



Media Release

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For immediate release

New Trans Stories with Welsh Connections Coming to Cinemas in 2022

With the support of Film Hub Wales' (FHW) Made in Wales (MIW) project, two new films from Welsh talent, that follow the lives of Trans women in India and the USA, are coming to cinemas this year.

'[Donna](#)' and '[Being Hijira](#)' are debut features from directors with roots in Wales, that tell international Trans led stories, at a pivotal time for Transgender communities.

'Donna' which is distributed by Bohemia Media, is the debut feature of Welsh director Jay Bedwani. The film, which releases on July 15th 2022, tells the story of Donna Persona who first hit the stage with the legendary Cockettes. Ecstatic lip-synching in San Francisco's downtown bars is a far cry though from Donna's Baptist upbringing in San Jose. Now in her seventies, she is offered a chance to co-write a play about an overlooked episode in queer history - the Compton's Cafeteria Riot, in which transgender women Donna knew stood up against police harassment.

Jay Bedwani, Director of 'Donna' spent five years travelling from Cardiff to California to document Donna's story, and formed a life-long friendship in the process. He explains:

"I feel very privileged to bring the story of an older transgender woman onto Welsh screens. I hope Donna's message and spirit will resonate with audiences as much as it does with me."

'Being Hijra', from West Wales based Director, Ila Mehrotra (Spring Films) which will release later this year, is a deeply personal, emotionally charged journey filmed over 6 years, which chronicles the pain and pride of Rudrani Chettri and the transgender community of New Delhi as they set about creating India's first transgender model agency.

Ila Mehrotra explains:

"Developing the story of the often exoticized Hijra community in the most humane and relatable way has been an absolute pleasure. The support and interest from Film Hub Wales fills me with excited enthusiasm, to bring the film onto Welsh screens hoping it resonates humanly across the board."

Both films are supported by 'Made in Wales', a FHW project which celebrates films with Welsh connections, giving a platform to lesser known stories from Wales that represent real Welsh communities. FHW are working with Bohemia and Spring Films to ensure that audiences have the opportunity to hear from the Directors through exclusive interviews and build global solidarity with Trans audiences represented on screen, at their local independent cinema.

Radha Patel, Made in Wales Officer at Film Hub Wales explains:

“These documentaries mark an important cultural milestone. Filmmakers are often told that there is only room for ‘one marginalised story’ at a time. By breaking this trend, Welsh cinema sends an important message to Trans people, particularly young trans people, affirming their identities and their right to self-determination.”

Later this year, audiences can also look forward to ‘T.L.C’ aka Tender Loving Care for Trans-Led/Trans-Loved Cinema. A series of special events exploring trans-led cinema releases from FHW’s [Inclusive Cinema](#) project.

Both films received funding from Ffilm Cymru Wales, the national development agency which invests in the development and production of short and feature length films from emerging and established Welsh and Wales-based filmmakers.

Kimberely Warner, Head of Production at Ffilm Cymru Wales explains:

“We’re so proud to have worked with Jay and Ila on their impressive feature documentary debuts. It’s so important to ensure visibility for our diverse trans communities who represent all racial and ethnic backgrounds, as well as faith traditions. Both Being Hijra and Donna centre the experiences of two incredible women and their individual journeys of self. Their stories will help pave the way for others and we’re certain that both will reach a global audience.”

MIW offers a host of year-round activities in partnership with Welsh exhibitors, including a [film catalogue](#) which hosts over 600 shorts and features with Welsh connections.

MIW is made possible thanks to funding from Creative Wales, along with support of the BFI Film Audience Network, awarding funds from the National Lottery. FAN offers support to exhibitors across the whole of the UK, to boost cultural programming and engage diverse audiences. Funds in Wales are administered by FHW via Chapter as the Film Hub Lead Organisation.

More than £30M is raised each week for good causes across the UK by the National Lottery.

Where To Watch ‘Donna’

[Torch Theatre, Milford Haven](#)

Saturday 23rd July

[Kinokulture, Oswestry](#)

Wednesday 17th August (part of their ‘Summer of Queer Cinema’ programme’)

[Aberystwyth Arts Centre](#)

Monday 1st August and Wednesday 3rd August

[Chapter Arts Centre](#)

From 15th July onwards

Dates subject to change, please keep an eye on the cinema's website for details on their upcoming film screenings.

Ends

For further information, please contact:

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Notes to Editors:

About Film Hub Wales

Film Hub Wales (FHW) celebrates cinema. We support organisations that screen film, from film festivals, to societies and mixed arts centres. Working with over [315 Welsh exhibitors](#), we aim to bring the best British and international film to all audiences across Wales and the UK. Since Film Hub Wales set up in 2013, we've supported over 250 exciting cinema projects, reaching over 480,000 audience members.

We're part of a UK wide network of eight hubs funded by the British Film Institute (BFI) which form the [Film Audience Network](#) (FAN), with [Chapter](#) appointed as the 'Film Hub Lead Organisation' (FHLO) in Wales.

We are also proud to lead on the UK inclusive cinema strategy on behalf of BFI FAN.
[Website](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)

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](#)

About the BFI

We are a cultural charity, a National Lottery distributor, and the UK's lead organisation for film and the moving image. Our mission is:

- To support creativity and actively seek out the next generation of UK storytellers
- To grow and care for the BFI National Archive, the world's largest film and television archive
- To offer the widest range of UK and international moving image culture through our programmes and festivals - delivered online and in venue
- To use our knowledge to educate and deepen public appreciation and understanding

- To work with Government and industry to ensure the continued growth of the UK's screen industries

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter.

The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Tim Richards.

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About Chapter

Chapter is one of Europe's largest and most dynamic arts centres with cinemas, theatres, exhibition spaces, studios, a café, award-winning bars, over 60 cultural workspaces and more.

Chapter has an international reputation for excellence, innovation and collaboration. It offers an ever-changing programme of the best performance, films and exhibitions from Wales and from around the world.

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