

UNDER STRICT EMBARGO FOR 13:45 CEST time (GMT +1) 21st June 2017

Sir Ian McKellen on the main Cannes Lions stage with The Brooklyn Brothers and Brown Eyed Boy: *Inspiring brands to co-create authentic entertainment with talent and inviting brands to join them re-inventing our heroes*

- **SIR IAN MCKELLEN APPEARED AT THE CANNES LIONS FESTIVAL 2017 FOR THE FIRST TIME TODAY TO ENCOURAGE AND CHALLENGE BRANDS TO TELL MORE AUTHENTIC STORIES, CO-CREATE WITH TALENT, AND ULTIMATELY TO INSERT MORE DIVERSITY IN THEIR CREATIVE COMMUNICATIONS AND JOIN HIM ON A MISSION TO DO SO**
- **TALK SPEAR-HEADED BY JACKIE STEVENSON, FOUNDER OF THE BROOKLYN BROTHERS, FOCUSED ON HOW BRANDS CAN TELL STORIES WITH PURPOSE THAT ARE ENTERTAINING**
- **DEBATE ENDED WITH A RALLYING CRY TO INVITE BRANDS TO SHAKE UP HOLLYWOOD AND ENTERTAINMENT STATUS QUO AND INCLUDE MORE LGBTQ HEROES IN STORYLINES**
- **FACEBOOK HAS ALREADY PLEDGED SUPPORT**

Today, The Brooklyn Brothers and Brown Eyed Boy shared the main stage with Sir Ian McKellen, acting legend, at the Lumière Theatre for Cannes Lions 2017.

The session titled “Telling a good story: Ian McKellen with The Brooklyn Brothers”, showcased and discussed Sir Ian’s best loved characters from Hamlet to Sherlock Holmes, from Marvel Comic’s Magneto to Tolkien’s Gandalf and how he’s taken on challenges in work and in life, to tell stories he believes need to be told, both factual and fiction.

Jackie Stevenson, Founding Partner and Global Managing Director of The Brooklyn Brothers sat down with Sir Ian to discuss how he combines creative fulfillment with campaigning around issues close to his heart and staying true to himself. In the second half of the session, Gary Reich, Founder and Managing Director of Production Company Brown Eyed Boy took to the stage sharing his personal stories and collectively, the three identified some lessons and behaviours brands can adopt to help tell stories in culture fit to inspire the next generation.

The session kicked off with an introduction by Jackie Stevenson who set the scene, talking of the current landscape between brands, talent, entertainment and the notion of purpose - subjects at the heart of Brooklyn Brothers creative DNA. The ensuing 45-minute stimulating discussion covered Sir Ian’s incredible career, the key moments in both his professional and personal life, including ‘coming out’ and what his journey taught him about stories well told, exploring lessons he has learned. To start he discussed his acting career, coming out and his work with schools and young people. Key outtakes included:

Entertainment with Purpose:

- Sir Ian stressed the importance in his life of **being true to himself**, coming out and choosing characters that inspired, interested and resonated with who he is
- He spoke about how vital it is to look around you and **be part of the world** and tell stories that **ask questions** and try and **see things from different but nonetheless real perspectives** (such as the moral ambiguity of Magneto and the beautiful differences of all the X-men in society)
- **Believe in the stories you tell**, the writing must be great and **the story inspiring and challenging** to tell, no matter what you worry an audience may or may not be interested in
- The importance of **talking to real young people** and to **inspire youth**, **McKellen** showing he is himself at all times, **giving them permission to be equally as free to explore themselves, without having all the answers**
- **Resist labels (as children do)** and tell stories of people in a **fluid way**, no-one real fits in a box
- **Today will always be yesterday** at lightening speed especially for the young, so look forward all the time

The second part of the discussion focused on Sir Ian's limited experience of brands in his work and why to date the idea of working with them has lacked appeal, as he had not encountered stories told particularly well or that felt authentic.

Talent wants Purpose

- **Putting the story first and the audience profile second**, allow people to make their own decisions on what interests them – if a **story is inspiring and has a purpose** that is what matters
- **Break some rules, challenging convention and authority** is okay and interesting if it means **true stories are well told** and get a platform or voice
- **Stories that ask questions provoke conversations and conversations lead to action**

Gary Reich of the Brown Eyed Brown Productions (producers of the world's first prime time gay sitcom Vicious featuring Sir Ian and Derek Jacobi) then joined the stage. He recounted his own story of sexual awakening and subsequent bullying at school, coupled with the total lack of cultural role models available at that point until he saw Boy George on TV. This was the start of his own journey to positively impact people through art and culture, the way he had been – by providing stories that helped individuals to feel recognized and valid.

The event culminated with a question to the audience and the broader entertainment world, to think about how much good it would do society and young people to see, relate to and admire more diverse role models in the stories we watch, offering more of a true and real reflection of society. And crucially what if a superhero or action star was gay or trans on screen? Sir Ian's openness to now be willing to work with brands is part of this bigger question and the need for authentic stories like this to be told with brands as co-creators.

Creativity which is at the heart of the Cannes festival is often acknowledged to thrive from diversity of talent, but Hollywood is still trailing behind here, which gives brands the perfect opportunity to unite with talent and start the shift to create more authentic entertainment themselves. The rallying cry at the end of the simulating talk was for people to get involved, to join the debate on twitter using the hashtag #LGBTHeroes and to crucially invite brands to commission and work as co-creators with the team to make a series of short films re-casting our most loved heroes in a new more diverse light. The first short has the ambition to re-imagine a quintessentially British spy, which has already excitingly got interest from many "A" list Hollywood LGBT talent. Facebook has already pledged their support to act as a live online premier broadcaster and to promote the film(s) with views. The remaining question is what brands will see this as an important story to tell?

The Brooklyn Brothers and Brown Eyed Boy will be at the Facebook Beach this afternoon from 3:30pm onwards to talk further about the project, next steps and how brands and supporters can get involved. To find out more you can also visit www.LGBTHeroes.info or tweet using the hashtag #LGBTHeroes

- ENDS -

EDITOR'S NOTES

Sir Ian McKellen said: *"I'm not an expert in branding and as a consumer, have some resistance to it. Since I started acting, I've rarely been involved professionally in the advertising business, Yet, yet, yet – the world it is a changing and I am intrigued that brands are taking an active role in telling important stories, which I have tried to do in my career. It is so encouraging that in a world where equality is not at all universal, that LGBT stories can be part of the branding of products and services."*

Jackie Stevenson, Founding Partner and Global Managing Director at The Brooklyn Brothers said: *"It has been exhilarating working with Sir Ian and collaborating together on this session and LGBT Heroes. I hope that we inspired our audience and most importantly encouraged bravery. We're now looking to push on from here and to make a change together, with our industry and Ian – to call upon brands that want to join us on this crusade. We welcome anyone interested in talking, learn more and get in touch from our website www.LGBTHeroes.info"*

Gary Reich, Founder and Managing Director of Brown Eyed Boy, said: *"The content landscape is changing rapidly and I firmly believe brands have a major role to play, particularly if they can find a*

fresh and inspiring ways of working with talent. Together with The Brooklyn Brothers, we think we've found a way to balance the needs of talent and brands to create thrilling and exciting new entertainment properties and we're delighted to showcase our first collaboration with Sir Ian McKellen. #LGBTheroes is a project dear to all our hearts and particularly pertinent for me, growing up gay in the very macho culture of Apartheid South Africa."

Sir Ian McKellen

An actor and campaigner, Ian McKellen has had an exceptional career on stage and screen. His performances for the National Theatre and Royal Shakespeare Company are legendary. In the cinema he has been Shakespeare's Richard III, the mutant Magneto in X-Men and the wizard Gandalf in the Middle Earth movies. On television, of late, he has starred as The Dresser and in the popular British sitcom 'Vicious'. His next project is his second King Lear for the 2017 Chichester Festival. He was a founder member of Stonewall UK and is a vocal activist for LGBT rights worldwide. He was knighted in 1989 and his latest accolade Companion of Honour is for his services to Drama and Equality.

The Brooklyn Brothers

Founded in 2001 in New York and 2008 in the UK, The Brooklyn Brothers expanded to Los Angeles in 2012 to create its Hollywood writing room, an alliance with seven of Hollywood's most renowned scriptwriters and an office in Brazil in 2013. In 2016, the agency joined the Golin, part of Interpublic Group of companies. The Brooklyn Brothers' new approach – Blockbuster Branding – blends PR, social, brand advertising and strategic thinking with the creativity of Hollywood to create work that entertains and generates its own audience. Not in the thousands but in the multi-millions. They have been European Effie Agency of the Year and Advertising Age Small Agency of the Year. They have been widely awarded including Cannes Lions Gold and the European Effie Grand Prix for Promote Iceland's 'Inspired by Iceland' and a Cannes Lions Silver and US Effie Gold last year for NBC's 'Coach Ted Lasso'. Clients include Land Rover, Jaguar, Inspired by Iceland, Icelandair, NBC, Castrol EDGE and Pepsi. www.thebrooklynbrothers.com

Brown Eyed Boy

Brown Eyed Boy opened their doors on May 27th 2002. The company was set up by maverick producer Gary Reich after he left the BBC and Chrysalis Entertainment where he had been a comedy executive for a number of years.

Their aim is to make innovative mainstream shows that bring together surprising established and breaking talent both on and off screen, drawn from a global playing field.

Most of all, they encourage, admire and try to adhere to the principles of relentless optimism, gay abandonment and inexhaustible humour - rejecting anything designed to provoke, engineer or spread fear. They believe everything is actually already perfect.

Brown Eyed Boy is part of the Endemol Shine Group. www.browneyedboy.com

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