



BFI AND BRITISH COUNCIL REVEAL GREAT8 SHOWCASE FOR CANNES 2021

LONDON – Thursday 10 June 2021. The **GREAT8 showcase** which presents new UK feature films from some of the UK's most exciting emerging filmmakers to international distributors and festival programmers has announced the eight films selected for this year's edition taking place in the run-up to this year's Cannes Marché.

Now in its fourth edition, this year's GREAT8 showcase is funded and run by the BFI and the British Council, in partnership with BBC Film and Film4.

In preparation for the Marché, unseen first-look footage from each of the titles will be introduced by their filmmakers and screened on Thursday 17 June exclusively to buyers and festival programmers and made available across five different time zones. All of the features are now in post-production and will be available to buyers during the online Cannes Marché (21-25 June).

International buyers and festival programmers welcome the opportunity offered by the GREAT8 to have an early look at the consistently high quality new UK films and co-productions being produced and the introductions given by their filmmakers. Films which have been presented in previous GREAT8 showcases include Rungano Nyoni's *I Am Not A Witch* (Camera d'Or nominee, 2017), Nick Rowland's *Calm with Horses*, Rose Glass's *Saint Maud*, Simon Bird's *Days of the Bagnold Summer*, Fyzal Boulifa's *Lynn + Lucy*, Rubika Shah's *White Riot*, Michael Pearce's *Beast*, and Tinge Krishnan's *Been So Long*. GREAT8 attendees have included Bleecker Street, SPC, Apple, IFC, Neon, A24, 30 West (US); Charades, Diaphana, Haut et Court, LE PACTE, The Jokers (France); Shochiku (Japan); UPIE, Transmission Films, Madman Entertainment (ANZ); Cherry Pickers (Netherlands); and MUBI.

Neil Peplow, the BFI's Director of Industry and International Affairs, says, "The high quality and diversity of UK filmmaking talent bringing their stories to film is exciting and a conversation that has grown through GREAT8. The level of interest shown by international buyers, programmers and the wider industry in the programme has been encouraging and we look forward to seeing their response this year.

"GREAT8 plays an important part in our activities to support the export of UK film around the world and build international relationships, work that we will be expanding thanks to our Government's support for the new UK Global Screen Fund."

Briony Hanson, the British Council's Director of Film says: "This is the fourth time we've laid out our annual GREAT8 showcase as an international launch-pad for some of the UK's most talented and distinctive new voices. It's gratifying to see that those voices are shouting loud and clear, despite the challenges of the past year.



"I'm really excited to follow the careers of these filmmakers and know that these special films are going to be embraced by international audiences."

The GREAT8 2021 line-up is:

BALLYWALTER

UK/Ireland

Drama

Director: Prasanna Puwanarajah

Writer: Stacey Gregg

Producers: James Bierman, Nik Bower

Cast: Seána Kerslake, Patrick Kielty

Production - Empire Street Productions/Riverstone Pictures/Cowtown Pictures

Sales: Bankside Films

Synopsis – Eileen is a caustic, unrepentant university drop-out whose dreams of a successful life in London have fallen by the wayside. Back at home with her mum, she makes ends meet by working as an unlicensed driver in her ex-boyfriend's minicab. Shane has exiled himself in Ballywalter following the break-up of his marriage, but he's trying to get his life back on track by enrolling in a stand-up comedy course. When Shane calls a taxi to get him to his classes, Eileen answers and a surprising connection is made. As the two spend time together shuttling back and forth, a beautiful friendship develops, leading both Eileen and Shane to a moment of realisation. *Ballywalter* is a life-affirming story about the unexpected connections that can change the course of our lives.

Prasanna Puwanarajah is a director, actor and writer and *Ballywalter* is his feature as a director. His debut stage play *Nightwatchman* was produced by the National Theatre in 2011. His other writing credits include the award-winning *The Half Light* and *Boy*, starring Timothy Spall, which screened at the London 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony. In 2018 his production of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* was nominated for The Carol Tambor Award and the Amnesty International Freedom of Expression Award at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. In 2019 he directed *Venice Preserved* at the Royal Shakespeare Company to critical acclaim. Prasanna's acting credits include *Doctor Foster* (BBC One), *Patrick Melrose* (Sky Atlantic/Showtime), *Defending the Guilty* (BBC Two) and *Three Families* (BBC One). His first graphic novel, *Sleeper*, co-written with Jed Mercurio (*Line of Duty*) will be published by Simon & Schuster in August 2021.

A BANQUET

UK

Psychological horror

Director: Ruth Paxton

Writer: Justin Bull

Producers: Leonora Darby, Mark Lane, James Harris, Nik Bower, Laure Vaysse

Cast: Sienna Guillory, Jessica Alexander, Ruby Stokes, Kaine Zajaz, Lindsay Duncan



**PRESS
RELEASE**

Production: Tea Shop Productions/Riverstone Pictures/REP Productions 8
Sales: Hanway Films

Synopsis – Widowed mother Holly is radically tested when her teenage daughter Betsey experiences a profound enlightenment and insists that her body is no longer her own, but in service to a higher power. Bound to her newfound faith, Betsey refuses to eat, but loses no weight. In an agonising dilemma, torn between love and fear, Holly is forced to confront the boundaries of her own beliefs. A slow-burn psychological horror with supernatural elements, *A Banquet* explores the strains and the love between three generations of mothers and daughters.

A Banquet is Ruth Paxton's feature directorial debut. A Screen Academy Scotland graduate in film and TV, Ruth's award-winning shorts include *Pulse* and *Paris/Sexy* both premiered at the Edinburgh International Film Festival and *Be Still My Beating Heart*, starring Maxine Peake, premiered at the BFI London Film Festival in 2019. She was the subject of a career retrospective at the London Short Film Festival and has been named as one of Canongate Books 40 Scottish Storytellers of the Future. She currently has a number of other features in development.

BOXING DAY

UK

Romantic comedy

Director: Aml Ameen

Writer: Aml Ameen, Bruce Purnell

Producers: Matthew G Zamias, Damian Jones, Aml Ameen, Dominique Telson, Joy Gharoro-Akpojotor

Cast: Aml Ameen, Aja Naomi King, Marianne Jean-Baptiste, Leigh-Anne Pinnock, Tamara Lawrence

Production: DJ Films, Studio 113, BFI, Film4, Warner Bros UK

Sales: Rocket Science

Synopsis – *Boxing Day* is a celebration of love and family through a Black-British lens, inspired by director Aml Ameen's own life. The film follows Melvin, a British author living in America who returns home to London for Christmas to introduce his American fiancée Lisa to his eccentric British-Caribbean family. Their relationship is put to the test, as she discovers the world her fiancé has left behind.

Boxing Day is Aml Ameen's feature directorial debut. Aml started his career as an actor, with his breakout performance in the cult classic *Kidulthood* (2006) earning him recognition as a Screen International Star of Tomorrow. He became a series regular on BAFTA-winning TV series *The Bill* before being cast in *Red Tails* and NBC's *Harry's Law*, which saw him spotlighted by Screen International as a notable Brit To Watch. In 2013 Ameen played the young Cecile Gains in the critically acclaimed film *Lee Daniels' The Butler*, followed by roles in *The Maze Runner* and *Sense8*. More recently Ameen has starred in Rafi Pitts' *Soy Nero*, which premiered



in competition at the Berlin International Film Festival; Anthony Onah's *The Price*, which premiered at SXSW; and in Idris Elba's directorial debut *Yardie*, which premiered at Sundance. In 2020 Ameen co-starred in Michaela Coel's acclaimed series *I May Destroy You*.

BRIAN AND CHARLES

UK

Comedy

Director: Jim Archer

Writer: David Earl, Chris Hayward

Producer: Rupert Majendie

Cast: David Earl, Chris Hayward, Louise Brealey, Jamie Michie, Nina Sosanya

Production: Mr Box, BFI, Film4

Sales: Bankside Films

Synopsis – Brian lives alone in a remote village in the countryside. Something of an outcast, he spends his spare time inventing things out of found objects in his garage. Without friends or family to rely on, Brian decides to build a robot for company. 'Charles' is not only Brian's most successful invention, but it appears to have a personality all of its own. Without friends or family to rely on, Brian decides to build a robot for company. However, Charles creates more problems than Brian bargained for, and the timid inventor has to face up to several issues in his life: his eccentric ways, a local bully, and a woman he's always been fond of but never had the nerve to talk to. *Brian and Charles* is a feel-good comedy about friendship, love and letting go. And a 7ft tall robot that eats cabbages.

Jim Archer is a writer and director who cut his teeth shooting comedy sketches with friends before writing and directing his debut short film *Intervention* in 2014. He went on to receive three Vimeo 'staff picks' for his subsequent three short films alongside numerous other festival awards and nominations, culminating in him winning the Young Director Award at Cannes Lions for the short film version of *Brian and Charles*. Jim has also directed a number of shows for television including the second series of *The Young Offenders* for the BBC and he will direct *Big Boys*, a new series for Channel 4, later in the year. *Brian and Charles* is his debut feature.

THE REAL CHARLIE CHAPLIN

UK

Documentary

Directors: Peter Middleton, James Spinney

Writers: Oliver Kindeberg, Peter Middleton, James Spinney

Producers: Ben Limberg, John Battsek, Mike Brett, Steve Jamieson, Jo-Jo Ellison

Production: Archer's Mark, Passion Pictures, Smaller Biggie, BFI, Film4, Showtime

Sales: Altitude Film Sales

Synopsis – From the award-winning creative team behind *Notes On Blindness* and *Listen To Me, Marlon* comes a contemporary take on cinema's most iconic figure. In an innovative blend of newly-unearthed audio recordings, dramatic reconstructions and personal archive, the film



traces Charlie Chaplin's meteoric rise from the slums of Victorian London to the heights of Hollywood superstardom, before his scandalous fall from grace. Refracting his life through a kaleidoscope of previously unheard voices and perspectives, the film sheds new light on the many sides of a ground-breaking, controversial and visionary artist. For decades he was the most famous man in the world but who was *The Real Charlie Chaplin*?

Peter Middleton and James Spinney have been working together for the past decade on a range of creative non-fiction projects. In 2014 they adapted the audio diaries of Australian theologian John Hull into a series of short films, including the Emmy Award-winning *Notes On Blindness*. Their debut feature with the same title premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, going on to receive three BAFTA nominations (including Outstanding British Film) and winning the BIFA for Best Documentary. *The Real Charlie Chaplin* is their second feature.

RIDE THE WAVE

UK

Documentary

Director: Martyn Robertson

Producers: Martyn Robertson, Louise Storrie

Production: Blackhouse Films

Sales: MetFilm Sales

Synopsis – Having participated in competition surfing since he turned 11, 14-year-old Scottish champion Ben Larg is not afraid of a challenge, and what bigger challenge for a young surfer than one of the biggest and most dangerous cold water waves in the world at Mullaghmore, Ireland. If he gets it right, he joins an elite group. If he gets it wrong, the consequences are terrifying. Danger, opportunity, and parental dilemma collide, propelling Ben and his family towards an unknown destiny.

Director and producer Martyn Robertson trained at The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. He has produced and directed a range of short films which have screened at the Edinburgh International Film Festival, the BFI London Film Festival and the Berlin International Film Festival. In 2015 his no-budget documentary *Marty Goes to Hollywood* won a BAFTA Scotland New Talent Award and sold to Amazon Prime. *Ride the Wave* is Martyn's first funded directorial feature documentary. He is currently in development on his next feature *Wild Rider*, with Sky Documentaries.

SHE WILL

UK

Psychological thriller

Director: Charlotte Colbert

Writer: Kitty Percy, Charlotte Colbert



**PRESS
RELEASE**

Producers: Jessica Malik, Bob Last

Cast: Alice Krige, Kota Eberhardt, Malcolm McDowell, Rupert Everett

Production: Popcorn Group, Rocket Science, Intermission Film, Pressman Film

Sales: Rocket Science

Synopsis – After a double mastectomy, fading star Veronica Ghent goes to a healing retreat in rural Scotland with her young nurse Desi. The two develop an unlikely bond after mysterious forces give Veronica the power to enact revenge in her dreams.

Charlotte Colbert is an established artist and an award-winning filmmaker. Her artwork has been shown internationally at prestigious institutions including Somerset House, the V&A Museum of Childhood, the Saatchi Gallery, Art Basel and the Centre Régional d'Art Contemporain in Sète. She has written a number of award-winning screenplays for Olivier Dahan, Eric Cantona, Tony Grisoni and Harry Wootliff. She has also written and directed award-winning short films including *The Silent Man* (2016) starring Simon Amstell and Sophie Kennedy Clarke. Colbert's practice, spanning film, photography, ceramics and sculpture, often plays with and questions narrative structures, time, language, psychoanalysis, and socio-political constructions of gender and identity. *She Will*, which she also co-wrote, is her debut feature film.

TRUE THINGS

UK

Drama

Director: Harry Wootliff

Writer: Harry Wootliff, Molly Davies

Producers: Tristan Goligher, Ruth Wilson, Ben Jackson, Jude Law

Cast: Ruth Wilson, Tom Burke

Production: The Bureau, Lady Lazarus, Riff Raff UK, BFI, BBC Film

Sales: The Bureau Sales

Synopsis – Kate is sleep-walking through life when a chance sexual encounter with a charismatic stranger awakens her. High on infatuation, what follows is an intoxicating car crash.

Harry Wootliff is a writer and director. Her debut short film *Nits* was BAFTA nominated and selected for Cannes' Directors' Fortnight. Her second short *Trip* premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival and was screened at 30 festivals worldwide. Her first feature film *Only You*, starring Laia Costa and Josh O'Connor, premiered in the First Feature Competition at the 2018 BFI London Film Festival. It won the BIFA award for Best Debut Director and was nominated for Outstanding Debut at the BAFTAs. She was named as one of The Observer's Rising Stars for Film in 2019. *True Things* is her second feature.

ENDS

For more information:



**PRESS
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NOTES TO EDITORS

About the BFI

We are a cultural charity, a National Lottery distributor, and the UK's lead organisation for film and the moving image.

Our mission is:

- To support creativity and actively seek out the next generation of UK storytellers
- To grow and care for the BFI National Archive, the world's largest film and television archive
- To offer the widest range of UK and international moving image culture through our programmes and festivals - delivered online and in venue
- To use our knowledge to educate and deepen public appreciation and understanding
- To work with Government and industry to ensure the continued growth of the UK's screen industries

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