

Scalarama Glasgow 2020 Roundtable | 24/05/20 | Minutes

Moderator: Megan Mitchell (Scalarama Glasgow, Matchbox Cineclub)

Attendees: Alex Misick, Alison Smith (Screen Scotland), Amanda Rogers (Cinetopia/ Scalarama Scotland), Anna Bogutskaya (Final Girls UK), Annabel Grundy (Film Hub Midlands), Arjun Sajip (Scalarama), Calvin Halliday (Pity Party Film Club), Caroline Golum (Spectacle Theatre), Garret Lin (Spectacle Theatre), Isaac Hoff (Spectacle Theatre), Charlotte Crofts, Duncan Carson (Nobody Ordered Wolves), Emma Dove (Cample Live), Erin Wiegand, Eve Gabereau (Modern Films), Gaz Bailey (Abertoir), Greg Walker (Pilot Light TV Festival), Heather Bradshaw (Unmellow Movies), Helen Wright (SQIFF), Jamie Dunn, Louise Buckler (Arrow Video), Maria Suarez-Alvarez, Marie Archer (N.E.A.T), Matt Grady (Factory 25), Mike Hewitt (Arrow Video), Michael Pierce (Scalarama), Midnight Memphis (Film Hub Wales), Mike O'Brien, Monika Fernandez (Cinema Nation/ Scalarama), Morven Cunningham (Regional Screen Scotland), Natasha Wilson, Nick Brodin, Nicola Kettlewood (Film Hub Scotland), Rana San (Northwest Film Forum), Reuben Wheeler, Rosie Beatty, Samantha May (Red Thread Film Club), Sambrooke Scott (Screen Scotland), Sean Welsh (Matchbox Cineclub/ Scalarama Scotland), Shona Thomson (A Kind Of Seeing/ Regional Screen Scotland), Steven Sheil (Mayhem), Tamara van Strijthem (Take One Action Film Festival), Toki Allison (Film Hub Wales), Tom Summers

1. Welcome + Update

Megan Mitchell, Producer of Matchbox Cineclub, welcomed all 60 + attendees to the session and explained that, usually, these sessions would take place at the CCA in Glasgow but, thanks to Film Hub Scotland, they're now able to take place online, allowing the Scalarama Scotland network to extend across the UK and further afield. This session focuses on how independent exhibitors can take their film screenings online, with contributions from American Genre Film Archive (AGFA), Arrow Video, Factory25, Modern Films, Northwest Film Forum and Spectacle Theater. Megan introduced the four questions which will frame the session's discussions:

1. How can we screen films online, practically?
2. How can distributors support independent exhibitors to do so?
3. How can we replicate and/or improve on the theatrical experience?
4. How can we develop online programming/activity to complement IRL events?

Megan offered a quick update on some [research on re-opening independent cinemas conducted by the Independent Cinema Office](#), and research results of [Screen Scotland, Regional Screen Scotland and Film Hub Scotland's survey into the impact of COVID19 on Scottish independent exhibitions](#). [Film Feels Connected](#) was also highlighted, which has adapted the Film Feels website to list online film activity of exhibitors across the UK and offer funding to support these activities.

2. Screening Films Online

Megan welcomed Rana San from Northwest Film Forum, a non-profit film and art centre located in Seattle, Caroline Golum, Garret Lin and Isaac Hoff of New York's volunteer-run screening space Spectacle Theater, Matt Brady of Brooklyn-based independent film distribution and production company Factory25, Bret Berg of the American Genre Film Archive (AGFA), Arrow Video's Mike Hewitt and Louise Buckner, and founder of London-based Modern Films, Eve Gabereau.

Caroline Golum began the discussion by describing how quickly Spectacle Theater's team had to take the decision to close. Caroline explained that as a volunteer-run screening space of only 35 seats they screen multiple films a day, programmed by a range of partners and volunteers, with the question for them being how can they replicate something like that online and continue to be a daily presence for people? Isaac also noted the appetite for midnight screenings in New York, which they programme for and have transported online via their Twitch streaming.

Rana San, Artistic Director at Northwest Film Forum, explained NWFF is an independent, non-profit, super-small group of enthusiasts based in Seattle with two screening rooms, which throughout the year, host festivals and film series, educational opportunities, workshops for youth and adults, artists services and an edit lab. They had to shut five days out from ByDesign Festival, their annual architecture and design film festival, and moved the programme online. As well as online screenings, NWFF are continuing to prioritise community engagement and partnerships as well.

Eve Gabereau, founder of London based distribution company Modern Films, explained that although they're primarily distributors, as the lockdown occurred just before their planned theatrical run for Haifaa Al-Mansour's *The Perfect Candidate*, they partnered with BFI Players, Curzon Home Cinema and launched their own VOD platform to get the film to audiences. This has evolved in a virtual cinema space with Modern Films partnering with 24 cinemas in a revenue share model. Eve said that although the distributor role might have shifted a bit they are still in the booking mindset around how they can create that feeling of going to the cinema even if you're at home, about new content and events, and how this spikes people's interest through the online events.

Louise Buckler from Arrow Video explained that their release *Why Don't You Just Die?* had to be refocused for online, being available on their own SVOD channels (via Amazon and Apple). They have been focusing on building communities around this release via Tweet-alongs and watch parties. Mike Hewitt also noted that Arrow have cultivated strong audience engagement through their films and festival partnerships, and are looking at investigating various options through their own SVOD channels, other streaming platforms, festival and platforms that are arising.

Bret Berg from the American Genre Film Archive joined and explained AGFA is a

Scalarama Glasgow 2020 Roundtable | 24/05/20 | Minutes

non-profit offshoot of the Alamo Drafthouse movie chain, which has a collection of film prints that they restore, preserve and handle theatrical sales for. As theatrical sales made up a larger portion of their revenue, AGFA are now focusing on promoting their home video labels with Blu Rays and managing titles' streaming rights to broadcast and streaming. AGFA are also hosting some of their found footage mixtapes for rent on Vimeo OTT for 99 cents. Their film *Ask Any Buddy* was set to screen at BFI Flare but this was taken online as part of the festival instead. AGFA doesn't own many of the streaming rights for the titles they handle but are confident that their partner venues will return strong after they have decided it's safe to re-open and return to audiences.

In regards to platforms, Caroline, Garret and Issac explained that their decision to use [Twitch](#) as a live streaming platform was taken in panic but has worked out well in terms of audiences from outside New York engaging with them. Megan notes that the Matchbox team have enjoyed tuning in and experiencing their programming.

Rana echoes the feeling of panic as a decision driving force at the beginning of the lockdown. NWFF has been using Vimeo embedded on their website to host their screenings, with a sliding scale ticket price model. Megan notes that their screening of *Shelf Life* was partially enjoyable.

Modern Films had already been looking to develop their own TVOD and the lockdown just brought this into focus on how they can practically manage transactions. They had tried to use Vimeo previously but found it to be too inflexible for their needs. They have also built an assets suite for each cinema that they can then embed on their own website when promoting their films. Eve comments that they are also working with community groups and non-venue groups with the same model of revenue sharing.

Mike comments that Arrow are confident theatrical and the appetite for theatrical will return, and although they are assessing online their own online screening platform.

Megan asked Bret if AGFA titles are likely to be available for exhibitors to book for online screenings. Bret explains the complexities faced when uploading content to Vimeo and how this has impacted, along with rights issues around streaming for some titles, online availability. Matt of Factory 25 notes that Vimeo OTT now has less of these complexities.

Matt from Factory 25 explained that they are an independent distribution company based in Brooklyn focusing on American indie cinema and music documentaries. They had been preparing for the theatrical run of their film *Other Music* prior to the lockdown and took this online using Vimeo OTT via their website, revenue sharing with records shops, cinemas and even radio stations to promote the film to audiences.

Megan asked how each organisation is finding the relationship and conversations with disruptors or as distributors around online screening rights.

Scalarama Glasgow 2020 Roundtable | 24/05/20 | Minutes

Spectacle have been working directly with filmmakers and distributors, drawing on pre-established relationships to book films or programmes. As their programming is so eclectic some of this will be unable to be translated into online but they are trying to replicate and adapt to their Twitch stream setting, with distributors and filmmakers giving their films for free to them to stream. Issac notes how exciting the mix of bringing film they've maybe already shown to audiences to wider audiences outside New York alongside new programmes they're able to present.

Rana says that NWFF's rights dealings have been a mishmash of pulling on previous relationships and working directly with filmmakers to discuss taking things online and reassuring them about platform security, the change of festival formats and audience engagement. Rana also mentioned that live elements present online has become important and that a hybrid of hosting and online content is being

Megan asked if people are trying to recreate the feeling of theatrical exhibition online, and if so how, and if their new online models are here to stay post-lockdown.

Garret commented on Spectacle's relationship with, and ability to promote artists and animators they collaborate with, and how they've taken this online via social media, still having trailers and posters to engage audiences with. Caroline points out that the Twitch chat function which runs live alongside their stream has become a really interesting feature of their screenings. Caroline also says that in terms of labour each volunteer has been able to migrate working in the screening booth online in their own homes via the Twitch streams, putting their own personal touches on to their shifts by choosing the pre-screening music, trailers or images, and online the chat has this same type of eclectic-ness. Issac also affirms that these personal touches enhance the online experience and make it more theatrical.

Rana said that NWFF have learned a lot through the whole process of taking screenings online and now, having seen how broad their audience can be and how far they can reach with their programmes, thinks it's definitely something that they will continue, even after they are able to get back to their venue.

Matt also wants to continue to offer online screenings once lockdown is lifted, especially as a way to continue to support independent record shops.

Spectacle are having internal discussions about continuing online screenings, but feel it has been positive to reach a wider audience from across the world.

Megan concludes by asking what everyone's biggest take away has been from their online process.

Scalarama Glasgow 2020 Roundtable | 24/05/20 | Minutes

Issac said Spectacle's was perhaps learning to take chances even though they were fearful of online, and Rana is interested in the new landscape in film this will produce, especially for premiere status and festival eligibility.

Garret then asked about institutional films, those owned by estates, controlled by libraries, museums, and if anyone has any insight into how they might open up to theatrical booking. Megan asked if Shona Thompson, A Kind Of Seeing and Regional Screen Scotland, who worked with archive films might have some insight.

Shona said that the National Library of Scotland Moving Image Archive is formulating how they can make their archive accessible online and that there are interesting conversations going on about the potential of archive and that kind of localness that people would be really interested to see. Shona points out that contractual issues, as archives might not hold the streaming rights to their content, might be a barrier.

Rana asked if anyone had used FilmFreeway or are having discussions with them about online/offline festivals. Matt mentions that Maryland Film Festival has been using Eventive and recommends looking into them.

Megan summarises this section by thanking everyone for their contributions, noting that although webinars and other Zooms around online exhibition have been taking place that these have focused on venues and festivals which have access to more funding and capacity to delivery online activities, so it was very useful to hear from other independent exhibitors who have been so successful in taking the leap online in such difficult times.

3. UK Funding for Online

Megan highlighted three funding opportunities for UK and Scottish exhibitors who want to delivery some activity online.

[Film Feels Connected](#)

[Film Hub Scotland's Pitch Pots: Online](#)

[Creative Scotland's Digital Pivot Scheme](#)

4. Open Discussion

Heather Bradshaw, University of Glasgow Curation Student and film exhibitor under the [Unmellow Movies](#) banner, spoke about her research on the adaption of specifically Glasgow-based exhibitors during the current pandemic, looking at target audiences, audience needs and how they're changing in light of the current pandemic, as well as the different approaches of different types of exhibitors. Heather invited any Glasgow based exhibitors who would like to contribute to the research to contact her at:

heatherbradshaw-@hotmail.com.

Scalarama Glasgow 2020 Roundtable | 24/05/20 | Minutes

5. Next meeting date + outline

Scalarama Scotland's next session on June 21st will focus on access and inclusion for screening events, both online and in venues.