

HEBDEN BRIDGE   
PICTURE HOUSE

# Annual Report

## April 2017 – March 2018



Photo by Sarah Mason Photography

**Town Mayor**  
Cllr Pat Fraser

**Chair of Picture House Committee**  
Cllr Dr Carol Stow

**Picture House Manager**  
Rebekah Fozard

**Hebden Bridge Picture House**  
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## Report from the Chair of the Picture House Committee

My report last year included the comment “We look to the future with continuing optimism but also with an awareness that we still have important areas and resources which need replacement and modernising.” This has proved accurate in every respect!

This year we have focussed on the refurbishment of the balcony seating and with the successful launch of the seat sponsorship scheme in the autumn and support from Hebden Royd Town Council have been able to commission work to re-cover and renovate the balcony seats in the coming year of 2018-19. Finding enough fabric to match the fabric used on the stalls’ seats has been a challenge which I am delighted the contractors have risen to and I look forward to using the new seats in the coming year.

The optimism I voiced was well placed. As well as providing entertainment for our local community we also offer employment to many local residents, both those who actually work in the building and those who supply the food and drink we stock in the sales kiosk. We continue to generate a small financial surplus and remain a much loved community resource. Our vibrant local community is always generating new ideas and I look forward to the coming year with interest to see what new ideas and opportunities arise for the Picture House.

***Cllr. Dr Carol Stow***

***Chair of the Picture House committee 2017-18***

***Hebden Royd Town Council***



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## Report from the Picture House Manager



Another year here has flown by and thankfully it was one which contained no flooding and no major building works, and where our audience numbers (whilst a little down on the previous year) gave us no cause for concern. This was our sixth trading year, and saw me celebrate five years as Manager at the Picture House on 1 November.

The year saw us say goodbye to two team members and recruit two more: Sue and Verity have been really valuable additions to our team. It was a year where the cinema's financial position was such that the Council was able to invest in its staff, giving Meg, Lisa and Ben (colleagues in three existing positions) additional weekly hours in order to carry out their roles with more depth and also further develop them. Meg, our Administrative Assistant (whose role includes looking after the mailing list, Picture This, kiosk stock, external reporting and many other things), Lisa (Marketing Officer) and Ben our Head Technician and Projectionist are all incredibly dedicated and bring ideas that they now have time to implement.

We are all paid staff here, and we don't rely on volunteers to operate. We presently have 24 staff at the cinema (all part-time) and gain additional support from 3 members of the Hebden Royd Town Council staff who provide certain functions. We are proud to continue to be a Living Wage employer, meaning all members of staff earn a minimum of £8.75 per hour, along with other benefits.

I have overseen Ben's work with the Projected Picture Trust to develop our 35mm capabilities with a new (to us), more flexible and reliable 35mm projector – the Victoria 5 - being installed. Work to improve the cinema's surround sound has occurred and the replacement and re-location our front of house lighting and staging to the front of the stalls was done in spring.

I applied to the Community Foundation for Calderdale and was successful in gaining capital funding enabling certain building changes to be made to make us even more accessible to those with visual impairment or physical disabilities. We installed an Evacuation Chair so we can now handle evacuations via the front steps for those who use wheelchairs or otherwise cannot manage the steps, re-painted the white edging to the front steps, and with funding towards the cost from Hebden Royd Town Council we have installed a defibrillator for use in the cinema (and between the hours of 7.30am to 10.30pm when the cinema's gates are unlocked by anyone else in the locality who should need an AED). New external dusk 'til dawn lighting (installed around the sides and back of the cinema) provides a safe environment for staff and customers alike.

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In terms of our performance and key financial indicators, Box Office and Kiosk Income (which together with the two shop units' rent, cinema hire fees, Picture This membership fees and Pearl & Dean screen advertising make up our six sources of income) in Year 6 (2017-18) was up 33% on our Year 1 (2012-13) combined income from tickets and the kiosk. Live Arts income, which is included in our box office income figure, was up 12% on the previous year. Hires in Year 6 accounted for just over £7k and Picture This membership fees contributed circa £8k for the year. As part of our hires during the year we accommodated our first ever wedding ceremony and Riverside Junior School held their Winter Production here for the first time since the 2015 floods, using our new demountable stage in front of the screen. Our hires also included three film premieres!

We sought to develop new audiences this year and work to make ourselves more accessible to potential customers who perhaps found there were barriers to attending their local cinema. A scheme was developed to give free access to the cinema to registered asylum seekers, as a means of integration into the social life of our community. Bi-monthly Autism Friendly screenings began in July and in February and March we held our first Dementia Friendly screenings. In autumn we made a commitment in terms of our subtitled screenings to always show at least one film per week with subtitles, and to move the date and time of that screening around (rather than make it the Sunday teatime film that was subtitled, only if that film happened to have an option to screen with subtitles) so as many customers as possible had the chance of accessing subtitled screenings.

In October we held a focus group with 17 customers who attend secondary school / further education college, who were also visitors at other cinemas, to discover how we could make ourselves more relevant and attractive to young people. The session was a great success and we listened and were surprised by some of the insights we gained. In November we launched two projects aimed at encouraging young people to see films on the big screen. Secret Cinema is a monthly subsidised entry film screening chosen by young people and only for 12-18s, with reduced price drinks and snacks at the kiosk meaning the whole visit (with beverages) is just £5. Our Cinema Saver card – free for a year in return for an email address so we can keep you informed about Secret Cinema – gives young people aged 11-18 £1 off the already competitive entry price for cinema (for under 26s) of £5, meaning their visits are only £4 for a year.

Looking forwards, once the balcony refurbishment project is completed by the start of this winter, it will be time to focus on two exciting projects: our involvement with the first Hebden Bridge Film Festival which is happening over 22 – 24 March 2019; and the start of our two years of planning in order to make our centenary year of 2021 our best one yet! Watch this space and, if you haven't already, join the Friends of the Picture House and our e-mailing lists to ensure you are kept up to date with opportunities to get involved.

**Rebekah Fozard**  
**Manager**  
**Hebden Bridge Picture House**

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## Report from the Marketing Officer

Throughout 2017 - 2018 the development of new audiences, alongside the continued engagement within the community, has been a main area of focus for us.

Our email mailing list has now widened to 6 mailing lists, to reach specific audiences throughout the community and beyond. Customers can now sign up to receive news on weekly film listings (including the monthly brochure), Parent & Baby, Autism and Dementia Friendly screenings, Live Arts and Secret Cinema updates.

We've welcomed increased social media engagement on both Twitter and Facebook and in the month of February 2018 launched our Instagram account with a current following of 671. We now have 3804 likes on Facebook up from 3173 last year with daily promotional activity taking place. The number of Twitter followers is continuing to steadily grow with 3542 following the Picture House account.

The Cinema Saver card scheme was implemented, alongside the monthly exclusive Secret Cinema screenings, to develop our youth audience, offering 11 - 18s £1 off all cinema entry. We are pleased how effective this has been with over 160 customers signed up to receiving discounted tickets by March 2018. The Loyalty cards that were launched in the previous year were revamped in 2017 - 2018 to encourage attendance to mid-week screenings and instead of having a Live Arts Loyalty Card, prices for Live Arts concessions were lowered (all now follow a formula of being twice the film entry price plus £1) following customer feedback.

To help raise the cinema's profile, and continue to develop our relationships within the region, collaborative partnerships continued with businesses including Hebden Bridge Arts Festival, Yorkshire Silent Film Festival, BANFF Mountain Film Festival, Right Now Film Festival, Scalarama, Into Film Festival, Heritage Open Day, and Happy Valley Pride. Other activity included the promotion of new incentives (Secret Cinema, Autism and Dementia Friendly screenings etc.) via print and digital marketing. The monthly paper brochures still prove to be a cost - effective way of promoting the cinema listings with between 6,000 and 7,000 distributed and an average of 3000 programme downloads from the website each month.



**Lisa Murdoch**  
**Marketing Officer**  
**Hebden Bridge Picture House**

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## Report from the Town Clerk



The Picture House remains clearly a great positive for the Town Council. We strive to encourage greater use of the venue for all and have this year focused on encouraging groups who have perhaps not used the venue that often.

Simple, sensible changes have been made to the building and the programme tweaked to encourage disadvantaged groups to visit us more frequently. Young people have also been targeted as customers: Secret Cinema and generous kiosk offers have been well received, by both young people and parents alike. Changes, however small, take time and I'd like to

thank those who come up with the ideas and those who implement them for all their hard work and dedication.

### **2017 - 18 financial performance summary**

The surplus generated in the previous year (2016 – 17) has greatly improved the position of the balance sheet: we are in a position where everything but a major incident can be dealt with financially by the Picture House. However the realisation that this surplus was enhanced by the settlement of previous flood related insurance claims has focused the mind on the need to control costs and not to allow expenditure to race ahead.

Income has remained solid, the kiosk has shone brightly and seen significant increases in turnover while offering value to our customers; the other income we generate has remained steady and reliable. Investment this year, again supported financially by the Town Council, has seen new lighting and a low level stage for the Picture House which both work well and will have a long life. They may not get used that frequently but when the need arises they will provide appropriate facilities for our performers and guests alike. The cost of providing extra screenings has seen staff costs increase, this is as anticipated, and with the continued investment as a Living Wage Employer we must remain aware that this cost contributes heavily to the viability of the cinema.

Consequently a small surplus has been generated this year, a little in excess of £8k, but the unique approach to managing this community asset continues to work and means we have achieved our goals once more...we have provided a quality service, improved the facility, supported local employment and made a surplus.

Should you wish to examine the financial information further this is available at the offices of Hebden Royd Town Council at Hebden Bridge Town Hall.

**Jason Boom**  
**Town Clerk**  
**Hebden Royd Town Council**

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## Acknowledgements & Thanks

For their continued dedication and commitment we thank the staff of the Picture House and those who support the Picture House at Hebden Royd Town Council; their energy and hard work remain central to the cinema's continuing success.

Once again, we owe David Sin at The Independent Cinema Office and his programming team our gratitude for continuing to provide advice and help and for putting together an enjoyable and diverse programme each month and assisting with special events.

Thanks to the Committee of the Friends of the Picture House for their constant fundraising, support, questioning and continued enthusiasm. Their regular committee meetings to discuss cinema issues, hear from the Manager and concoct ways to enhance what the cinema offers, together with their monthly film screenings continue to enhance the Picture House beyond being just a venue in which to watch films. Their support since the Balcony Alchemy fundraising scheme began in September 2017 – with a goal of raising £40,000 for the refurbishment of the balcony in 12 months through various means – has been invaluable. Their new Making Friends project, working with St Augustine's in Halifax, to bring groups of asylum seekers to the cinema to enjoy family films together is a further example of the excellent work they do to keep the cinema at the heart of our community.

We thank Rogue Robot Visual Industries for their gift of their skills in making films to help promote our teatime screenings and the Friends of the Picture House Presents screenings and updating these every single month, and thank too Lizzie Wharton for giving her professional time freely to provide British Sign Language for the new access video for our website, and again to Rogue Robot for donating time to record and produce this short film.

Once again, sincere appreciation to the many regular visitors to the Picture House who choose the Picture House above other cinemas, continue to make the Picture House a vibrant space and organisation, and provide ideas and feedback on what we do. We'd be lost without you.



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