worked with BFI Film Academy in a new initiative to support young curators and programmers to develop and produce events for young audiences. Filmmakers and international experts participating as speakers included filmmakers Yemi Bamiro, Aleem Khan, Hardeep Pandhal and Dawinder Bansal, artists Mandla Rae, Ruari Paterson-Achenbach and Yandass Ndlovu, author Jason Coles, sneaker archivist Kish Kash, co-founder of horror film collective The Final Girls Anna Bogutskaya and film critic Kaleem Aftab.Now in its third year, the BFI LFF Critics Mentorship Programme gives meaningful experience and opportunity to a range of talented emerging film writers and paves the way to future opportunities for paid work in the media. In response to a lack of diversity in film criticism and systemic racism and inequality in the film industry, the Festival made the decision to make the 2020 BFI LFF Critics Mentorship Programme exclusive to six Black applicants. The programme was overseen with the BFI by lead mentors Akua Gyamfi (journalist, commentator and founder of The British Blacklist) and Kate Muir (film critic, journalist and screenwriter). Each mentee was paired with an LFF media partner mentor from Empire, Evening Standard, Little White Lies, Screen International, Sight & Sound and Time Out and had sessions with filmmakers including director Steve McQueen, Kemp Powers, writer and co-director of Disney Pixar´s SOUL and writer of ONE NIGHT IN MIAMI, and some of the UK´s most prominent critics and film journalists. Source: DDAPR

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