

HippFest 2025 – tickets on sale now

The silent film festival which is centred in the oldest purpose built cinemas in Scotland takes place in March.

Hippfest is back for its 15th edition from 19 to 23 March 2025 at the Hippodrome Cinema in Bo'ness and will celebrate more than a century of films with its programme.

The 15th edition of HippFest takes place Wednesday 19 – Sunday 23 March 2025 at the Hippodrome in Bo'ness and online, with selected events available to view online on-demand within a 48-hour viewing window after the in-person screenings. There is a taste of what is to come with HippFest's pre-Festival presentations which are broadcast on the [Falkirk Leisure & Culture YouTube channel](#).

Tickets are on sale now for the full programme, as well as the HippFest Festival and Weekend Pass. For full programme information and to book tickets visit www.hippfest.co.uk.

Festival Director Alison Strauss said: "The team and I are thrilled to be sharing this superlative line-up of silent films presented with unrivalled live music accompaniment. And we want everyone to know that the fun doesn't end with great films... There are many more immersive treats on offer including excursions, quizzes, guided tours, an exhibition, workshops, talks, an online programme and of course a party! We are proud that HippFest has reached this milestone edition, and can take its place alongside the best arts festivals that Scotland has

to offer, cultivating an international and ever-growing community of people with an adventurous appetite for extraordinary cinema.”



Big Business 1929

Programme 19 to 23 March 2025

On Wednesday 19 March, the Festival focuses on Scandinavia with two features that explore different sides of the region. Folklore, the supernatural and ritual weave a sinister spell in **Before the Face of the Sea** (*Meren kasvojen edessä*) (1926) accompanied by **Jane Gardner** and **Caroline Salmon**. This eerie drama bears all the hallmarks of a fully-fledged folk horror, intensified by the starkly beautiful archipelago locations of Finland. And a beautiful, naturalistic portrait of everyday life of the indigenous people of Sweden; **With Reindeer and Sled in Inka Länta's Winterland** (*Med ackja och ren i Inka Läntas vinterland*) (1926) is the earliest feature-length documentation of the Sámi, following Inka Länta and her family of reindeer herders in northern Sweden as they strive to subsist in the harsh winter months. To accompany the opening night film, HippFest is proud to present the UK premiere of a new music commission by Sámi-Finnish joiker and electronic musician **Hildá Länsman** and sound designer **Tuomas Norvio**, collaborating with the Norwegian-Sámi musician **Lávre Johan Eira** and Swedish composer, cellist and bass guitarist **Svante Henryson**.

From the northernmost cap of Europe to the Far East, HippFest is proud to continue its partnership with the Confucius Institute at the University of Edinburgh to present **The Cave of the Spider Woman** (*Pan Si Dong*) (1927) on the afternoon of Sunday 23 March. Adapted from one of China's most beloved novels from the Ming Dynasty, *Journey to the West*, this lively film features shape-shifting, cannibalistic spider-women,

elaborate costumes and special effects. **Günter Buchwald** and **Frank Bockius** will accompany the epic quest on piano, violin and percussion.

There's more global cinema on Saturday 22 March, with three films that will be sure to transport audiences back in time. From Germany and the Deutsches Filminstitut & Filmmuseum comes **The Chase After Millions** (*Die Jagd nach der Million*) (1930) featuring ex-strongman and silver screen heartthrob Luciano Albertini as a debonair stowaway, tracking down a band of duplicitous villains along the Dalmatian Coast. This year's Platform Reels event comes to HippFest from the Uzbek SSR, **I Want to be a Train Driver** (*Qlic/Klych*) (1935) is a charming tale about a mischievous boy who dreams of riding on a steam train, with endearing young actors and playful use of animation. And Saturday's screenings draw to a close with a poetic realist masterpiece, beautifully shot on the canals and waterways of Flanders and northern France. **The Swallow and the Titmouse** (*L'hirondelle et la mésange*) (1920) follows the peaceful lives of a family living on two barges, until a new hand joins the crew, tensions build and illicit secrets emerge. HippFest favourites **Stephen Horne** (piano, flute, accordion) and **Elizabeth-Jane Baldry** (harp) provide musical accompaniment as we pay witness to life on the canals.

On Thursday 20 March, HippFest turns its attention to closer shores, with a programme of films focused on Ireland. The influential director 'auteur' **John Ford** digs deep into his Irish roots for an affectionate tale about Irish immigrants to America in **The Shamrock Handicap** (1926). The racetrack drama will be brought to life with musical accompaniment from **Mike Nolan**. And celtic connections are also explored in a series of shorts from Scottish and Irish filmmakers in a programme called **The Near Shore** (1899 – 1958). Renowned Irish avant-garde pianist **Paul G. Smyth** will accompany the collection, a unique collaboration between the Irish Film Institute and National Library Scotland Moving Image Archive offering

alternating perspectives on Scotland and Ireland through the lens of Scottish and Irish filmmakers.

Delving into the archives once more, HippFest spotlights the work of 1960s Irish animator **Flora Kerrigan – Rediscovering a Film Pioneer**. Discover the darkly comedic and idiosyncratic world of Flora Kerrigan. The Cork-born filmmaker crafted a remarkable collection of silent animation and live-action shorts, with a surreal playfulness that earned her national recognition in Ireland and international accolades. Introduced by **Sunniva O’Flynn**, Head of Irish Film Programming at the Irish Film Institute, the collection will be presented with a newly commissioned score from Paul G. Smyth.

Continuing this celebration of women working in silent cinema, HippFest 2025 will highlight the films of Alma Reville, English screenwriter, editor and wife of Alfred Hitchcock, with screenings of **The Constant Nymph** (1928) and **The Pleasure Garden** (1926), with live musical accompaniment from **Mike Nolan**, and **Jane Gardner** and **Hazel Morrison** respectively. Festival goers wishing to learn more about Alma Reville and other women who worked with Hitchcock during the silent era can tune in to HippFest’s pre-festival presentation **Alma Reville: In the Shadow of Hitchcock?** and Festival podcast on **Hitchcock’s silent heroines**.



The Pleasure Garden (1926)

For its 15th edition, HippFest has commissioned perhaps its most ambitious project to date. **What the Water Remembers – The Dark Mirror** (2025) is a brand new moving image and live music commission inspired by the Union Canal and Falkirk Tunnel and created in partnership with Flatpack Festival, Birmingham. Created by artist **Moira Salt**, the film uses footage and research from five different archives, weaving a mythological tale inspired by the rich recorded history and transnational cultural significance of canals. The film will premiere at HippFest 2025 on Saturday 22 March, accompanied by a newly commissioned live score by **Tommy Perman** and **Andrew Wasylyk**, known for their combination of meditative ambient soundscapes and folktronica. The project will then be shown at Flatpack Festival in May as part of the wider project taking place in Birmingham and Falkirk, gathering perspectives on these often-overlooked but surprisingly rich sites that carry stories of industry, migration, anti-capitalism and rewilding. Audiences

can learn more about the making of the film and the wealth of research and creative responses uncovered by Moira Salt and local communities at the accompanying exhibition, at Bo'ness Library, 14 February – 20 April.

In a pioneering move HippFest's Friday Night Gala will present its star-studded feature film with optional Audio Description available to visually impaired audiences via headphones, alongside a suite of pre-screening aids such as braille compatible script and film primer. With a dress code of your best Tartan glamour, the inimitable **Mary Pickford** will star in Maurice Tourneur's **The Pride of the Clan** (1917). **Stephen Horne** on piano, flute, accordion and **Elizabeth-Jane Baldry** on harp will provide the soundtrack to this charming tale of West Coast fisher-folk that will beguile you with its proud tartan heart.



The Pride of the Clan (1917) Courtesy of the Mary Pickford Foundation

HippFest offers rich pickings for fans of silent comedy once again this year, with the return of the popular Jeely-Jar screening on Saturday morning. Grab 2-for-1 tickets with a clean jam jar to **Our Hospitality** (1923) starring **Buster Keaton** and accompanied by **John Sweeney** on piano. Then at Sunday lunchtime, the boys in bowlers are back with a double-bill as **Laurel and Hardy** get up to their usual high jinks in **We Faw Down** (1928) and **Big Business** (1929). And there's even more laughter to be had with **Skinner's Dress Suit** (1926), a delightful domestic comedy starring **Reginald Denny**, the silent era's answer to Cary Grant. Dramatist and composer **Neil Brand** accompanies this superb showcase of Denny's comedic talents on Saturday afternoon.

Having played at the very first Hippodrome Silent Film Festival in 2011, Neil Brand will reflect on 15 years of the Festival and his career as a silent cinema music maestro with **Neil Brand: Key Notes**. A unique and memorable show that will leave you in awe of the great filmmakers of the silent era and the artistry of the accompanists who breathe life... and sound into their work. From one of silent cinema's most accomplished musicians, to some of its youngest; **New Found Sound** invites young musicians from the Falkirk District to compose, arrange and perform new scores for shorts from the National Library of Scotland Moving Image. Elsewhere in the programme, Festival goers are invited to explore Bo'ness and the surrounding area with a series of events and excursions. Witness the Hippodrome in all its glory and learn about its history as Scotland's original 'picture palace' with a **Behind-the-Scenes Tour**; experience Bo'ness' wild side with a **Guided Nature Walk**, led by the RSPB; awaken your inner radiance with HippFest's **Bath Bombs and Beauty Creams Workshop**, inspired by the screening of *Smouldering Fires*; and pay tribute to the 'King of The Lowlands' with a guided tour of the newly restored **Rosebank Distillery** in Falkirk including tutored whisky tasting.

HippFest 2025 comes to a close on Sunday 23 March with **Smouldering Fires** (1925), an intelligent and moving love-triangle drama; and **Forgotten Faces** (1928), a tour de force final act. Meet “Heliotrope” Harry – the most debonair of all gentlemen thieves to have ever graced a cinema screen. Harry might be a master criminal, but his gallantry knows no bounds. His life as a loyal husband and devoted father is threatened by a series of explosive events which see Harry finding out the truth about his treacherous wife and forced to act quickly to protect his baby daughter from her mother’s depravity. **Stephen Horne** and **Frank Bockius** underscore the drama on piano, accordion, flute and percussion. Cleverly directed and tightly scripted, this splendid film is enjoying a well deserved renaissance and will be a seat-holding climax to HippFest’s 15th celebration.

HippFest is a project of **Falkirk Council**, supported by **Film Hub Scotland**, part of the **BFI’s Film Audience Network**, and funded by **Screen Scotland** and **National Lottery** funding from the **BFI**.

