



BRIGHTWIDE brings refugee stories from the big screen to your computer screen

Brightwide, the new film website created by Colin Firth, and Refugee Action launch online film festival for Refugee Week at the BFI Southbank

2 June 2010

A unique online film festival showcasing some of the best in recent world cinema will be launched at BFI Southbank as part of this year's national Refugee Week celebrations (June 14th-20th).

Brightwide, a film website set up by BAFTA-winning actor Colin Firth and his wife Livia, is hosting films which explore the refugee experience such as *In This World*, *Welcome*, *La Forteresse* and *No One Knows About Persian Cats* during Refugee Week, in partnership with the national charity Refugee Action.

The festival will be launched on June 10th at BFI Southbank to coincide with the event *From Casablanca to Calais: Exile on Celluloid*, a panel discussion featuring prestigious directors and cultural commentators looking at the depiction of refugees in film.

Mr Firth, who campaigns for refugee rights, said: "Our online festival will bring the experience of exile, and the situations that compel people to become refugees, to life. Refugee Week is all about celebrating the contribution of refugees to the UK, but it is also about nurturing a better understanding of the issues that face people in exile. Brightwide is proud to play its part in mobilising support for this important cause."

Directors Stephen Frears (*Dirty Pretty Things*, *My Beautiful Laundrette*, *Dangerous Liaisons*, *The Queen*), Mat Whitecross (*Road to Guantanamo*, *Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll*, *Moving to Mars*), and Kenny Glenaan (*Summer*, *Gas Attack*, *Yasmin*) will join cultural commentators such as Professor Terence Wright of Ulster University, at the BFI on the evening of June 10th to examine the extent to which film can really provide a window into the realities of refugees' lives.

The panel, chaired by Channel 4 News broadcaster Samira Ahmed, will look at films from the BFI National Archive such as *Dirty Pretty Things*, *Casablanca*, *Welcome* and *Refuge England*.

Mat Whitecross, director of *Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll* and *Moving to Mars* said, "For most of us, it's very hard to imagine what it's like to flee war and persecution, leave behind your home and rebuild your life in a new country. Films about the refugee experience can help bridge that gap by providing a window into the reality of refugees' lives. Refugees are often reduced to statistics and negative stereotyping but as film directors and story-tellers, we can counter that trend by portraying refugees as individual human beings, undergoing a courageous journey."

Jill Roberts, Chief Executive of the charity Refugee Action, said: "We are delighted to be teaming up with BFI Southbank for the second year running to bring the experiences of refugees and people in exile to a wider audience. The new partnership with Brightwide will mean that this year that audience will hugely expand.

"It can be easy to forget that refugees are normal men, women and children who find themselves in extraordinary and traumatic situations which force them to flee. The films that will be showcased at the BFI and available on Brightwide.com throughout Refugee Week will bring to life the complex, harrowing and inspiring experiences of refugees the world over."

ENDS

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NOTES TO EDITORS:



BFI Southbank

www.bfi.org.uk/southbank

The BFI Southbank is open to all. BFI members are entitled to a discount on all tickets. BFI Southbank Box Office t: 020 7928 3232. Tickets for 'From Casablanca to Calais: exile on celluloid' are £5.

The BFI Filmstore is stocked and staffed by BFI experts with over 1,200 book titles and 1,000 DVDs to choose from, including hundreds of acclaimed books and DVDs produced by the BFI.

The benugo bar & kitchen

Eat, drink and be merry in panoramic daylight. benugo's décor is contemporary, brightly lit and playful with a lounge space, bar and dining area. The place to network, hang out, unpack a film, savour the best of Modern British or sip on a cocktail.

There's more to discover about film and television through the BFI. Our world-renowned archival collections, cinemas, festivals, films, publications and learning resources are here to inspire you.

Brightwide

www.brightwide.com



Brightwide is a new site featuring the best of social and political cinema, where you can watch films, learn more about the issues at their heart and take campaigning action, all in one place.

Brightwide launched in February 2010 as an online festival for social and political film. Founded by Colin Firth and wife Livia, Brightwide was inspired by the realisation that great films with issues at their heart have a unique ability to mobilise outrage and activist energy, an energy that too quickly dissipates after the credits have rolled. By linking people to causes through award winning films and by directly providing online audiences with opportunities to act and engage after the film has been streamed, Brightwide screens films that will make audiences want to change the world, and then shows them how.

Our selected library of fresh and compelling documentaries and feature films is screened in high definition and supported by an array of exclusive interactive features to bring the stories to life and promote an enjoyable and informed experience.

Brightwide's primary goal is to engage larger and younger audiences in vital social and political issues not only through cinema but also with an interactive online experience. Brightwide films work as a catalyst to start a dialogue and also inspire viewers to take action on the issues featured in the films.

Brightwide works in collaboration with filmmakers, film festivals, educational bodies, campaign groups and charities to bridge the worlds of independent film and social action by means of this new way to participate, act and donate.

Refugee Action

www.refugee-action.org.uk



Refugee Action is an independent, national charity working to enable refugees to build new lives in the UK. We provide practical advice and assistance for newly arrived asylum seekers and long-term commitment to their settlement, and deal with some 40,000 enquiries from refugees and asylum seekers each year. As one of the country's leading agencies in the field, Refugee Action has 28 years' experience in pioneering innovative work in partnership with refugees.

Refugee Week

www.refugeeweek.org.uk



Refugee Week (June 14 -20 2010) is a countrywide programme of events including concerts, film screenings, debates and exhibitions that celebrate the UK's history of providing sanctuary to people fleeing human rights abuses and their contribution to the UK.

Refugee Week is an initiative supported by charities including Amnesty International, The Children's Society, The Red Cross, Refugee Action and Oxfam. Refugee Week seeks to raise awareness of the reasons refugees come to the UK and the reality of their lives here.

Simple Acts campaign

www.simpleacts.org.uk

This year the Refugee Week partnership is running the Simple Acts campaign, which is about inspiring individuals to use small, everyday actions to change perceptions of refugees. It consists of 20 actions that can be done by anyone and that encourage us to learn about and interact with refugees.

The actions were chosen from ideas submitted from people across the UK, including Helen Fielding, Michael Bond and Michael Palin. The final list includes cooking a dish from another country, smiling at a stranger, and having a cup of tea with a refugee.

This year, people all over the UK are being encouraged to do one of the 20 Simple Acts that will make a big difference to how refugees are welcomed to our country. Every Simple Act - from learning a few words in another language to playing a game of football with local refugees - will be contributed to on an online total at refugeeweek.org.uk so people can see what a big impact they are making collectively. 'Watch a movie about exile' is one of the Simple Acts.

*** PICTURE DESK ***A selection of images for journalistic use in promoting BFI Southbank screenings can be found at www.image.net under BFI / BFI Southbank / June / 2010