

'Sleep Furiously', a feature-length film produced and directed by Gideon Koppel of the Department of Media Arts at Royal Holloway, University of London, will have its UK premier at this year's Edinburgh International Film Festival (EIFF) which runs from 18 – 29 June.

Some of the biggest names in documentary filmmaking have been lined up for this year's Festival. Artistic director, Hannah McGill, has announced 22 documentaries which will be in competition including new offerings from Werner Herzog and Errol Morris. Says McGill: 'The scope and quality of the documentaries we have viewed this year is incredibly impressive. It was very hard to whittle them back to this list, so these are the best of the best.'

'Sleep Furiously' is one of Koppel's outputs from a research project that was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) through a Research Leave Award. The bulk of the funding came from The Film Agency For Wales. 'The Film Agency is delighted to be able to support Gideon's film, both in terms of backing a film-maker with a distinctive voice, and also most importantly in reflecting upon and representing often under-represented communities in Wales,' said Pauline Burt, Chief Executive of the Film Agency for Wales.

Koppel collaborated with Producer Margaret Matheson ('Abigail's Party', 'Scum') and Executive Producers Mike Figgis ('Leaving Las Vegas') and Serge Lalou ('Etre et Avoir') to make 'Sleep Furiously'. 'It was a real pleasure, education and privilege to work with such a supportive and dynamic group of people,' said Koppel.

Koppel's prolific work as a film maker and artist has been widely exhibited, broadcast and shown at film festivals worldwide. His work is eclectic in form, ranging from film installations to documentaries, making several prominent and award-winning commercials along the way.

This latest project, 'Sleep Furiously', is set in an isolated hill farming community in mid Wales, which Koppel describes as 'a landscape and population that is changing rapidly as small scale agriculture is disappearing and the generation who inhabited a pre-mechanised world is dying out.' He was very much influenced by his conversations with the Austrian writer Peter Handke, in developing a lyrical and observational approach to story telling. 'Sleep Furiously' is also noteworthy for being the first and only feature-length film with a soundtrack by cult musician-composer Aphex Twin.

Despite having had very restricted viewings, the film has attracted considerable interest and important reviews: Alex Cox describes 'Sleep Furiously' in the respected American film journal 'Film Comment' as 'visually remarkable...what could be bleak in another film is infinitely beautiful here...and what might otherwise seem hopeless is redeemed and made marvellous.' In addition, Mark Cousins, author of 'Imagining Reality', one of the important texts on documentary film making, comments: 'This film reminded me of the great documentaries by Humphrey Jennings and Georges Rouquier. It is pure cinema: visually alert, brilliantly musical, and moving in the way it captures time passing and lives lost.'

Commenting on his participation, Koppel says, 'My first short film, an experimental drama called 'Unseen Unsaid' was shown at The Edinburgh Film Festival, so I am really happy to go back with my first feature-length work.'

'Sleep Furiously' screenings at EIFF are:

Tuesday 17th June 11.45am (press & industry screening) Thursday 19th June
21.45pm (public) Sunday 22nd June 14.20pm (public)