Annual film programme takes on theme of curiosity and invites independent venues to take part

* **The annual celebration of cinema, supported by the BFI Film Audience Network, awarding National Lottery funding, is looking for champions of film from across the UK’s exhibitor sector to get curious in 2022**
* **Film Feel: Curious promises to connect audiences to thought-provoking cinema past and present**

Curiosity is the theme of this year’s [Film Feels](https://filmfeels.co.uk/) cinema season, which will take place at independent cinemas across the country from next month, with a summer of online and in-person screenings, events and activities, all designed to connect people through film.

And, for the first time since its 2018 launch, Film Feels, backed by the BFI Film Audience Network, awarding National Lottery funding, is partnering with the Screen Heritage programme [Changing Times](https://filmhubnorth.org.uk/curious), giving film programmers an even broader creative license to showcase archive film as well as cinematic classics.

Activity will officially kick off at the 16th birthday of the Flatpack Film Festival in May, but it’s not too late to apply for funding to be part of this year’s programme.

Jen Skinner of Screen Argyll has received almost £9,000 in funding to create a tailored event programme over the last two years as part of Film Feels Obsession (2020) and Film Feels Hopeful (2021) respectively.

She said the funding supported the team to take some risks with its programming and reach new audiences in a variety of ways: “These seasons provided isolated rural audiences in Scotland the opportunity to see something different and engage on a deeper level with cinema, bringing it to some communities for the first time”, Jen said.

“The project built on the partnerships we’re developing and enabled volunteers to have a better understanding of what would work best for their audiences.”

Megan Mitchell of Glasgow’s Matchbox CineClub, a small, independent exhibitor with a niche programming framework that received almost £5,000 in funding over the last three years’ Film Feels seasons, said: “Film Feels allows us to truly showcase the best versions of events – ambitious, visible, enhanced in meaningful ways, and fully accessible.

“Possibly the most important aspect of Film Feel’s support has been our journey to open our events to everyone, having confidently implemented a pay-what-you-can sliding scale ticket model, and to produce captions and audio description for the titles we screen.”

Matchbox Cineclub has also been able to commission work from emerging screenwriters and artists, to collaborate with other local exhibitors, and to develop programmes with international appeal and reach as a result of its involvement in Film Feels.

Justine Atkinson of distribution company Aya Films, which received £14,000 to support three Film Feels seasons between 2019 and 2021, said: “Being part of Film Feels has enabled us to create ambitious programmes that showcased films that would be difficult to bring to UK audiences without support.

“The programmes emphasised the importance of having meaningful and positive representations both on and off screen, of and for Black audiences and people of colour. Many audience members stated in feedback how important the films were for allowing them to feel represented on screen.”

CURIOUS is this year’s chosen Film Feels theme as it’s clear as we emerge from the worst of the pandemic that bringing people together to experience art collectively and learn more about the people and things around us, is more important than ever.

Manon Euler is Major Programmes Manager at Film Hub Midlands which leads Film Feels, said: “With CURIOUS, we want to take audiences out of the ordinary and down the wonderful rabbit hole of cinema, with intriguing, exciting film programmes that will stimulate the mind and the senses.

“Because curiosity is the most human emotion of all, it drives us to question and search, to learn, understand something, get to know someone, find an answer, a solution. It’s the desire to unlock the key to a mystery, the urge to understand the why and the how, head into the unknown, get lost, and maybe find out how the story ends, if it ever does.

“That’s ultimately what film is about, and what this nationwide season, through film (re)discovery and collective cinematic experiences, sets to do.”

Screen Heritage Producer Andy Robson added: “The pandemic has forced us to look at life through a new lens and over the last two years of disruption and isolation, we’ve recognised things we may have missed or never considered before.

“Through multiple lockdowns we’ve gained a new awareness of our communities and neighbourhoods, made discoveries of previously unacknowledged places on our doorsteps and found satisfaction in personal passions and curiosities.

“However we experienced it, the pandemic has asked us to question and learn something new, to understand the unfamiliar and seek solutions. Through film’s unique ability to transport us, illuminate ideas and to spark a conversation, we can seek those solutions and understand those experiences together.”

More information about the organisations already set to take part in Film Feels Curious and Changing Times will be announced in the coming weeks, with a huge variety of events planned.

For those yet to sign up, funding of up to £10,000 is available for organisations to present special film events and engagement activity in July as part of the season. Apply by 2 May and find more details at [filmhubmidlands.org/major-programmes/film-feels-curious](https://filmhubmidlands.org/major-programmes/film-feels-curious/).

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For more information contact Jule Wilson, Crystallised at jule@crystallised.co.uk or 0781 309 6398 (not for publication).

For captioned images to download, visit <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/17rrXClLrQv5aathzXq4jvzXxnuKMkrhS?usp=sharing>

**Notes to Editors:**

Film Feels is part of the [**BFI Film Audience Network Major Programmes**](https://www.bfi.org.uk/supporting-uk-film/distribution-exhibition-funding/film-audience-network) led by Film Hub Midlands 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**

The BFI Film Audience Network Screen Heritage work is led by Film Hub North, and again supported by National Lottery funding. Changing Times is a multi-year programme that supports film exhibitors to screen archive film, establish closer connections with the UK’s archives and grow audiences for screen heritage events. Each year, Changing Times focuses on a topical issue of social transformation – from the centenary of the Representation of the People Act 1918; to the growing climate crisis; to the era-defining changes of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic. **filmhubnorth.org.uk/fhn/screen-heritage**

**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 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**](https://filmhubmidlands.org/)

**About Film Hub North**

Formed as a partnership between HOME Manchester and Showroom Sheffield and, part of the BFI Film Audience Network, Film Hub North works with a range of organisations and individuals to help great films get made, screened and seen in the region. Film Hub North covers Chester to Hull, Newcastle upon Tyne to Carlisle, Blackpool to Scunthorpe and everywhere in between. **filmhubnorth.org.uk**