



Free VR Festival comes to Merton, London

General Giles Social Club, 12-16 Upper Green West, Mitcham, CR4 3AA

Saturday 7th March 2020

Showcasing the latest immersive technologies, Mitcham VR Festival will be the culmination of FilmMerton, the year-long project aiming to encourage participation with film throughout the London Borough of Merton. Curated by VR industry expert Mária Rakušanová (Curator and Executive Producer, Raindance Film Festival; member of BAFTA's Immersive Entertainment Advisory Group), this special one-off community event will bring cutting-edge VR entertainment to the heart of Merton.

At Mitcham VR Festival, interactive Virtual Reality films will be showcased alongside 360-degree films to give visitors the opportunity to engage with a broad range of immersive experiences from sci-fi thrillers to romantic dramas; documentary investigations to comedy flicks.

Starring Colin Farrell, ***Gloomy Eyes*** is the impossible love story of a zombie boy and a human girl and a reflection on populism as an outlandish preacher oppresses the zombie community. Narrated by Geraldine Chaplin, ***Memoria: Stories of La Garmá*** allows viewers to explore the memories of a 16,500-year-old cave, once occupied by humans, which has been untouched and preserved for thousands of years. ***The Curious Tale of the Stolen Pets*** invites audiences to solve its mystery by exploring wonderful miniature worlds. Set in Victorian London, ***Kinch and the Double World*** brings the fantasy adventure to cinematic Virtual Reality. VR comedy series ***Bro Bots***, set in the not-so-distant future, introduces two British robots – Otis and Roberto – as they arrive in New York to join the NYPD.

Demonstrating the power of VR to connect us with the world around us, the Festival will also see **Judi Dench: My Oak Tree VR** which allows viewers to fly around and through the most impressive oak tree in her garden. Emerging VR director, Samantha Kingston will showcase **Anonymous**, her immersive documentary and a personal story of living with an alcohol-dependent parent, hiding the secret and dealing with the death of that parent. Mitcham resident and emerging VR director, John Lynch, will share **Crackle Pop**, a part documentary, part music VR experience which explores the phenomenon of sound to colour synaesthesia.

Mária Rakušanová comments, *We're thrilled to bring a curated selection of pioneering immersive experiences to Mitcham. Visitors will get a chance to try out some of the latest award-winning VR experiences and films, each pushing the boundaries of this fledgling medium.*

Also at the festival, **All the Fun of the Fair** will enable visitors to step into their local history through the technology of an Augmented Reality installation. With a unique soundscape and images springing to life on smartphones and tablets, **All the Fun of the Fair** will transport audiences back in time to the Mitcham Fair, rumoured to be the oldest fair in England.

Alongside this, a series of four short films specially commissioned by FilmMerton and selected by a board chaired by Justin Johnson (Lead Programmer, British Film Institute Southbank), will premiere at the festival. These have all been produced in Merton and showcase work from both established and aspiring filmmakers. Local Mitcham resident, Rosie Gaunt-Mathieson (*Dawn of a New Gay*, selected for London Short Film Festival 2020) will present **Just Delivered**, a heart-warming romantic comedy. Peter Lee Scott (*Sketch*, winner of Best Film at British Independent Film Festival 2018) will share **His Name is Gerry**, a drama-comedy about young people and bereavement. Aspiring filmmaker Matvi Khosho, a former asylum seeker brought up in Mitcham, will highlight the multicultural foundations of Merton with **The Streets That Shape Us**. The final short will be Wimbledon resident Charlie Strank's **The History of Wimbledon Football Club – As Told in Lego** which documents 'football coming home' to the local community.

Cllr Cooper-Marbiah, Merton's Cabinet Member for Culture comments, *I am so delighted to see this festival in Mitcham. The Council has been proud to support the innovative work showcasing the great opportunities in our area. Not least, FilmMerton has commissioned four new films entirely made in the borough and premiered at the Festival. We are bringing innovative technologies to Merton and I hope that our residents enjoy the chance to see exciting new work.*

Merton's Cultural Advisory Group has steered the FilmMerton programme from the beginning. Somayeh Agniah and Greg Vincent, Merton's Cultural Advisory Group's co-chairs comment, *We want to promote Merton, and Mitcham, as a place where extraordinary new things happen. The*

VR Festival is the first of its kind to take place in the borough and we welcome local people, businesses and filmmakers to take part. We want them all to experience these immersive new ways of telling stories, so we can help grow audiences and support the creative community and economy.

Mitcham VR Festival is part of London Borough of Culture, a Mayor of London initiative supported by the City of London Corporation's Charity, City Bridge Trust and Airbnb.

Notes to Editors

Title	Mitcham VR Festival
Dates	Saturday 7 th March 2020
Location	General Giles Social Club, 12-16 Upper Green West, Mitcham, CR4 3AA
How to get there	The closest tube station is Tooting Broadway, which is only 15 minutes away via the 355 or 270 bus routes. Mitcham Eastfields overground station is a 15-minute walk away.
Websites	https://www.digitaldrama.org/project/mitchamvrfestival/ http://www.london.gov.uk/mylocalculture
Tickets	<p><i>Gloomy Eyes</i> tickets available online at: https://mitcham-vr-festival-gloomy-eyes.eventbrite.co.uk</p> <p><i>Memoria: Stories of La Garma</i> tickets available online at: https://mitcham-vr-festival-memoria-stories-of-la-garma.eventbrite.co.uk</p> <p><i>The Curious Tale of the Stolen Pets</i> tickets available online at: https://mitcham-vr-festival-the-curious-tale.eventbrite.co.uk</p> <p><i>360 Films Playlist One – Judi Dench: My Oak Tree VR</i> and <i>Anonymous</i> tickets available online at: https://mitcham-vr-festival-360-films-playlist-1.eventbrite.co.uk</p>

360 Films Playlist Two – Crackle Pop and Kinch and the Double World:
tickets available online at: <https://mitcham-vr-festival-360-films-playlist-2.eventbrite.co.uk/>

Bro Bots tickets available online at <https://mitcham-vr-festival-bro-bots.eventbrite.co.uk/>

All The Fun Of The Fair tickets available online at: <https://mitcham-vr-festival-all-the-fun-of-the-fair.eventbrite.co.uk/>

Social Media #MitchamVR, #FilmMerton, @digidrama, @LDN_Culture,
#mylocalculture

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