

SFF Trustee Meeting 8.12.2024

SFF 2024 was a wonderful festival that successfully built on SFF 2023

Venue:

- Ryan wants to keep it at good shepherd studios next year due to good/established relationship
- pews in main screening room remain a problem (perhaps cushions / move chairs in)
- slight cafe /break timing issue to be remembered
- noise pollution from cafe
- make sure to chase management re alcohol license next year (perhaps byob?)
- Only ten more tickets were available to sell. We seem to be growing to the limits of the venue, and some screenings were very crowded. This can be managed by being more canny about which screening is going to be more popular and making sure we put that in the bigger screening room).
- There is an argument for expanding into the community space next door

Date/Timing:

- Secure a September weekend date (**Helen, is there a particular weekend that doesn't coincide with other festivals / events?**)
- Timings seemed to work well, and starting after lunch on Saturday didn't seem to be a problem

Programme:

- show fewer submitted films
- be more - success of Tony Hill retrospective (consider John Smith for next year)
- importance of intros from Programmers to help foster communal experience
- double check deliverables from filmmakers to avoid corrupted files
- try to do a proper sound check of the programme in the venue (or compile films into grouped exports)
- possibly engage a bigger name (although the Landscape and the Fury Had a real buzz)
- consider doing build-up or surrounding events in other venues to improve audience reach (ICA)
- review of programming timeline:
 - o begin programming process in early January
 - o decouple submissions from wider programme to ensure focused-filmmaker presence
 - o Close submissions earlier (June) to reflect earlier festival date, and to ensure selection is made with more time to advertise / contact filmmakers

Funding:

- revenue was good
- consider upping ticket price:
 - o SFF 2024 was £15 day & £22.50 weekend
 - o Possibly SFF 2025 to be £20 for a day & £30 for a weekend, with an unwaged price.
- possibly grow audience (and therefore revenue) through online showcase.

Logistics / Team:

- Ryan's proposed rejig of the team makes sense:
 - o Ryan to stop working on submissions programming to focus on special screenings / events
 - o Kat to possibly take on administrative role (Ryan to write a job description and check Kat's interest)
 - o Programmer stay the same + extra programmer to take over from Ryan (possibly Matthew Barrington)
 - o Keep junior programmer role (asking volunteers from last year)
 - o Ed Smyth fee to be increased to account for his marketing workload- makes sense
- Ryan to implement this by checking interest

Next SFF Trustee Mtg to be in January (Peter to arrange)

SFF 2024 was once again held at Good Shepherd Studios in Leytonstone. The festival expanded this year with events happening across two screens as well as an extra-cinematic event that took place on the nearby Wanstead flats. This was the first year that tickets have been sold directly through the website. And where the online showcase was also hosted through our site.

11 separate screenings of 85 films. Up from 7 sessions and 45 films screened in 2023.

Attendance:

Total of 91 tickets sold. 21 more than last year.
60 tickets to the online showcase. 11 more than last year

Income:

£2495 from in person tickets
£540 from online showcase
£3794 from submissions

Total: £6829

(total in 2023 was £4800)

Notes and feedback on the venue:

The café stayed open for the whole event which was a big improvement on last year. There was a staff hand over that fell during the afternoon break on Saturday so perhaps some more coordination needed on timings. They also didn't get their TENS license in time which meant no alcohol could be served.

The pews are not ideal and people noted the uncomfortable seating in feedback. We could put in more chairs rather than pews next year but this is likely to remain an issue unless we switch to a cinema as the venue.

Audience feedback:

On the venue:

"The venue is unique and has character. It feels very welcoming. However, the chairs need to be improved—in both rooms, especially the upstairs room, they were significantly uncomfortable."

"Pews were uncomfortable; otherwise brilliant and cute place! "

"I liked the venue and the chance to be a little outside of central London, in reach of the Wanstead Flats and the bottom of Epping forest. I also liked the friendly and relaxed atmosphere. "

On the Program:

Unknown contact said:

"Outdoor or discussion events help refresh me as an audience member - hours and hours just watching is demanding. "

Unknown contact said:

"I am happy to come with an open mind and just enjoy the programme as it is presented. I enjoyed the addition of the Q and A. "

Unknown contact said:

"More feature films could be good, though I like the equal emphasis on shorts. "

Additional comments:

"I loved the festival and hope it continues to thrive. "

"Regardless of the quality of the curation/films, I'm still appreciative of the mere existence of such a festival (with such cheap tickets!) within such a monopolised and capitalist-driven industry. It's a real testament to the hard work you people put into this festival. I hope to see it return for many more years!"

Feedback from programming team and volunteers:

Proximity to LFF likely effecting audience numbers. Could we hold mid-September?

Should have films backed up in different format in case of SD card failure.

Could do with a few more volunteers as there were only just enough to cover tasks so if people's availability had been different we may have had issues.

Primarily white audience. Could more outreach and audience development take place?

Feedback from festival director and proposal for workload re-jig:

I was thrilled with how the festival went. I feel we built on the good parts of last year and that we had a really lively and engaged audience. This year we had more screenings, more Q&A's, and a sonic meditation. We pulled off the move to two screens nicely - I had been concerned that there would be moments when one screen was empty but this didn't transpire. The smaller screen was often over full which is a good concern to have. I do agree with some of the audience feedback that not all of the programming was as strong as it could have been this year. We over stuffed some of the sessions thinking

that we wouldn't have Q&As but then the filmmakers were really keen to come. Next year we can be more discerning and have shorter sessions.

The move to two screens meant that there was a lot more work involved this year and, as we continue to grow we need to change the division of labour somewhat.

I feel we have now reached a point where we can see what our costs and income are and plan what a sustainable budget might look like. I think we can expand our audience slightly in this venue and will be able to continue to grow the audience for the online showcase but that we should plan for a budget of £6700. With this in mind, I would like to propose the following:

- Directors wage reduced to £2000.
- 2 new hires: 1) **Festival assistant (£300)**. Primarily an admin role. Will help the festival director with tasks such as: populating the website, writing newsletters, proof reading all copy (Kat has expressed keen interest in continuing to be involved). 2) **Programmer (£500)**. I suggest hiring an additional programmer who can take over from Ryan in viewing submissions. Ryan would instead focus on invited filmmakers, talks, and extra-cinematic events. This would also free up space for Ryan to work on additional events (eg. With Ben Rivers) as well as audience development work. Potential person for the role is Matthew Barrington: <https://opencitylondon.com/jury/matthew-barrington/>
- **Continuation of the Junior programmer role (£300)** with one of the volunteers from this year in post.
- **Ed's wage bumped up to £600** to reflect his work on social media.

2024 BUDGET

INCOME

Money in account		£1,893
Filmfreeway Sales	Revenue from 275 submissions	£3,794
Eventbrite Sales	91 Tickets total	£2,495
Online	60 at £9	£540
TOTAL		£8,722

EXPENDITURE

LICENSES/SPEAKER FEES

Blanc Sceol		£200
		£150
Fiona Hallinan		£150

EVENT PRODUCTION

Venue Hire		£1,000.00
Venue Hire 2		
Festival Wristbands	Wristbands UK x 140	£11.00
Event Insurance (public liability)		£47.00
Business Email Address		

PUBLICITY

Website	New domain purchase (£19.20) + website creator (£124.80)	
Online showcase host		£75.00
Mail Chimp	£24 a month	£288

WAGES

Director		£2,000.00
Programmer 1 (Andy Key - freelance)		£500.00
Programmer 2 (Ed Smyth - freelance)		£500.00
Programmer 3 (Cate Elwes - freelance)		£400.00

Junior Programmer	£300.00
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TRAVEL

Travel expenses for Ed	25.8
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FOOD

Dinner for programmers, volunteers and trustees	£391.50
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TOTAL	£6,038.30
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REVENUE	£8,722
SPEND	£6,038
REMAINING	£2,684

