

HUGH GRANT HONOURED WITH BFI FELLOWSHIP

Embargoed until 9pm GMT, Tuesday 23rd February 2016

The BFI tonight presented actor and producer Hugh Grant with the BFI Fellowship, the highest honour it can bestow, for his outstanding contribution to film. The award was presented to Hugh by film producer and Co-Chairman of Working Title, Eric Fellner, at the BFI's Chairman's Dinner, hosted by BFI Chair Greg Dyke. With awards including a BAFTA, Golden Globe and an Honorary César already under his belt, Hugh's hugely successful career has spanned over 30 years, 40 films and 21 TV roles. Hugh redefined the British leading man for a generation, he is one of our finest comedy and character actors and has starred in international hits such as *Four Weddings and a Funeral* to dark turns in *An Awfully Big Adventure* and most recently, playing opposite Meryl Streep in the soon to be released *Florence Foster Jenkins*.

Hugh Grant said *'This is such a lovely surprise and a great honour and I'm very grateful to the BFI for thinking of me.'*

Greg Dyke said *'We are absolutely delighted to honour Hugh Grant with a BFI Fellowship. With impeccable comic timing and huge doses of his unique, ironic self-deprecating and very British charm, Hugh always pulls off the hardest thing of all – a seemingly effortless performance. I can assure you it's not. Hugh's acting talents are prodigious and his contribution to cinema enormous. He is a British icon and has been making literally billions of people all over the world laugh, cry - and fall in love with him of course - for over 30 years.'*

Eric Fellner said *'Hugh is one of those extraordinary British actors whose effortless performance and onscreen charm has endeared him to generations of audiences worldwide. His success has helped British film as a whole carve out a place in the world with a distinct quality that easily rivals the best to come out of Hollywood and other countries. For that contribution alone he deserves this remarkable honour from the BFI.'*

Known around the world for his Englishness and charm, Hugh continues the great British comedy traditions of studios like Ealing, perfecting a screen acting style which seems effortless but requires incredible skill and artistry. The BFI is proud to honour one of the UK's great comic actors, in recognition of the fact comedy is a serious business - which Hugh Grant has mastered.

Born in 1960, Hugh was educated at Latymer School, London and then at New College, Oxford where he studied English Literature and starred in his first film, *Privileged*, produced by the Oxford University Film Foundation. Hugh joined the Oxford University Dramatic Society and starred in successful touring productions, including *Twelfth Night*. After university Hugh formed a comedy revue group with friends called The Jockeys of Norfolk, eventually taking the Edinburgh Fringe Festival by storm. After his first major film role in *Maurice* (dir. Merchant-Ivory, 1987) won him a Best Actor award at the Venice Film Festival (shared with co-star James Wilby), Hugh was much in demand with roles including Ken Russell's *Lair of the White Worm* (1988), *White Mischief* (dir. Michael Radford, 1987), *Impromptu* (dir. James Lapine, 1991) in which he played composer Chopin, Roman Polanski's *Bitter Moon* (1992) and Merchant-Ivory's *The Remains of the Day* (1993).

Hugh's breakthrough role was in the global smash hit *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (dir. Mike Newell, 1994) winning him a BAFTA and a Golden Globe and making him a worldwide star. Becoming the highest grossing British film then to date, *Four Weddings* was produced by Working Title and Hugh went on to make a succession of hits with the team, including *Notting Hill* (dir. Roger Michell, 1999) – which surpassed even *Four Weddings*' box office success and the international smash hit *Love Actually* (dir. Richard Curtis, 2003) in which Hugh played the British Prime Minister.

With more than US\$2.4 billion earned from 25 theatrical releases worldwide, there is no doubt that Hugh is one the UK's biggest box office stars but his career choices have been diverse and eclectic and certainly not driven by chasing box office success or celebrity status. From 1994 to 1996 Hugh made seven films including the offbeat and critically acclaimed *An Awfully Big Adventure* (1995), in which he reunited with director Mike Newell, *The Englishman Who Went Up A Hill But Came Down a Mountain* (dir. Christopher Monger, 1995), Chris Columbus's *Nine Months* (1995) co-starring Julianne Moore, Ang Lee's Academy Award-winning adaptation of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1995) and *Extreme Measures* (dir. Michael Apted, 1996) with Gene Hackman.

Hugh went on to thrill audiences and win over the critics with his dastardly depiction of Daniel Cleaver in two hugely successful film adaptations of Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones* novels: *Bridget*

Jones's Diary (dir. Sharon Maguire, 2001) and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (dir. Beeban Kidron 2004). Hugh starred with a young Nicholas Hoult in the critically acclaimed hit, *About A Boy* (dirs. Chris Weitz and Paul Weitz, 2002), adapted from Nick Hornby's novel. The late film critic Roger Ebert said in his 2002 review of the film and High's performance 'the way he handles it – the way he handles the role in general – shows how hard it is to do light romantic comedy, and how easily it comes to him. We have all the action heroes and Method script chewers we need but the Cary Grant department is understaffed, and High Grant show here that he is more than a star, he is a resource'. The dark side to Hugh's acting was demonstrated in Woody Allen's *Small Time Crooks* (2000) in which The Observer's Andrew Sarris called Hugh's character at the time 'the sleaziest and most unsympathetic character ever created by Allen'.

Hugh has enjoyed long-standing successful collaborations with filmmakers throughout his career and most recently his relationship with writer / director Marc Lawrence has seen them work together on four films: *Two Weeks Notice* (2002), *Music and Lyrics* (2007), *Did You Hear About the Morgans?* (2009) and *The Rewrite* (2014), all starring Hugh.

During this period Hugh also played six cameo roles in the epic sci-fi feature *Cloud Atlas* (dir. Lana Wachowski, Tom Tykwer and Andy Wachowski, 2012) based on David Mitchell's novel of the same name. In the same year, Hugh voiced the part of the Pirate Captain in Aardman's *Pirates! In an Adventure with Scientists* (dir. Peter Lord, 2012) to great acclaim.

Hugh stars alongside Meryl Streep in Stephen Frears' *Florence Foster Jenkins* (released May 6th 2016), the story of Florence Foster Jenkins, a New York heiress, who dreamed of becoming an opera singer, despite having a terrible singing voice. Hugh plays her husband St Clair Bayfield.

With special thanks to The Corinthia Hotel for supporting the 2016 BFI Chairman's Dinner

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Note to Editors:

The Fellowship of the BFI (British Film Institute) was created in 1983 to coincide with the BFI's 50th anniversary. On that occasion the British film industry gathered in the Guildhall for a televised event at which the first group of Fellows were created - Marcel Carné, David Lean, Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger, Satyajit Ray and Orson Welles.

Since its creation, the BFI Fellowship has been awarded to key figures in British cinema including Peggy Ashcroft, Dirk Bogarde, Alec Guinness, Maggie Smith, Laurence Olivier, Vanessa Redgrave, Mike Leigh, Judi Dench and Helena Bonham Carter. Also recognised have been such film industry luminaries as Jack Cardiff, Sydney Samuelson and Jeremy Thomas, and some of the giants of world cinema, including Michelangelo Antonioni, Abbas Kiarostami, Akira Kurosawa, Jeanne Moreau, Elem Klimov and Bernardo Bertolucci.

The BFI Fellowship also celebrates achievement in the world of television with such names as Alan Yentob, Greg Dyke, Jeremy Isaacs, David Rose, Michael Parkinson, Lynda La Plante, Lord Bernstein and Verity Lambert all receiving the award.

Since 1983 a total of 81 Fellowships have been awarded.

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
- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK - investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

The BFI is a Government arm's-length body and distributor of Lottery funds for film. The BFI serves a public role which covers the cultural, creative and economic aspects of film in the UK. It delivers this role:

- As the UK-wide organisation for film, a charity core funded by Government
- By providing Lottery and Government funds for film across the UK
- By working with partners to advance the position of film in the UK.

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