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EMERGING WELSH FILMMAKERS TO PITCH TO GLOBAL FINANCIERS AND DISTRIBUTORS

Two Welsh filmmakers have been selected for Film London's prestigious New and Emerging Producer Training Programme.

Film-maker Helen Grace of Cardiff and producer Antony Smith of Port Talbot will have the opportunity to improve both their creative and financial pitching capabilities in a formal training session in September before presenting to a Dragon's Den-style panel who will competitively select around 15 projects to participate in the first ever Production Finance Market. The event will then run from 22-23 October 2007, in association with The Times BFI 51st London Film Festival.

Held at a central London venue, the two-day event will bring together producers, financiers and new forms of investment and funds. More than 100 film producers and leading financiers for the UK, Europe and international territories will attend giving producers the opportunity to pitch to private equity investors.

Helen Grace and Anthony Smith were two of eight Welsh-born or resident producers, or production companies based in Wales, put forward by the Film Agency for Wales for consideration by Film London.

Director and producer Helen Grace of Little Dragons Films will be presenting her £4million feature film 'The Escape Artist', a comedy about a middle-aged man who fakes insanity to escape his mundane life. Winner of the prestigious Final Draft Big Break script contest in 2005, 'The Escape Artist' is written by award-winning Julia Van Develder. Some of the filming and the post production will take place in Wales. Helen is working with Hollywood producer Michel Shane on this project, whose previous films include 'I, Robot' and 'Catch Me if You Can'.

Having begun her career as a location director and producer for high-profile UK TV programmes for ITV and Channel 5 networks, Helen's TV credits include 'News at Ten', 'The Royal Wedding', 'The Budget Programme' and 'Jailbreak'. She has directed and produced three short films since 2001 including a BAFTA Cymru nominated short that has been selected for more than 30 international film festivals.

Helen was a recipient of the European Commission's Media New Talent Award in 2004. In 2005/06, she directed award-winning comedy feature film 'Are you Ready for Love?', which is currently being sold by Carnaby International. As well as 'The Escape Artist', Helen is attached to the comedy feature film 'Lunchbox', which has received development funding from the Film Agency for Wales.

"In tandem with working on securing the funding for 'The Escape Artist' we are currently talking to some very exciting and high-profile potential cast members who have expressed an interest in the film," explained Helen Grace.

"To have been selected for the Producer Training Programme is a fantastic opportunity to sharpen the presentation of 'The Escape Artist', to identify finance and distribution interest and, perhaps, to make a vital contact that will support the production of the film."

Joining Helen Grace will be Tornado Films Antony Smith, who will be pitching his horror film 'Nocturne'. Currently in development, the film tells the story of a man caught in the centre of a timeless religious battle that ends in one night.

Financially supported by the Film Agency for Wales, 'Nocturne' is one of five films on the development slate of Port Talbot-based Tornado Films. Antony is also overseeing a slate of 12 films as senior producer for Boomerang where he is working closely with Sioned William, former controller of ITV Network Comedy and Marc Evans, the internationally recognised Director of films including 'My Little Eye', 'Trauma' and 'Snow Cake'. The Boomerang slate is financially underpinned by S4C.

Having begun his career with HTV Wales Drama Department in 1998, Antony established Tornado Films in 2002. He has produced or co-produced more than 15 short-films along with being involved with several feature-length films including

'Reaching Higher' and 'The Testimony of Taliesen Jones'. He was also the creator of BAFTA Cymru nominated drama 'Life and Debt'.

"At Tornado Films, we pride ourselves on providing high quality programmes that communicate their objectives in a creative and entertaining way. 'Nocturne' is a great example of what we can offer an international film market and we very much hope that the opportunity to join this prestigious training programme will enable us to secure commercial investment," said Antony Smith.

According to Angus Finney of Film London, the key objectives of the event are to stimulate the city and private capital's interest and involvement in the film production industry:

"Financiers will have the opportunity to hand-pick feature film production companies, producers and projects that are of potential interest to them. The event has a cap of around 45 senior UK and international producers, which means that the standard of projects and slates is expected to be extremely high."

"This event is a great opportunity to provide hands-on training for some of the UK's most promising producers," added Pauline Burt, Chief Executive of the Film Agency.

"We have a wealth of filmmaking talent here in Wales and as an agency we are very much focussed on ensuring that we maximise the opportunities for emerging producers. Both Helen and Antony will have the opportunity to pitch to some of the market's leading financiers with a view to securing corporate and/or slate investment. We wish them both every success and will be doing all that we can to support the production of their chosen projects."

The Film Agency for Wales is funded by the Arts Council for Wales, the UK Film Council and the Welsh Assembly Government, via Creative Business Wales, the latter of which was set up to support, encourage and increase the range and number of films being produced in Wales and to foster the abundance of creative talent in Wales.

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For further information please contact Lisa Jenkins on 0790 873 8763

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- Further information on Little Dragon Films and 'The Escape Artist' is available at www.littledragonfilms.net.
- Information on 'Nocturne' and Tornado Films is available at www.tornadofilms.com.
- Information on the Film Agency for Wales is available at www.filmagencywales.com
- Information on Film London and the New and Emerging Producer Training Programme is available at www.filmlondon.org.uk