

HEBDEN BRIDGE 
PICTURE HOUSE

Annual Report

April 2018 – March 2019



Photo by Dave Croft Photography

Town Mayor

Cllr Dr Carol Stow

Chair of Picture House Committee

Cllr Pat Fraser

Picture House Manager

Rebekah Fozard

Hebden Bridge Picture House

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Hebden Royd Town Council

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Hebden Royd
Town Council



Report from the Chair of the Picture House Committee

This past year was very much one which concentrated on the role of the Picture House as an important part and asset of the community of Hebden Bridge and its wider community. This was especially displayed in the Making Friends Project run by the Friends of the Picture House, which continues to have monthly meet-ups for film screenings. These are mainly with users of St Augustine's Centre in Halifax, which does such sterling work with refugees and asylum seekers. This initiative has resulted in different groups who work with asylum seekers coming together to visit the cinema.

The Picture House was very honoured to be nominated for a UK Screen Award in Autumn 2018, coming second in their category with 'Highly Commended', which for a single screen cinema was very prestigious. Also, in this last year the Picture House was a host and partner for a very successful first Hebden Bridge Film Festival.

The cinema worked hard to increase its social media presence and the Manager introduced a draft Business Plan to highlight entering a new phase in the life of the Picture House. The refurbishment of the balcony in Autumn was completed on schedule and within budget. It was decided that, in view of the loss of cash points within the town, payment could now be made by debit card at the Box Office. All these changes and innovations have proved very popular with Picture House attendees.

During my year as Chair of the committee a Working Group was set up to identify business imperatives with the overall intention to give support to the Picture House and to further consider a template for a workable Business Plan. This is will hopefully reach a successful outcome during this present session.

I was very proud to be involved with the Picture House committee and I wish the present committee every success. I look forward with great hope and optimism to a splendid celebration in 2021 of the centenary of the cinema.



Cllr. Pat Fraser

Chair of the Picture House committee 2018-19

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Report from the Picture House Manager



Our seventh-year trading saw a major milestone pass: the restoration and refurbishment the final front of house area, seeing the balcony and its 228 seats returned to their former glory. With the Friends assisting with the fundraising for the project, the work was completed by four main contractors in a space of just 8 weeks and came in on budget. As a gesture of thanks, all donors and seat sponsors were invited to a special screening of First Man in November. Our Seat Sponsorship scheme now continues in operation as a source of fundraising for the Friends, with funds used to support capital projects at the cinema.

As the interminable road works on the A646, a hot summer, increased competition with (now) two cinemas in Halifax and a major football tournament took their toll on audience figures from the Spring to the early Autumn, we had to make a few tough programming decisions at the start of winter. Over winter our audiences thankfully returned towards anticipated levels.

We analysed and rationalised our four strands of Saturday teatime screenings. 'Teatime Classics' is a firm favourite and remains monthly, with films programmed from a very broad cannon. 'Surreal Reels' also stays as a monthly feature but moves to an evening position, and 'Friends Presents' screenings continue but every second month. For the time being audience demand for the (expensive to mount) 35mm film screenings is not sufficient to run these regularly, but we will continue to host 'Reel Film' screenings on an ad hoc basis. The take up of our Dementia Friendly screenings, despite extensive marketing activity, was disappointingly small (audience average of 14 people), and in autumn we had to call time on these screenings too.

Our attempts to attract a broader teenage audience to the cinema via exclusive 12-18s 'Secret Cinema' screenings were sadly very under-utilised (average attendance 14) and came to a halt in November. Keeping both the under 26s price and family matinee film screening tickets at the lowest price point remain priorities for encouraging young people into our space. Our Live Arts programming is becoming more dynamic and we are noticing a younger audience for some of the music concerts we're screening.

Our commitment to a minimum of one screening per week with subtitles on screen is well received and audience numbers for these screenings, whilst lower than for non-subtitled screenings, are better than national averages. Our Autism Friendly screenings of family films, a minimum of once per school holidays, is also a flourishing strand of the programme and a benefit to the community. Monthly Parent and Baby screenings continue and are a way to welcome new parents back into cinema-going and establish a connection with the Picture House for our

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smallest audience members. Our excellent value Thursday morning 'Elevenses' screenings, with tea / coffee and a biscuit included in the flat admission price of £6.50, is still a firm favourite of audience members and generally well attended week on week. We continue to support asylum seekers with free film entry and a free hot drink, as a way of helping them to feel welcome and at home in our community, and the Making Friends project of our Friends group builds on this.

As our operating costs continued to mount, with the Living Wage rates rising and all staff feeling the benefit of the National Joint Councils 2018-2020 pay award in April 2018, as well as suppliers increasing their costs, in January 2019 it was time to increase film ticket prices by 50 pence across the board. This was the first price rise in 31 months. The headline price for adults is now £7.50, with concessionary prices of £1 off remaining for those in receipt of State Pension and using a Passport to Leisure card, and £2 off for those under 26 or Full Time Students. Our average ticket price over the year was £5.80, with 67% of admissions being at one of the concessionary rates.

The cinema continues to partner with the Arts Festival and hosted Bridget Christie on stage, and later in the year was used for Riverside Junior School's Christmas production. The cinema was also hired again (twice) by BANFF Mountain Film Festival, who have already made three bookings for 2020!

Our 'Highly Commended' placing in the Screen Awards 2018 category for best independent cinema in November was an accolade much appreciated by staff and loyal customers alike.

As the year ended, we enjoyed a very successful and busy weekend, hosting eight of the Hebden Bridge Film Festival's feature films, including the opening night film with Maxine Peake in attendance and the closing night film, The Fight, with Jessica Hynes in post-film discussion. The 2020 festival dates are confirmed as 27-29 March.

Following the 2018-2019 year end accounts being prepared, we have now determined that to cover our costs each year **we need our average audience to be in the region of 85 people per screening**. Now this is a big ask of any cinema – 'screen averages' are often much lower - but for a very large cinema (with overheads probably approaching those of a town centre multiplex but only one screen to generate all its income from) in a small town (that doesn't enjoy the best transport links) it is quite a challenge! We need to remind local folk to 'shop local' when it comes to screen entertainment, and then remind them to do it again and again.

Our priority in the coming year is two-fold: find ways to make the cinema sustainable, as audience numbers level out from an amazing high point in 2016-2017 and prepare for our season of centenary celebrations and heritage and legacy projects happening in 2021.

Rebekah Fozard
Manager
Hebden Bridge Picture House

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Report from the Marketing Officer



Our data management and handling practices were brought into line with the new General Data Protection Regulations. Because of this we worked on more effective email marketing throughout the year, reducing larger contact lists to ensure that newsletters are only sent to those who are likely to be interested in hearing from us.

Results were excellent, with an average 'open rate' of 37.8% on our weekly mailing list – 26% being the national average. Our lists continue to grow, however targeting the correct audience is now our priority and focus.

We've welcomed increased engagement on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram with goals to improve our engagement rate on our Facebook events pages (once more, engaging with the audiences that already support us) being met. We now have 4494 likes on Facebook up from 3804 with daily activity taking place. The number of Twitter followers is continuing to grow, and we now have 3698 followers. Our Instagram account number of followers has doubled since last year, to 1258.

We're also seeing the number of monthly downloads of the PDF programme from the home page of the website increase. It's now at around 4,000 programme downloads a month, as the number of physical programmes collected from the cinema and other collection points in the Calder Valley steadily falls (we're currently printing 6,000 a month), which is a saving costs on printing and distribution and also helping with our environmental footprint.

Thanks to funding from BFI, for the BFI Comedy Genius Tour, we were able to promote to audiences further afield using Facebook sponsored posts, helping us to introduce the cinema to those that don't currently attend. With the first Hebden Bridge Film Festival taking place, press coverage also increased with positive exposure online and in print.

We introduced gift vouchers to the cinema in October 2018, to help bring in new customers (that might then become regulars) as well as offering our loyal customers an additional way to help support the cinema.

2019-20 is going to be an exciting year! Going forward will be making the website more user friendly, and help to increase our visibility online, improving our SEO. And of course, work will begin to prepare for our 2021 centenary celebrations.

Lisa Murdoch
Marketing Officer
Hebden Bridge Picture House

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Report from the Town Clerk



To my mind the Picture House has once again had a tremendous year. The delivery of the refurbished balcony primarily through external funding and fundraising really was an achievement. The minimum of fuss as the work raced to completion saw only a small number of Thursday morning screenings cancelled and the result is one that must have been much desired for amongst those who endured the previous arrangements.

Coupled with the continuing strong programme of cinema, live arts and one-off events the Picture House remains a venue the Calder Valley remains rightly proud of.

The management team at the Picture House has remained vigilant, tweaking schemes designed to encourage attendance and improving the offer at the kiosk. We have responded to the need to introduce card payments at the Picture House, while being mindful of potential increased costs and have started to develop new initiatives and plans for the coming years.

2018 - 19 financial performance summary

Surpluses generated in previous years remain healthy and, as stated in the past, everything but a major incident can be dealt with financially by the Picture House.

This year's trading has been a challenge, in a testing climate and against the backdrop of one of the hottest/driest summers in recent memory. Tickets revenues have dropped very slightly but reacting to these challenges has seen costs managed tightly: we must accept that all cinemas are more attractive places to enjoy and socialise in during the winter months. Positively and with great effort from all those associated with the kiosk this area has seen growth approaching 5% and remains a very important contributor to the Picture House.

We continue to invest in more than just our building, facilities and equipment. Staff are essential to our endeavour and with training, along with our continuing commitment to the Living Wage Foundation's Living Wage sees us remain a responsible local employer. Our small deficit this year of just over £10k, while disappointing, will once again focus our efforts to provide a quality service, improved facility and support local employment in this unique community asset.

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.

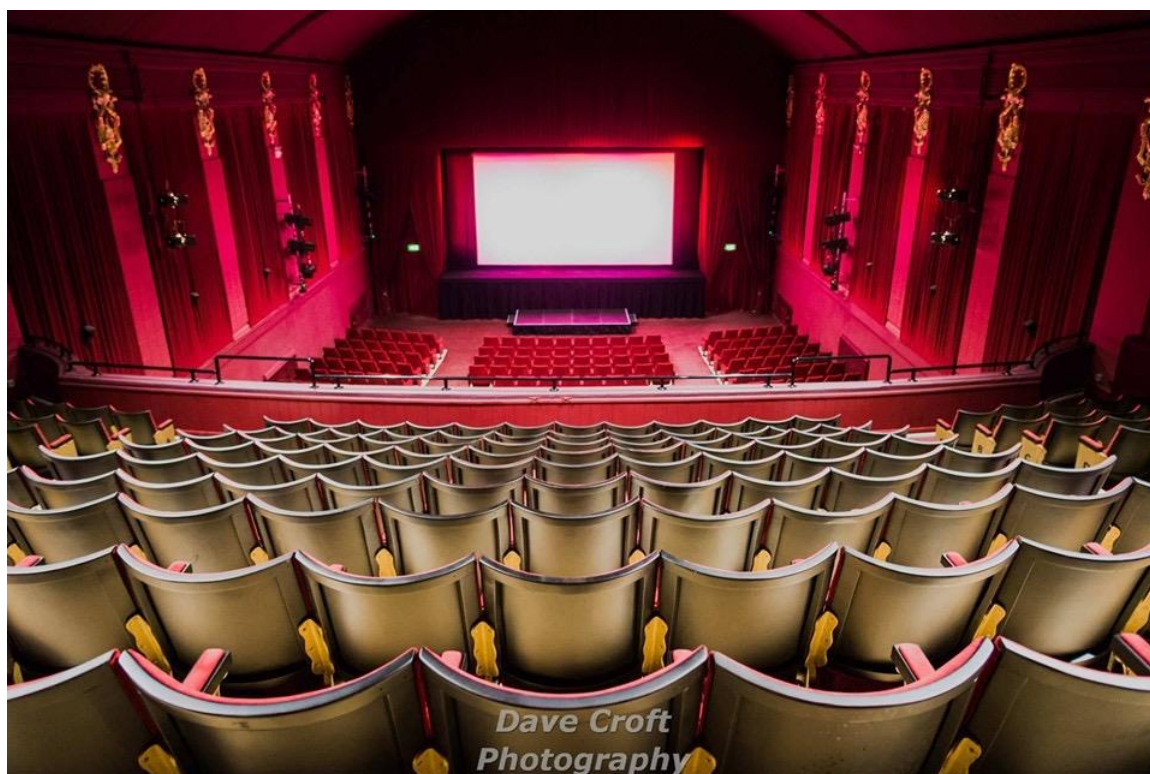
Once again, we owe David Sin at The Independent Cinema Office and his programming team our gratitude for continuing to provide advice and help and for putting together an enjoyable and diverse programme each month and assisting with special events. Film Hub North and the UK Cinema Association also continue to provide support and assistance to the cinema.

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 regular Friends Presents film screenings continue to enhance the Picture House beyond being just a venue in which to watch films.

This year we extend our thanks to the Rotary Club of Hebden Bridge and to two major private donors, whose funding support made the balcony refurbishment work in 2018 possible.

Once again huge thanks to Chris Johnson-Standley at Rogue Robot Visual Industries for his ongoing brilliance (in his films to help market us and what we do) and his indefatigable support.

As always, sincere appreciation too 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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