



# PRESS RELEASE

## BRANCHAGE FESTIVAL 2011 OPENS WITH HIT DOCUMENTARY 'SENNA'

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The annual **Branchage International Film Festival** returns for its fourth edition from 22-25th September 2011, with films, live soundtracks, parties and performances taking place in a host of wonderful and unlikely venues across the parishes of Jersey. Branchage combines a creative, lovingly-curated programme of site-specific events and one-off performances with all the idiosyncratic charm of Jersey, making it not only the Channel Islands most unique cultural event, but one of the most desirable destination festivals in Europe.

We are pleased to announce that kicking off the weekend's various proceedings is the traditional Branchage Opening Night Gala screening at the Opera House. Following in the footsteps of the first two Branchage Festival's, we open with one of 2011's great documentaries **SENNA**.

The film, by British director **Asif Kapadia**, premiered earlier this summer and tells the story of legendary F1 racing driver **Ayrton Senna**. Considered one of motorsport's all time greats and a saint in his native Brazil, Senna met his end in a fatal crash during the 1994 San Marino Grand Prix. Despite his life and death being watched by millions of television viewers around the world, this incredible film succeeds in bringing new light to his story.



### Ayrton Senna

Using archive footage to chart his beginnings to his end, the film depicts his early rise as a world champion teenage kart-racer, to his unbroken run of F1 wins. Senna also dramatically explores the racing driver's long-running and intense rivalry with his team mate **Alan Prost**. Senna and Prost were involved in a series of controversial clashes which decided the drivers' title and had a publicly acrimonious relationship.

A three-time Grand Prix winner, Senna was no stranger to controversy during his sporting career, often outspoken and known for his aggressive and regularly dangerous driving style. In his later career, however, he became increasingly preoccupied with the dangers of F1 racing, and ironically, on the morning of his death, had initiated the reformation of the GPDA safety organisation.

A devout Catholic, Senna was also a committed philanthropist, and his deep concern about poverty in his native Brazil is well-documented. He is believed to have quietly donated a huge proportion of his personal fortune (estimated at around \$400 million) to aid poor children. His death was considered a national tragedy in Brazil, and over 3 million people lined the streets of his hometown of Sao Paulo to pay their respects at his funeral procession.

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## Senna, the film

The documentary is constructed entirely of archive footage and was met with universal acclaim, winning the World Cinema Audience Award (Documentary) at Sundance Festival in the United States, and is strongly-tipped for an Oscar nomination at next year's awards.

**Empire Magazine** said *"The film is ambitiously constructed, deeply compelling, thrilling and in no way only for those who like watching fast cars drive in circles."*, while **The Guardian** commented, *"with so much recorded footage of Formula One available, it has been possible to fashion Senna's story as a live action drama rather than a posthumous documentary. We're not so much hearing what happened in the past as seeing it happen before our eyes."*

**Film 4** said, *"Complete ignorance of, or even indifference to, the sport won't disqualify you from being utterly gripped, moved or charmed by Asif Kapadia's film about legendary Brazilian F1 champion Ayrton Senna"*.

**SENNA** is an incredible portrait of a man who was spiritual, sublime, fiercely patriotic – a sheer force of nature. It will appeal not only to those with an enthusiasm for Grand Prix but anyone with an interest in the extremes of the human condition.

The Branchage Opening Night Gala screening of Senna is kindly sponsored by **Waitrose** and will be followed by an on-stage Q&A with one of the filmmakers.

**SENNA** is showing at Jersey Opera House, St Helier at 7.30pm, Thursday 22nd September. Tickets are £10 and will be available from the Branchage Box Office, Liberty Wharf, from mid-August. Please visit [www.branchagefestival.com](http://www.branchagefestival.com) for further information and updates.

## Quotes:

### Philip Ison, Branchage Chief Programmer:

*"To be honest, I have little interest or knowledge of motor racing, but the film's power makes you think that Formula 1 is the most important thing out there. You'll either be on the edge of your seat as the races get more nail-biting or won over by the handsome charm of Senna himself."*

## Notes to Editors:

Started in 2008 by Creative Director Xanthe Hamilton, Branchage engages local audiences in Jersey as well as attracting visitors from the UK and further afield. The festival has made its names as a leader in live soundtracks, site-specific screening and unusual filmic experiences. Past live soundtracks have included: **The Memory Band** performing to **The Wicker Man** and **British Sea Power** playing to **Man of Aran**, as well as new soundtracks commissioned to the festival by **Bo Ningen (Cat Soup)**, **Amiina (Lotte Reiniger fairytales)** and **Euros Childs (Yuri Norstein animations)**.

The festival delights in turning unexpected spaces into cinemas including **Battleship Potemkin on a tugboat**; **Sleep Furiously in the barn of an organic farm**; **Lindsay Anderson's If... in Victoria College's Great Hall**; **The Vanishing of the Bees in a polytunnel** and **Lourdes in a church**. Elaborate themed parties are another staple of the Branchage experience, with past performances by **Chrome Hoof**, **Kitty Daisy & Lewis**, **Paloma Faith** and **Top Cats**, as well as troupes of interactive performers, aerial artists, burlesque dancers and troubadours.

Many more events and performances will be announced soon.

Please visit [www.branchagefestival.com](http://www.branchagefestival.com) for further programme information.

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