

Monday 19 March 2012

Ben Roberts is to be the new Director of the BFI Film Fund, the BFI announced today. Thirty six year old Ben Roberts is currently CEO of Protagonist Pictures which represents many British films in the international market place. Since 2007 he has overseen a range of releases including recently, *Submarine*, *Kill List*, *Nativity*, *Deep Blue Sea*, *Tyrannosaur*, *Streetdance 3D* and *In The Loop*. Ben has 15 years film of industry experience across international sales, studio acquisitions, UK distribution and film finance, and has developed strong relationships with new and established filmmakers.

His previous roles include VP Worldwide Acquisitions at Universal International Pictures (2003-2007) and he ran the UK theatrical distribution and acquisition operations for independent UK distributor Metrodome (1998-2003). There he achieved success for a range of releases including *Last Orders*, *Human Traffic*, *Donnie Darko*, *Spellbound*, and *Chopper*. Roberts joins the BFI at a key time for UK film as the organisation prepares to publish its Forward Plan proposals next month.

This newly expanded role will bring together development, production, distribution and exhibition for the first time. As Director of the BFI Film Fund, Ben Roberts will play a key role in shaping the future of British film and film audiences, overseeing the UK's biggest public film fund with a total annual budget of over £21M from the National Lottery.

Amanda Nevill, Chief Executive of the BFI welcomed the appointment:

'I'm thrilled that Ben is joining us to lead the BFI Film Fund at this important time for film in the UK His experience reflects the future demands on this new role, combining creative flair with a very strong audience and market sensibility. This will ensure we achieve maximum impact both in making strong investments in film development and production, but also in linking up distribution and exhibition activities in new ways for the benefit of audiences.'

'Ben Roberts' commitment and enthusiasm for UK film is infectious and his track record in finding audiences for new British film voices is impressive. We look forward to working with him to help build further on the current success of British film at home and abroad.'

'In making this appointment we were fortunate to have a strong field of candidates. After a long and comprehensive process it was clear that Ben was the best candidate to take the BFI Film Fund into its next stage.'

Ben Roberts commented:

'This is a rare opportunity to make a difference in a really dynamic part of the film sector and I relish the chance to work across the industry, building on the successes of the last few years. This new role offers me the special opportunity to support talented British filmmakers in achieving their potential to make great and memorable films.'

'It also means I can play my part in leading the development of a more joined-up approach to public investment in film in the UK by overseeing all of the BFI's Lottery Film Fund investments - including distribution and exhibition - to better connect films with their audiences.'

Matthew Justice, Managing Director of Big Talk, and BFI Governor welcomed Ben Roberts' appointment:

'People that combine Ben's experience, flair, tenacity, energy and charm are very rare. I'm sure that he'll bring visionary leadership to the already strong team at the Film Fund, across all its areas of activity, and I think Ben is an inspired and bold appointment for the BFI.'

David Kosse, President, Universal Pictures International commented:

'Ben has a real nose for new and fresh talent. His approach takes not only a cultural perspective but also strikes a commercial chord.'

Mark Herbert, CEO and Producer at Warp Films commented:

'Ben has a great understanding of the importance of backing new talent and taking risks with first time filmmakers, together with a brilliant commercial eye for the bigger, more mainstream films.....this is great news for the Lottery film fund.'

Ben Wheatley, director of *Kill List* and the upcoming *Sightseers*, commented:

'It's great news to hear about this appointment. Ben Roberts combines a love of cinema, sharp business sense and cool nerves under fire while remaining a great person to be around. Exciting times ahead for the BFI.'

UK film is enjoying significant critical and commercial success at home and abroad. The Director of the BFI Film Fund will play an important strategic role in helping the BFI shape its Forward Plan following the recent publication of Lord Smith's independent Film Policy Review.

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Image provided upon request

Notes to Editors

BFI Film Fund

The BFI Film Fund supports bold and exciting British films.

Films currently in production include Nick Murphy's *Blood*, Rufus Norris' *Broken*, Regan Hall's *Fast Girls*, Mike Newell's *Great Expectations*, Omid Nooshin's *Last Passenger*, Sophie Fiennes' *The Pervert's Guide To Ideology*, Martin McDonagh's *Seven Psychopaths*, Scott Graham's *Shell*, Ben Wheatley's *Sightseers*, Mat Whitecross's *Spike Island*, Andrew Köttling's *Swan Down*, Julien Temple's *This Is London*, Jonathan Glazer's *Under the Skin* and Eran Creevy's *Welcome To The Punch*.

Recent releases supported by the BFI Film Fund include James Watkins' *The Woman in Black*, now the most successful British horror film at the UK box office; Phyllida Lloyd's Academy Award® winning *The Iron Lady*; Steve McQueen's BAFTA nominated *Shame*; Lynne Ramsay's *We Need To Talk About Kevin*; Carol Morley's *Dreams of a Life*; Andrea Arnold's *Wuthering Heights*; and Paddy Considine's BAFTA award-winning *Tyrannosaur*.

Upcoming releases include Max Giwa and Dania Pasquini's *Streetdance 2 3D* (UK release date 30 March), Lasse Hallström's *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* (UK release date 20 April), Ol Parker's *Now Is Good* (UK release date 25 May), and Ken Loach's *The Angel's Share* (UK release date 1 June).

In the official selection at the Sundance Film Festival in January were Jon Wright's *Grabbers* and James Marsh's *Shadow Dancer*. The latter also screened at the 2012 Berlinale in February.

The BFI's ambition is 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
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of filmmakers and audiences

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On 1 April the BFI became 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. We'll connect audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema; preserve and restore the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations; champion emerging and world class filmmakers in the UK; invest in creative, distinctive and entertaining work; promote British film and talent to the world; and grow the next generation of filmmakers and audiences.

For more information on the BFI and its work, visit bfi.org.uk

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