

FROM FILM SOCIETY TO FILM FESTIVAL

– A DEDICATED TRAINING AND NETWORKING SESSION FROM BFFS



BFFS welcomed over 80 delegates from a wide range of film societies and community cinemas across the UK to a series of special training and networking sessions. The first session '**From Film Society to Film Festival**' was designed to deliver practical advice and support by and for film societies and community cinemas on how to deliver large and small-scale special events, such as film festivals or themed evenings.

Session leader: Donna Anton. BFFS, Cornwall Film Festival and Penwith Film Society (SW Eng).
Panellists: David Miller. Keswick Film Club and Keswick Film Festival (NW Eng).
Ian Robinson. Chorley Film Society (NW Eng).
Caroline Hafner. Screen at Hay (Welsh Borders).

All about the presenters:

Donna Anton is the Chair of BFFS and Director of the Cornwall Film Festival. She has been involved with Penwith Film Society for many years. Donna describes herself as '*a film lover since I could walk*' and is a tireless volunteer organiser.

Websites: BFFS www.bffs.org.uk
Cornwall Film Festival www.cornwallfilmfestival.com
Penwith Film Society www.penwithfilmsociety.co.uk

Both **Keswick Film Club and Festival** are run by the same committee with the aim of screening the cream of world cinema. The annual film festival was established at the same time as the film club and has attracted an array of special guests from veteran directors Nicolas Roeg and Ken Loach to up and coming British talent like Andrea Arnold. **David Miller**, head of the programming committee, joined the panel to share the secrets of Keswick's success.

Venue: The Alhambra Cinema
Projects on: 35mm
Website: www.keswickfilmclub.org

Chorley Film Society's main aim is to deliver fun and memorable screening events to a local audience. Chorley FS regularly programmes special events, such as screening days themed around a particular genre or topic, such as a Wild West movie day. Audience members are invited to dress up and truly enter into the spirit of the occasion. **Ian Robinson**, marketing and publicity officer, joined BFFS to remind us that screening events, like life, should include a healthy dose of fun and laughter.

Venue: Chorley Little Theatre
Projects on: DVD
Website: www.chorleyfilm.com

Following inspiration from the 2008 BFFS National Conference for Community Cinemas **Screen at Hay** decided to organise a festival of British Cinema. The inaugural festival took place on the weekend of 4th and 5th of September and screened 16 films at 3 venues. Fresh from the event (role) **Caroline Hafner** travelled to Sheffield to tell us all about it.

Venue: Parish hall
Projects on: DVD
Website: www.thescreenathay.co.uk

Audience questions:

- How do you attract special guests to an event?
- What's the best way to secure funding for the event?
- Print or electronic – what makes the most effective publicity tool?
- Is timing a factor, what about completion from other events?
- Without the wow factor of a big industry festival is a passion for films enough?

Other more general questions included - tracking down copyright for little known films and advice on different types of screening licenses.

Top tips from the panel:

-When putting on a festival or special event use this as a hook to attract new members to your regular film club.

-Themes are important and lend the event a focus, they can be regional, historical or reflect a particular film genre - consider what your audience will respond to best.

-Offer something more than film screenings - workshops, master classes, and fancy dress evenings have all proved popular.

-Milk your contacts – do you have, or can you attract a patron specifically for the event? Are there any local dignitaries that you can involve?

-Spread the word – use modern social networking tools such as Twitter and Facebook, as well as print publicity and never underestimate the power of word of mouth

-Offer potential sponsors and partners something practical in return for their support. For example, stall space to sell books on film and cinema.

-Don't just go for big name guests, people from all walks of the film industry can offer a brilliant addition to your event, for example, animators, editors, film makers, script writers etc.,

-Be current and use a topical hook to grab people's attention

-Turn obstacles in your favour – at one venue the Hay festival had to contend with 100yr old brambles, they pruned considerably but left many in place to add to the atmosphere of a classic horror screening!

-If you want to include screenings for children then establish a good relationship with local schools and link your screenings to the National Curriculum. Positive partnerships with teachers are key, and the local authority can advise if you find you need CRB checks.

-See who'll give you something for free – if you do manage to attract a big name then local hotels and restaurants may give you free accommodation or catering in return for the positive publicity

-Start small with special events and grow gradually

-Above all make it memorable!

BFFS Training

This training session was held at the Showroom Cinema, Sheffield as part of the 2009 BFFS National Conference weekend for Community Cinemas. For more information on sector specific training and events visit the BFFS website www.bffs.org.uk or email info@bffs.org.uk.