



Film festival shares hope as UK independent cinemas welcome back audiences

UK-wide film programme, Film Feels Hopeful, celebrates inspiring films and filmmakers as independent cinemas begin to welcome audiences back

filmfeels.co.uk

Film Feels has launched a UK-wide film programme to celebrate films' unique ability to connect us, as independent cinemas across the country begin to welcome audiences back following Covid-19 closures.

The programme combines in-venue, online and hybrid activities that showcase films imbued with hope, dreams of the future and ways of reimagining film itself, with a particular emphasis on creating space for voices that don't get heard in mainstream programming.

Upcoming highlights include:

- **Sheba Soul Ensemble** - A series of online screenings and creative writing workshops celebrating hopeful works by Maori director Merata Mita, Canada First Nation directors Doreen Manuel and Loretta Todd, as well as Cameroonian filmmaker Florence Ayisi.
- **Screen Argyll** - a collaboration between artists' collective SO:AR and Screen Argyll featuring a programme of films and activities that will build on ideas explored by the collective, to reflect on shifting paradigms, knowledge acquired from the past and what we can take into the future.
- **The Batty Mama** - a screening of feature film 'James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket', followed by a long-table discussion, performance and short film screenings, to discuss the themes of hope, joy, aspiration, connection and growth raised by the life, work and legacy of Black activist and agitator James Baldwin.
- **Aya Films** - the Imagined Futures project will look at what has been and reimagine what is to come by giving people from marginalised communities the opportunity to curate film screenings and supporting live events. 'Vai', a 2019 feature film made by nine South Pacific female directors, will open the festival and act as the starting point for the curated programme to follow.

Film Feels Hopeful invites audiences to join in with over 50 online film events, ranging from watch-along screenings to director Q&As, poetry readings and performances plus plenty of opportunities to discuss the variety of themes raised by these inspirational films and filmmakers.



Film Feels Hopeful follows last year's Film Feels Connected programme, which was launched in response to national cinema closures and the need to continue to provide film fans with engaging, inspiring and challenging content.

Film Feels is a National Lottery-funded project designed to bring new, old, independent and off-the-beaten-track films to those who have spent lockdown searching every corner of streaming services for something a bit different.

Film Feels organisers said: "The aim of Film Feels Hopeful is to offer the viewer something extra - whether that is critical engagement, entertaining special events or rediscovered works presented in new ways - that foreground the power of cinema as a collective, bigger-than-life experience.

"During lockdown, we have felt yearning for the big screen experience and the simple pleasures of being alone together in the dark. At the same time, there have been seismic shifts in the film industry and cinema and we need to respond to these. Film Feels Hopeful reflects that sense of apprehension and hope - we can imagine new ways to amplify new stories, better serve all audiences and enjoy the communal experience of film once again."

Although cinemas were given the green light to open in England on 17 May, many smaller independent cinemas in the UK, unable to open at reduced capacity, are making plans to reopen later in summer or early autumn.

Ben Luxford, Head of UK Audiences at the BFI, said: "We're delighted that the Film Feels UK-wide film programme provides a welcome opportunity for audiences to experience something different with exciting new voices and a showcase of in-venue screenings and activities, as well as online events, with the support of the BFI Film Audience Network. Film Feels Hopeful will allow a diverse mix of organisations across the country to express their creativity and programming ambitions. This will enable venues and programmers to amplify new stories and reconnect with audiences following the challenges of Covid-19 for the exhibition sector, all supported thanks to National Lottery players."

Jen Skinner, Director of Screen Argyll, said: "We are delighted to have the opportunity to develop a programme as part of Film Feels, expanding on the work that SO:AR has been exploring on the Isle of Jura through its 'Take Flight' project. We will be asking the audience to reflect on the last 18 months, opening up the conversation across Argyll and the Isles as well as online. Enabling communities and individuals to reflect and discuss, exploring thoughts and ideas which radiate out from communities through the shared experience of film. We can't wait to get screening films again and this programme is a wonderful way to start."



Film Feels is managed by Film Hub Midlands on behalf of the BFI Film Audience Network, supported by National Lottery funding. Visit filmfeels.co.uk for the full Film Feels Hopeful programme.

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[For images click here](#)

Notes

Film Feels is part of the [BFI Film Audience Network Major Programmes](#) initiative and is supported by funds from the National Lottery. In 2019 the Film Feels programme, entitled Obsession, attracted audiences of over 12,000 across 279 screenings in UK cinemas. In 2020, Film Feels moved online due to Covid-19. The programme, entitled Connected, supported 51 organisations and attracted 21,670 reported live attendees and 263,456 post-event views across 376 screenings. filmfeels.co.uk

About the BFI

We are a cultural charity, a National Lottery distributor, and the UK's lead organisation for film and the moving image. Our mission is:

- To support creativity and actively seek out the next generation of UK storytellers
- To grow and care for the BFI National Archive, the world's largest film and television archive
- To offer the widest range of UK and international moving image culture through our programmes and festivals - delivered online and in-venue
- To use our knowledge to educate and deepen public appreciation and understanding
- To work with Government and industry to ensure the continued growth of the UK's screen industries

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter.

The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Tim Richards.

About the BFI Film Audience Network

Supported by National Lottery funding, the BFI Film Audience Network (FAN), is central to the BFI's aim to ensure the greatest choice of film is available for everyone. Established in 2012 to build wider and more diverse UK cinema audiences for British and international film, FAN is a unique, UK-wide collaboration made up of eight Hubs managed by leading film organisations and venues strategically placed around the country. FAN also supports talent development with BFI NETWORK Talent Executives in each of the English Hubs, with a mission to discover and support talented writers, directors and producers at the start of their careers.

BFI FAN Film Hubs are:

- Film Hub Midlands is led by Broadway, Nottingham working in partnership with the Birmingham-based Flatpack
- Film Hub North is led collectively by Showroom Workstation, Sheffield and HOME Manchester
- Film Hub South East is led by the Independent Cinema Office
- Film Hub South West is led by Watershed in Bristol
- Film Hub Scotland is led by Glasgow Film Theatre
- Film Hub Northern Ireland is led by Queen's University Belfast
- Film Hub Wales is led by Chapter in Cardiff
- Film Hub London is led by Film London

About the National Lottery

Thanks to National Lottery players, up to £600 million of funding has been made available to support communities across the UK during the Coronavirus crisis. The National Lottery is playing a critical role in supporting people, projects and communities during these challenging times. By playing The National Lottery, you are making an amazing contribution to the nationwide response to combatting the impact of Covid-19 on local communities across the UK.



About Film Hub Midlands

Formed as a partnership between Broadway Nottingham and Flatpack Projects in Birmingham, part of the BFI Film Audience Network, Film Hub Midlands provide resources, training and funding for film exhibition with a particular emphasis on growing new audiences for British independent and international film and raising awareness of film and film culture in the region. Film Hub Midlands covers the counties of Derbyshire, Birmingham/West Midlands, Herefordshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Rutland, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire. filmhubmidlands.org

Full list of participating organisations

Above the Line	Mitchell Arts Centre
Aya Films	Picturehouse/ Sundance Film Festival:
Bertha DocHouse	London Tour
Black Country Touring	Portrush Film Theatre
Black Stock Films	Queen's Film Theatre
Broadway Cinema	S.O.U.L Film Festival Ltd
CatStrand	Screen Argyll
Centre for the Moving Image	Sheba Soul Ensemble CIC
Cornwall Film Festival	Sign for All Community Ltd
Doc'n Roll Films	The Batty Mama
Flatpack	The New Black Film Collective
Fringe! Queer Film and Arts Fest	The Roses
Glasgow Film Theatre	The Twelve30 Collective
Irish Film London	Victoria Park Productions Ltd
Light House	We are Parable
London Kurdish Film Festival	Wild Rumpus
Matchbox Cineclub	YourScreen Ltd