

# EIFF opening night film is a crime thriller

Hyena a crime thriller developed by Film4 is to open the 68th Edinburgh International Film Festival next month.

The Festival runs from 18 to 29 June 2014.

This will be the first opportunity for any audience to see this hotly anticipated title from the award-winning producers Stephen Woolley (*Made in Dagenham*, *The Crying Game*, *Mona Lisa*), Elizabeth Karlsen (*Great Expectations*, *Ladies in Lavender*) and Joanna Laurie. HYENA reunites director Gerard Johnson with Peter Ferdinando (*A Field in England*, *Starred Up*), who played the lead in his debut feature *Tony* which received its World Premiere at EIFF back in 2009 and also stars Stephen Graham (*This is England*, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*), MyAnna Buring (*Twilight*, *Downton Abbey*), Neil Maskell (*Kill List*, *Wild Bill*), Elisa Lasowski (*Somers Town*) and Richard Dormer (*Good Vibrations*). HYENA was developed by Film4. Sam Lavender and Katherine Butler exec produced the film for Film4 which was co-financed by Film4, BFI, Ingenious and Lipsync.



Chris Fujiwara, EIFF Artistic Director, said: "We're excited to be opening the festival with the World Premiere of HYENA. It's a powerful and beautifully directed thriller that clearly establishes director Gerard Johnson as a major talent in British filmmaking. It's also an exceptional example of the kind of film that our festival has traditionally supported: a work in which a director of artistic integrity takes a vigorous and imaginative approach to the renewal of a film genre."

HYENA will receive its World Premiere at Edinburgh's Festival Theatre on Wednesday 18 June and will be released in the UK by Metrodome in October. HYENA Producer Stephen Woolley, said: "I vividly recall seeing the World Premiere of *The Long Good Friday* in 1980 at EIFF and presenting my first production *The Company of Wolves* there in 1984. The design of *Wolves* was heavily influenced by Michael Powell's *Black Narcissus*. So to bring Gerard Johnson's dark London crime thriller HYENA to the festival to compete for the Michael Powell Award completes a perfect thirty year circle."

HYENA Director Gerard Johnson, said: "My first feature *Tony* had its World Premiere in Edinburgh in 2009, that same year I won a Trailblazer Award for future talent. It feels right to say thank you and return with my new film HYENA and for it to open this prestigious festival is a huge honour."

HYENA revolves around Michael Logan (Ferdinando) an anti-hero for our times: a natural predator and a complex mix of high-functioning addict and corrupt police officer. But his dark world is evolving. A recent influx of ruthless Albanian gangsters is threatening to change London's criminal landscape. Michael's razor sharp instincts have always kept him one step ahead, but now his increasingly self-destructive behaviour and the sheer brutality of the new gang lords find Michael in a spiralling descent of fear and self-doubt.

HYENA will join eight other British films in competition for the Michael Powell Award at this year's Festival. Films are eligible from across the Festival programme at the discretion of Artistic Director Chris Fujiwara and will be judged by an international jury.

Nominated several times previously, and twice a Michael Powell Award recipient, Gillies Mackinnon returns to EIFF with the World Premiere of *CASTLES IN THE SKY*, the fascinating story of visionary Scottish engineer and developer of radar, Robert

Watson-Watt, played by Eddie Izzard. Co-starring with Izzard is David Hayman, who directed the very first Michael Powell Award winner, *Silent Scream*, in 1990. Mackinnon previously won the award for *The Grass Arena* (EIFF 1991) and *Small Faces* (EIFF 1995).

GREYHAWK, the debut feature from Guy Pitt, will receive its UK Premiere at the Festival. Revolving around an outstanding central performance from Alec Newman, the film follows a withdrawn, blind ex-soldier who loses his beloved guide dog on an infamous housing estate. World Premiere HIDE AND SEEK is directed by Joanna Coates and is a study of a modern attempt at living a utopian ideal. A very special romantic comedy set in Brighton, MY ACCOMPLICE is the directorial debut of Charlie Weaver Rolfe and will receive its World Premiere at EIFF.

Celebrating Dylan Thomas' centenary, EIFF will host the World Premiere of SET FIRE TO THE STARS, an intriguing drama following Thomas battling his demons in 1950s New York. Featuring strong performances from co-writer Celyn Jones as Thomas and Elijah Wood as John Malcolm Brinnin, and an accomplished original score by Gruff Rhys (*Super Furry Animals*), the film is co-written and directed by Andy Goddard.

UK Premiere A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO A SPECTACULAR SUICIDE, directed by Graham Hughes, is a sharply scripted and poignant comedy telling the story of a young man who wants to kill himself and starts a blog charting his plans for the ultimate 'spectacular suicide'.

Uberto Pasolini, director of *Machan* and producer of *The Full Monty* and *Palookaville*, presents a poignant tale of life, love and the afterlife in STILL LIFE, which will receive its UK Premiere at the Festival. Eddie Marsan stars as a council worker charged with finding the next of kin of those who have died alone.

Delving into the tragic real-life case of an Asian teenager

brutally murdered in his cell in a UK young offenders institution by a racist fellow inmate, *WE ARE MONSTER*, directed by Antony Petrou, is another title set to receive its World Premiere at Edinburgh.

As announced in December, the prize money for the Michael Powell Award will be increased to £20,000 this year, one of the largest cash prizes awarded at a UK film festival. The Michael Powell Award, named after one of Britain's most original filmmakers, was inaugurated at EIFF in 1990 to honour imagination and creativity in British filmmaking. It is regarded as a mark of prestige both within the UK film industry and internationally. Previous winners of the award include: *Blue* (Derek Jarman); *Jude* (Michael Winterbottom); *Moon* (Duncan Jones); *My Summer of Love* (Pawel Pawlikowski); *Priest* (Antonia Bird); *Somers Town* (Shane Meadows); *Tsotsi* (Gavin Hood) and *Young Adam* (David Mackenzie).

The 2014 Michael Powell Award will be presented at the EIFF Awards Ceremony on Friday 27 June at Filmhouse.