

Community cinema – some practicalities

Answers to some frequently asked questions about community cinema practicalities.

Do I need a film licence?

If you want to screen a film in public you will probably need a film licence, even if your event is free. Licences are obtained from the film's UK distributor. An alternative is to build a programme around royalty-free material such as short films, archive film and art films. Feature films, however, generally require a licence.

How do I find out who distributes a film?

If you're showing a mainstream or classic film, there's a good chance it's distributed by one of the big three:

- Filmbank (www.filmbank.co.uk/film_catalogue.asp)
- BFI (www.bfi.org.uk/distribution/)
- Motion Picture Licensing Company (www.themplc.co.uk/)

You could also search these databases to find the distributor:

- British Board of Film Classification (www.bbfc.co.uk/search/). Look for the 'film' distributor not the 'video' distributor, which covers home entertainment
- The Film Distributors' Association (www.launchingfilms.com/release-schedule).

If you're having trouble finding out who distributes the film, try contacting the Independent Cinema Office (www.independentcinemaoffice.org.uk).

Are all licences the same?

No. Filmbank, for example, have different types of licences depending on the type of event. Their Single Title Screening Licence is for one-off screenings – either free events or where entrance is charged at the door. Their Public Video Screening Licence gives a blanket licence to a single venue for a year but there are conditions (eg it only covers Filmbank films, you cannot charge entry, and you are not supposed to advertise the film outside of the venue). Visit www.filmbank.co.uk/which_licence.asp for details. NB: Some distributors, including Filmbank, publish different price lists for outdoor screenings.

Do I need permission to show a film in a park?

If you want to use council property (such as a park) you'll need to get permission. If you're not sure who to contact, ask to speak to someone in the council's events team or parks department. You might be asked to pay a hire fee to use the park. However, if you argue that the event is for community benefit and not-for-profit, the council might

waive the costs (eg Southwark and Lewisham have done so in the past). You could contact your local councillor to try and get their support too.

What is a Temporary Event Notice?

A Temporary Event Notice has to be completed for any venue wanting to put on a 'licensable activity' (which includes film screenings, sale of alcohol etc). TENs are given by the council and applying is easy. The TEN also notifies the police of what you are planning. There is a small cost for getting a TEN. Contact your local council for details of how to apply. Venues like pubs may already have a public entertainment licence. Check with the landlord. They may, however, need to amend their licence to include the right to show films.

Will I need to get public liability insurance?

Even if the venue has insurance, this might not cover injury caused as a result of your screening, so you might want to consider public liability insurance. One option is to get insurance via the British Federation of Film Societies, which has teamed up with WRS Insurance to put together insurance deals for community cinemas.

www.bffs.org.uk/services/moreservices.html

What equipment will I need?

If you're projecting digitally you'll need a digital projector, PA and screen, plus a DVD player or laptop. Don't worry if the equipment is basic. People come for the occasion and atmosphere and don't expect the quality of image/sound to rival a commercial cinema.

Event checklist

A checklist of things to consider.

Venue

- Is the venue/date/time confirmed with the owners?
- What is the maximum capacity of the room/space?
- Do they have enough chairs?
- Is the venue dark enough (or can it be blacked out)?
- If the film is outdoors, when will it be dark enough to start the film?

Programming

- What film or films will be screened?
- Have you identified the distributor?
- Have you obtained a licence to screen the film if necessary?

Projection

- Have you access to a suitable projector, screen and PA?
- Have you got wet weather cover if needed?

Insurance/event licences

- Do you have public liability insurance for the event?
- Are the premises licensed to show films?
- Have you got a temporary event notice if needed? (Will cost around £20 – obtainable from the council by filling in a form)

Funding

- What are the costs of staging the event?
- Where is the money coming from?

Stewards/volunteers

- Do you need stewards/volunteers on the day (only needed for larger/outdoor events)

Publicity

- How will you publicise the event?

Other sources of information

- **BFI** website has a section called 'How to organise a screening' www.bfi.org.uk/filmtvinfo/faq/screening.html
- **British Federation of Film Societies** has a 'resources' section including details of their Community Cinema Handbook www.bffs.org.uk/resources/

Compiled by Free Film Festivals (www.freefilmfestivals.org) – a community group promoting free film screenings in South East London.

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