



# NEWSREEL

UK FILM COUNCIL  
LOTTERY FUNDED

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BRITISH FEDERATION OF FILM SOCIETIES

APRIL 2006

## 'THANK GOD FOR FILM SOCIETIES'



### ANTHONY MINGHELLA HOSTS FSOY AT NFT

In a warmly appreciative welcome speech, reproduced in full inside, this year's host opened the 2006 Film Society of the Year Awards with a resounding endorsement of the film society movement's importance to British cinema culture. Speaking as a filmmaker, he praised film societies for continuing to find outlets for 'films that matter': with his film director's hat on, he spoke of the way film societies provide 'the support of people who care about movies with con-

tent... movies for grown-ups': and as Chair of the British Film Institute, he said 'it is absolutely appropriate that you should be celebrating whatever you want to celebrate at the National Film Theatre'.

Anthony Minghella was introduced by BFFS President Derek Malcolm, whose hard-hitting speech is also reproduced in full inside this edition of NewsReel. Derek took the Film Council to task for paying insufficient attention to the film society move-

ment's achievements, and for unnecessarily removing responsibility for viewing sessions from BFFS, at a time when the organisation had demonstrably been doing a good job in meeting the needs of film societies.

The whole event was compèred with aplomb by BFFS Chair David Miller, who ensured that it concluded neatly within the allotted time-slot, and all attendees then moved without unseemly haste to a drinks reception in the nearby National Theatre.

## INSIDE: THE WINNERS, THE SPEECHES - AND MANY MORE PICTURES

# FILM SOCIETY OF THE YEAR AWARDS

## ∞ THE WINNERS ∞

### ENGHOLM FILM SOCIETY OF THE YEAR

Winner: Keswick Film Club

Distinction: Slough Co-Operative Film Society

Commendations: Brighton International Film Society and Edinburgh University Film Society



Rod Evans of Keswick Film Club



Jean Hill of Ipswich Film Society with Anthony Minghella

### BEST WEBSITE

Winner: Ipswich Film Society

Distinctions: Cranbrook Film Society and Jersey Film Society and Keswick Film Club

Commendations: Brighton International Film Society, Edinburgh University Film Society and Wimbledon Film Club

### BEST NEW SOCIETY

Winner: Brighton International Film Society

Distinction: Cineguernsey

Commendations: Louth Film Club, Oundle Cinema, Wimbledon Film Club and Wincanton Film Society



Geetha J. of Brighton International Film Society with Anthony Minghella



Brian Clay of BFFS SW Regional Group accepts on behalf of Bridport Film Society

### BEST PROGRAMME NOTES

Winner: Bridport Film Society

Distinctions: Cranbrook Film Society and Penwith Film Society

Commendations: Brighton International Film Society and Feckenodeon Film Society

### BEST STUDENT SOCIETY

Winner: Edinburgh University Film Society

Distinction: Film Unit (Sheffield University)

Commendations: Warwick Student Cinema and University of Exeter Guild of Students Cinema Society



Katherine Seller accepts for Edinburgh University Film Society



Catriona Stares of Cineguernsey

### BEST MARKETING

Winner: Cineguernsey

Distinctions: Brighton International Film Society and Keswick Film Club

Commendations: University of Exeter Guild of Students Cinema Society

### BEST FILM PROGRAMMING

Winner: Abingdon College and District Film Society

Distinctions: Club Film and Penwith Film Society

Commendations: Letchworth Film Club, Shaftesbury Arts Centre, Slough Co-operative Film Society, Swindon Film Society and Welwyn Garden City Film Society



Michael Bloom of Abingdon College and District Film Society with Anthony Minghella



Dudley Smithers accepts Slough Co-Operative Film Society's award

### COMMUNITY AWARD

Winner: Slough Co-Operative Film Society

Distinctions: Oxen Park Cinema Club and Shaftesbury Arts Centre

Commendations: Club Flix, Rainbow Film Society, Strathendrick Film Society and Swindon Film Society

## JOHN CHITTOCK AWARDED THE ROEBUCK CUP AFTER A MERE 40 YEARS

*David Miller's citation for this award reads:* In determining this year's recipient, the committee has selected a person whose contribution has just simply been immense. This person defined the BFFS as it stands today. Writing nearly thirty years ago our recipient said 'socially, and culturally, there is much to be said for the future role that film societies can serve.

Whereas traditionally, the film society has been a convenient means for making quality film available to minority audiences, film societies of the future should become a reservoir of knowledge, expertise and com-



munity activity, taking the initiative to show people how film can help them, enrich them, even solve some of their community problems.' His article concluded that more Government support would be needed, especially financial. And, whilst I believe the film society movement took heed of his words thirty years ago, we still need the money. But how prophetic, how perceptive, and how discerning a view. For his support over four decades - and still involved today as one of our vice-Presidents - a true friend and champion of the British Federation of Film Societies, John Chittock.



# FILM SOCIETY OF THE YEAR AWARDS

## ∞ THE SPEECHES ∞



### DEREK MALCOLM

Well Anthony, you know, I can remember when you'd been Chairman of the *bfi* for a few months, you actually said, and quite rightly, that you didn't know how difficult it would be to actually persuade people to give you enough money to actually run the Institute properly. Well, ditto BFFS. We've had a terrible time over the last few years, and it did seem at one point that we might have to completely give up. But now we seem to be on a reasonably even keel, though I do have two grumbles. The first is that I don't think

the Film Council shows a great deal of interest in us, and I would like them to think of us, not as a lot of old biddies who watch peculiar foreign films in very bad conditions, like it used to be sometimes thirty years ago, but as a lot of young people too, especially in the universities, who actually are getting to know world cinema much better than they would ever be able to if they were going to their local commercial cinema.

The other grumble I have is that I'm sorry that the viewing sessions have more or less been taken away from us, and that the choice of the film is not really ours any more. I think that's a bit silly, because I think our choices would be probably a bit better than most other people's. The thing that I would also complain about, if I'm going to start complaining, is about the film societies! I know it's an extremely difficult job, getting the audiences, and it's no use putting a lot of abstruse films in front of them, because in many cases you'd only have an audience of about twelve for them, if that, but I am a little worried when I see that *Ladies in Lavender* is the top choice of the year for film societies. That seems to me a tiny bit unambitious. I'm glad *Motorcycle Diaries* was second. Thank God *Motorcycle Diaries* was second. I'm not criticising *Ladies in Lavender* - nice little film - but if that's what we actually think is the best film of the year for film societies, then we've got a little bit of work to do yet. \*

I don't know if you agree - you might not agree with that (applause). Anyway, I'm here to introduce Anthony, and I remember the first time I ever met him was not in this country, but in Munich, and I was popping in to see *Truly, Madly, Deeply*. I think it was probably before the film was actually shown in England, and all I can remember is him saying, as I passed him by in the auditorium, 'Good God! Malcolm!' I think he was a little frightened, at that stage, that his first film was going to be seen in those conditions, in a preview, at Munich, and not back at home. Frightened perhaps that I might write horribly about it, and destroy the distribution in England, or help to. Anyway, I didn't destroy the distribution, and he went on - he must be the only film-maker I know who's actually won major awards for every single film he's made so far. Long may that last - he's got two more on the stocks, I believe, so long may that last, and thank you Anthony, for giving us such a lot of pleasure, and thank you for being here tonight.

*\* Ladies in Lavender came top of Filmbank's DVD hirings but this included many community and mobile cinema venues. Motorcycle Diaries actually came first in the film society bookings league, so Anthony, Derek and Walter Salles can rest easy!*

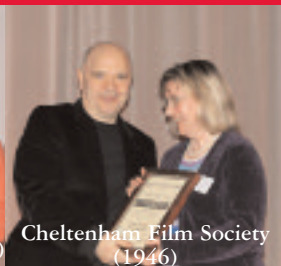
### BFFS 60TH ANNIVERSARY LONG SERVICE AWARD WINNERS



Manchester and Salford Film Society (1930)



Ipswich Film Society (1935)



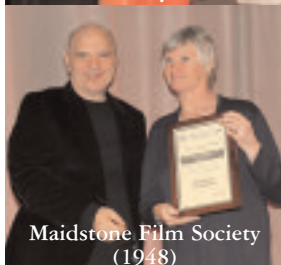
Cheltenham Film Society (1946)



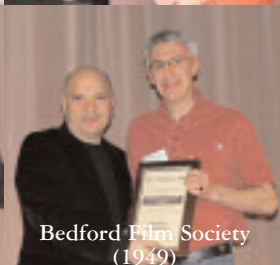
Slough Co-operative Film Society (1946)



South London Film Society (1947)



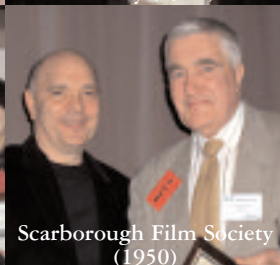
Maidstone Film Society (1948)



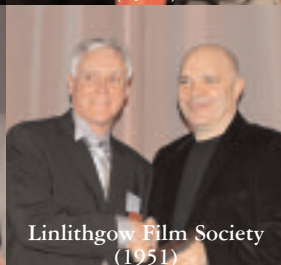
Bedford Film Society (1949)



Film Unit (Sheffield University) (1949)



Scarborough Film Society (1950)



Linlithgow Film Society (1951)

# FILM SOCIETY OF THE YEAR AWARDS

## ∞ THE SPEECHES ∞

I was going to tell that story about Derek (see Derek's speech), because I was a terrified first-film maker, thinking that I had a special privilege to be in Munich and have a quiet screening, because I had friends in the Munich Film Festival who'd asked to see the film. I turned up and the first person I saw going in was Derek Malcolm, who at that time of course was everybody's hero as a film critic, and my dread... (laughter at the 'at that time') - shall I tell you something about compliments, is that they never ever work. But it's true - he was the only film critic whose name I knew at that time, and there he was, and I thought, this is the most ghastly screening room, and the mono sound, and the terrible projection, it was all just awful, and I thought, well OK, that's the end of my film career. But he was very kind to me, and thank God for that, is all I can say, but also, thank God for film societies, and it was a real honour when I was asked if I could come here today and be part of the event, for three reasons, or with three hats on.

One is as a film-goer, and David's account of my particular interest is a very fair one. I went to University where Ralph Willett was teaching, and I fell in love with the cinema, in Hull, through film societies, through the regional film theatre there, and through the one in Leeds which I used to get a train to if the movies they were showing there weren't the same as the ones they were showing in Hull. I became a real disciple of world cinema, of serious cinema, and of the secret cinema, I think, that's increasingly secret. And so, as an audience-goer, as a person who loves movies, I bless you all, for continuing to try and find outlets for films which matter. My friend Walter Salles, my great friend, would be thrilled to know that you rated his *Motorcycle Diaries* so highly in the past year. And I'll call him tonight and tell him that he was number two behind *Ladies in Lavender*!

Secondly, as a film director, the kind of films that I would love to be able to make, and want to make, are films which are harder to bowl down the middle of the alley, which need the support of people who care about movies with content, who care about movies for grown-ups, who care about movies which don't deliver themselves in a kind of narrative straight-jacket. I think film societies are part of the constituency which will continue to welcome films which matter, which might last more than the first couple of days in the cinema, and will buck the trend of selling films through all the wrong ways, for all the wrong reasons.

So as a film director I thank you, and lastly, as the Chairman of the British Film Institute, I think it's absolutely appropriate that you should be celebrating whatever you want to celebrate at the National Film Theatre. As far as I'm concerned you will always be part of the British Film Institute, whatever your orthodoxy is, whatever our orthodoxy is. It's so important that the *bfi* is part of a national, regional, UK-wide message about the cinema, and about the cinema which Derek, rightly, has concern for. About what our choices are, about the choices available to us - how do we create opportunities



**ANTHONY  
MINGHELLA**

around the country for people to see great cinema. And one thing I know about is opportunity, and you provide that.

My son, when he was a teenager, would leave the room when I put a foreign movie in the DVD, and in fact, there was one section of our films, and one section for his. One day I was watching an Almodóvar movie, and he came with some friends and put his head around the door and then left. About three or four weeks later I was looking for another Almodóvar movie, and it had gone. I couldn't think where it was, and he passed me in the hall, and I said, have you seen the Almodóvar movie *Matador*, and he said, oh yeah, well, we're having an Almodóvar season at the moment, so we're just collecting all his DVDs to watch them all in sequence. He's just come home from America, where he's studying at Columbia University, and he was online when he came in, trying to buy a poster of Godard's *Masculin/Feminin*. So I think that the film society which is in my house has had some effect. I think what it says to me is, if you build it, they will come. And clearly, you are continuing to build it, and clearly, there is more and more interest again, I think, in the notion of film societies, and I think it's great that Derek supports you, and I'm very happy to be a small part of your celebration today.

### DAVID MILLER'S CHAIRMAN'S SPEECH IN BRIEF

The Film Society of the Year awards ceremony is an opportunity to pay tribute to the many marvellous ways you, our members, develop audience participation, widen access to world cinema and, at the bottom line, add to the income enjoyed by the industry so that it can continue to provide the product we love, film.

This year saw a record number of entries, 133, submitted by a record number of entrants, 48. The quality of submissions was absolutely superb and came from all corners of the UK - inner cities, suburbs, rural and island communities. This provides irrefutable evidence of the vibrancy and relevance of community based cinema to people across the nation.

As part of our 60th anniversary celebrations, this evening is also the appropriate event to recognise the contribution made by long-standing film societies. Representing the oldest, continuous film society from every region, eleven representatives received a special certificate marking this achievement. Between them they have contributed 636 years of unbroken service. Quite amazing!

The Film Society of the Year awards brings like-minded people together. The exchange of ideas, knowledge and expertise all contribute to helping ensure the future of the movement. I commend every entry and encourage you to present an even larger task to our judges for the 2007 Awards. We look forward to seeing you there.



## BFFS PIONEERS NEW SHORTS DISTRIBUTION ARRANGEMENT WITH SHOOTING PEOPLE

In an exciting new initiative, BFFS has teamed up with Shooting People, through their distributor Word of Mouth, to offer BFFS members an exclusive deal. Members can buy a DVD of new, award-winning shorts in an offer that includes the rights to screen to an audience. The DVD, titled Best v Best Vol. One, features 6 outstanding short films all of which have won awards at competitive events around the world.

BFFS has been working for some time to make it possible for film societies with DVD capability to get easy access to high-quality, recent short films at a reasonable price, and in a relatively hassle-free way. The scheme works like this: you buy the DVD with the rights attached, you are licensed to show the films twice within a twelve-month period, and after that the DVD is yours to keep, raffle or whatever. The price, £80 including p&p, represents good value for money (just over £13 per short).

Word of Mouth has also agreed to put interested film societies in touch with filmmakers to arrange a Q&A or talk about their short.

To order the DVD (sign-up deadline 30 September), send a cheque for £80 to BFFS, Ritz Building, Mount Pleasant Campus, Swansea SA1 6ED. And please, give us feedback about how the scheme works for you, by post or at [bffs-admin@sihe.ac.uk](mailto:bffs-admin@sihe.ac.uk).

### THE FILMS

(for more information see [www.bestvbest.com](http://www.bestvbest.com))

**Family Portrait (USA)** 28 mins  
Awards: Grand Jury Prize for Best Short Film, Sundance Film Festival 2005. Best Documentary Award at the Aspen Shorts Film Festival 2005. Best Documentary Award at the Los Angeles International Shorts Film Festival 2005. David A. Wolper Student Documentary Award from the International Documentary Association 2004.

Richard and Diana render their own family portrait as they recount their childhood memories and the challenges they have faced since Gordon Parks photographed their family in 1968 for Life magazine.



**Who Killed Brown Owl (UK)** 10 mins  
Awards: Joint Winner, Best Short Film Edinburgh International Film Festival 2004. Inspired by classical paintings of village life and Agatha Christie whodunits, this spectacular 9-minute one-shot film, is about a lazy Sunday afternoon down by the river that goes horribly wrong.

Burnt sunbathers, beer-drinking kids, an abandoned baby, a rabbit in a boat, a bicycle accident - in Who Killed Brown Owl, the perfect English arcadia gives way to varying kinds of misfortune, disruption and violence. Filmed over the course of one afternoon, Who Killed Brown Owl, commissioned by Enfield Council, features a volunteer cast of almost 100 residents of the London Borough of Enfield.

**The Banker (UK)** 13 mins  
Awards: Winner, British Film and Television Academy Award, Best Short Film 2005. The Banker is a short, black comedy about a quirky loner, who works in a sperm bank. He's border-line obsessed with the nurse who works at the fertility clinic across town and goes to enormous, rather disturbing lengths to prove his love for her... It's a little

tale of unrequited love on a grand scale, starring Michael Sheen.

**School of Life (UK)** 8 mins  
Awards: Best Short Film, British Independent Film Awards 2004. This will be the most important lesson of your life. Maybe the only important lesson.

**Milk (UK)** 10 mins  
Awards: Golden Bear, Best Short Film, Berlin International Film Festival 2005. Best Film, Young Filmmakers International Film Festival, Granada 2005. Reluctant Jennifer must bathe her mischievous grandmother. Once close, they are now virtually strangers. The enforced intimacy of the situation results in an awkwardness that they can neither deny nor overcome until they begin to play together in the water.

**Little Terrorist (UK)** 15 mins  
Awards and Nominations: Winner: Grand Prize, Tehran International Short Film Festival 2004. 1st Prize, Montreal World Film Festival 2005. Oscar-nomination for Best Short Film (Live Action) 2005. Nominated for Best Short Film, European Film Awards 2005.

Jamal, a 12 year old Muslim Pakistani mistakenly crosses the border between India and Pakistan, finding an unusual ally in a Hindu Brahmin, Bhola. Indian soldiers descend on Bhola's village searching for the 'terrorist' who crossed over. His niece Rani insists they can't let a Muslim into their Hindu home. With Bhola and Rani grappling with the consequences of harbouring a Pakistani and their deep-set prejudice against Muslims, Jamal's only hope is the humanity shared by a people separated by artificial boundaries a long time ago.

Little Terrorist is based on a true story: In early 2003, a 12-year old Pakistani boy crossed the Indo-Pak border by mistake. Indian PM Atal Bihari Vajpaae, amidst PR fanfare, restored the boy to his family in Pakistan, kicking off the thaw in tensions between these two nuclear countries who came so close to war less than a year earlier.

## CINEMA BUSINESS SPECIAL OFFER FOR BFFS MEMBERS

Enclosed with this newsletter you will find a complimentary copy of Cinema Business, a magazine which finds its way into almost every cinema and film exhibition venue in the country. Cinema Business are very keen to get film societies interested in taking their magazine, and at BFFS we think you may well be interested, for a whole range of reasons.

For one thing, more and more film societies are operating theatrically - letting whoever turns up pay at the door - and thinking of new ways of increasing their audiences. For another, as film societies take increasing advantage of early availability of DVDs, they have to take the attitudes and approaches of commercial cinemas in their locality into account.

BFFS has negotiated an extremely favourable subscription deal with Cinema Business. Subscribe before 8th Sept. 2006, and you will get a 1-year subscription of 11 issues for £35, instead of the standard price of £49, saving you 30%. To take advantage of this offer, ring CB on 0845 2707857 keeping your credit card handy, and (I love this bit) quote the special secret code BFFS06.

## VIEWING SESSIONS FILMS - WHAT THE AUDIENCE THOUGHT

*At the recent ICO viewing sessions, BFFS collected information from members on the quality of the offerings, in standard audience reaction format. Here are the results.*

Title	A	B	C	D	E	Audience Total	Reaction Index
Tsotsi	27	20	6	1	0	54	83.8
Shooting Dogs	16	13	2	2	0	33	82.6
Army in the Shadows	10	9	5	0	0	24	80.2
Pierrepoint	19	21	6	3	0	49	78.6
Love + Hate	11	14	7	0	0	32	78.1
Paradise Now	7	16	0	2	0	25	78.0
The Squid and the Whale	12	13	13	2	0	40	71.9
The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada	15	19	14	5	0	53	70.8
The White Countess	13	18	15	5	0	51	69.1
Seducing Dr. Lewis	13	15	14	3	4	49	65.3
Favela Rising	2	6	0	2	1	11	63.6
The Beat that my Heart Skipped	6	6	10	7	1	30	57.5
U-Carmen E-Khayelitsha	2	9	11	13	4	39	44.9
Overcoming	0	4	6	7	1	18	43.1

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