

Roll up, roll up for HippFest 2024

The 14th annual silent film festival takes place at the Hippodrome Bo'ness next month with a programme full of the best old movies around.

The programme for this year's HippFest has just been announced along with details of the live music which accompanies the films. Talks, workshops, and an exhibition also form part of the programme. Details are [here](#).

The programme will feature some of the biggest names from the silent era such as **Mary Pickford**, **Lillian Gish**, **Clara Bow**, and **Joan Crawford**; with live appearances from musicians and silent film aficionados, including **Neil Brand**, **Jenny Hammerton**, **Maud Nelissen**, and **John Sweeney**.



Stella Maris (1918) courtesy of the Mary Pickford Foundation
The festival opens with Peggy (1916) on 20 March with accompaniment from Stephen Horne. This was a debut role for Billie Burke who then appeared in The Wizard of Oz as the Good Witch. The story follows New York socialite Peggy Cameron (Burke) as she moves to Scotland to live with her new guardian, "a man as stern and unyielding as the rocky hills of his native land". Will she succumb to the charms of the 'hot' Reverend? Once thought lost, the film has been reconstructed with the final missing scenes being filled in with stills and text from the 1916 copyright registration to ensure that today's audiences are not left in suspense at the film's conclusion.

In The Rugged Island : A Shetland Lyric (1933) Glasgow born film maker Jenny Gilbertson directs a story documentary about Shetland crofters. Presented with a new music commission by award-winning multi-instrumentalist and composer from Fair Isle: **Inge Thomson**, with Shetland-born **Catriona MacDonald** (commission funded by Creative Scotland National Lottery Open Fund for Organisations), this tender and beautiful dramatisation of Shetland life will be a must see.

Silent comedy will be provided by Laurel and Hardy and Buster Keaton. HippFest's Saturday morning's Jeely Jar Screening of ***Steamboat Bill, Jr.*** (1928). Buster Keaton's inspired energy and inventive physical comedy dazzle in this hilarious, heart-warming comedy, featuring possibly the most celebrated comedy set piece in cinema history. Plus a double bill from history's favourite comedy duo: Laurel and Hardy in ***The Second Hundred Years*** (1927) and ***The Finishing Touch*** (1928) with **Stephen Horne** and **Frank Bockius** performing live.

Rounding off the Festival line-up is an entertaining and informative programme of talks and an exhibition including **Behind the Scenes Tours** of Scotland's oldest purpose built cinema; a **Bo'ness Witch Trials Walking Tour** with local historian **Ian Scott**, a deeper dive into the *The Flying Scotsman* and **Britain's part-talkies** delivered by writer and self-declared "film nerd" **Marc David Jacobs**; and **How to Be a Flapper**, an insight into the joyful women's cinemazine *Eve's Film Review* from author and film archivist **Jenny Hammerton**. The **Pen to Picture Exhibition** at Bo'ness library (17 February – 15 April 2024, free) curated by **Richard Weeks** will showcase the colourful artwork that graced the eye-catching covers of 'Film-tie-in' books published by the Readers Library during the early years of cinema.

HippFest Director, Alison Strauss said: "HippFest is proud to have grown a real community of people who share an adventurous appetite for extraordinary cinema and live music. I am particularly thrilled that this year we have been chosen as the festival to host the world premiere of the prestigious new restoration of 'The Wind' from New York's Museum of Modern Art, and I am over the moon that we have secured the means to commission a new accompaniment for Jenny Gilbertson's rarely screened Scottish masterpiece 'The Rugged Island' for the exceptionally talented Inge Thomson and Catriona MacDonald. We can't wait to welcome everyone to discover these and the many other brilliant films and musicians that we have lined up.

Come one come all, and be part of the unique atmosphere of the Festival, of Bo'ness and of the Hippodrome itself, where you'll be sure to find great films, great fun, and great music."

Councillor Cecil Meiklejohn, Leader of Falkirk Council added: "Visitors come from across the country and beyond to attend this great festival of silent film. It has always attracted an enthusiastic audience, including some well-known personalities and it's great to see it return again for its 14th year."

Katharine Simpson from Screen Scotland said: "HippFest, held at Scotland's first-ever cinema The Hippodrome in Bo'ness, is an unparalleled experience that stands out in both Scotland and the UK. This festival offers a one-of-a-kind blend of historic films from our cinematic legacy, complemented by live music, all curated and presented for today's audience in engaging, fun, and meaningful ways."

The Hippodrome Silent Film Festival will run Wednesday 20 to Sunday 24 March 2024 at the Hippodrome Cinema in Bo'ness, Falkirk. Selected events and screenings will be livestreamed from the cinema, plus pre-festival talks on Frances Marion, Jenny Gilbertson, and the story of Victorian film by British Film Institute Curator of Silent Film, **Bryony Dixon** as part of **HippFest At Home**.

Full HippFest 2024 programme and to purchase tickets, please visit www.hippfest.co.uk



Oliver Twist 1922 courtesy of Film Preservation Associates



The Wind (1928) courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Collection



The Rugged Island A Shetland Lyric (1933) courtesy of National

Library of Scotland Moving Image archive