

# 'Oscars' handed out

## Potter star Matthew heaps praise on deaf youngsters with film-making gift

by Emma Clayton  
Leisure and Lifestyle Editor

Harry Potter star Matthew Lewis presented awards at the world's first film festival for deaf young people which took place in Bradford yesterday.

The Horsforth actor was guest of honour at the Yorkshire SignFilm Festival, held at the National Media Museum, which showcased films made by deaf youngsters from schools in Bradford and across the region.

The event was organised by Bradford-based charity Youth Deafinitions, which helped the children produce short movies from initial concept to final production, screened over the two-day festival.

Organiser Ranjit Singh said the aim was for the festival to become an annual event in Bradford.

"We have given young people chance to develop film-making skills and show what they can do," he said. "We are helping to empower them and show the world that deaf people can make films too. We hope to show these films throughout the UK, to hearing as well as deaf audiences.

"Deaf film-makers are often overlooked, and not included in the mainstream film industry," he added. "But once you cross the language barrier the stories are still the same, and the crew and cast all have the same skills."



PICTURE THIS: Harry Potter actor Matthew Lewis with deaf film-makers Wasim Baig and Naila Mariam at the festival

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Films made by six schools and youth clubs were screened at yesterday's awards ceremony. Thorn Park School For The Deaf in Bradford made *Midnight Thriller*, a film about school 'legends', and Nab Wood Grammar School's deaf unit made *Who Is Deaf?* exploring the concept

of distinguishing between who is deaf and who is hearing. Little Deafinitions Youth Management Committee made a horror film called *Deaf Vampire*.

The children were delighted to meet Matthew, 19, who plays Neville Longbottom in the smash hit *Harry Potter* movies. He described their films as "spectacular."

"What really impressed me was that they've been involved in the whole process, from writing to editing," said Matthew.

Judging by what I've seen today, it should be an annual event."

Matthew, a former pupil at St Mary's School, Menston, is currently filming the sixth *Harry Potter*

film, *Deathly Hallows*. The next film, *Harry Potter And The Half Blood Prince*, is due out in July.

Mandy Tennant, audience development co-ordinator at the National Media Museum, said: "Matthew has grown up on TV and film sets and he's been telling the children about his experiences. He's been a big hit with them."

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