



Film Feels Connected

FAN Major Programmes Monitoring and Evaluation

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FAN Major Programmes

Film Hub Midlands has led on BFI Major Programmes, a cross-FAN, UK-wide programming initiative open to all Film Audience Network (FAN) members, since 2018. The initiative includes an annual BFI 'Blockbuster' and a moment of National coordinated programming generated from within the Network. The UK-wide initiative was project managed by Annabel Grundy for Film Hub Midlands who worked collaboratively with all stakeholders and partners to achieve the final results. Annabel managed all stakeholder management, opportunity promotion via the Hubs, engagement with members and coordinated the assessment panel who make the funding decisions.

The aims of the BFI Major Programmes initiative are to:

- increase audience engagement with film and deepen the quality of cultural experience
- increase the confidence of FAN members to screen a wider range of films
- boost the engagement of audiences aged 16-30
- increase the diversity of FAN audiences
- raise the profile of film as an art form and create a dialogue about its place in our cultural life

Report Overview

This report provides a summary of the initial findings of Film Feels Connected, a season responding to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. The support was designed to spotlight innovation across BFI FAN, and to promote online activity during lockdown helping cinemas, festivals and film societies to access support to try out new activity.

The report presents the main output data for FAN member projects funded via Major Programmes, demonstrating the scope and scale of delivery, alongside evidence of key outcomes. A more comprehensive assessment of Major Programmes is due for delivery in 2022.

In response to the shifted landscape, the methodology and framework for evaluation were also redesigned in collaboration with FAN Evaluation lead, Jane Raynor. New methods of reporting were developed to capture data from online audiences. Audience surveys changed from paper to digital, and project reporting was collected via an online form. The use of Project Log templates did not fit the approach to this season as some of the data we wanted to collect was specific to online activity and adapted audience behaviour.

The evidence presented here is drawn from the following sources:

- Digital Project Reports and delivery partner feedback collected via online surveys
- Online audience surveys
- Observations are drawn from qualitative interviews with delivery partners (FAN members and FAN Hub Managers)



About Film Feels Connected

Film Feels is the framework for BFI FAN's UK-wide cinema season, with its own identity and marketing, designed to reach key audiences and support FAN Members' own programming and audience development.

The aim is to inspire programming that offers the viewer something extra - whether that's critical engagement, entertaining special events or rediscovered works presented in new ways - that foregrounds the power of cinema as a collective, bigger than life experience. FAN Major Programmes want to offer audiences a chance to discover films across eras, genres and national borders, and the venues and festivals that curate them.

The 2020 COVID 19 pandemic paused attendance at cinemas, but venues and their audiences still needed to find ways to come together. Film Feels responded to the dramatic shifts in the sector, whilst remaining committed to its aim of celebrating film's unique ability to transport us, to illuminate ideas, and to spark a conversation - this time looking at how that can happen online while the sector is locked down and audiences are isolated.

It was open in June to all film exhibitors who are BFI FAN members and could present additional audience development activity online, during lockdown. Small grants of up to £1,500 were available for organisations to present and trial online engagement activity as part of the season which took place across July – August 2020.

Key elements of the programme were:

- Small-scale funding for special events & curated programmes delivered online
- Media campaign, brand assets and social media activation to broaden awareness
- Advice, guidance and resources to help trial new activity online
- Advice, guidance and resources to help broaden reach and deliver accessible activity
- UK-wide listings resource to collate and promote BFI FAN activity

Summary

- Major Programmes, with the valued support of the BFI, responded swiftly to the pandemic and adapted the Film Feels season to suit the impact on members. Ring fencing support for project activity to engage audiences in innovative ways whilst venues were closed was gratefully received by members of all types. For some this was the only opportunity to access funding to deliver audience facing activity; for others this was an opportunity to innovate with new ideas that developed as the pandemic progressed.
- Adaptations to the season, including smaller grants and an open curatorial brief, were generally well received. There was a sense that some members, who are more regularly supported by Major Programmes, would welcome the return of curatorial themes that create boundaries and increase creative risk taking. Some also voiced concern that the smaller grants are not enough to support innovative blended or live activity in venue activity.
- The benefit of a national network was strongly felt by members, which met an overwhelming need for solidarity, connection whilst isolated, shared best practice and mutual support. In addition, the Major Programmes team provided much appreciated support, flexibility and encouragement to members when they needed it most.
- The centralised website and opportunities with social media sharing benefited the season, specifically as the geographical boundaries of activity had been removed for audiences.
- Digital evaluation was challenging, and there is a need for more consistent methodologies and guidance in future editions. Traditional project logs were not fit for the purpose of evaluation due to inconsistencies in the data received and the need for additional lines of enquiry to suit online delivery. Whilst digital surveys and reporting were well received by members, there is loss of control and responsibility as they were centrally collected, therefore members weren't sure how many people were responding. Despite these shortcomings, the information gathered provided some useful insights into audience behaviour and members experience and identified training and support needs for future editions.
- The data suggests the season reached a high proportion of new and more diverse audiences, particularly audiences identifying as disabled and disadvantaged. This was largely due to increased investment in members who serve specific demographics who have direct access to these communities. Also, an increase in the number of events being accessible due to tech opportunities online. Audiences were engaged across the UK and beyond.
- The season provided value for money for relatively low investment, but the real value for members lies in the enhanced skills, potential for experimentation and the opportunity to remain connected at a time when there was major disruption for the industry.

Audience Engagement

21,677* reported live attendees (hard)

263,456 post-event views (soft)

51 projects funded

376 screenings

There is evidence that at this point in the pandemic audiences remained committed to watching specialised films online and the data suggests that digital activity can improve geographic reach and broaden audience demographics. There was a significant increase in audience attendance compared to Film Feels Obsession, although it is difficult to compare these two seasons, like for like, due to the dramatically different circumstances.

There are challenges around the inconsistency of audience data records. For the purposes of Film Feels Connected, members were asked to identify audiences defined by whether they attended a 'live event' (hard) or whether they watched a recording of content at a later date (soft). Both types of audience are difficult to accurately capture, and members lacked guidance on how to do this consistently. For example, a hard view could have been the number of participants in a live Q&A who'd watched a film on another platform as a 'watchalong', where the actual film views were not available. The soft view figure was any subsequent views generated after the 'live' event. The soft view figure is largely skewed by one event that reported 223,986 soft views representing 84% of the total. It is also highly likely that more than one person-watched in any given location, but this is only counted as a single hard view.

It is also worth noting that there will be increased legacy for recorded activity created as part of the season that will continue to reach audiences beyond the scope of this evaluation. This is not normally possible with in venue activity; thereby adding a new dimension and long term benefit.

Whilst the data is inconsistent, there is valuable evidence on new audiences, location and behaviour (also see next slide).

Audience Surveys**

98% would attend again
(matching Film Feels Obsessions)

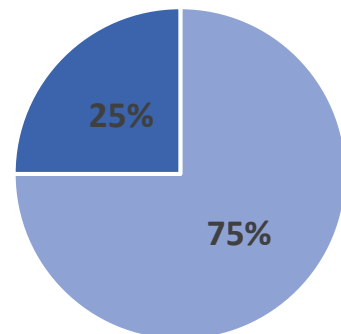
68% would have attended physically

89% will continue to watch online events when cinemas open

*Data collected from members project logs

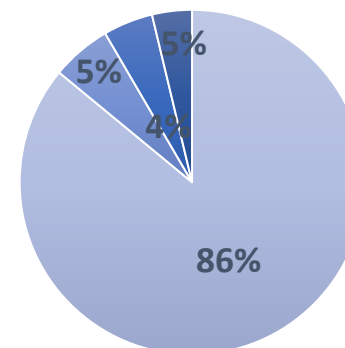
** Data collected from audience survey sample of 708

Viewing Habits



■ watched 'live'
■ watched at a later date

Audience Location



■ UK ■ USA ■ International ■ Europe

Location Top 9

London	39%
Bristol	6%
Manchester	4%
Glasgow	4%
Edinburgh	3%
Cardiff	3%
Sheffield	2%
Brighton	2%
Cambridge	2%

Audience Profile

44% New Audiences

(8% increase from Film Feels Obsession)

66% identified as female

22% 16–30 year olds

27% identified as LGBTQ+

27% Under-represented ethnic

12% identified as disabled

18% identified as disadvantaged

Comparisons with previous national season:

16 percentage point increase in audiences who identify as disadvantaged were also from under-represented ethnicities.

17 percentage point increase in Black audiences for activity aimed at under-represented ethnicities.

10 percentage point increase in Asian or British Asian audiences at activity aimed at LGBTQ+ audiences.

9 percentage point increase in reaching disadvantaged audiences

3 percentage point increase in disabled audiences

	ALL	Activity aimed at target audience groups**			
		16-30 yr old	Under-represented ethnicities	LGBTQ+	Access
Survey Sample*	708	56	188	75	250
FEMALE	66%	48%	66%	58%	64%
MALE	29%	48%	30%	24%	33%
IN ANOTHER WAY	2%	4%	3%	13%	2%
AGE 16-30	22%	25%	21%	39%	19%
AGE 30+	75%	72%	74%	56%	77%
BISEXUAL	9%	7%	8%	21%	10%
GAY / LESBIAN	13%	5%	4%	51%	14%
PREFER TO SELF IDENTIFY	5%	5%	5%	9%	4%
HETEROSEXUAL / STRAIGHT	58%	66%	65%	12%	59%
YES - DISABLED	12%	16%	3%	15%	15%
NO - DISABLED	82%	75%	78%	81%	80%
YES - DISADVANTAGED	18%	9%	34%	16%	23%
NO - DISADVANTAGED	73%	84%	54%	79%	68%
WHITE: BRITISH, IRISH, TRAVELLING COMMUNITY, ANY OTHER WHITE BACKGROUND	66%	72%	40%	63%	62%
MIXED: ANY MIXED / MULTIPLE ETHNIC BACKGROUND	7%	8%	9%	10%	6%
ASIAN or BRITISH ASIAN	7%	7%	5%	17%	1%
BLACK: AFRICAN/CARIBBEAN/BLACK BRITISH/ ANY OTHER BLACK BACKGROUND	9%	2%	26%	2%	16%
OTHER ETHNIC GROUP	4%	5%	14%	3%	8%

* Table does not include those who preferred not to answer

** Target audience groups activity has been identified by from project activity description. Further individual breakdown on following slides.

Audience Objectives

Targeted activity: Reaching Younger Audiences

5 Projects *(10% of total projects)*

75 Screenings

41% New audiences*

93% Would attend again

25% 16-30 year-olds

48% identified as female

22% under-represented ethnicities

17% identified as LGBTQ+

9% identified as disadvantaged

16% identified as disabled

*Audience survey sample from 5 projects was 54 (8% of the total number of audience surveys)

Whilst Film Feels Connected shares the overarching audience objectives as FAN (boosting the 16 – 30 year old range and developing diverse audiences), the primary aim was to celebrate film's unique ability to transport us, to illuminate ideas, and to spark a conversation - this time looking at how that can happen online while the sector is locked down and audiences are isolated.

Film Feels Connected was designed to spotlight innovation, promote online activity during lockdown and to help cinemas, festivals and societies access support to try out new activity. Due to the uniqueness of this season there were no audience targets set, yet for the purpose of the evaluation there have been some comparisons to the previous Film Feels Obsession season.

Reaching younger audiences between 16-30 years old, appears to have been more challenging than in previous national seasons, according to audience survey data. Overall audience engagement of 16-30 year olds was 22% compared to 32% achieved by Film Feels Obsession. The figure was higher for activity targeted at 16-30 year olds (25%).

There were a similar number of projects delivered with a specific focus on reaching younger audiences (FF Connected 5 projects and FF Obsession 6 projects) and an increase on target screenings (FF Connected 75 screenings and FF Obsession 23 screenings). However, engaging younger audiences also remained a challenge for these projects. Film Feels Obsession appeared to also have had a greater impact on new audiences (reaching 60%) compared to 41% for Film Feels Connected. 16-30 year olds audiences increased to 45% for Film Feels Obsession compared with just a 3 percentage point increase to 25% for Film Feels Connected.

This could suggest that younger audiences have a preference for attending live events that provide unique, innovative experiences or there was a greater demand for young people's attention during this time, with lockdown restrictions easing so they could meet physically with friends. It could also suggest that young people consume film content in a very different way online, and organisers weren't reaching these audiences via the platforms used or presenting the content in the way in which a digitally native audience consumes it.

However, there are other elements to consider, including the type of data used as evidence. For example, the audience survey data was limited for the events we know were aimed at younger audiences, and therefore weighted towards an older audience. This could be largely down to the type of person more likely to complete an online survey.

Interviews with members also suggests that individual website and social analytic information identified the participation of a younger audience, but this data was not provided as part of the evaluation.

Targeted activity: Increasing Diversity

19 projects targeted under-represented audiences

(37% of total projects)

188 screenings

52% new audiences*

98% would attend again

44% under-represented ethnicities

67% identified as female

25% 16-30 year olds

40% identified LGBTQ+

27% identified as disadvantaged

15% identified as disabled

*Audience survey sample from 19 projects was 263 (37% of the total number of audience surveys)

The data shows an increase in the diversification of audiences compared to Film Feels Obsession. LGBTQ+ audiences increased by 6 percentage points, under-represented ethnic audiences increased by 16 percentage points, audiences that identified as disadvantaged increased by 9 percentage points and audiences identifying as disabled increased by 3 percentage points.

There was a significant increase in activity specifically targeting under-represented audiences (37% of projects and a total of 188 events/screenings). These events/screenings reached 52% new audiences, which could suggest that online digital activity reaches audiences who would not normally attend physical activity, and these new audiences are traditionally under-represented.

There have been some significant changes to the approach since the previous Film Feels season, including a commitment to diversifying the decision-making process by recruiting external assessors for both rounds. This resulted in improved record keeping and a process to deal with grievances should they arise. It is worth noting that there has also been significant outreach and awareness raising work done by regional hub colleagues to develop programming groups, support organisations and encourage them to participate in Major Programme activity which also contributes to an increase in curators from under-represented ethnicities.

The open nature of the theme enabled a broad variety of member organisations with multifaceted voices to engage and respond in a more relaxed curatorial way. They were able to speak directly with the audiences they were targeting, using content more suited to digital environments such as short films and web series.

It is clear from the data and tracking members over the three-year period of Major Programmes evaluation, that there is a growing number of smaller, non-venue-based organisations led by under-represented curators. Data suggests that these organisations have greater reach with targeted audience groups.

There were 15 organisations that are led by under-represented curators, including (but not limited to); Africa in Motion, Birds Eye View, Club des Femmes, Fringe! Queer Film Festival, Kotatsu Japanese Animation Festival, Stella Vision Productions, S.O.U.L Film, Sheba Soul Ensemble, TAPE Collective, Twelve 30 Collective, We Are Parable, Women Over 50 Film Festival. Of these 15 organisations, 63% received funding from Major Programme for the first time.

Diversity also needs to be understood in terms of representation by region and venue/organisation type, not just protected characteristics. More detail on will follow when discussing member engagement.

Increasing Accessibility

43 projects delivered some element of access measures *(84% of total projects)*

70 screenings

15% identified as disabled*

64% identified as female

19% 16-30 year olds

31% from under-represented ethnicities

28% identified LGBTQ+

23% identified as disadvantaged

'As a disabled person I would have been unable to attend this in person so for me this was a truly liberatory event personally as well as being educationally and culturally enlightening.'

Audience Member

Film Feels Connected saw an increase in members delivering activity aimed at audiences with access needs and this season has supported an increase in knowledge and understanding on how to deliver accessible activity online. Audience survey data shows a 3 percentage point increase in audiences who identify as disabled compared to previous national seasons.

Activity aimed at audiences with access needs increased this season, with 43 projects out of 51 identifying access measures in place across some if not all activity in their event, resulting in 70 screenings (18% of the total number).

Types of access measures varied and included subtitles for films in English, captions and use of subtitling software for panels, workshops, Q&As, BSL interpretation for panel discussions/talks/introductions, transcripts provided, events/screenings made free or 'pay what you can', sliding scale ticketing, data access funding/support. However, the data is not consistent in identifying the extent of access measures for different events.

Analysis of this segment of audience is limited to those audience members who completed audience surveys and leads to the question of how accessible the audience surveys were and how accessible was the method used to communicate the need to complete audience surveys.

It is evident from this increase in activity and interviews with members that this season has enabled huge strides in understanding more about what is needed and how to deliver accessible online activity. This is backed up by 57% of members who accessed inclusive cinema guides on <https://www.the-bigger-picture.com/guides/>. However, there is a clear need from analysing the data and collecting feedback from members, for increased guidance and training on how to market to and engage broader audiences with access needs when delivering digital activity and how to continue to include these audiences when restrictions are relaxed and activity is focused on physical engagement.

More research with a larger, more robust, sample of data is required to determine whether online events are successful at reaching wider audiences with access needs. If this assumption is evidenced, it could be the key to changing focus of future funding and a continued need to support online activity.

These insights are encouraging but members are concerned about the increased costs and additional challenges incurred when delivering a similar level of accessible programming and attracting this new audience into venues.

Cultural Experience

44 projects delivered were enhanced
(86% of total projects)

96% of audience rated experience of additional activity good or very good

Range of enhanced activity included:
pre-recorded introductions with talent, live introductions, industry sessions, masterclasses, workshops, live and pre-recorded Q&A, podcasts, twitter takeovers/tweet along, training, live performance, zine production, panel discussions, commissioned blog pieces, spoken word commissions, watch parties, live D-J sets, award parties.

'I loved the poem and thought the poet integrated my contribution really well and still created a moving poem that added to my experience of the film. Given that I can't watch the film at the cinema with other people, knowing that others had contributed to the poem made me feel more connected to them, despite the fact they weren't there in the room with me.'

Audience Member

Film Feels Connected had an open curatorial theme as the focus of investment was on the method of engagement and innovative approaches to reach audiences whilst venues were closed. This enabled a lot of voices to respond, a more relaxed curatorial approach and an opportunity to meet audiences where they are with specific content aimed at the audiences being targeted.

Audience engagement was crucial for investment however for some projects it was more integral and innovative with greater interaction prior to 'live activity'. For example, one member encouraged people to send in handwritten letters that were forwarded on to other audience members, audiences were asked to contribute talking heads recounting personal memories and contribute to a user generated piece of poetry, creating a worthwhile and memorable experience, and something tangible to take away from it.

Enhanced activity was either live or pre-recorded. Some recorded live activity will remain available on websites providing legacy for the project and content for the members.

Audience data tells us that 54% of audience members engaged directly in enhancement activity (eg. asked a question, left a comment) and that 62% of those would have participated in the same way had the event been delivered physically in a venue. Yet this is based on those who complete online surveys who we assume are more committed and invested in engaging and participating.

Anecdotal evidence from members who ran Q&As felt they witnessed more of a breadth of questions from a wider range of individuals online. In venue members claim there are similar amounts of engagement but by a smaller number of people in the audience.

Cultural Achievements, ranked by audience survey responses

76%	Provided a worthwhile cultural experience
70%	Encouraged you to attend similar events
54%	Increased your appetite for independent British & international films
47%	Taught you something new about film
43%	Introduced you to new types of films
38%	Increased your awareness of film heritage

Profile & Public Dialogue

96% of audience rated experience of event/film good or very good

'The Q&A component exemplified something that I do think has come out of the Covid moment, namely that when these events are community focused but occur in homes for both participants and audience, then it does seem to create a more relaxed atmosphere that is really conducive to in-depth and genuinely fascinating discussion about the processes of filmmaking and the ways in which film can resonate so strongly with an audience.'

Audience Member

'The whole season has been a real revelation to me. I knew nothing about Central Asian cinema before and it was hugely interesting to discover films and filmmakers from this region. The online introductions were also great, very clear and informative, providing really good context for the films.'

Audience Member

'The sense of community engendered by the Twitter conversations has made me feel braver about voicing my opinion about films watched, it is a very welcoming community.'

Audience Member

Film Feels is designed to engage audiences into deeper thinking about film and to spark conversation, regardless of whether activity takes place in venues or online. Whilst the data to support an increase in public dialogue or a raised profile of film is challenging to capture due to a lack of social media interaction and press coverage, the anecdotal evidence from audience and members' feedback provides an insight into new behaviour from audiences and members alike.

Major Programmes provided a centralised website (filmfeels.co.uk) to provide a listing of all Film Feels Connected activity, which also included other online activity being delivered by FAN members during July-August 2021, even those not in receipt of funding. The website generated 75% more traffic than previous Film Feels seasons and had the potential to transfer audiences from one activity to another due to the lack of geographical boundaries, which would have been less possible for previous editions. Major Programmes also invested in enhanced marketing and comms support via Gateshead based agency, [Crystallised](#). This support was gratefully received by members stating it *'was a major step forward in our comms: we were able to define and refine our USP, streamline and make uniform our messaging across our mailouts, social media, video interviewing and art work'*. Yet, members have also identified challenges with working in new ways with online advertising and controls in place on social platforms, pointing to the need for future training to reach broader audiences. Social media provided a new opportunity to share activity that was no longer limited by geographical boundaries and had become accessible to all, which is evidenced by an increase of over 100% of retweets and 75% coverage on twitter using shared #FilmFeels and #FilmFeelsConnected hashtags.

With all activity focused online, members reported how this enabled them to provide a wealth of material for each film by tracing the existing cultural imprint of Q&As, interviews, blogs, articles and opinion pieces to contextualise the films curated. Some members commissioned significant new writing on the films and filmmakers and also created transcriptions of live event for future access and research and providing further legacy for the season.

Members have also reported huge benefits from the opportunity to interact directly with audiences via 'live chat' and Q&A elements of activity and that these could generate a greater level of discussion, enabling direct engagements between curators, staff teams and audience members, especially as it gave anonymity to 37% of audience members who either would not have or weren't sure they would engage in the same way in a live in person Q&A. However, live Q&As online can also create challenges due to the lack of control of guests and the sensitive nature of some topics of discussion that can cause discomfort and offence. Members identified a need to ensure safe spaces for discussion are created, especially when being recorded, and more training in this would be useful.

Website Impact

	Connected	Obsession
Total visits	19,461	11,135
Unique visits	2,845	2,464
'Join events' clicks	1,456	430
Peak visits	29-Jul	

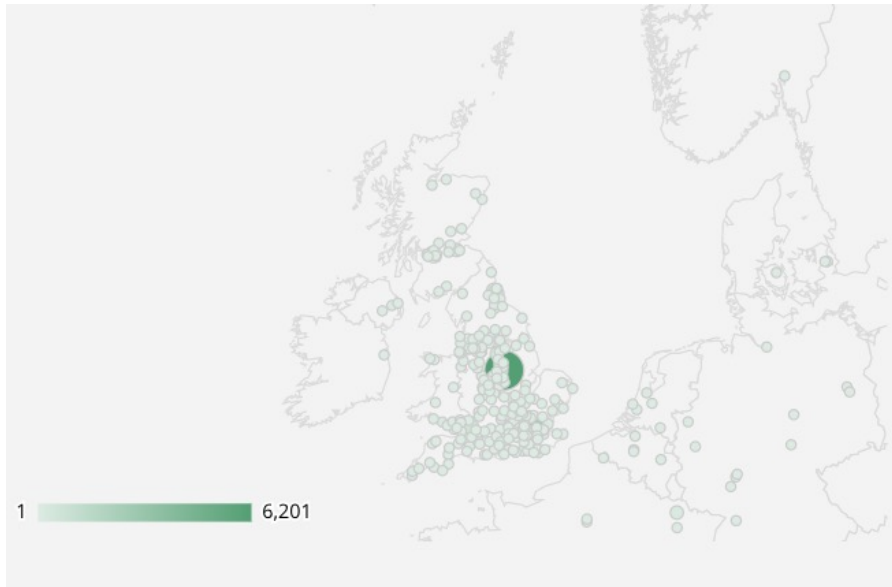
Visitors

	Connected	Obsession
Female	55%	44%
Male	45%	56%
35+ yrs old	50%	50%
18-34 yrs old	50%	50%

Incoming Channels

	Connected	Obsession
Direct	35%	36%
Social	25%	22%
Organic search	20%	30%
Referral	11%	11%
Email	8%	0.40%

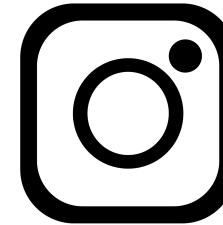
Visitors by location



Social Interaction



630 direct tweets
 1660 retweets received
 212 replies
 3893 likes received
 112 unique users



Increase of 290 followers
 34 posts
 Max engagement
 31 likes and
 2 comments

Our audience engagement and interaction via twitter and mailouts was the highest it has ever been.
Member

Enabled risk, experimentation and innovation

290 Total titles*

96 Feature Films
(33% of total titles)

3 Archive** Films
(6% of total projects)

16 Short Film Compilations

194 Short Films
(67% of total titles)

25 Web/TV Series

Film Feels Connected had an open curatorial theme, the focus of investment was to support innovative approaches to engaging audiences whilst venues were closed. This enabled multifaceted voices to respond, to meet people where they are with specific content aimed at the audiences being targeted.

The open programming brief was well received by members, due to being less restrictive. Members felt the investment enabled them to take risks with trying new things, adapting, building confidence in delivering online activity whilst remaining true to their programming objectives. Specifically rural venues, film festivals and independent curatorial collectives who used the opportunity to remain connected to existing audiences with the hope of reaching broader local, national and even international audiences who follow them for the type of programming and enhanced activity they deliver. Especially as many members were continuing and building on developments made in access and reaching more D/deaf and hard of hearing audiences. That said, some more regular recipients of Major Programme funding find a clearer curatorial theme beneficial and enjoy responding creatively to a tighter brief.

There are discrepancies in the data, making it difficult to compare seasons like for like. Not all film titles were identified when featuring as part of a compilation. However, what the data does show is an increase of approximately 200 titles compared to Film Feels Obsession (90 titles). This is largely due to 67% of those titles being short films, compilations and web series. This choice could be due to a preference for short film (which can be more accessible) or could reflect challenges members experienced with digital rights and availability of feature titles for streaming, especially when most members hadn't by this time developed their own players and were relying on platforms like YouTube and Vimeo or what was already available to audiences via VOD platforms. This could also be due to an open curatorial brief and access to a wider programming choice due to availability of content online.

'We felt that the pandemic and lockdown was a big challenge to our community spirit and we wanted to connect people with a lively, interactive and educational film-based programme that would celebrate our film and community heritage around festival and carnival'

Member

	Number	Connected	Obsession
Specialised film*** (features & shorts)	285	98%	77%
US films (features)	22	23%	53%
Non-US International (features)	43	45%	30%
British Films (features)	31	32%	17%

The analysis of the types of features films programmed identifies a reduction of titles from the US, and an increase in specialised titles from the UK and International non-US titles, when compared to previous seasons. It was not possible to identify how many documentary films were screened, although many of the members were focused on these titles.

* Only counting titles that were identified - a number of short films were not listed by title as they formed part of a collection or compilation

** Projects who identified working with archives

*** Based on [BFI Definition of Specialised Film](#)

FAN Members Participation

51 projects were supported out of 55 offers made (4 projects withdrew due to timing, staffing challenges and complexity of proposal)

70 applications received

100% member satisfaction

'It was very inspiring to be part of such a diverse programme of material and activity delivered by a wide range of exhibitors, see different approaches taken within different contexts to reach audiences, and to have such a view into the range of activity taking place across the UK.'

Member

There were very high levels of satisfaction from members and FAN Managers who valued the investment opportunity to support members who were able to adapt to online activity whilst regional Hubs were focused on resilience support.

All members expressed gratitude to Major Programmes, Project Manager Annabel Grundy and her team for providing valued support, a real sense of community and collaboration when supporting applications and delivering the season. This was also reinforced by members accessing regional hub networking and feeling the solidarity of organisations experiencing similar impacts from the pandemic.

There was a shift in the 'type' of organisation applying for funding, with a reduction of cinema venues (down 24 percentage points) and an increase in festivals (up 13 percentage points). This could suggest that these members were in need of support due to being unable to access funding at this time, especially as the Resilience funds were competitive, prioritising venues and the focus was on resilience rather than project delivery. However, Hub Managers confirmed many of these organisations were also being funded by regional Hubs through this time, in some cases causing confusion regarding double funding. In each of these identified cases it was confirmed that the funding from MP was to support different activity. However, this leads to the risk of reporting audience numbers more than once as a requirement for different funding pots.

There were high numbers of 'new' members receiving Major Programmes funding. 49% of members who participated hadn't participated in a Major Programme season before (tracked back to Sci-Fi Blockbuster in 2014). 32% of those new members were festivals, 24% mixed arts venues where cinema was not their primary audience, 20% film clubs/community cinemas. 44% of these new members were from London, 12% from the Midlands, 12% from Scotland and 12% from Wales.

It was confirmed by Hub Managers that many of these 'new' organisations were familiar with regional Hub funding, some however were new to any FAN funding. Time will tell to see if these 'newly' engaged members remain engaged in either hub activity or MP activity in the future or if their engagement was related purely to the pandemic.

There was a suggestion that due to large numbers of venue staff being furloughed, the information on funding opportunities was being picked up by other people in the organisation who could have been more engaged/interested in the opportunity of funding. This could also contribute to the increase in non-venue members participation, especially as most are smaller organisations that may have been unable to furlough staff or access the furlough scheme.

See table on next page for details on Hub breakdown.

'This funding has enabled us to test new ideas and has contributed to long-term organisational resilience.'

Member

'This activity has pushed us to programme more multilingual activity and to explore how we can better capture audience feedback.'

Member

HUB	PROJECTS	AUDIENCES	% of total audience	Screenings/ Events	Investment	% of total investment
London	17	10,658	50%	169	£20,450	35%
Scotland	8	3,253	15%	10	£10,444	18%
South West	7	2,332	11%	4	£8,250	14%
North	7	942	4%	47	£7,395	13%
Wales	5	2,487	12%	43	£6,580	11%
Midlands	4	533	2%	6	£3,590	6%
South East	2	373	2%	23	£1,225	2%
Northern Ireland	1	891	4%	74	£1,225	2%
	51	21,677		376	£59,909	
Film Feels Obsession 2019	40	9,173		236	£65,272	
Uprising 2018	28	6,593		165	£61,135	

Value and Impact for Members

98% felt support enabled them to engage audiences in a new way

57% members read online event guides and articles at thebiggerpicture.com

Increased confidence *	
85%	claim increased confidence in delivering events
65%	claim increased confidence in general programming
65%	claim increased confidence in attracting more diverse audiences
60%	claim increased confidence in applying for funding
5%	claim increased confidence in archive programming
5%	worked with the BFI National Archive or another major film archive

* Based on 51 member survey responses

Benefits & Challenges

Film Feels Connected successfully achieved increased confidence levels in members. The value and impact on members are evident from member and FAN Manager feedback. However, some of the consistent barriers to participation continue to exist and the evolving landscape and impact of the pandemic provided some new challenges.

Benefits

- Financial support when income generation options had vanished
- Participation in a UK wide high-profile season reaching national audiences, with national coverage
- Opportunity to develop audiences beyond traditional location, no geographical or physical barriers for audiences
- Reach audiences who don't traditionally attend physical screenings due to access needs, provide free activity for those who were experiencing financial hardship, travel limitations, isolation
- The value of a centralised website was increased due to lack of geographical barriers for audiences
- Brand awareness and presence throughout the pandemic continued provision for their community – keeping people engaged and the dialogue going
- Moral support and solidarity, connected to a wider network of different organisations going through a similar experience
- Genuine sense of wider network of national organisations
- Advice and support from the project management team / Film Hubs Development of curatorial collaborations
- Experimentation and risk taking to understand audience behaviour online
- Technical skills development for delivering online activity – became even more valuable as the pandemic progressed
- A platform for filmmakers to reach and connect with audiences
- Enabled audiences to connect and staff/curators to connect with audiences, which felt especially important
- Engaged freelance, artists, filmmakers and technicians in paid opportunities
- Legacy of creating online content for subsequent audience engagement
- Engaging international talent, normally not cost effective to pay for travel

Challenges

- Timing – quick turnaround, more time needed for marketing and explaining to audiences. There has been a shift in audience behaviour, and this takes time to understand on both sides. Audiences like uniqueness and innovation but they also need a level of familiarity with how to access or take part in events.
- Stress – due to unforeseen factors, titles not being available, challenging negotiations with distributors.
- Safe-guarding online – more training required for online moderation, creating a safe space for audiences
- Recording content – requiring consent from panellists/audiences
- Increase in costs and time for subtitling/captioning
- Level of reporting required can put members off, especially for small grants
- Over saturated space, lots of activity happening at the same time online
- Audience behaviour changing – impact of lockdown restrictions easing, varying lockdown restrictions across the Nations, screen fatigue
- Offering free tickets with sign up and high dropout percentage
- Engaging audiences to complete online survey
- Struggle to reach D/deaf and hard of hearing audiences
- Technical limitations – bandwidth and storage, costly subscriptions to zoom, crowdcast and vimeo pro
- Navigating contributors in different time-zones, lockdown, life impacts – led to pre-recording content and loss of 'live' element
- Difficulty to create 'communal viewing', 'watch along' when not in control of live streaming of content

Barriers

- Quick turnaround
- Information overload during the time of call for applications
- Members didn't feel they had the confidence to deliver online activity
- Staff on furlough, reduced delivery teams

New Skills & Ways of Working

90% claimed to have learned new skills

Skills Acquired

- Remote working
- Curating broader, diverse content types
- Rights and negotiations with distributors for online screenings
- Digital contracting
- Online events delivery
- Understanding bandwidth needs for live streaming
- VOD and streaming live - transcoding, geo-blocking, working with different file formats
- Working with someone to subtitle the films
- Captioning – trained inhouse staff via Matchbox Cine
- Delivering multiple/collective events online – as opposed to single events.
- Pre-record and live Q&As recording remotely/interviewing techniques
- How to deliver webinars and online workshops
- Accessibility for digital events
- Online marketing (social media ads, writing copy)
- Creating digital assets
- vMix software for online video production

'We definitely learnt about how to hold safe spaces for sensitive discussions and how to ensure everyone felt heard and seen.'

Member

'One of the biggest learnings was how we engage audiences in new cities and harness online advertising tools via social media. Producing high quality online content is a great way to build new audiences across the country.'

Member

Skills & Training Identified

- Online presenting skills for introductions and Q&As
- Higher quality kit to support the technical delivery live broadcast events
- Video editing
- Understanding different platforms
- CRM Development
- SEO Development
- Deaf Awareness training and Audio Description training
- Adapting sponsorship strategies to fit online activity
- GDPR compliance and audience data safety
- How to capture demographic information from our audiences
- Contract negotiation and legal language for contracting films
- Digital Marketing/Social Media – how best to expand our audiences, both nationally and internationally
- How to manage difficult discussions online (trauma, racism, colonialism, violence and abuse etc)

'We learnt a lot about how to run a collective group of online events, opposed to just one-off singular screenings and Q&As. This ability to build momentum and engage a diverse audience across multiple events,'

Member

Delivered Value for Money

Total Season Cost

£146,503

FAN Investment

£59,909

41% of total project costs

Spend per head

£2.79

Additional Funding Leveraged

£17,574 ticket sales & donations

12% of total project costs

£37,128 other income/match

24% of total project costs

Total additional funding **£54,702**

37% of total project costs

*Average (mean) value of additional funding leveraged by members **£1,072.59***

£31,892 in-kind support

22% of total Project costs

*Average (mean) value of in-kind support leveraged by members **£625,33***

Level of FAN investment is consistent with previous seasons, and increased audience engagement resulted in reduced spend per head which demonstrates considerable value for money. Yet as this report demonstrates the real value is evidenced by innovation and creative risk taking to reach new more diverse audiences, increased member confidence and skills, and an insight into online audience behaviour.

Film Feels Connected, with a focus on delivering online activity, complemented funds available from regional hubs as they were focused on resilience and supporting the sector through recovery. Hub Managers encouraged members to apply to Major Programmes funding when it is not possible to support their activity.

Major Programmes was designed with smaller grants, limiting exposure to risk by capping investment. These smaller grants may have been more accessible to less established organisations who have not accessed FAN funding in the past.

Whilst there wasn't evidence of a high number of organisations who developed new partnerships it was vital for the members to use the support to continue to work with existing partners, employ freelance staff they would normally work with and engage artists connected to the content or enhanced activity.

This season saw an increase in leverage of other income, match funding and in-kind support, despite box office income being lower, which was expected due to a large number of projects offering activity with no way of generating box office – screening material on third party platforms and using funding support to create enhanced activity which is offered free of charge (Q&As, intros etc).

'A wonderfully responsive initiative at a time when most of us across the exhibition sector were reeling from the practical, financial and emotional challenges that was brought with the pandemic. Having the benefit of co-ordinated FAN marketing, as well as skill-sharing with colleagues throughout the UK, this project felt like it had considerable value for money.'

Member

'Small pots of funding like this are incredibly useful as a little can go a long way in terms of online projects. We're excited by the discussion it has sparked for us in programming online content alongside our live physical programme.'

Member

Other discussion points

- This season brought into sharp focus the question of whether FAN priorities are around developing audiences for independent film and/ or building audiences for cinema events in venues. There is a difference, especially when it comes to online activity and the types of organisations that have been funded through this project
- There is an assumption that online activity can reach audiences beyond venue-based geographical boundaries, but it remains unclear if this is evidenced in the data. Further research is required to determine if members are able to reach beyond their regular audiences through online activity, and how this varies by exhibitor type.
- It is interesting to speculate whether specialised film has become more popular and accessible during the pandemic because there have been more viewing opportunities online. Projects like this open up many more questions about audience behaviour and habits and how they may have changed during the pandemic. It remains to be seen whether any new online viewing habits will translate into in-venue viewing patterns as lockdown restrictions ease.

Recommendations

- Traditional evaluation methods are challenging when applied online, and there is continued reluctance from members and audience to use BFI standard audience surveys partly due to the wording of equality monitoring questions concerning gender and sexual identity which may be perceived as outdated and exclusionary. Some members feel strongly that they are potentially offending and isolating the very community they are representing. These related issues should be discussed at the same time as new methods for online data capture are explored.
- It is vital that evaluation results are shared with members as there is a definite feeling of consistent reporting upwards, with little in the way of useful feedback.
- Future investment needs to support:
 - developing accessible events in venue to encourage new audiences generated online to return to physical events;
 - venues with delivering live events, especially as these will remain high cost and risky with social distancing reducing ticket income;
 - venues with the practical elements of enabling live events to be COVID secure.
- There needs to be more awareness of sensitivities of using auto-captioning on platforms as it can generate disrespectful misinterpretations.
- To ensure the best use of funds, MP Project Manager should consider seeking guidance from Hub Managers regarding the strategic investment of hub members as they have a deeper understanding and stronger relationship with individual members.
- FAN should consider creating a standardised rate card for freelancers in the sector – specifically programmers- and these fees should take account of the additional duties required for online activity.

Appendix

Full list of qualitative interviews conducted;

FAN Major Programmes, Project Manager:

Annabel Grundy Film Hub Midlands

FAN Managers:

Paul Bowman Film Hub London

Nicola Kettlewood Film Hub Scotland

Hana Lewis Film Hub Wales

Sally Folkard (via email) Film Hub North

FAN Members:

Lisa Brook

Sean Carroll

Emma Dove

Paul Gallagher

Eiko Meredith

Nuala O'Sullivan

Tara Sachdeva

Christopher Tryer

Live Cinema

Inspirate

Cample Line

Glasgow Film Theatre

Kotatsu Japanese Animation Festival

Women Over Fifty Film Festival

Compass Presents

Phoenix Leicester



A Buddha in Africa, Watch Africa



Out Run, Queer East



Where I'm From event, TAPE Collective