# Gay animated adventure Two Black Boys in Paradise to premiere at BFI Flare London



A new stop-motion animated short film titled Two Black Boys in Paradise is set to make its UK. premiere at the BFI Flare London: LGBTQIA+ Film Festival, taking place at BFI Southbank from March 19 to March 30. The film is based on a poem by award-winning writer Dean Atta, known for The Black Flamingo, and will be narrated by musician and actor Jordan Stephens.

Directed and co-written by Baz Sells alongside Atta and Ben Jackson, Two Black Boys in Paradise spans nine minutes and is produced by One6th Animation Studio in Manchester. The project received support from the BFI Short Form Animation Fund, which is funded through the National Lottery, and benefitted from the early development insights of actor Ian McKellen and Partizan Films.

Dean Atta expressed his excitement about the animation process, saying, “This process has been amazing because I didn’t know how an animation was made at all. It’s just mind boggling sometimes to know how many hands have had a part to play in making this happen.” He described the adaptation of his poem into a visual format as a wonderful opportunity to present the narrative directly to audiences, rather than relying solely on their imagination.

The film centres on the characters Eden, aged 19, and Dula, aged 18, who embark on a journey of self-acceptance and love, ultimately finding a paradise free from shame and judgement. The narrative delves into significant themes including homophobia, racism, and the universal struggles associated with identity, sexuality, and belonging. The film’s world premiere took place at the Anima Festival in Brussels on March 1, and it will also be showcased at the Tampere Film Festival in Finland from March 5 to 9, followed by a screening at the American Documentary and Animation Film Festival (AmDocs) in Palm Springs later in March.

Ben Jackson, the writer-producer, spoke to the personal significance of the project, stating, “For years, I wanted to create a film rooted in my personal journey as a gay man… That’s what this film is about for me — the joy of self-acceptance and self-love.” He articulated hopes that the film would resonate with viewers, providing warmth, hope, and a sense of belonging.

Sells acknowledged the challenges faced by his independent animation studio throughout production, commenting, “I’m profoundly grateful for the chance to visualize this beautiful and bold poem.” He emphasised the film’s focus on the transformative essence of personal victories, specifically for those who face societal or internal barriers to self-acceptance and empowerment.

The film features actor Arun Blair-Mangat, noted for his roles in *Kinky Boots* and *In the Heights*, contributing non-verbal sounds, while narration is handled by Jordan Stephens. Stephens praised Atta’s work and the project's essence, asserting, “The whole project is an ode to belonging… It’s an ode to love. Which is and will always be the greatest anything that life has to offer.”

Blair-Mangat echoed these sentiments, sharing that he was deeply moved by the depiction of Black queer love within the film, highlighting the characters' sensuality and authenticity. He articulated his privilege in being part of such a poignant project.

Two Black Boys in Paradise will screen at the BFI Flare festival on March 23, within the To Your Souls shorts selection in the event’s Hearts strand.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.skwigly.co.uk/two-black-boys-in-paradise-poster/> - This article discusses the poster release for 'Two Black Boys in Paradise', a stop-motion short film based on Dean Atta's poem, and highlights its themes of homophobia and racism. It also mentions the involvement of One6th Animation Studio and the BFI Short Form Animation Fund.
* <https://manchester.nowthenmagazine.com/articles/manchester-stop-motion-short-set-to-break-boundaries-of-storytelling-and-diversity> - This article provides insights into the production of 'Two Black Boys in Paradise', including its adaptation from Dean Atta's poem and the collaborative efforts of One6th Animation Studio. It emphasizes the film's exploration of race and sexuality.
* <https://www.bfi.org.uk/flare> - This URL leads to the BFI Flare London: LGBTQIA+ Film Festival, where 'Two Black Boys in Paradise' is set to premiere. It provides information about the festival and its programming.
* <https://www.partizan.com/> - Partizan Films is mentioned as a supporter of 'Two Black Boys in Paradise'. This URL provides information about the production company's involvement in various film projects.