On the weekend of 19th and 20th September, the British Federation of Film Societies (BFFS) held its 2009 National Conference for Community Cinemas at the Showroom Cinema, Sheffield, and The Void, Sheffield Hallam University’s new, bespoke media facility. The event was supported by the UK Film Council, Screen Yorkshire, AVCOM, Park Circus and Wallflower Press.

BFFS provided a stimulating programme including a wide range of independent titles, many from its own community-distributed DVD scheme. Introductions and Q&As by British filmmakers Jan Dunn (at an exclusive pre-release screening of *The Calling*) and Ian Hawkins (*My DDR T-Shirt*) gave an insight into the filmmaking process and their financial and artistic challenges.

Recognising the importance of sector-specific training and networking, BFFS delivered sessions by and for film societies and community cinemas. The 2009 conference encompassed two themes, innovation and education. Saturday was Innovation Day, featuring: From Film Society to Festival, The Role of the Film Society in Digital Britain, Community Connections and the Student Cinema Workshop. "Sheffield Hallam University was very excited about hosting the BFFS student workshop in The Void", commented SHU’s Martin Carter. “We had an excellent afternoon of discussion and exchange of ideas. This was a tremendously important event for us and one that, we are sure, will lead to further equally successful collaborations”.

Sunday was Education Day, and BFFS welcomed film educator John Salisbury (Ventnor Film Society), who delivered a film noir-themed presentation and a workshop on how to construct a DIY film education talk tailored for film societies and community cinema audiences.

On Saturday evening the BFFS 2009 Film Society of the Year Awards were held at the Millennium Galleries, Sheffield. This annual ceremony recognises excellence in the work of film societies in cultural and community cinema. BFFS was delighted to welcome the Motion Picture Licensing Company (MPLC), which sponsored this year’s awards. Gill Morris, MPLC vice president of licensing for Europe, said: “This 2009 conference is a perfect mix of specialist support and pure enjoyment. Only the BFFS could produce such a terrific event aimed at community cinema’s specific needs.”

In a special anniversary year, marking 40 years of the Film Society of the Year Awards, the quality of applications did not disappoint. “Forty years on, the Film Society of the Year Awards continue to set the standard for excellence in community exhibition,” commented BFFS Chair, Donna Anton.

The Engholm Prize for Film Society of the Year, for the most vigorous and dynamic film society demonstrating all qualities required of individual categories, was awarded to Forest Row Film Society for excellence across the board. Chairman Brad Scott said: "We are delighted and honoured to win the Film Society of the Year award for 2009. Many thanks to all our funders, our audience, and to the BFFS for catalysing and supporting our endeavours to bring interesting and exciting cinema events to this corner of Sussex.”

For her commitment to the film society movement, The Roebuck Cup was awarded to Ros Hill. Over the past three years every major initiative from BFFS that has benefited film societies and community cinemas in the UK has been underpinned by the tireless hard work and dedication shown by Ros. In addressing the audience Ros said: “The work of community cinemas is inspirational. Community cinemas spark a genesis of film culture forging new creative pathways within their local communities, developing into community festivals, pioneering outreach projects and bringing together different strands of the community to create a local sense of identity and ownership. I have really enjoyed working with so many of you, to develop the practical resources that help dedicated volunteers turn their passion into action.”

The full list of Awardees is appended.
THE BRITISH FEDERATION OF FILM SOCIETIES

Full List of Awardees of the BFFS 2009 Film Society of the Year Awards

Best Film Programming
Winner: Forest Row Film Society (E Sussex)
Distinction: Ayr Film Society (Strathclyde)
Commendations: Bracknell Film Society (Berkshire) and Woking’s New Cinema Club (Surrey)

Best Programme Notes:
Joint Winners: Forest Row Film Society (E Sussex) and Warwick Student Cinema
Commendation: Solihull Film Society (W. Midlands)

Best Marketing and Publicity
Winner: Forest Row Film Society (E Sussex)
Distinction: Warwick Student Cinema
Commendation: Louth Film Club (Lincolnshire)

Best Website
Winner: Louth Film Club (Lincolnshire)
Distinction: Forest Row Film Society (E Sussex)
Commendation: Keswick Film Club (Cumbria)

Best New Society
Winner: Brampton Film Club (Cumbria)
Distinctions: Chudleigh Film Society (Devon) and Torbay Film Club (Devon)
Commendation: Bude Community Cinema (Cornwall)
Special Mention: Brian Clay, Paul Schilling and the South West Group of BFFS for their tireless work to develop and support new film societies in South West England

Best Student Society (sponsored by Sheffield Hallam University)
Winner: Warwick Student Cinema
Distinction: LU Cinema (Lancashire)

Community Award
Winner: Octagon Films (E Midlands)
Distinction: Dulwich Paradiso (London)
Commendation: Forest Row Film Society (E Sussex)

The Engholm Prize for Film Society of the Year
Winner: Forest Row Film Society (E Sussex)
Special Mention: Warwick Student Cinema

The Roe buck Cup Awarded to: Ros Hill
Notes for editors: BFFS is the national support and development agency for the film society and community cinema sector. Its 330+ member organisations across the UK represent a membership of over 36,000 people. BFFS prime funder is the UK Film Council. BFFS members screen about 3,000 films per year of over 620 different titles to a combined total audience of almost half a million. BFFS has supported specialised (art-house) cinema exhibition in the voluntary sector since its inception over 60 years ago and today continues to provide advice, technical support and education opportunities to communities across the UK. Each year BFFS hosts the UK Film Society of the Year Awards, recognising excellence in all aspects of film society and community cinema endeavours.

BFFS extends a diversity of viewing choice critical within the UK cultural economy and offers increased opportunities for access and diversity – not only in more remote regions of the country where access to any sort of cinema is restricted, but also in metropolitan areas with no alternative to mainstream titles. Community exhibitors have a strong history of bringing to audiences those films not on general commercial release and in this way have provided national exposure for many minority interest and foreign language films. Many recent specialised films made here and abroad owe much of their exhibition opportunities in Britain to film societies and community cinemas.

For further information contact:
Jaq Chell on 0114 221 0314 info@bffs.org.uk
www.bffs.org.uk