

Edinburgh International Film Festival Programme Launch




Lavish extravagance ditched in favour of 'an exciting, fun, engaged, serious, brainy, and relevant series of events' at the 2011 Edinburgh Film Festival.

Following months of speculation since the release of the 'blueprint' for the revamped Film Festival, director James Mullighan today appeared before the press to announce the programme for the festival's 65th year.

The departure of former director Hannah McGill and relocation of festival headquarters to Teviot House led many to question whether the EIFF was suffering from a lack of funding and criticised the ambitious steps taken to transform one of the world's longest running film festivals.

Speaking from Festivalhouse@Teviot, where Mullighan said filmmakers and filmgoers alike would be able to 'rub shoulders at two o'clock in the morning in the Library bar', the director outlined the 2011 programme. He highlighted not only the changes that have been made, but also the various events and screenings which the new look festival would include.

 The director spoke of 'an ambition to open up the festival to a much wider range of people, to have it spread its wings and engage audiences of all tastes, ages and backgrounds.' 'Throughout its history it's been provocative, controversial, a little dangerous often, a debate leader, and a culture setter, but not lately. We want to get that back for all of us, because we can and because we should, because

that's what the Edinburgh Film Festival has been and should always seek to be, an agenda setter not a reactor to other people's agendas.'

Though there had been ruminations of a reduced number of premieres and a decline in star turnout, the programme features 63 International, European and UK premieres including the opening night screening of John Michael McDonagh's *The Guard*, starring Brendan Gleeson and Don Cheadle.

Amongst the various new initiatives, including the newly sponsored Nokia Shorts Weekender and the appropriately named science and cinema events of Reel Science, the director discussed at length the Conflict Reportage strand. Of particular interest was Dafung Dennis' *Hell and Back Again* which explores the monstrous nature of war, and through the use of revolutionary technology allows an up close documentary insight into modern warfare.

On the subject of the guest curators, which caused a considerable stir when announced as part of the 'blueprint', Mullighan was quick to clarify that it was the creative input of these individuals rather than their status and celebrity that the festival was calling upon.

"What we wanted was their ideas; their different angle on this mighty film festival, not their guest wattage or their guest photograph-ability on a red carpet." said the director:-"They are guest curators, not guest attendees.'

With announcements of additional screenings and events to follow in the coming weeks it is clear that things may be a little different at the 65th Edinburgh International Film Festival, and that audiences are more likely than ever to see something they've never seen before.

The Film Festival runs from 15th -26th June.

www.edfilmfest.org for more information.