



THE 63rd BFI LONDON FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES 2019 OFFICIAL COMPETITION SELECTION

**Winner to be revealed at public award presentation following sell-out
surprise screenings in 2018**

60% of films from female director or co-director

Embargo: Wednesday 28th August, 9.30am BST

LONDON, Wednesday 28th August: The 63rd BFI London Film Festival in partnership with American Express is delighted to announce the contenders for the Best Film Award in this year's Official Competition selection. The 2019 nominated films showcase an incredible range of filmmaking talent from across the world; 60% of the films are from a female director or co-director with 16 countries represented across the producers and co-producers.

The 10 films in Official Competition are:

- FANNY LYE DELIVER'D (United Kingdom-Germany, dir-scr. Thomas Clay)
- HONEY BOY (USA, dir. Alma Har'el)
- LA LLORONA (Guatemala-France, dir. Jayro Bustamante)
- LINGUA FRANCA (USA, dir-scr. Isabel Sandoval)
- MOFFIE (South Africa-United Kingdom, dir. Oliver Hermanus)
- MONOS (Colombia-Argentina-Netherlands-Germany-Sweden-Uruguay-USA, dir. Alejandro Landes)
- THE OTHER LAMB (Ireland-Belgium-USA, dir. Małgorzata Szumowska)
- THE PERFECT CANDIDATE (Germany-Saudi Arabia, dir. Haifaa Al Mansour)
- ROSE PLAYS JULIE (Ireland-United Kingdom, dir-scr. Christine Molloy and Joe Lawlor)
- SAINT MAUD (United Kingdom, dir-scr. Rose Glass)

The Official Competition trailer, giving a taster of those competing for Best Film this year, can be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eK1V7YPIOP4>

The Best Film winner will be chosen by the Official Competition Jury, the members of which will be announced in the coming weeks. The other competitive categories, the Grierson Award for Best

Documentary, the Sutherland Award for Best First Feature and the Short Film Award in the Short Film Competition, will be revealed at the full programme launch tomorrow, 29th August.

For the first time, the winner of each competitive section, including the Official Competition, will also be awarded a commemorative 35 mm print of their winning film, provided by festival sponsor CPC London.

Last year's awards were a sell-out success when audiences were placed at the heart of the celebrations, with the winning film from each competitive section presented to the public as a surprise screening. 2019 will once again see the winner of the Best Film Award in Official Competition receive their award on stage from Festival Director Tricia Tuttle and Jury President in front of a public audience, at a special screening on Saturday 12th October at Vue Leicester Square.

The Best Film Award aims to honour inspiring, inventive and distinctive global filmmaking. Established in 2009 and first won by Jacques Audiard for *A Prophet*, recent winners include Sudابه Mortezaei's *Joy*, Andrey Zvyagintsev's *Loveless*, Kelly Reichardt's *Certain Women* and Athina Rachel Tsangari's *Chevalier*.

This year's selection spans a range of genres; from gothic psychodrama and hallucinogenic thriller, to provocative period piece and taut social commentary.

The Festival continues to highlight the work of women behind the camera, with over half of the films in competition from female directors or co-directors (Alma Har'el, Isabel Sandoval, Małgorzata Szumowska, Haifaa Al Mansour, Rose Glass and Christine Molloy, co-directing with Joe Lawlor).

Writer, director, actor Isabel Sandoval is the first transgender director to compete in Official Competition.

Joining them are acclaimed UK director Thomas Clay, making his festival debut, alongside Jayro Bustamante who returns to present a third feature in London, as does Oliver Hermanus, here for the first time since 2015.

Tricia Tuttle, BFI London Film Festival Director says: "Our Official Competition showcases the best in global filmmaking. These filmmakers each have unique and distinctive voices and their films by turns reveal truths about human existence; explore stories we haven't seen before or examine familiar ones in new ways; address pressing social and political issues, and make audiences feel and think. It's striking that so many of the filmmakers here are telling strongly political stories, but never dogmatically so. We have selected 11 directors in these ten films who invite viewers to probe and ponder, to be changed – either subconsciously or wildly and irrevocably - by their work".

Official Competition titles will screen nightly across the Festival in the two premier screens of the Vue Leicester Square, with a red carpet-style reception for the attending filmmakers each evening. The Festival invites audiences to share responses to films seen in Competition throughout the Festival at #MyLFFAward.

Further information about titles shortlisted for this year's Official Competition:

FANNY LYE DELIVER'D (United Kingdom-Germany, dir-scr. Thomas Clay)

Maxine Peake delivers a powerhouse performance as the titular character in Thomas Clay's intoxicating period drama FANNY LYE DELIVER'D, a woman living a humble existence with her puritanical husband John (Charles Dance) and young son Arthur on an isolated Shropshire farm in the 17th Century.

The daily routines of this God-fearing family are abruptly interrupted when they discover two strangers hiding in their barn, pleading for help. When the family agrees to take them in, it is not long before their progressive ways begin to cause tensions.

HONEY BOY (USA, dir. Alma Har'el)

Alma Har'el collaborates with gifted writer and performer Shia LaBeouf to impressive effect for her first dramatic feature HONEY BOY, an artful and soul-baring examination of the lingering effects of emotional abuse.

Lucas Hedges plays Otis, an alcoholic with a penchant for fiercely self-destructive behaviour who makes a living starring in action films. When an accident forces him into rehab, he begins to examine his troubled past with his unstable and often emotionally abusive father (LaBeouf, playing a version of his own real-life father).

LA LLORONA (Guatemala-France, dir. Jayro Bustamante)

Guatemalan director Jayro Bustamante's taut genre-bending thriller, LA LLORONA, sees elderly general Enrique Monteverde tried for a genocide he oversaw three decades earlier, who finds himself haunted by a spectre of his past; La Llorona, the spirit of a woman who has returned to seek justice for the dead.

Guatemala's lengthy Civil War and the mass murder of Mayan civilians provide a powerful historical framework for Bustamante's third feature. This is a film about secrets and lies, rendered through a breathtaking visual language that melds horror, fantasy and courtroom drama to disarming effect.

LINGUA FRANCA (USA, dir-scr. Isabel Sandoval)

In LINGUA FRANCA, Olivia is a Filipino transwoman and undocumented immigrant in Brooklyn, surreptitiously working as a caregiver for Olga, an elderly Russian woman in the early stages of dementia. She spends her time documenting a staged relationship with the man who has agreed to marry her so she can obtain legal status in the US. One day Olivia meets Olga's grandson Alex, a despondent slaughterhouse worker battling his own inner demons and the pair develop a strong connection.

A beautifully performed character study and an incisive critique on race and immigration in modern America, writer/director Isabel Sandoval (who also takes on the role of Olivia) has crafted a deeply moving work of great intimacy and insight.

MOFFIE (South Africa-United Kingdom, dir. Oliver Hermanus)

Oliver Hermanus follows *The Endless River* (LFF 2015) with MOFFIE, a haunting examination of the violent persecution of gay men under Apartheid. Nicholas (Kai Luke Brummer) has long known he is different, that there is something in him that must stay hidden, denied even. But in South Africa in 1981, all white young men over 16 must serve two years of compulsory military service to defend the Apartheid regime and its culture of toxic racist machismo. When fear pushes Nicholas to accept unspeakable horrors in the hopes of staying invisible, a tender relationship with another recruit becomes as dangerous for them both as any enemy fire.

MONOS (Colombia-Argentina-Netherlands-Germany-Sweden-Uruguay-USA, dir. Alejandro Landes)

Alejandro Landes delivers one of the most talked-about films of the year in MONOS: a hallucinogenic, intoxicating thriller about child soldiers that has inspired feverish buzz and earned comparisons to *Apocalypse Now* and *Lord of the Flies*.

High in the mountains of South America, above the billowing clouds but with gunshots heard in the distance, a motley group of child and teenage soldiers train and wait for instruction while in the presence of their American hostage, the Doctora.

Despite wearing its influences on its sleeve, the film is a wildly original vision from Landes and screenwriter Alexis dos Santos; the camera prowling over mud and organic decay, cutting swathes through the jungle, all to the strains of Mica Levi's visceral score.

THE OTHER LAMB (Ireland-Belgium-USA, dir. Małgorzata Szumowska)

Małgorzata Szumowska's (Berlin Jury Prize-winner *Mug* and LFF 2015's *Body*) English-language debut THE OTHER LAMB is a beguiling, genre-tinged examination of life in an otherworldly cult.

Selah was born into The Flock, a community of women and girls ruled over by Shepherd, the only male, and a seemingly benevolent but undisputed leader of the strictly regimented and isolated woodland settlement. Selah appears the most perfect of the faithful flock, until unsettling revelations see her devotion shaken.

Szumowska offers an eerie ethereal vision that compellingly recalls a range of references, from David Koresh's Waco, Texas cult to Margaret Atwood's dystopian science fiction.

THE PERFECT CANDIDATE (Germany-Saudi Arabia, dir. Haifaa Al Mansour)

Celebrated Saudi director Haifaa Al Mansour's THE PERFECT CANDIDATE is an inspiring drama about Maryam, a highly competent young doctor whose road is paved with compromises and complications – quite literally in the case of a flooded path leading to her clinic, the dangers of which are not taken seriously by local officials.

When her attempt to drive to a medical conference is stymied by not having the right papers, she finds her only solution is to sign up to be an electoral candidate, allowing her easy access through road blocks. However, when the responsibility of local politics dawns on her, she ropes in her sisters to challenge Saudi Arabia's strict social codes and what is expected of a young woman in the country.

ROSE PLAYS JULIE (Ireland-United Kingdom, dir-scr. Christine Molloy and Joe Lawlor)

ROSE PLAYS JULIE is a frank, immersive and gripping feminist drama from Irish directing duo Christine Molloy and Joe Lawlor, also known as Desperate Optimists.

During a term studying animal euthanasia, veterinary student Rose (Ann Skelly) decides to contact Julie (Orla Brady), the birth mother who gave her up for adoption. But Julie, who is now a successful London-based actress, doesn't want to know. Undeterred, Rose will not be ignored and curiosity leads her to discoveries that shake the fragile identity she has built for herself.

Molloy and Lawlor build a sense of dread inside an exquisite world of immaculate architecture, rendered through an icy performance style and enveloped by a claustrophobic soundtrack.

SAINT MAUD (United Kingdom, dir-scr. Rose Glass)

A mysterious nurse becomes dangerously obsessed with saving the soul of her dying patient in director Rose Glass' divine debut feature, SAINT MAUD.

Having recently found God, self-effacing young nurse Maud, arrives at a plush home to care for Amanda, a hedonistic dancer left frail from a chronic illness. When a chance encounter with a former colleague throws up hints of a dark past, it becomes clear there is more to sweet Maud than meets the eye.

Glass's gothic-tinged psychological drama is by turns insidiously creepy, darkly humorous and heartbreakingly sad; with Jennifer Ehle's beautifully nuanced performance proving the perfect complement to Morfydd Clark's star-making turn as the unsaintly Maud.

The 63rd BFI London Film Festival in partnership with American Express takes place from Wednesday 2nd October-Sunday 13th October 2019. The full Festival programme will be announced on Thursday 29th August 2019.

The winner of Official Competition will be announced on 12th October 2019.

-ENDS-

For further press information and general enquiries about the 63rd BFI London Film Festival:

Please note the contacts and red-carpet accreditation for the different festival sections.

MAIN FESTIVAL PROGRAMME AND STRAND GALAS, LFF AWARDS, EVENTS and FILMMAKER TEAS:

Email: LFFPress@ddapr.com | Tel: +44 (0)207 932 9800

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For Opening/Closing Night Red Carpet Media Enquiries and all Red Carpets for HEADLINE GALAS AND SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS:

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GENERAL ENQUIRIES and FESTIVAL ACCREDITATION

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Director of Press and PR, BFI: Judy Wells

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Festival Information & Ticket Booking

BFI Members' priority booking opens 10:00am, 5th September – join at www.bfi.org.uk/join

Public booking opens 10:00am, 12th September

Telephone Bookings: 020 7928 3232 between 10:00 – 20:30 (from Tuesday 3rd September – Sunday 13th October)

Online: www.bfi.org.uk/lff

In person: BFI Southbank Office: 11:00 – 20:30 *(open 10:00am from 5th + 12th September)

NOTES TO EDITORS

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.

The BFI London Film Festival

BFI London Film Festival is Britain's leading film event and one of the world's best film festivals. It introduces the finest new British and international films to an expanding London and UK-wide audience and attracts significant international film industry participation. LFF is a compelling combination of diverse films, red carpet glamour, friendly audiences and vibrant exchange. LFF provides an essential profiling opportunity for films seeking global success; promotes the careers of British and international filmmakers through its industry and awards programmes and positions London as the world's leading creative city.

Tricia Tuttle Biography

Tricia Tuttle's appointment as Director of BFI Festivals follows her role as Artistic Director of the 62nd Edition of the BFI London Film Festival and five successful years as Deputy Head of Festivals at BFI, including BFI Flare and BFI London Film Festival. Moving from North Carolina in 1997 to complete a joint MA at BFI and Birkbeck, University of London in Film and TV Studies, Tricia's passion for film has seen her work as a programmer, lecturer, writer and journalist. Her career has spanned a five year tenure at BAFTA, starting in 2008 and with her appointment as Film Programme Manager in 2011. Tuttle has been instrumental in evolving BFI Festivals, continuing to expand audience reach year on year and introducing impactful initiatives such as BFI Flare's FiveFilms4Freedom, in partnership with the British Council. In March 2019, she was recognized in Variety's annual International Women's Impact Report as a woman making an impact in showbiz around the globe.



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About CPC London

Based in Kent, CPC London creates affordable high quality 35mm prints direct from a data source in a fast and efficient way. Their unique direct-to-print from data technology ensures the highest quality 35mm positive prints in either colour or black and white, eliminating all stages involving expensive negative intermediates.

CPC are proud to be giving four commemorative 35mm prints of each LFF Award-winning Official Competition title, one for each winner of the Best Film, Best First Feature, Best Documentary and Best Short Film.

About Amex Experiences

American Express connects Cardmembers to the kinds of rewarding experiences and opportunities that matter to them and their businesses. Through Amex Experiences, Cardmembers have access to presale tickets, as well as the best seats and exclusive offers at some of the UK's most sought-after entertainment events via partnerships with a range of entertainment institutions, including AEG, Live Nation, Somerset House, The British Film Institute and the National Theatre. Amex Experiences is just one example of the powerful backing that American Express provides its customers.

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