

Real2Reel Cinema

History

Real2Reel Cinema was born out of a holiday that the Secretary spent in Australia. As part of the trip, she visited a local cinema, café & bookshop complex in a small suburb of Melbourne. The project was very well-established within the locality and drew its audience from all sectors of the local population. Watching the film was a relaxed, enjoyable occasion where drinks could be bought and taken into the screening. The evening was a great opportunity to socialise with family and friends, so far removed from the pre-packaged experience available in the UK Multiplex, surrounded by other people's left over popcorn and hyperactive teenagers. With this vision in mind, Real2Reel Cinema was established in April 2006 with the intention to translate this sunny, antipodean image into a reality in the grey, sodden environment of a Lancashire mill town.



From the beginning, our intention has been to create a welcoming and relaxed event which is accessible to the whole community. Ramsbottom, where we are located is the north west of England some 14 miles north of Manchester. The local population has an average age mix but there is a relatively small ethnic minority in this particular town. We took an explicit decision to make our appeal as broad as possible through the choice of films, the choice of venue and the approach to the staging of the event. Having drawn up a constitution and a set of responsibilities at our first meeting, we went ahead and chose our first season of films with some trepidation and, at the end of April 2006, we had our first screening to an audience of over 130 people who had turned out to see **CRASH**. It has to be said that we were perhaps a little lucky with these first choices as four of our six selections went on to win OSCARS and a variety of other awards.

One of the aspects of the cinema of which we are most proud is the organisation we have put into staging the event. Our regular venue, the local civic hall was chosen because of its central location and the fact that it could comfortably seat 130 with access to a bar, but in truth it does not lend itself to cinema projection easily. We have constructed blackouts for both the windows and the emergency lighting, we rig the screen in front of the stage and hang the sound equipment. We also create a box office and membership area with camouflage netting and ambient lighting to welcome people and to screen the 'auditorium' from them. In addition to the bar area, a local sweetshop sells ice-cream and candy in the lobby and filmgoers are met at the door by some of our younger committee members who sell tickets. Before the main event, we show adverts for local shops and restaurants à la 'pearl and dean' and a short film.



A committee of 8 people are active in the running and management of the cinema; although up to a further 5 members help out at screenings and with the set up of each event. Our membership ranges in age from 16 to over 50 and all founder members live in the local area. We have taken steps to reflect this diversity of age and experience not only in the choice of films but also to make use of the different skills in terms of allocating committee work, front of house tasks and projection. New members are recruited at screenings and through information distributed in the programmes and on the website. Members can buy tickets for individual screenings at a reduced cost and can purchase tickets in advance. They are also invited to make suggestions as to future titles to show and to contribute to the work of the committee.

🏆 Awards

In March of this year, we were named **Best New Society by the British Federation of Film Societies.**



∞ Funding

In our first year of operation, we secured a grant from the **Heritage Lottery Fund** of **£9,990** with which to purchase our own screen and projection equipment. Prior to this award, we were loaned equipment from a local arts venue. We were also granted a **Kickstart Award** of £700.00 to off set our initial start up costs. This year, we have applied for and been awarded two further grants. The first, of **£900** from our **local authority** to fund the purchase of a new DVD player and the second of **£949** from **central government** to meet the costs of three screenings in local schools. With additional support from our local authority, we have managed to purchase seat cushions to add to the comfort of the environment. A raffle of that evening's film poster at each screening has resulted in our being able to buy an additional 100 cushions so that more than three quarters of the available seats have cushions on both the seat and back. The fixed costs of each screening are met from ticket sales and we have been able to make use of the modest excess accrued in this year to meet the costs of some of our community initiatives such as a screening at the local high school and bursaries to young film makers.

The costs of publicity are met from **sponsorship through local businesses** and **advertising both in print and onscreen.**

∞ Screenings

In making a choice of films, we have been guided by the desire to balance entertainment with our intention to create a dynamic and challenging environment where the audience can see films to which they would not easily otherwise have access to on a big screen. Our audience is as varied as our membership and reflects a broad and diverse collection of the local community and we have wanted to profit from this by showing a mix of well- known staples with some more unfamiliar choices. We have been aided in this wide-ranging selection by the fact that we have **agreements with all the major distributors** and have felt this to be an essential expenditure.

As well as screening a wide selection of challenging and entertaining features **Real 2 Reel Cinema** has also brought back the "**B movie**" to the big screen. Each month a short film is shown prior to the main feature. We see this as a very practical way of looking to **support and encourage local film makers.** We are delighted that two of our young committee members have short films accepted into the **Under Exposed Film Festival** at the **Cornerhouse, Manchester** this December.



As a further way of exploiting and sustaining the talents of the young people involved in the cinema, we also show a range of local advertisements prior to the main screening. These films and screen drops have all been created by the founder members.

∞ Partnerships

We have established **strong links with our local Arts venue** which are mutually beneficial in terms of advertising and use of equipment and we have created **positive relationships with the distributors** in order to secure not only the films themselves but also publicity materials.

We have an **established and active connection with our local authority** which has brought benefits to both of us. We are also establishing links with **the police** force and youth groups to see how we might work together to address some of the problems of youth offending and social dislocation.

Additionally, **local businesses** have been eager to become involved either through advertising, through selling tickets or through selling products at events.

∞ Future Projects

Our intention in creating the cinema is to **encourage participation in the enjoyment of films in a community setting and to bring the cultural and educational benefits of film to the wider community**. In September of this year we made our first **outdoor screening** of Alfred Hitchcock's 'The Birds' at our local Cricket Club.



This proved extremely popular and we plan to repeat the experiment with further outdoor events. Some of these screenings will be themed around other local events – Ramsbottom has a steam railway where they hold a 1940s weekend each year and we are so looking forward to showing 'Brief Encounter' in the platform waiting room! – but we are also ambitious enough to be plotting a Film Festival in conjunction with the local Sixth Form College, Film Studies Course where we hope we will be taking films into more unusual locations.

We are hugely proud of what **Real 2 Reel** has achieved in the past 18 months. It has been harder work than any of us perhaps envisaged but it has also been far more rewarding than we had foreseen – we have learnt new skills, tried new experiences, made new friends and watched new and fabulous films. It has made us feel part of a community and made us feel connected not just to our locality and our neighbours but to a wider community of film goers and film lovers!

This case study was written by Real 2 Reel Cinema.

For more information please visit:

<http://www.real2reelcinema.co.uk/index.html>

http://www.bffs.org.uk/Content/bffs_awards/awards_win07.html

Photographs: Karen Write, Photography (Real 2 Reel Cinema) and Brian Clay, Regional Secretary of BFFS South West (BFFS Film Society of the Year Awards 2007)