

# BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE



BlackBerry smartphones at the movies. "Before the London Film Festival I had never used a BlackBerry® smartphone...now I have one, I can't imagine being without it!"

Clare Diskin, Deputy Director of Development, British Film Institute

## **BRINGING WORLD-CLASS FILM TO LONDON**

The Times BFI London Film Festival is Europe's largest public film event and runs for two weeks every autumn, showcasing the best in contemporary cinema from around the world at venues across London. The festival has come a long way, and in its 50th year (2006) it was attended by over 400 filmmakers, 700 members of the press, 116,000 ticket buyers and many of Hollywood's A-list celebrities.

The festival is run by the British Film Institute (BFI). Established in 1933 to promote greater understanding, appreciation and access to film and television culture, the BFI is the custodian of the largest film archive in the world. It also manages the National Film Theatre, part of the new BFI Southbank complex, and the largest cinema screen in the UK: the IMAX Cinema on London's South Bank.

## **THE CHALLENGES**

Organising such a high profile event as the The Times BFI London Film Festival is a colossal task, and the BFI has a dedicated festival team that works on the event all year round, managing everything from sponsorship deals to celebrity schedules.

Although the festival team members are seasoned event co-ordinators, they are faced with a number of challenges. The first is that, in many respects, the team is a victim of its own success. As the profile of The Times BFI London Film Festival expands annually – with ever-bigger film titles and names in attendance – worldwide media attention intensifies. This heightened scrutiny creates added pressure on the festival team to ensure that sponsors, celebrities and the media enjoy the event.

In a digital age where consumers have instant access to breaking news, being able to react quickly is of paramount importance. For a team that is rarely in the office, responding to changes at the drop of a hat can be difficult.

To help overcome these hurdles, for the 2006 Festival, the BFI provided members of the festival team with BlackBerry® smartphones. They were used throughout the duration of the festival to help ensure the event ran smoothly and that communication across the team was as efficient as possible.

## **"KEEPING MUM"**

When dealing with celebrities, discretion is the key – the last thing any celebrity wants is to have their private dinner reservations broadcast on the red carpet. To reduce the risk of being overheard, the team used its BlackBerry devices to send all sensitive information via email. The team chose email over text as it allowed them to write more and send the details to several people at one time.

Co-ordinators also used their BlackBerry smartphones to alert the rest of the team to celebrities' co-ordinates at every stage of the festival. Once a celebrity had been picked up at the airport, the car co-ordinator would email the team at the destination point to advise of the estimated time of arrival. This in turn allowed other co-ordinators to alert the media at the right time.

*"I initially had reservations that using BlackBerry would mean work would always be on my mind, but being able to reply to emails even when I was out of the office meant things got sorted so much quicker. This in turn meant shorter hours at work and a peace of mind that allowed me to really switch off."*

Clare Diskin  
Deputy Director of Development  
British Film Institute

## NOT ACCORDING TO SCHEDULE

Some industry celebrities attend films at the last minute simply because they enjoy the film festival. To make sure these celebrities were accommodated and properly looked after, the team used BlackBerry smartphones to communicate any eleventh-hour changes.

"In my role, where information is constantly changing, and we need to be accessible at all times, the device was invaluable," said Danni Brown, Programme and Hospitality Assistant.

The BFI also had to manage its own team's busy schedules. In one afternoon a co-ordinator might have to pick up clothes and drop them at a venue, attend a meeting for sponsors, ensure champagne is delivered to the green room and liaise with the branding team about events like the London Lesbian Gay Film Festival. To coordinate all activities, the team used the calendar application on their BlackBerry smartphones to keep track of their schedules. As changes made on the BlackBerry smartphones are wirelessly updated on office computers, the team could also check their colleagues' appointments from their desks.

## A STANDING OVATION

"BlackBerry totally changed the way I work on the festival for the better."

Charlotte Owen – Industry Office Co-ordinator

There was a real buzz around the BFI using BlackBerry smartphones at the festival, with guests asking the team to demonstrate their devices and answer questions about the benefits of using the BlackBerry solution.

The BFI also received positive feedback about BlackBerry smartphones from its staff, particularly when it came to work/life balance. "I initially had reservations that using BlackBerry would mean work would always be on my mind," said Clare Diskin, Deputy Director of Development. "But being able to reply to emails even when I was out of the office meant things got sorted so much quicker. This in turn meant shorter hours at work and a peace of mind that allowed me to really switch off."

The BFI has decided to provide all co-ordinators with BlackBerry smartphones as one of the main solutions for all future festivals. In the meantime the devices will be used by other members of the team who need BlackBerry smartphone to assist their working day.

For further information: [www.blackberry.com/go/success](http://www.blackberry.com/go/success)

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