

#BFIBLACKSTAR



ROBESON IN SONG! THE PROUD VALLEY RETURNS TO WELSH CINEMAS

#BFIBLACKSTAR / @BFI and www.filmhubwales.org/projects/bfi-black-star

17 OCTOBER 2016

As part of the British Film Institute's BLACK STAR season – the UK's biggest ever celebration of black screen actors - Film Hub Wales, together with venues across Welsh communities, are preparing for an immersive tour of remastered 1940s classic, *The Proud Valley*.

The tour will celebrate American actor, bass singer and Civil Rights activist Paul Robeson and the film, *The Proud Valley*, which was filmed on location in the Rhondda Valley coalfields.

The film tells the story of David Goliath, played by Robeson, who has sailed to Cardiff to find work. On discovering his voice, he joins the local male voice choir, finds work with the Blaendy miners and is adopted by the community. It was extremely rare for a black character to be presented as kind, generous and good natured in the 1930s and 1940s, when cinema audiences were used to seeing Stepin Fetchit playing the fool in American comedies.

The film enabled Robeson to express his socialist beliefs and portray the struggles of Wales' working class.

The screenings launch with newly remastered material at Chapter Cardiff, on Sunday 13th November and will be accompanied by a performance from Treorchy Male Choir. The screening will be followed by a panel discussion, exploring Robeson's impact on Welsh life, politics and BAME communities.

Hana Lewis, Manager of Film Hub Wales, one of the BFI's nine UK Film Audience Network hubs explains:

"There are some incredible stories to be told about Paul Robeson's connections to Wales, particularly the 1957 Porthcawl Eisteddfod, which now offer us such a special opportunity to celebrate our cultural heritage through BLACK STAR. Venues across Wales, including in the heart of the main coal mining region, have the chance to explore the role he played in the civil rights movement across their local communities. Audiences will have a chance to see unique choral performances alongside the film, in spectacular settings, from art deco auditoriums to regenerated miners' halls. We're looking forward to celebrating the wider work of talented black filmmakers and actors. There's so much on offer throughout the season."

Full listings across Wales include:

Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff

- *The Fabulous Nicholas Brothers* – Tuesday 1st November
- *Xala* – Sunday 6th November
- *The CEO* – Monday 7th November
- *Listening Event: Paul Robeson's Transatlantic Exchange Concert* – Sunday 13th November
- *The Proud Valley* – second showing on Tuesday 15th November
- *Chocolat* – Tuesday 15th November
- *Sembene* – Friday 18th – Thursday 24th November
- *Moolaade* – Sunday 20th and Tuesday 22nd November
- *The White Knights* – Tuesday 22nd November
- *NG83: When We Were B-Boys* – Friday 25th – Wednesday 30th November, Thursday 1st December
- *Black Girl* – Sunday 27th and Tuesday 29th November
- *The Stuart Hall Project* – Saturday 3rd December
- *A United Kingdom* – Friday 9th – Thursday 22nd December

Phoenix Community Cinema and Theatre

Ton Pentre started life as the Ocean Collieries, Maindy & Eastern Workman's library and Institute in 1895 before the Workman's Hall was attached in 1904. Due to the local mine closures the hall fell into decline in the 1940s and although films were shown until 1971, it was only in 2012 that the cinema was renovated with a digital projector. The team will be relaunching their cinema programme with a perfectly themed screening of *The Proud Valley* on **Monday 5 December**, with plans for a string of Welsh films to follow.

Pontio, Bangor

A special *The Proud Valley* event planned for December (date tbc), as one of the largest and most successful male voice choirs in Wales will be performing a number of Robeson songs among their repertoire. The Brythoniaid Male Voice Choir, was formed in 1964 and have been successfully competing at the National Eisteddfod since 1965.

Newbridge Memorial Hall, Caerphilly

Once known as Celynen Collieries Institute & Memorial, the Institute building which opened in 1908 is a lasting monument to the miners who worked so hard to build it and the Memorial Hall built in 1924 serves as a memorial to the local servicemen who lost their lives during World War One. Recently refurbished the Art Deco auditorium reopened its doors in November 2014, filling the space with music and theatre once again. *The Proud Valley* is set to screen on **Sunday 11th December** (date tbc).

Further screenings of *The Proud Valley* will also take place at **The Welfare**, a community venue serving the former mining community of Ystradgynlais and **The Gwyn Hall**, Neath on **Saturday 26th November** (date tbc), home to one of the major coal port and commercial centres of the 19th century.

Ben Luxford, Head of UK Wide Audiences, BFI said: "It's fantastic to see FAN's ambition growing year after year, and this collaboration with the BFI on the UK's biggest-ever celebration of Black screen acting talent promises a real treat for audiences. Not only is it

timely and important, it'll also be fun and accessible, mixing traditional cinema screenings with house party weekenders in Bristol, a screening of *Car Wash* in a Sheffield Car Wash, a trip to jail with Richard Prior in Belfast and of course the Paul Robeson celebrations planned across Wales. We're eager to get going and bring BLACK STAR to new audiences all over the UK, giving them the chance to watch some classics and seek out many new discoveries."

BLACK STAR champions the achievements of black stars from the earliest years of cinema through to the present day, whilst exploring why opportunities to shine on screen have been historically limited for black actors. Black Star celebrates films that feature black actors in central roles, bringing their work to a new generation of UK audiences and helping to reposition them and their performances in our collective memory.

BLACK STAR will be available to audiences everywhere in the UK; in cinemas, on BBC Television, on DVD/Blu-ray and online via BFI Player from 17 October – 31 December, with further projects planned to celebrate the contribution of black practitioners working across film and TV in the coming years.

(ends)

For more information, please contact Jane Thomas on 07967 351 827 or hello@janethomaspr.com

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Venue websites

Chapter - www.chapter.org/season/bfi-black-star

Phoenix – www.phoenixtonpentre.co.uk

Pontio, Bangor - www.pontio.co.uk/Online

Newbridge Memo - www.newbridgememo.co.uk

The Welfare - www.thewelfare.co.uk

Gwyn Hall – <https://gwynhall.celticleisure.org>

ABOUT FILM HUB WALES:

Film Hub Wales aims to bring more films, to more people, in more places around Wales. Along with its independent member venues, FHW regularly develops inventive ways for people in Wales to go to the cinema.

Film Hub Wales (FHW) is one of nine UK wide 'hubs' funded by the BFI (British Film Institute) to form the Film Audience Network (FAN), with Chapter appointed as the Film Hub Lead Organisation (FHLO) in Wales. We aim to develop the exhibition sector through dedicated research, training and audience development project support. Since Film Hub Wales set up in 2013, we've supported over *ninety* exciting cinema projects, reaching over *100,000* audience members.

In partnership with our member cinemas, arts centres, community venues, societies, festivals and wider film practitioners, FHW aims to celebrate and support the vibrant cultural film sector here in Wales, working together to expand and increase choice for audiences, regardless of where they live.

Twitter: www.twitter.com/FilmHubWales

Facebook: www.facebook.com/filmhubwales

About the BFI

The BFI is the lead body for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

1. Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
2. Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
3. Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK - investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
4. Promoting British film and talent to the world
5. Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

The BFI is a Government arm's-length body and distributor of Lottery funds for film. The BFI serves a public role which covers the cultural, creative and economic aspects of film in the UK. It delivers this role:

1. As the UK-wide organisation for film, a charity core funded by Government
2. By providing Lottery and Government funds for film across the UK
3. By working with partners to advance the position of film in the UK.

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter.

The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger CBE.

About the BFI Film Audience Network

Film Hub Wales is a lead film hub partner in the BFI Film Audience Network.

The BFI Film Audience Network (FAN) is a ground-breaking initiative that gives audiences across the UK the opportunity to see a broader range of films in a cinema setting. For filmmakers, getting films onto cinema screens is a highly competitive business, particularly for specialised films which includes archive, documentary, independent and foreign language films.

With £8.7 million of Lottery funding over four years (2013-2017) the BFI FAN works with cinema exhibitors, film festivals, educators, film societies, community venues, film archives and other organisations in their regions or nations to boost audiences for film across the UK.

The film hub partners which drive audience engagement across the UK comprise: Broadway Cinema, Nottingham; Chapter, Cardiff; HOME, Manchester; Film London; Queen's Film Theatre, Belfast; Scottish Film; the University of Brighton; Showroom Sheffield; and Watershed, Bristol.

About BFI BLACK STAR

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www.bfi.org.uk/black-star