

BFI 2019 FLARE LONDON LGBTQ+ FILM FESTIVAL

BFI FLARE: LONDON LGBTQ+ FILM FESTIVAL 2019 FULL PROGRAMME ANNOUNCED
21st - 31st March at BFI Southbank

OPENING NIGHT FILM UK Premiere of **VITA & VIRGINIA** starring Gemma Arterton and Elizabeth Debicki - 21st March

CENTREPIECE SCREENING UK Premiere of **JONATHAN AGASSI SAVED MY LIFE** - 22nd March

CLOSING NIGHT FILM European Premiere of **JT LEROY** starring Kristen Stewart and Laura Dern - 31st March



Top row, left to right – VITA & VIRGINIA (dir. Chanya Button), SOCRATES (dir. Alex Moratto)
Bottom row, left to right – JONATHAN AGASSI SAVED MY LIFE (dir. Tomer Heymann), JT LEROY (dir. Justin Kelly)

Embargoed until 19:45, Wednesday 20th February 2019, London.

The 33rd edition of BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival unveiled its full programme tonight. One of the world's most significant and long-standing LGBTQ+ film events, BFI Flare will present over 50 features, more than 80 shorts and a wide range of special events, guest appearances, club nights and much more. Tickets go on sale via bfi.org.uk/flare to BFI Patrons, Champions and Members from 25th February and General Public on 28th February.

As previously announced, the Festival will open with Chanya Button's breath-taking period drama **VITA & VIRGINIA**, charting the passionate relationship between literary trailblazer Virginia Woolf

and enigmatic aristocrat Vita Sackville-West, starring Elizabeth Debicki and Gemma Arterton respectively [[press release here](#)]. The BFI is also thrilled to announce that the Closing Night Gala is the European Premiere of Justin Kelly's **JT LEROY**. Powered by superb performances from Laura Dern and Kristen Stewart, the film is adapted from Savannah Knoop's memoir *Girl Boy Girl: How I Became JT LeRoy* and tells the captivating real life story of the most compelling literary 'hoax' of our generation. With a screenplay written by Justin Kelly and Savannah Knoop, **JT LEROY** also stars Diane Kruger and Jim Sturgess. Fortitude International is handling international sales.

Justin Kelly, Director, JT LEROY says: *"Having opened 2015's BFI Flare with my first film, I AM MICHAEL, I am beyond honoured to return to close this year's festival with my new film, JT LEROY, the fascinating true story about two women whose lives forever change when they bring to life the fictional boy-wunderkind author JT LeRoy."*

Michael Blyth, BFI Flare's Senior Programmer says: *"With his previous accounts of ex-gay Christian pastor Michael Glatze (I AM MICHAEL) and porn star Brent Corrigan (KING COBRA), director Justin Kelly has proved himself one of contemporary queer cinema's most fascinating and provocative storytellers. It is an absolute pleasure to continue supporting Kelly's work by closing this year's BFI Flare with his latest biopic, the extraordinary JT LEROY."*

The Centrepiece Screening of the Festival is the UK Premiere of **JONATHAN AGASSI SAVED MY LIFE**, the latest documentary from acclaimed filmmaker Tomer Heymann, in which he paints an illuminating portrait of one of the world's most successful gay porn stars, Jonathan Agassi, capturing both his highs and his lows.

Additional programme highlights include Marco Berger's sweet and sexy **THE BLOND ONE**, which sees a tentative friendship between two young men blossom into a beautiful bromance, and **MAPPLETHORPE** (Dir. Ondi Timoner), which stars Matt Smith as the legendary photographer in a full-frontal homage to the devilish bad boy. **TELL IT TO THE BEES** (Dir. Annabel Jankel), adapted from Fiona Shaw's beloved novel, stars Anna Paquin and Holliday Grainger as two women who fall in love in 1950s Scotland, while the classic high school coming-out story gets a smart revision in the sharply perceptive teen drama **GIANT LITTLE ONES** (Dir. Keith Behrman), featuring supporting turns from Mario Bello and Kyle MacLachlan.

Among the various themes emerging from this year's programme, we see strong representations of bisexual, intersex and non-binary life. Highlights include:

- **TWO IN THE BUSH: A LOVE STORY** (Dir. Laura Madalinski), a charming rom-com in which bisexual Emily discovers the joy of polyamory in a relationship with her boss and her boss's partner.
- **NO BOX FOR ME: AN INTERSEX STORY** (Dir. Floriane Devigne) focuses on a growing network of activists, determined to shift the medical community away from advising parents that a child's future happiness depends on conforming genitals to binary norms.
- In **TUCKED** (Dir. Jamie Patterson), a blossoming friendship between two drag performers born 60 years apart is the subject of this emotionally engaging comedy.
- Based on an original stage play by Lee-Ann Poole, **SPLINTERS** (Dir. Thom Fitzgerald) is an affecting Canadian drama about a young bisexual woman facing up to her rural past.

Michael Blyth, BFI Flare's Senior Programmer says: *"At the heart of BFI Flare is a commitment to telling as wide a range of stories as possible, stories which speak to all members of the LGBTQ+ community. One of the many things which makes this year's programme so exciting, and so vital, is an increased number of films addressing subjects so often overlooked in cinema – such as bisexuality, asexuality or intersex representation – making the 2019 edition one of our most diverse and inclusive yet."*

For the second consecutive year, the BFI is very pleased to be presenting the Festival in partnership with its Main Supporter – Pureland Foundation.

Bruno Wang, Founder of Pureland Foundation says: *"We were delighted to support BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival for the first time last year and to be back as the Main Supporter for this year's events. The Festival mirrors Pureland Foundation's belief in the power of the arts and culture to promote inclusion and social well-being and to celebrate diversity in our communities. As ever the programmers have done an incredible job in bringing together an exciting, ambitious and thought provoking schedule of films and we look forward to seeing audiences reactions to these great films."*

2019 sees the welcome return of BFI NETWORK @ Flare Mentorships in partnership with BAFTA. The programme offers UK-based LGBTQ+-identified emerging filmmakers strong professional networks and better understanding of the market. Now in their 5th year, the Mentorships have connected filmmakers to the heart of the industry – with 2018 Mentors including BAFTA and Oscar-winning director James Marsh, BAFTA-nominated director Lucy Cohen and writer-director John Cameron Mitchell. The 2019 participants will be announced at this year's Festival.

The Festival's Industry Programme returns this year with a series of panels and masterclasses that explore contemporary LGBTQ+ filmmaking practice. Events will examine a range of topics, from the recent boom of film and television for and about queer young adults, to the growing call for representation and inclusion in casting.

BFI FLARE: LONDON LGBTQ+ FILM FESTIVAL, 2019 FULL PROGRAMME

From 21st – 31st March at BFI Southbank, the Festival will showcase the best in contemporary global LGBTQ+ features and short films. The Festival is divided into three thematic strands: HEARTS, BODIES and MINDS. Following are highlights from this year's programme:

HEARTS include films about love, romance and friendship. In heart-warming drama **FROM ZERO TO I LOVE YOU** (Dir. Doug Spearman), a married man must face up to his true desires. A history of abuse is uncovered in **MEN OF HARD SKIN** (Dir. José Celestino), a provocative and challenging coming-of-age drama from Argentina. Supported by the Interbank LGBT Forum Members, the delightful **PAPI CHULO** (Dir. John Butler) stars Matt Bomer as a heartbroken gay TV weatherman who forms an unlikely friendship with an older straight migrant worker. Mishcon de Reya are supporting **RAFIKI** (Dir. Wanuri Kahiu), in which two young Kenyan women attempt a relationship, despite the illegality of their love. A 17-year-old girl's sexual and political awakening upsets her devoutly religious father in the impressive coming of age film **RED COW** (Dir. Tsvia Barkai). A teenage orphan is forced to grow up quickly in **SOCRATES** (Dir. Alex Moratto), a captivating story of resilience in the face of hardship, while old tensions resurface between four friends in the sizzling psychological drama **SUNBURN** (Dir. Vicente Alves de O).

BODIES include stories of sex, identity and transformation. A varied selection of films includes the fabulous 25th anniversary screening of the Oscar-winning classic **THE ADVENTURES OF PRISCILLA**,

QUEEN OF THE DESERT (Dir. Stephan Elliott). In the taut Austrian thriller **THE GROUND BENEATH MY FEET** (Dir. Marie Kreutzer) ghosts from the past threaten to engulf a young woman's tightly controlled present. Winner of the Queer Lion at the Venice Film Festival, **JOSE** (Dir. Li Cheng) is a rare portrait of gay life in contemporary Guatemala. The uplifting and revelatory debut documentary, **MAN MADE** (Dir. T Cooper) follows four bronzed and buffed contestants at the Trans FitCon. In **NEVRLAND** (Dir. Gregor Schmidinger), a teenager is on a journey to discover himself in an unforgettable film not for the faint-hearted. After being released from prison, a young African-American woman goes in search of her father in **NIGHT COMES ON** (Dir. Jordana Spiro). A dream vacation to Fire Island turns into a waking nightmare in **LAST FERRY** (Dir. Jaki Bradley), a nail-biting thriller. Delightful documentary **LITTLE MISS WESTIE** (Dir. Joy E Reed, Dan Hunt) charts the progress of a somewhat alternative, trans-inclusive New England family with two trans kids.

MINDS feature reflections on art, politics and community. A beautiful 16mm portrait of a queer lucha libre wrestler is captured in **CASSANDRO, THE EXOTICO!** (Dir. Marie Losier), whilst **UNITED WE FAN** (Dir. Michael Sparaga) tells a story of ordinary people determined to save the television shows they love. Mx Justin Vivian Bond narrates **THE GOSPEL OF EUREKA** (Dir. Michael Palmieri, Donal Mosher), an enlightening portrait of a Bible Belt town in Arkansas. The documentary **HALSTON** (Dir. Frédéric Tcheng) is the lavish portrait of American fashion legend Halston, complete with astonishing rare archive footage. **MAKING MONTGOMERY CLIFT** (Dir. Robert Clift, Hillary Demmon) trawls through the Hollywood star's archives in search of the real Monty. The work of legendary black gay filmmaker Marlon Riggs is celebrated with archive screenings of **TONGUES UNTIED** (Dir. Marlon T Riggs) and a selection of his short films. **TRANSMILITARY** (Dir. Gabriel Silverman, Fiona Dawson) follows four soldiers risking dismissal to fight for transgender rights in the US armed forces.

BFI Flare also includes a wide range of events, talks and debates:

TRANS CREATIVE AT THE MOVIES: Historically starved of content at the cinema, this panel event will 'trans up' film history by repositioning mainstream movie moments. With a series of clips to flip perspectives, we seek to close the gap between the 'us and them' narrative and reclaim some space in cis-led cinematic history.

The queer female of the species is far deadlier than the male in this talk about the screen's most ruthless lesbians and bisexuals. At **LETHAL LESBIANS**, Festival programmer Emma Smart takes a not-entirely-serious look at these deadly onscreen stereotypes and asks the ever important question: Why do we love them so much?

In **OPERATION SPANNER: THEN AND NOW** the infamous Spanner trial, in which 16 men were prosecuted in the late 1980s for their participation in consensual SM sex sessions, is explored in two short films, **LASTING MARKS** (Dir. Charlie Lyne) and **BLUE BOYS** (Dir. Stuart Marshall), and an in-depth discussion – then carried on with a free talk in the BFI Reuben Library, further unpacking the reality of the infamous trial.

Another free talk in the BFI Reuben Library on **TRANS REPRESENTATION ON SCREEN** will follow a special Best of Year screening of **GIRL** on the 31st March.

For the fourth year running, BFI Flare is delighted to present the **BIG GAY FILM QUIZ**, inviting you to put your queer knowledge to the test, whether you're a film buff or a novice – everyone is welcome.

The Festival fun continues at our popular **BFI FLARE CLUB NIGHTS** (Fri 22nd, Sat 23rd, Fri 29th, Sat 30th and Sun 31st) at BFI Southbank's Benugo Bar & Kitchen with our favourite DJ's including: The Batty

Mama, Debbie Does BFI Flare, Club Kali, Tony Dunne and joining us again for the BFI Flare Closing Night Party, Unskinny Bop.

The BFI Southbank will also host the popular press and industry (P&I) screenings for all those with accreditation.

For further details about Press and Industry accreditation and the full programme see www.bfi.org.uk/flare

BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival is programmed by Jay Bernard, Michael Blyth, Zorian Clayton, Brian Robinson and Emma Smart, led by Tricia Tuttle, Director, BFI Festivals.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival is the UK's longest running LGBTQ+ film event. It began in 1986 as Gay's Own Pictures. By its 3rd edition it was tagged the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival and since then has grown to become the largest LGBTQ+ film event in the UK, and its most anticipated. The Festival changed its name to BFI Flare in 2014 to reflect the increasing diversity of its films, filmmakers and audience. The festival is programmed by Jay Bernard, Michael Blyth, Zorian Clayton, Brian Robinson and Emma Smart, led by Artistic Director, Tricia Tuttle.

The full programme of BFI Flare: London LGBTQ+ Film Festival will include 52 feature films, an expanded industry programme, selected films on BFI Player VOD service, a series of special events and archive screenings. fiveFilms4freedom will see Flare offer five LGBT short films for free across the world and promoted through the British Council's global networks. The full programme will be available on 20th February. The festival runs 21st - 31st March www.bfi.org.uk/Flare

The Pureland Foundation

The Pureland Foundation supports institutions, charities and programmes that promote social, spiritual and emotional wellness, with an emphasis on art and music.

Pure Land in Buddhism refers to the realm of higher consciousness, peace and harmony. Although not based in any religion, the Foundation seeks to create and promote the interconnectedness and sense of “pure land” in our daily lives.

The Pureland Foundation was founded by Bruno Wang, a Chinese philanthropist, cultural patron and businessman. The Foundation reflects Mr. Wang’s well-established interests in meditation, holistic wellbeing, art and music.

www.purelandfoundation.com

About the BFI

The BFI is the UK’s lead organisation for film, television and the moving image. It is a cultural charity that:

- Curates and presents the greatest international public programme of World Cinema for audiences; in cinemas, at festivals and online
- Cares for the BFI National Archive – the most significant film and television archive in the world
- Actively seeks out and supports the next generation of filmmakers
- Works with Government and Industry to make the UK the most creatively exciting and prosperous place to make film internationally

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter. The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger CBE.

BFI Flare Sponsors

In 2019 the Festival is delighted to introduce a number of new supporters and welcome back some of its most valued and enduring partners.

We are delighted to welcome back Pureland Foundation as our Main Supporter for the second year. Such significant and continued support we could not value more highly. We could not deliver BFI Flare without the continuing support of the Department for Digital, Culture Media & Sport. American Airlines are flying back in to ensure we can continue to bring some of the very best talent to the UK. The May Fair Hotel celebrate an amazing tenth year accommodating the Festival’s special guests. We are thrilled to announce Mishcon de Reya and Amazon Prime Video who this year both join as new Official Partners. We would also like to thank our returning special screening sponsors, the Interbank LGBT Forum for their continued support of the Festival and we’re particularly delighted to see a few new organisations supporting amongst their number. And special thanks to our Media partners Attitude and Diva, and our Distribution Partner Impact. Similarly our sincere thanks go out to our new and returning in kind partners: Barefoot Wines, Dalston’s Soda, Konditor & Cook, Maltsmiths and Pink Pepper Gin, and lastly, but by no means least, our other hugely important Funding Contributors, Venue Partners and Community Partners.



WITH THANKS

TO OUR GENEROUS SPONSORS AND FUNDERS FOR MAKING IT ALL POSSIBLE

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