

# press release



Falkirk Council

24 March 2011

## Silent Cinema Success Something to Shout About!

Over 1,500 visitors flocked to the town of Bo'ness last weekend to visit the Hippodrome Festival of Silent Cinema – three days celebrating films and cinema-going in the silent era at Scotland's oldest purpose-built cinema.

The programme, which included the big names of Clara Bow, Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd alongside rare screen outings of titles from the Scottish Screen Archive and locally made films, was met with great enthusiasm by audiences who packed out houses throughout the weekend and travelled, in some cases, from as far afield as London, Brighton, the Midlands and even France in order to be part of the unique cinema experience.

Festival Director, Alison Strauss said "We have been absolutely delighted by the response to this, our first Festival since Falkirk Council re-opened the restored Hippodrome in 2009.

"The figures have been fantastic, far exceeding our expectations, with five complete sell-outs during the weekend and more than 1,500 people through the doors of the Festival and fringe events. But perhaps even more precious has been the wonderful atmosphere over the course of the Festival. Time and again the audiences were literally helpless with laughter or on the edge of their seats, thrilling to the spectacle of the early film classics. The auditorium has been filled with folk of all ages from small children up to ninety year-olds, and every age in between, and for many of them this was their first experience of silent film, let alone silent film with live musical accompaniment in such a beautiful venue."

The Festival, funded by Falkirk Council and Regional Screen Scotland featured live music accompaniment from David Allison of The Island Tapes, Falkirk Council Schools Orchestras and acclaimed silent film pianist Neil Brand. An award-winning composer, performer and writer, Neil Brand played at six screenings during the Festival including his live show: 'The Silent Pianist Speaks'. Mr Brand said at the Festival's close, "I have just had the most wonderful time here. You do come away from these sort of gigs thinking: I wish every gig could be like this... There's a sense of community spirit about it which makes the films what they are, which is human achievement, artistry and a kind of timeless awareness of the way we all are and what makes us laugh, what makes us all smile and cry. That has been the most important thing of all, and I feel very honoured to have been part of this."

For the Festival the Hippodrome was graced with period 'God Save the King' bunting and a red carpet, whilst the town's shops were inspired by the 'twenties glamour theme to dress their windows accordingly. Local businesses got behind the event by offering goods and services with the xpod Night at the Movies youth event barbeque supplied with burgers and sausages from Thomas Burns and Son Butchers, the Saturday morning jeely jar screening of 'The Kid' supported by goody bags from Sweets 'n' Things, the fancy-dress prize for the best Charlie Chaplin look-alike supplied by Bo'ness Town Centre Management, and the canapés at the opening night gala supplied by

Linlithgow-based Findlater's Fine Foods and Nairns, with a bit of fizz from the nearby Tesco store.

Festival organisers are still collecting the audience feedback but early data suggests that as many as 58% of the attenders were first time visitors to the Hippodrome and 90% would definitely come again. The impact on local tourism is being tracked with monitoring suggesting that many people combined their visit to the Hippodrome with trips to nearby visitor attractions, dining in the town, and staying in local hotels.

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