

The 13th Keswick Film Festival – 23rd to 26th February

What are YOU going to see?

With so much on offer, how do you pick your way through the programme? We asked David Miller, Festival Programmer, for his tips. David says –

“Firstly, don’t miss the gala opener! Get your pass and enjoy wonderful food kindly donated by local restaurants, a cracking movie and all in the presence of director Tony Britten and star John Hurt.

Friday is really a choice between Looking Good and Feeling Very Good. Our Looking Good theme features films that have scooped awards from across the globe and the Feeling Very Good selection offers humour and a little light relief but usually with a twist! The opening film at the Theatre *David and Kamal* is a family-friendly film depicting life in Jerusalem as experienced by two very different boys who come to rely on each other despite their differences. Over at the Alhambra cinema the opening film *Pardon* depicts Turkish humour but with a fact-based storyline that will have you gasping in disbelief!

Mid-afternoon options then switch places with a searing prison drama at the Theatre and American humour at the Alhambra. All four films thus far are UK premieres so our audiences will be the first to see these films. The early evening titles offer the same disparity of choice! Do you go for another intense thriller or be humoured by an Icelandic comedian offering his take on the financial crisis? And, to close the day, is it one of the bloodiest, high octane dramas ever to come out of Korea (*The Yellow Sea*) or the French box-office smash that may well have resonance with us too (*Welcome to the Sticks*)! All in all, you can plot your day to see humour from international perspectives or journey across the globe experiencing drama, intrigue and action – and, of course, you can mix them up!

Saturday sees the widest range as well as a new venture with the inclusion of Rheged as an official venue. For early risers and those interested in human rights, *The Kids Britain Doesn’t Want* at the Theatre at 09.30 is a thought-provoking start to the day; you can then stay for the debate with Clare Sambrook and director Rachel Seifert or catch the bus to Rheged to catch up to three films that feature the great-outdoors in all its greatness – and use of the IMAX screen only enhances that experience.

In Keswick at the Alhambra at 11.00 we offer our free family-friendly screening – *Ways To Live Forever* – and star Alex Etel will be on hand to take questions. Although this is free entry, you will need a ticket so don’t leave it too late. For the early afternoon, do you want to see a collection of short films made by the cream of Cumbrian talent or see two films that feature John Hurt (*Lou and Sailcloth*)? Then mid-afternoon has a real treat for lovers of the music of Dolly Parton in the UK premiere of *The Year Dolly Parton Was My Mom*. The film has many of her most famous songs interwoven into a heart-warming family-drama. Alternatively, you might be tempted by the poignant yet somehow uplifting story of a cancer patient’s battle to beat the disease in *50/50*.

After what is sure to be an unmissable performance by the Lancaster Millennium Choir at 19.00 in the Theatre, the choice is between two of John Hurt’s best and most famous performances or an intense British drama. The John Hurt selection is *The Naked Civil Servant* (directed by last year’s star guest Jack Gold) and its follow-up *An Englishman in New York*. The British drama is *Tyrannosaur* with Peter Mullan at his intense best and a performance by Olivia Colman that will leave you dumbfounded. To finish the day, why not join us to witness Leonard Cohen’s 1972 concert *Bird On A Wire*, and with an introduction by radio star Tony Palmer.

The final day is another smorgasbord of choice! Two early starts, both at the Theatre, provide the opportunity to see another Human Rights presentation, a Kurdish film, itself a prize-winner with guest speaker who is both involved in Human Rights in Turkey and assists with the Kurdish film festival in London, Mustafa Gundogdu. Or do you settle in for the 10 hour (yes, that is ten hour) epic that is *Wagner*, with expert Tony Palmer on hand, and an hour for lunch conveniently built-in! This is a rare opportunity and obviously one that will appeal to music, as well as film lovers. The early afternoon choice is one that could hardly be more divergent – the UK premiere of a Chinese film that has one of the most staggering performances by a child actor you are ever likely to see, or gentle Spanish humour. *Little Moth* will leave you drained emotionally and *Mia Sarah* will put a smile on your face. Which one appeals the most? And then is it John Hurt ‘In Conversation’ with clips of many of his fantastic films, or *A Separation* one of the front-runners for the 2012 Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film of the Year? John Hurt is a national treasure and sure to have lots to say. His coming to the festival, especially so soon after BAFTA recognises his extraordinary career by awarding him with the Outstanding British Contribution to Cinema Award is just wonderful.

The two early evening slots are another clear – if difficult – choice, this time between the old or the new. When the old is the Bfi archive of *Tales From The Shipyard*, including scenes from Barrow-In-Furness adding a very local flavour as well as Sean Connery’s only film as a director and the new is controversial Director Lars Von Trier’s *Melancholia* (with John Hurt in the cast!) you can see the dilemma! And, for the grande finale, the last two films offer the opportunity to see pre-releases of two films that are both sure to be huge when they come out later in 2012. Does the Argentinian drama *Carancho (The Vulture)* appeal more than Norway’s *Babycall*? Whichever one you decide on you are sure to see a worthy finale to what promises to be a brilliant festival.”

Phew! For full details of the festival, see www.keswickfilmfestival.org.