



**THE 57TH BFI LONDON FILM FESTIVAL
AMERICAN EXPRESS[®] GALA ANNOUNCED AS
UK PREMIERE OF
PHILOMENA**



Embargoed until 3.00pm (UK) Friday 30th August

London, 30th August, 2013: – The 57th BFI London Film Festival in partnership with American Express is delighted to announce that the Festival’s American Express Gala will take place on Wednesday 16 October at the Odeon Leicester Square with the UK Premiere of Stephen Frears’ PHILOMENA, the moving, funny and at times shocking true story of one woman’s search for her lost son.

Academy Award[®] winner Judi Dench plays the title role, with BAFTA winner Steve Coogan as Martin Sixsmith. The screenplay is written by Steve Coogan and Jeff Pope, based on the book “The Lost Child of Philomena Lee” by Martin Sixsmith. Pathé release the film in UK cinemas on 1 November 2013.

Stephen Frears, Judi Dench and Steve Coogan are all expected to attend the American Express Gala.

Falling pregnant as a teenager in Ireland in 1952, Philomena was sent to the convent of Roscrea to be looked after as a “fallen woman”. When her baby was only a toddler, he was taken away by the nuns for adoption in America. Philomena spent the next fifty years searching for him but with no success. Then she met Martin Sixsmith, a world-weary political journalist who happened to be intrigued by her story.

Together they set off to America on a journey that would not only reveal the extraordinary story of Philomena's son, but also create an unexpectedly close bond between Philomena and Martin.

Clare Stewart, BFI Head of Exhibition and Festival Director says: *"I am thrilled that American Express, returning as our Principal Sponsor with a renewed three-year partnership, have PHILOMENA for their gala this year heralding both their support of British film and on-going commitment to the BFI London Film Festival with a film of extraordinary potency and relevance. Stephen Frears demonstrates his customary flair for extracting brilliant performances and balancing cogent wit and deep pathos while Judi Dench and Steve Coogan adroitly navigate the tonal shifts between drama and humour and imbue their real-life characters with depth and dignity."*

PHILOMENA was developed by BBC Films, produced by Gabrielle Tana, Steve Coogan and Tracey Seaward and Executive Produced by Baby Cow's Henry Normal, BBC Films' Christine Langan, Pathé's Cameron McCracken and Francois Ivernel, and Magnolia Mae Films' Carolyn Marks Blackwood. The Senior Executive representing the BFI Film Fund was Natascha Wharton.

The 57th BFI London Film Festival in partnership with American Express runs from Wednesday 9 October-Sunday 20 October. The full programme for the Festival will be announced on Wednesday 4 September.

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Images for PHILOMENA are available at www.image.net

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:

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

The BFI London Film Festival

BFI London Film Festival is an iconic international film festival that supports London's position as the world's leading creative city. It presents the best new British and international films to an expanding London and UK-wide audience. It provides career-enabling opportunities for British and international filmmakers through its industry and awards programmes.

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Clare Stewart biography

Clare Stewart's sixteen year programming career has encompassed leadership roles as Festival Director, Sydney Film Festival (2006-2011) and the inaugural Head of Film Programs at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image in Melbourne (2002-2006) as well as various roles at the Australian Film Institute (1996-2001), including Exhibition Manager, and programmer and Committee Member of the Melbourne Cinémathèque (1995-2002).



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