

BFI Distribution acquires COUNTY LINES for UK and Ireland



London – 18 December 2019. The BFI announces the acquisition of the highly topical and compelling new British feature *COUNTY LINES* for theatrical distribution in the UK and Ireland and release on all platforms. Produced by Two Birds Entertainment and Loupe Films, *COUNTY LINES* is the debut feature from director Henry Blake; the producers are Victoria Bavister and David Broder. It premiered at the BFI London Film Festival on 8 October 2019 and then screened at the 39th Cambridge Film Festival where it won *Best Film – Young People’s Jury Award*.

Inspired by true events, *COUNTY LINES* is a powerful drama about a young single mother and her 14-year old son who is groomed into becoming involved in 'county lines', the lethal nationwide drug dealing enterprise which exploits vulnerable children into trafficking drugs with shocking consequences. Writer/director Henry Blake based the film on his own experience as a youth worker in London, which took him to the frontline of child exploitation through drug trafficking.

COUNTY LINES introduces Conrad Khan (*Black Mirror*) in the breakout role of teenager Tyler. The London-born and now Hollywood-based actor Ashley Madekwe (*Revenge*) is his mother Toni. The cast also includes Harris Dickinson (*Beach Rats*) and Marcus

Rutherford whose screen debut in *Obey* won him a BIFA 2018 nomination for Most Promising Newcomer.

The deal was negotiated with Two Birds Entertainment and Loupe Films by BFI Acquisitions Manager Laura Dos Santos.

Victoria Bavister, producer, Two Birds Entertainment, says "Henry's Blake's first-hand experience working with those exploited by county lines enabled him to create an authentic and unique film that beautifully captures the harsh reality so many vulnerable young people are going through. We are thrilled to be working with the BFI to share this story to widest possible audience."

Stuart Brown, BFI Head of Programme and Acquisitions, says "Seeing COUNTY LINES at the BFI London Film Festival was a deeply emotional experience. Made with rare sensitivity, this is an important film that epitomises everything that the BFI believes in and stands for; cinema as an art form that has real emotive power, that makes us feel something and most crucially makes us think about what is happening in our society."

COUNTY LINES will be released in cinemas in spring 2020.

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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.