**WOW 2021 Press Release**

**18/2/2020**

**WOW Wales One World Film Festival**

**Free & Online Festival, March 11-21 2021**

Celebrating 20 years of eye-opening world cinema to Wales, [WOW Wales One World Film Festival](https://www.wowfilmfestival.com/en/) in partnership with Aberystwyth Arts Centre returns this March in a somewhat different guise. Instead of buying tickets to enter a darkened cinema, festival goers will be settling back into their sofas to view the films streaming online, for free.

The free WOW Film Festival opens on **Thursday 11th March**, 10 years to the day since Japan’s devastating earthquake that led to the Fukushima nuclear meltdown. The first film, chosen to mark this sad anniversary, is ***3:11 A Sense of Home***, Naomi Kawase’s a collection of shorts from directors such as Oscar winner Bong Joon Ho (Parasite), Victor Erice and Patti Smith that explore timely themes of renewal, recovery and home.

WOW Film Festival’s “Green Screen” selection includes several environmental films. Among WOW Festival’s many international guest speakers this year is forest ranger turned **best-selling German author Peter Wohlleben**, whose film ***The Hidden Life of Trees*** has its UK online premiere. The growing local food movement is the theme of documentary ***First We Eat***, whose director **Suzanne Crocker** will be joining live from Canada’s frozen Yukon.

One of sixteen online premieres, the strange and wonderful ***Sanctorum*** imaginesthe awesome power of nature unleashed to protect the traditional way of life in a mountain village. ***Beloved*** about an 82 year old woman devoted to the wild mountains and her cows will feature alongside a Q&A with producer **Elaheh Nobakht** from Tehran.

Need a laugh? Feel good movies include comedies ***Arab Blues*** starring Iranian actress in exile Golshifteh Farahani (*Paterson, The Patience Stone*); ***The Whaler Boy*** set against the visually poetic backdrop of the Bering Strait and ***Joy,*** an international programme of short films curated from the best of **Iris LGBT+ Film Festival.**

There is plenty of family viewing too. ***Lunana: A Yak in the Classroom*** is a heartwarming drama set in the world’s most remote school, high up in the mountains of Bhutan. ***Delfín*** follows a young boy whose determination to audition for a children’s orchestra takes him and his father on a life changing adventure. **Kotatsu Japanese Animation Festival** are joining the WOW Women’s Film Club’s International Women’s Day celebration with a selection of animated family-friendly shorts by up and coming female animators in Japan. ***Running to the Sky*** sees young runner Jekshen competing for the top prize in traditional running races of Kyrgyzstan.

Nature, gods and mysticism feature in WOW’s “Strange Films for Strange Days” strand. **Laos’s only female film director Mattie Do** is another guest speaker, alongside her wonderful ghost story ***The Long Walk****,* presented by Abertoir Festival. Abertoir are also presenting the chilling Malaysian folk-horror ***Roh.*** In ***Tantas Almas/Valley of Souls*** about Colombia’s civil war, the swampy air of the magnificent Magdalena river is thick with mystery and fear.

**Saturday 20th March is Nowruz,** or Persian New Year. Iranian film curator **Ehsan Khoshbakht will introduce his film about** the vibrant world of ***Filmfarsi,*** a popular genre of cinema from the 1960s and 70s, alongside the UK online premiere of the restored version of the greatest Iranian movie of all time, ***The Deer,*** which is rarely seen outside Iran.

**The 2021 WOW Film Festival will wrap on Sunday 21st March, with a celebration of the UN’s International Day of Forests.** With the climate emergency, everyone is talking about planting trees. But are we going about it in the right way?

WOW Film Festival Director David Gillam said:

*“It has been really exciting to put together our first online festival. Now people anywhere in the UK can join the party and discover what Welsh audiences have enjoyed for twenty years.We would like to thank all our funders and sponsors who have made it possible for us to brighten these dark days by providing the online festival entirely for free. Without the support of the Welsh Government’s Cultural Recovery Fund, this free festival would not have been possible.We’ve only thrived for so long thanks to the support of many great partners. But I would particularly like to thank everyone at our ‘spiritual home’ in Aberystwyth Arts Centre without whom we simply couldn’t have put on this year’s festival. Other film festivals in Wales have also provided essential support. As well as bringing the world to Wales, by taking WOW online, we can export the best of Welsh film festivals to the rest of the UK. I would also like to thank the many people who have supported WOW over the last twenty years. ”*

*WOW Film festival is funded by The Welsh Government’s Cultural Recovery Fund, Ffilm Cymru Wales, National Lottery Communities Fund and Film Hub Wales as part of the BFI Film Audience Network (FAN), made possible by the National Lottery.*

For all the news on the festival, visit **[ww.wowfilmfestival.com](http://ww.wowfilmfestival.com)** and sign up to the newsletter.

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Notes:

WOW Film Festival is funded by:

**Welsh Government's Cultural Recovery Fund** is providing essential support to theatres, music venues, heritage sites, libraries, museums, galleries, archive services and independent cinemas, right across **Wales** - which have all experienced a dramatic loss of revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ffilm **Cymru Wales** is the development agency for **Welsh film**.

The **National Lottery** Community **Fund** gives grants to organisations in the UK to help improve their **communities**.

About Film Hub Wales

Film Hub Wales aims to bring more films, to more people, in more places around Wales. Part of the BFI Film Audience Network and supported by National Lottery funding, FHW regularly develops inventive ways for people in Wales to go to the cinema with its independent member venues.

Film Hub Wales (FHW) is one of eight UK wide ‘hubs’ part of the BFI Film Audience Network (FAN) and supported with National Lottery funding, with Chapter appointed as the Film Hub Lead Organisation (FHLO) in Wales. We aim to develop the exhibition sector through dedicated research, training and audience development project support. Since Film Hub Wales set up in 2013, we’ve supported over 225 exciting cinema projects, reaching over 465,000 audience members.

We are also proud to lead on the UK inclusive cinema strategy on behalf of BFI FAN.

[Website](https://filmhubwales.org/en/), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/filmhubwales), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/filmhubwales/)

About the BFI Film Audience Network

Supported by National Lottery funding, the BFI Film Audience Network (FAN), is central to the BFI’s aim to ensure the greatest choice of film is available for everyone. Established in 2012 to build wider and more diverse UK cinema audiences for British and international film, FAN is a unique, UK-wide collaboration made up of eight Hubs managed by leading film organisations and venues strategically placed around the country. FAN also supports talent development with BFI NETWORK Talent Executives in each of the English Hubs, with a mission to discover and support talented writers, directors and producers at the start of their careers.

BFI FAN Film Hubs are:

* Film Hub Midlands is led by Broadway, Nottingham working in partnership with the Birmingham-based Flatpack
* Film Hub North is led collectively by Showroom Workstation, Sheffield and HOME Manchester
* Film Hub South East is led by the Independent Cinema Office
* Film Hub South West is led by Watershed in Bristol
* Film Hub Scotland is led by Glasgow Film Theatre
* Film Hub Northern Ireland is led by Queen’s University Belfast
* Film Hub Wales is led by Chapter in Cardiff
* Film Hub London is led by Film London

[Website](https://www.bfi.org.uk/supporting-uk-film/distribution-exhibition-funding/film-audience-network)

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.

[Website](https://www.bfi.org.uk/), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/BritishFilmInstitute), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/bfi)

About the National Lottery

Thanks to National Lottery players, up to £600 million of funding has been made available to support communities across the UK during the Coronavirus crisis.

The National Lottery is playing a critical role in supporting people, projects and communities during these challenging times.

By playing The National Lottery, you are making an amazing contribution to the nationwide-response to combating the impact of COVID-19 on local communities across the UK.

[Website](https://www.lotterygoodcauses.org.uk/), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/TheNationalLotteryUK), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/TNLUK)

**Sponsors include:**

Aberystwyth Arts Centre <https://www.aberystwythartscentre.co.uk>

The Riverfront <https://www.newportlive.co.uk/en/venues/riverfront/>

Pluto Film <http://www.plutofilm.de>

**Festival Partners:**

Abertoir <http://www.abertoir.co.uk>

Kotatsu Festival of Japanese Animation <http://www.kotatsufestival.com>

Iris Prize LGBT+ Film Festival <https://irisprize.org>

For enquiries contact Rachel Scurlock (Aberystwyth Arts Centre) [rls@aber.ac.uk](mailto:rls@aber.ac.uk) and [rhowan@wowfilmfestival.com](mailto:rhowan@wowfilmfestival.com)