**LONDON SHORT FILM FESTIVAL 2020 TO HOST CINEMA’S FIRST UK PILOT OF NATIONAL THEATRE’S INNOVATIVE SMART CAPTION GLASSES SYSTEM FOR CINEMA-GOERS FOR D/DEAF, DEAFENED OR HARD OF HEARING AUDIENCES**

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 FRIDAY 3RD JANUARY

**This January 2020, the London Short Film Festival (LSFF) will host the first UK pilot in cinemas of the National Theatre’s smart caption glasses, a solution for D/deaf, deafened or hard of hearing audiences, at BFI Southbank.**

As part of the festival’s ongoing commitment to accessibility, LSFF is delighted to announce that smart caption glasses will be available to cinema-goers at all LSFF 2020 UK Competition screenings with support from the **BFI Audience Fund** (awarding funds from The National Lottery), **BFI Southbank**, **National Theatre**, **Epson** and the **UK Cinema Association’s** *Technology Challenge Fund*.

Launched in 2018 by the National Theatre (NT), following a year of testing with audiences who are D/deaf, deafened or hard of hearing, smart caption glasses have been in use for 80% of their productions on the South Bank.

The Open Access Smart Capture technology was the result of an ongoing collaboration between the NT's technical team and speech and language experts led by Professor Andrew Lambourne.

The glasses display a synchronised transcript of dialogue and sound directly onto the lenses of the glasses, giving service users the freedom to experience captions how and when they want to. Accenture and the NT developed the service using Moverio BT-350 smart glasses, which are designed and manufactured by Epson specifically with arts and culture applications in mind.

Including work from **Peter Strickland** (*In Fabric*), a poignant turn from **Maxine Peake** (*Funny Cow*) and the directorial debut of **Lena Headey**, the LSFF 2020 UK Competition selection presents compelling storytelling from established and emerging British directors across four screenings on 11th, 13th, 15th & 16th January in NFT1 at BFI Southbank.

With 11 million people living with hearing loss across the UK - around one in six of the population - LSFF has been hosting annual screenings in London and across the UK for underserved Deaf and hard of hearing audiences for the past three years, curated by LSFF’s Deaf programmer **Zoe McWhinney**.

Over the last decade, the UK cinema sector, with the support of the UK Cinema Association, has worked hard to meet the needs of deaf and hearing-impaired audiences, increasing the number of subtitled screenings significantly. There are now over 1,500 subtitled screenings in UK cinemas every week. But the delivery of such ‘open caption’ shows, where the subtitles are visible to audience members whether they need them or not, remains a challenge, particularly for smaller cinema operators.

A further development of the Technology Challenge Fund, launched by the UK Cinema Association in October 2018 to find an affordable and inclusive solution to the delivery of subtitles for deaf and hard of hearing people, the pilot will see the first test of the National Theatre solution in a ‘live’ cinema environment.

**Booking details**

A limited number of smart caption glasses will be available for booking at the following LSFF UK Competition screenings:

*A Little Tenderness* - Saturday 11th Jan, 5.20pm, BFI Southbank

*Concealment Feeds the Fear* - Monday 13th Jan, 8.45pm, BFI Southbank

*In Living Colour* - Wednesday 15th Jan, 8.50pm, BFI Southbank

*Joyful & Triumphant* - Thursday 16th Jan, 8.45pm, BFI Southbank

**Bookings must be made by emailing LSFF on events@shortfilms.org**

**Sarah Chorley**, Festival Director, London Short Film Festival, said:

“LSFF is an experimental festival that pushes boundaries in cinema, and so we are delighted to host the first chance for UK cinema audiences to trial smart caption glasses, a technology which promises to bring accessibility and choice to deaf and hard of hearing audiences at the pictures.

“The pilot during London Short Film Festival 2020 will present this cutting edge technology as an excellent access option for cinemas and audiences alike.”

Welcoming the planned pilot, **Phil Clapp,** Chief Executive, UK Cinema Association said:

“It’s hugely exciting to have reached this milestone in the progress of our Technology Challenge Fund; the first genuinely live in-cinema of the National Theatre’s subtitling glasses solution. Our aim all along has been to help develop technology which can overcome many of the barriers of the current ‘open caption’ approach and make the cinema experience more accessible and inclusive for those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

“This next step we hope brings that outcome a little closer and we look forward to working with the team behind the technology and colleagues at LSFF and the BFI to make it a reality.”

**Ben Luxford**, **Head of UK Audiences**, **BFI**, said:

“The BFI Audience Fund exists to support a range of screening activities to help increase access and boost inclusivity to reach new audiences, so we are excited to fund this proposal from the London Short Film Festival. We welcome their ambition and ingenuity to road test and push forward the Open Access Smart Caption solution which could potentially radically improve the cinema experience for millions of people living with hearing loss across the UK. Although we recognise it’s not a perfect solution, it’s certainly a significant step in the right direction.”

**Jonathan Suffolk**, Concept Designer and Project Director for the smart caption glasses at the National Theatre, said:

“When we began developing the smart caption glasses in 2014, we were not only determined to transform how our audiences at the National Theatre were able to access our work but always had the vision that the glasses could transform access to arts, entertainment and culture more widely. This feels like a really exciting step towards that ambition – we’re really pleased to be working with BFI, UK Cinema Association and the London Short Film Festival on this exciting pilot in cinemas.”

**Notes for editors**

About London Short Film Festival

Founded in 2003, London Short Film Festival enters its seventeenth year as the UK’s premiere showcase for emerging and established UK and International short film.

Screening 500+ distinctive short works across 9 days, each January sees diverse audiences of over 10,000 flocking to the festival at some of the capital’s most historic independent venues, consolidating LSFF as the first significant date on London’s cultural calendar.

About the BFI

The BFI is the UK’s lead organisation for film, television and the moving image. It is a distributor of National Lottery funding and 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. The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger CBE.

About the National Theatre

The National Theatre’s mission is to make world class theatre that’s entertaining, challenging and inspiring – and to make it for everyone. It aims to reach the widest possible audience and to be as inclusive, diverse and national as possible with a broad range of productions that play in London, on tour around the UK, on Broadway and across the globe. The National Theatre's extensive UK-wide learning and participation programme supports young people and schools through performance and writing programmes like Connections, New Views and Let’s Play, while Public Acts creates ambitious new works of participatory theatre in sustained partnership with theatres and community organisations around the country. The National Theatre extends its reach through digital programmes including NT Live, which broadcasts some of the best of British theatre to over 2,500 venues in 65 countries, and the National Theatre Collection, which makes recordings of shows available to UK schools and the global education sector. The National Theatre invests in the future of theatre by developing talent, creating bold new work and building audiences, partnering with a range of UK theatres and theatre companies.

nationaltheatre.org.uk

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About the UK Cinema Association

The UK Cinema Association represents the interests of well over 90 per cent of UK cinema operators by number and market share. Its membership ranges from single screen/owner-managed sites to the largest circuit and multiplex operators. The Association advocates on behalf of the UK cinema sector at international, national, regional and local level, as well as advising its members on a range of legislative, regulatory and operational issues.

About the UK Cinema Association Technology Fund

The UK Cinema Association – the trade body representing UK cinema operators – launched its Technology Challenge Fund in October 2018. Developed in partnership with the charity Action on Hearing Loss, the Fund aims to find an affordable and inclusive solution to the challenge of delivering captions only to those who need them, but potentially for all cinema screenings. This would massively widen the range of films available to deaf customers, and their ability to enjoy the big screen experience with friends and family.

**Contacts**

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