Jackie Edwards appointed as Head of BFI’s New Young Audiences Content Fund

Fund launches in April offering production and development funding

Wednesday 16 January 2019: Jackie Edwards has been appointed as Head of Young Audiences Content Fund (YACF), a major new pilot being delivered by the BFI as part of the UK Government’s support for distinct, high-quality content for children and young audiences to be broadcast on UK Public Service Broadcasters (PSB) channels and platforms.

Edwards will join the BFI in February and will be based in Leeds, with the Fund opening for applications in April. The Fund is part of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport’s (DCMS) Contestable Fund and assigns the BFI up to £57 million to deliver a three year pilot. Edwards will report to BFI Deputy CEO, Ben Roberts, and work on the final design and implementation of the Fund.

Edwards has been the BBC’s Head of Children’s Acquisitions and Independent Animation since 2015, delivering programming for 0-16 year olds. As well as overseeing the strategy for her department, Edwards was responsible for pre-buying and acquiring live action and animated programming. She joined the BBC in 2008 as CBeebies Content Manager and later as Executive Producer, working on programmes including Tree Fu Tom, Octonauts, Bing, Rastamouse and Clangers.

Prior to the BBC, Edwards was a freelancer, working on the development, finance and production of shows for a variety of companies such as LEGO, CBBC, Three Stones Media and Mackinnon & Saunders. She started her television career in animation in 1995 as a production assistant with Hibbert Ralph Entertainment (later Silver Fox Films), going on to produce many prestigious specials and award-winning series.

Ben Roberts, BFI’s Deputy CEO said: “Jackie’s passion for public service broadcasting, and her extensive experience in original and high quality programmes for young people of all ages, made her the perfect choice to help us shape and deliver the Fund. The landscape for television audiences is evolving at speed, but the appetite for innovative, relevant material which speaks to today’s young people feels as strong as ever. In supporting the UK’s world class indie sector, and working with broadcasters, I’m confident that Jackie and her new team will create something potentially game changing.”

Jackie Edwards said: “While I will be sad to leave BBC Children’s, the role of Head of Young Audiences Content Fund was simply irresistible as it presents a unique opportunity to revivify and diversify the kids public service broadcast landscape in the UK.”

John McVay OBE, Chief Executive, Pact: “Pact welcomes the appointment of Jackie Edwards to this key role in the BFI. Jackie’s experience, passion and understanding of children’s production is exemplary and her recent experience of working with one of the world’s leading children’s channels should give the broader industry confidence that this vital funding will be spent in a way that supports creativity, commercial opportunity and help increase the number and range of programmes available for UK children to enjoy.”

The YACF aims to stimulate the creation of content for children and young audiences (up to the age of 18) that entertains, informs and reflects their experiences of growing up across the UK today. It will support original programming, in both live-action and animation, and across genres including...
education, fiction and drama, arts and culture, factual, and religion. The Fund will offer production funding for projects which have secured a broadcast commitment from a UK Public Service Broadcaster to make the programme available to a UK audience on a free-to-access, Ofcom-regulated service. Development funding will be available to support new voices and emerging producers, for which a broadcaster commitment is not necessary. One of the priorities of the Fund is to support content which is reflective of UK cultural identity and the nations and regions – both on screen and off screen – with a commitment to support content in UK indigenous languages.

Ends

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About the New Young Audiences Content Fund
In December 2017 DCMS announced a pilot Contestable Fund, committing up to £60 million to help stimulate the provision and plurality of public service original UK content.

Up to £57 million was assigned to the Young Audiences Content Fund focussed on audiences up to 18, and up to £3 million was assigned to the Audio Content Fund to support public service audio content for all ages on commercial radio. The Contestable Fund will be a positive injection of investment that will help create new avenues for creators of original content and bring new voices to the market.

About the BFI
At the BFI we support, nurture and promote the art of film, television and the moving image. A charity, funded by Government and earned income, and a distributor of National Lottery funds, we are at the heart of the UK’s fast growing screen industries, protecting the past and shaping their future across the UK. We work in partnership with cultural organisations, government and industry to make this happen. We bring our world-class cultural programmes and unrivalled national collections to audiences everywhere, and promote learning about our art-form and its heritage. We support the future success of film in the UK by nurturing new voices and fresh ideas, enriching independent British film culture, challenging the UK’s screen industries to innovate and defining Britain and its storytellers in the 21st century.

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

About the BFI Film Fund
The BFI Film Fund invests over £50 million of National Lottery funding a year into developing and supporting filmmakers with diverse, bold and distinctive films, that have a cultural relevance or progressive ideas, and which reflect people from different backgrounds, as well as a range of activities to increase the opportunities for audiences to enjoy them.
The BFI’s current slate includes *Cold War* which brought Pawel Pawlikowski the Best Director award at this year’s Cannes; *Aquarela*, filmed at a rare 96 frames-per-second by innovative filmmaker Victor Kossakovsky; Chiwetel Ejiofor’s feature directorial debut *The Boy Who Harnessed The Wind*; Tinge Krishnan’s vibrant romantic musical *Been So Long* starring Michaela Coel and Arinzé Kene; Wash Westmoreland’s *Colette* starring Keira Knightley and Dominic West about the Belle Epoque French novelist who challenged Parisian society with her unconventional life; William McGregor’s *Gwen*, starring Maxine Peake, nominated for Toronto’s Discovery and People’s Choice awards; Peter Strickland’s *In Fabric* starring Oscar nominee Marianne Jean-Baptiste and Gwendoline Christie; Gabrielle Brady’s *Island of the Hungry Ghosts*, named best documentary feature at the Tribeca Film Festival; *The Last Tree* from acclaimed Shola Amoo which will enjoy its World Premiere at Sundance Film Festival; *Postcards from London* by Sundance Film Festival Grand Jury Prize nominated filmmaker Steve McLean; Locarno Film Festival Special Jury Prize and BIFA Best Debut Director award-winner *Ray & Liz* by filmmaker Richard Billingham; Joanna Hogg’s *The Souvenir* starring Tilda Swinton and Richard Ayoade; and Annabel Jankel’s *Tell It to the Bees* starring Anna Paquin and Holiday Grainger.

Currently in prep or production *Chaplin* from three-time BAFTA nominees Peter Middleton and James Spinney; *Dirty God* from Berlin Film Festival FIPRESCI Prize winner Sacha Polak; Craig Roberts’ *Eternal Beauty* starring Oscar nominated Sally Hawkins, Alice Lowe and David Thewlis; *Untitled Girls Film* from award-winning director Sarah Gavron and producer Faye Ward; Philippa Lowthorpe’s *Misbehaviour* starring Keira Knightley, Gugu Mbatha Raw and Jessie Buckley; *Monsoon* from Sundance-nominated filmmaker Hong Khaou and starring Henry Golding; Lisa Barros D’Sa and Glenn Leyburn’s *Normal People* starring Lesley Manville and Liam Neeson; *Sorry We Missed You* from acclaimed and Cannes winning director Ken Loach and screenwriter Paul Laverty; Jessica Swale’s *Summerland* starring Gemma Arterton and Gugu Mbatha-Raw; and Tim Travers Hawkins’ eagerly awaited *XY Chelsea* about whistleblower Chelsea Manning.