



**July 8th 2011**

## **CLARE STEWART APPOINTED HEAD OF EXHIBITION, BFI**

The BFI announced today the appointment of Clare Stewart to the newly created role of Head of Exhibition, BFI. Reporting directly into Heather Stewart, Creative Director BFI, Clare's new position brings all of the BFI's film exhibition activity together and will be responsible for the cultural and commercial performance of BFI Southbank, BFI Festivals including the BFI London Film Festival, and BFI IMAX.

Starting late August 2011, Clare will lead the delivery of a dynamic world class programme of British and international cinema that is designed and contextualised to attract the broadest and most diverse audience. Outgoing Artistic Director for the BFI London Film Festival Sandra Hebron will continue to lead the 55<sup>th</sup> BFI LFF until it closes at the end of October 2011.

Clare, whose career in programming spans sixteen years, joins the BFI from her position as Festival Director of Sydney Film Festival, a role she held for five years. Clare introduced and built the reputation of the festival's Official Competition, successfully increased audiences, built box office takings to an all-time high, attracted new funding and sponsorship deals and curated new experiential strands. Clare's final Sydney Film Festival was June 8-19 2011. In addition to critically and commercially successful festivals, Clare brings venue experience to the task having previously served as the inaugural Head of Film Programs at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image in Melbourne.

**Clare Stewart said** *"I am thrilled to be joining the BFI at this significant moment in the organisation's history and to be working with Creative Director Heather Stewart to forge the future strategy for the flagship BFI Southbank venues and leading film festivals. This new position provides the opportunity to align the expertise of BFI's team of programmers and producers with the objective of further enhancing the cultural and business impact of the BFI's diverse screening programmes."*

**Heather Stewart, Creative Director BFI said** *"This new role is a great opportunity for the BFI to bring together our exhibition activities and think about how we reach audiences for*

both historical and contemporary filmmaking in our festivals and all year round. I'm confident that Clare can meet the challenges ahead with flair and imagination. Clare has an impressive track record, most recently leading the Sydney Film Festival from strength to strength, and proven that she has both the creative and commercial expertise this role needs.'

### **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)

During Clare's time as Festival Director, SFF introduced the Official Competition (2008) for films that are 'courageous, audacious and cutting-edge', offering the richest cash prize for film in Australia (\$60,000 AUD) and the FOXTEL Australian Documentary Prize (2009). In 2009 the festival program was re-scaled by 33% in scope and duration (from 19 days to 12 days, 180 features to 120 features) and re-branded. Clare introduced the 'pathways' concept designed to make the selection more navigable and accessible for audiences with six sections: Take Me on a Journey, Fire Me Up, Love Me, Push Me to the Edge, Make Me Laugh and Freak Me Out. 31% of the festival's audience started attending the festival for the first time in 2009 and 2010 following this restructure and rebranding of the program. The 2010 edition achieved a 15% increase in box office, a 20% increase in overall attendance year-on-year, and substantial growth in younger audiences and single session purchasing. NSW State Government funding has substantially increased during her directorship.

Clare has served on juries at the Hong Kong, Dubai, Rio and Atlantic film festival and the Hollywood World Cinema Awards. She has presented on panels at Toronto International Film Festival, IFP (New York), Cinemart (Rotterdam), Hong Kong International Film Festival and Festival do Rio.

Previously Clare was the inaugural Head of Film Programs at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) where she was responsible for the creative direction of ACMI Cinemas, managing ACMI's festival and event partnerships and corporate events business. She was also the Australian producer of Resfest and Creative Director of ARTV, a joint commissioning project between ACMI and SBSi.

Prior to her role at ACMI, Clare programmed for the Australian Film Institute for five years and the Melbourne Cinémathèque for seven years. She curated 'Peepshow', a successful spotlight program at the 2000 Melbourne and Brisbane International Film Festivals and 'Captured' at the 1999 Melbourne International Film Festival. In 1999 Clare received the Queens Trust for Young Australians Award for *expandingsscreen*, a project that investigated the impact of new technologies on the exhibition of the moving image.

Clare is co-editor, with Philippa Hawker, of the publication *Leslie Cheung* and the establishing editor of *Cteq*, a journal dedicated to film criticism, now published as part of online journal *Senses of Cinema*. She contributed to *Filmbuffs Forecast on 3RRR* for 3 years which included a stint as anchor and also held regular review slots on Melbourne radio stations 774 ABC and 3AK. She also lectured in Cinema Studies at RMIT in Melbourne.

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