



Media Release

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For immediate release

‘This is Welsh Film’ Wales Celebrates 130 Years of Cinema

Welsh cinemas are celebrating a significant anniversary this spring, with the first known film screenings taking place in Cardiff 130-years ago, in April 1896.

Wales’ big screens have been home to the pioneering Welsh films of William Haggart and Arthur Cheetham from the early 1900s, right through to the latest anticipated releases of 2026, such as *Effi o Blaenau* and *Madfabulous*.

To mark the occasion, [Film Hub Wales](#) is running activities throughout the year, including sharing the results of an [industry wide survey](#) which lays out the Welsh screen industries’ hopes for the future of Welsh film and a similarly themed Made in Wales podcast. There will also be a series of ‘cinema treasure’ blogs, giving audiences a look at historic and newly renovated venues and a list of some of the key Welsh titles from the last 13 decades, which will be available to screen in cinemas for a ‘This is Welsh Film’ season.

Hana Lewis, Head of Film Hub Wales, explains the significance of the anniversary:

*“Cinema has evolved over the last 130 years, reflecting changes in society, new ways of storytelling and embracing digital technologies. It has remained a constant source of escapism, entertainment and connection. There are many ‘cinema treasures’ for audiences to discover in Wales, from *The Monmouth Savoy* to *Brynamman Hall* and more. We want to make 2026 a year of cinema, to thank them for their significant contributions to our communities, whilst also recognising the role of Welsh film itself and our hopes for the future of on-screen stories from Wales. In our recent industry survey, 97% of Welsh filmmakers told us that it was important to them that their film was seen on a big screen, so we can’t underestimate the value of cinema to production, as well as audiences.”*

So where did it all begin? American Birt Acres first screened films privately for the Cardiff photographic society before going on to exhibit his films to audiences in Cathays Park, just pipping the renowned Lumiere Brothers to the post, as they brought their famous Cinematographe to Cardiff’s Empire Music Hall in May 1896. In June, Acres then shot the first film in Wales - a Royal Visit of the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) to Cardiff.

Film Hub Wales’ ‘This is Welsh Film’ 130-year film package includes over 70 films reaching right back to 1898, including one of the most remarkable cinematic films of that time called “*Conway Castle – Panoramic View of Conway on the L & N.W Railway*”, courtesy of the Screen and Sound Archive at the National Library of Wales. Known as a sub-genre of film called ‘phantom train ride’, the locomotive was filmed from a truck as it ran through the tunnel, out into a spectacular panoramic vista of the Castle. Other films from across the decades include the first Welsh talkie ‘*Y Chwarelwr*’, and favourites such as *The Proud Valley*, *Rhosyn a Rhith (Coming up Roses)*, *Submarine*, *Gwledd* and many more.

Film Hub Wales' industry survey also revealed that 87% of respondents feel that there not enough films made in Welsh and there are not enough films about life in Wales, making it even more crucial to take a look back at some of the most influential films to be made in Wales, whilst also preserving Welsh screen culture.

Annie Grundy from Wales' beloved cinema the Magic Lantern, which recently made Time Out's top 100 cinemas in the world list, as well as winning the BIFA's 2025 cinema of the year award, adds:

"Happy 130th Birthday to Welsh cinema - what an exciting year! We are also celebrating 125 years of films playing at the Magic Lantern – originally the 'Assembly Rooms' in Tywyn, Gwynedd. Our 125 film programme launched on 8th March with a talk about the history of the venue from the team's very own Chris Richards. Like many of the fabulous cinemas in Wales, we look forward to digging into 'This is Welsh Film' and treating our audience to some screenings of the greatest films from the archive. It's so important for our communities to see their culture and heritage on the big screen."

Audiences can watch the 'This is Welsh film' season trailer now, as well as 'cinema treasures' videos and blogs from film exhibitors about their hopes for the future of Welsh film. They can also take a quick tour of The History of Welsh Cinema in this [short resource](#) created for the season, read the full [Future of Welsh Film industry survey results](#), and follow Film Hub Wales for news of upcoming screenings.

– ENDS –

The full list of season assets includes:

1. [This is Welsh Film list](#)
2. [Season trailer](#)
3. [Ten great films from Wales that you might not have watched yet](#)
4. [The History of Welsh Cinema – Short Resource](#)
5. [Cinema treasures blogs](#)
6. [The Future of Welsh film Blogs & Podcast](#)
7. [The Future of Welsh Film industry survey results](#)

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Notes to Editors:

About Film Hub Wales

Film Hub Wales (FHW) celebrates cinema. We fund, train and advise organisations that screen film, from film festivals to societies and mixed arts centres. Working with over [270 Welsh exhibitors](#), we aim to bring the best UK and international film to all audiences across Wales and the UK. Since Film Hub Wales set up in 2013, we've supported over 380 exciting cinema projects, reaching over 717,500 audience members.

We're part of a UK wide network of eight hubs which forms the British Film Institute (BFI) FAN,

made possible thanks to National Lottery funding. Film Hub Wales is managed by [Chapter](#). We also lead Made in Wales, a project celebrating films with Welsh connections, which is supported by Creative Wales. We were also proud to lead on the UK inclusive cinema strategy on behalf of BFI FAN 2017-23.

Film Hub Wales: [Website](#), [X \(Formerly Twitter\)](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#)

About Made in Wales

Film Hub Wales' Made in Wales (MIW) project celebrates films with Welsh connections. It offers a host of year-round activities in partnership with Welsh exhibitors, including a [film catalogue](#), which hosts information on over 1000 shorts and feature films. Audiences can keep up to date with news of upcoming Welsh releases and the latest interviews by following Made in Wales on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [TikTok](#), the [Made in Wales podcast](#), [YouTube](#) and [Letterboxd](#).

MIW is made possible thanks to funding from Creative Wales and the BFI Film Audience Network (FAN), awarding funds from the National Lottery. BFI FAN offers support to exhibitors across the whole of the UK, to boost cultural programming and engage diverse audiences. In Wales, activity is led by Film Hub Wales, managed by Chapter.

Made in Wales: [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), [Facebook](#), [Made in Wales podcast](#), [YouTube](#), [Letterboxd](#).

About Chapter

Chapter is an international centre for contemporary arts and culture, rooted in the heart of Cardiff, Wales. Established by artists Christine Kinsey and Bryan Jones and writer Mik Flood in 1971 to celebrate experimentation and radical thought, it's been a catalyst for creativity and critical thinking ever since.

Chapter is a hub for the production and presentation of world-class, inventive and compelling work. Their gallery commissions and produces exhibitions of the very best in national and international art. Their theatre spaces are a platform for experimental and thought-provoking plays, dance, music, live art plus so much more. Their cinemas offer independent and challenging films alongside a range of unique festivals and events, and they bring more films, to more people, in more places through Film Hub Wales.

Alongside the core programme, they're also home to more than 50 artists and creative companies who are based in their studios. From award-winning animators and film production companies to artists, designers and photographers, and bespoke art framers, print and recording studios, the creative community are at the heart of everything they do.

Their programme and community come together in an award-winning Caffi Bar that seats around 120 people and is a great place to meet up with friends, find a quiet spot to work away from home, or tuck into freshly prepared, locally sourced food and drink.

Outdoors, Chapter are proud to work with Canton Community Gardeners who nurture their

green spaces and share their knowledge through outreach work with schools and local communities. They also look after their beautiful bees!

Many people visit to attend the range of exciting classes, workshops and events that are brought to you by different local businesses every day. Try your hand at printmaking, Lindy Hop, Tae Kwando, ballet, tap, music for babies, youth orchestra and so much more, in the inclusive atmosphere of Chapter's relaxed venue. They also offer a range of unique, low-cost spaces for hire if you're looking for an unusual film location, accessible venue for a conference or meeting, or somewhere to celebrate a special occasion.

Everyone's welcome! Croeso i bawb!

[Website](#), [Facebook](#), [X \(Formerly Twitter\)](#), [Instagram](#)