

<b>Committee(s):</b> Barbican Board	<b>Date(s):</b> 20 March 2019
<b>Subject:</b> Barbican Cinema Annual Report 2018/19	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Louise Jeffreys, Artistic Director	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Gali Gold, Head of Cinema	

## Summary

This report provides an overview of the Barbican Cinema Department's activity through 18/19 and sets out how this relates to the wider Barbican and City of London strategy. It is structured as follows:

1. Mission Statement and Strategic Objectives
2. Challenges and Opportunities
3. Artistic Programme: 18/19 Programme Review and 2019 Highlights
4. Equality & Inclusion
5. Conclusions

## Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

### 1. Mission Statement & Strategic Objectives

The Barbican Cinema programme offers a fully curated programme of international world-class cinema including thematic seasons, New Release (NR) titles and special events. Our offer includes partnerships with film festivals, art & culture organisations, tailored programmes for young audiences including regular family screenings and an in-house curated festival by, about and for teens and young adults.

The Event Cinema programme presents the best of the performing arts & reputable visual arts exhibitions on screen, furthering the links between Barbican art forms. Our cinemas are a cultural space for people to share the viewing experience, gather and connect; a place where audiences can always find a programme focusing on first-class, international cinema, often highlighting new and under-heard voices on the screen. We showcase the work of young programmers and emerging filmmakers and collaborate with the Guildhall School of Music & Drama.

Through our activities we aim to inspire more people to discover and love the arts. We programme free events including offsite events in East London and offer reduced price tickets to 14-25year old through the Young Barbican membership scheme which is valid for all screenings and cinema events.

We aim to celebrate and exercise cinema's wide reach and appeal and make our programme truly inclusive. We achieve this through our diverse cinema offer and through partnerships with a variety of international and national arts & culture organisations which reflect the richness of world cinema and the diversity of our society.

## **Developing Barbican Cinema's Unique Offer**

In January 2018 - five years since the opening of the new cinemas – we conducted the first major survey of cinema audiences and their relationship to the Barbican's cinema offer. The research has come against a backdrop of a changing, and challenging, landscape. The rise of Netflix and other streaming platforms, as well as the growth of local competition, present significant challenges to Barbican Cinema.

Collaboratively commissioned by the Marketing and Cinema teams, using MHM (who had just completed an extensive research project with the BFI), a survey was sent to a sample of Barbican bookers, both cinema attenders and arts attenders who did not visit our cinemas. This was backed up by a series of focus groups – a mix of regular and lapsed Barbican cinema attenders and non-visitors to the Barbican.

The primary finding was that the Barbican cinema goers enjoy the Cinema programme, returning regularly and engage readily with the other art forms at the centre, but visitors who engage with other art forms are more likely to attend a cinema elsewhere. This audience feel that Barbican Cinema doesn't have the same cache as the rest of the Centre, are unaware of the carefully curated programme of specialist and world-class cinema on offer and tend to choose the ease of cinema locations more local to them. In short, there was a perceived brand gap between Barbican cinemas and the rest of the Barbican programming. Another key finding was the perceived lack of areas to socialise comfortably before and after cinema screenings.

The research findings coincided with a change of leadership in Cinema, with the departure of the Cinema Department's long serving Head, Robert Rider, in April 2018. In May 2018, a new Head of Department, Gali Gold, was appointed, a change which lead to the development of a refined vision for the cinema. This vision has been partly shaped by the research findings, taking into account the changing cinema landscape and ensuring a close link with the COL and Barbican strategic objectives.

## **How Barbican Cinema has responded**

Barbican Cinema, in close collaboration with its marketing team, have developed a comprehensive strategy aiming to:

- Change an existing perception amongst some (potential) audiences, of our cinema programme as ‘just another New Release cinema’
- Refine and establish the unique voice of the programme and offer within the contemporary cinema landscape
- Strengthen the links between cinema and the other Barbican art forms
- Improve the audience experience of our venues and invest in wrap-around offers throughout the cinema programme.

A new focus on highlighting the curated programmes and the Barbican’s film expertise was explored through changes to messaging and framing of the Barbican cinema programme on line; podcasts, blog articles, rewriting the positioning statement, and brand partnerships.

A Cinema Venue Experience Working Group was set up to improve the food and beverage offer, and the comfort and ambiance of cinema foyers. In early 2019, the Cinema Marketing team ran a repositioning campaign with outdoor advertising around the City of London, venue presence, and print and digital advertising - imparting a key phrase that encapsulates both the arts programme and new release programming ‘*Watch this space: bold films, bravely curated*’.

With this comprehensive approach we aim to focus attention on our fully curated programme as one of our USPs as well as offering a unique and attractive environment for a collective viewing experience.

## **How Barbican Cinema Contributes to the City of London Corporate Plan**

The Barbican Cinema primarily responds to City of London Aims 1 & 2. It does this in the following ways:

### **Contributing to a flourishing society (CoL Aim 1)**

***“Participation in arts and culture may produce engaged citizens, promoting not only civic behaviours such as voting and volunteering, but also helping articulate alternatives to current assumptions and fuel a broader political imagination.”*** Arts & Humanities Research Council – Cultural Value Project  
March 2016

*People Enjoy good health and wellbeing (Objective 2)*

***“For me, what makes this cinema great is its impeccable selection of films – a mixture of the best new releases and timeless classics - from every era.”***

**Spotted By Locals**

Our programme of the best New Releases titles and our boldly curated arts programme entertain and challenge, offering a space to engage, explore and delve into the richness of our world through cinema. Cinema presents an opportunity to enjoy pure escapism or stimulate your mind, both of which are key to good mental health and wellbeing (Bupa UK).

An evidence review by Arts Council England pointed towards the unmeasured value that participation in the arts and culture gives to health and wellbeing. The national body called for more thorough research to fully understand just how valuable access to the arts really is for mental and physical health and how it could be used by the medical practitioners in the future.

*Provide inclusive access to facilities for recreation (Objective 2, 3)*

***“The Barbican Centre has an outstanding reputation for accessibility. The cinema has monthly Relaxed Screenings, aimed at adults who are on the autistic spectrum, or who have other sensory difficulties. Visitors with disabilities are also encouraged to sign up for the free Access Membership scheme, for discounts and regular updates on upcoming events. Membership also gives the centre a record of your requirements, to help ensure your needs are met.” Culture Whisper, January 2019***

Barbican Cinema programme includes a regular access offer, enabling people with a variety of disabilities to take part and enjoy our cinema offer:

- Weekly Access screenings with captioning for the deaf and hard of hearing as well as audio-description for the visually impaired
- Monthly ‘Relaxed Screenings’ of New Releases
- We are committed to further develop our access offer during 2019 in the following ways:
  1. Team training for autism awareness and relaxed screenings.
  2. For Disabled Access Day on March 16<sup>th</sup> 2019 we will offer an extended programme of access screenings. The Barbican will also be offering an extended programme of access screenings of New Release titles during that week to achieve greater awareness of our offer and develop the audience for these screenings going forward.

*People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives (Objective 3)*

Barbican cinema programme holds Equality and Inclusion at its heart.

Our commitment is applied through our efforts to lower financial barriers to cinema attendance and reach out to under-served communities:

1. Since September 2018 we have opened all cinema screenings and events to Young Barbican members which enable 14-25 years old to purchase significantly discounted tickets.
2. In November 2018 we hosted the Into Film Festival which offers a series of free screenings and programmes to young people aged 5-19, as well as educators, inspiring young people to watch, understand and make film in new and creative ways.
3. Our Family Film Club is offering significantly reduced-price tickets (£2.50/£3) aiming to lower financial barriers for families and introducing world cinema in theatrical setting to the youngest audiences (3+) cultivating the love and enjoyment of film from a young age.
4. In May 2019 we will take part, for the first time, in **Sound Unbound** offering free admission to film & music events.
5. Barbican cinema plays central part in the conceptualisation, development, programming and delivery of **Beyond Barbican** flagship programme **Leytonstone Loves Film** to take place in September 2019. Admission to all events is free. Despite Leytonstone's rich film history and cinema activity, it does not have a working cinema. The programme therefore caters to a large community which is currently under-served.

*Provide access to world-class heritage, culture and learning to people of all ages and backgrounds (Objective 3)*

**Several of Barbican cinema's strands are dedicated to engaging young people in the experience of the art of cinema through tailored screenings and learning programmes:**

The **Barbican Young Programmers** are a group of film enthusiasts, critics, filmmakers and budding programmers aged 16–25 who have been developing their film programming skills at the Barbican through the bespoke training and mentorship programme. In March 2019 they will be presenting the flagship outcome of their work: **Chronic Youth Film Festival**: programmed, run and presented by and for young people.

**Barbican Family Film Club** runs every Saturday throughout the year and gives access to specially selected New releases & children's films from around the world, not usually accessible to UK audiences. The club looks to engage with the cinemagoers of tomorrow, with an accessible price opening the door to wide range of audiences, with the last Saturday of every month adding a workshop to bring the children closer to the art of filmmaking.

**Support a thriving economy (CoL Aim 2)**

*We are a global hub for innovation in ...culture (Objective 7)*

**VR and AR – New Forms of Documentary Storytelling**

Barbican cinema, in collaboration with level G programmes, launched a collaboration with Sheffield Doc/Fest and in August 2019 hosted the first **Alternate Realities** exhibition selecting 4 projects to be presented on Barbican level G, alongside a curated cinema film series.

The successful programme will continue in 2019, while we're looking carefully into the use of VR and AR by filmmakers and as part of new works of cinema.

*Strengthen local, regional, national and international relationships to secure new opportunities for collaboration (Objective 7)*

Barbican Cinema initiates, develops and cultivates relationships with a variety of local, national and international partners, enabling diverse and unique opportunities for film programme collaborations.

Amongst our partners are: Kinoteka: the Polish Film Festival; The Czech Centre; Human Rights Watch Film Festival; Underwire: the UK's largest film festival celebrating female talent across the crafts; London Jazz Festival; Doc'n Roll - The UK's music documentary festival; Fringe - Queer Film & Art festival, London International; London International Mime Festival; London International Animation Festival; Dance Umbrella; Sheffield DocFest; Women in Film and TV; Shubbak: Festival of Contemporary Arab Culture; London Indian Film Festival; The New Social for our New East Cinema strand; The Japanese Avant-Garde and Experimental Film Festival; The Women's Film Preservation Fund (NY); The Bagri Foundation; AMPAS (The Academy of Motion Picture, Arts and Sciences) for Oscars Week and Oscar Creatives and, London Mathematical Laboratory for our Science on Screen programme.

## **How Cinema Contributes to the Barbican Strategic Plan**

The Barbican Cinema contributes to all 5 goals of the Strategic Plan:

### **Goal 1. Visitor Experience**

The perceived lack of a social wraparound offer available at the Barbican Cinema, was one of the main findings of the audience research. In response to this we have formed the Cinema Venue Experience Working Group who are tasked with improving the comfort, look and ambiance of the cinema and with developing the food & beverage offer. We aim to create a space that inspires visitors, makes them feel comfortable in the space, encouraging audiences to spend time in our venue before and after screenings.

Progress has already been made in the following areas:

- Benugo and Barbican agreed to rename the Beech Street Café as Barbican Cinema Café and are working closely to improve the food and cinema snacks offer

- Selling Cinema Tickets from Cinema Café has been agreed by Benugo and will be activated by Sep 2019 to improve customer service all day long
- Ambiance: Cinema to take ownership of foyer music, set up appropriate technology and manage content by April 2019
- Close work with Barbican projects on short term improvement to the look and feel of cinemas and foyer spaces

## **Goal 2. Art and learning**

As a direct outcome of one of the main findings of the audience research undertaken in early 2018, Cinema made the decision to work extensively to highlight our expertly curated Arts Programmes. Leading with the line: **'Bold Cinema, Bravely Curated'**, a positioning campaign was developed in autumn 2018 and launched in January 2019 aiming to put our curation at the heart of our unique offer. We wish to demonstrate that Barbican cinema is not "just another new release cinema" and show that we have a unique voice across our entire programme.

We continue to develop our programme towards the goal of providing world class arts and learning, increasing our Arts programming offer from April 2019, fostering connections between our New Release programme and our Arts programmes creating an ALWAYS CURATED programme of films and events.

In the reported period we have been:

- Developing Cinema's family offer
- Adding Parent & Baby screenings
- Expanding the input of the young Programmers to Barbican cinema programme

These initiatives are elaborated on later in the report.

## **Goal 3. Mixed Income Generation**

- Combining food & drink with special ticket offers was a success for Cinema in the Summer of 2018 and we will look to utilise this again during periods of traditionally lower attendance.
- Cinema has looked to increase commercial income through the rental of the cinemas to other industry bodies. This began well in 2018 as sundry income increased and we aim to further increase this revenue stream in 2019.
- We are currently reviewing our pricing and hire capabilities, conducting benchmarking and price sensitivity research to maximise revenue.

- Putting Cinema at the heart of a new membership offer in January 2019 is aimed at increasing audience numbers and repeat visitors to our venues, to increase both cinema and food & beverage income.

#### **Goal 4. Culture Mile**

For the first time, cinema will be an integral part of **Sound Unbound** in May 2019 with a free programme of film & music. In June, cinema will take part in **Play the Mile** initiatives through its **day time and family programme**, linking it to other Culture Mile activities and with a bespoke thematic family film club programme linked to the **Beasts of London** exhibition at the Museum of London.

#### **Goal 5. Audience Development**

Our team continues to improve our opportunities for equality and inclusion in all aspects of the Barbican cinema programme. This includes: Committing to gender parity by making sure selected films and invited talent address the grave gender imbalance within the film industry (for example 83 films out of over 350 made our F-Rated list and over 50% of the hosts and guest speakers, in a total of over 80 introductions and ScreenTalks, were female); offering access to audiences with sensory impairments or learning difficulties; collaborating with organisations that reflect diverse cultural voices and investing in our Young Audiences by extending our Young Barbican offer.

We continue to expand the audience for our programming beyond the Barbican with our work with the Young Programmers at Sheffield DocFest and commissioning a silent film score that will play at other venues around the UK, helping to promote the Barbican's presence nationally. We have also begun a series of long reads for selected programmes, reaching out to a wider audience for digital in-depth engagement with programme content.

## **2. Challenges and Opportunities**

### **Industry-wide:**

#### **Cinema attendance**

2018 marked a record year for cinema admissions across the UK boasting a 40 year high for cinema attendance. This encouraging data is a reassuring audience trend for exhibitors, who are constantly wary of the growing availability and consumption of streaming services, Netflix, Amazon Prime etc.

However, some of the contributors to this increase represent a challenge to the Barbican. The growth of neighbourhood cinemas via chains such as Picturehouse, Curzon and Everyman, as well as the New Release titles that have driven audience increase, namely, box office hits that do not fit with the Barbican art house cinema slate.

**1a. Increase of cinema chain sites:** The industry is increasingly being taken over by chains which now make up a 49% of sites and a staggering 81% of screens. The Barbican does not face direct competition from the large multiplex chains but the smaller chains of 'Independents' such as Everyman, Picturehouse and Curzon have been investing heavily in their cinemas and opening new sites. In four years, they have increased their share of the market from 2% to 7%, investing in their 'wraparound' offer: comfort, space and food & drink.

These factors help explain why Barbican audience numbers remained stable throughout this period and have not demonstrated similar increase.

**1b. The Star Wars effect** – Since 2015, the rejuvenated Star Wars franchise has been a remarkable box office draw and in December transforms the fortunes of a typically slow month for cinemas. For the first in the series, *The Force Awakens*, the Barbican took almost £100,000 in 4 weeks. The subsequent two releases have posted similarly impressive figures.

In 2018, when there was no *Star Wars* film released in December, the industry saw it as an opportunity for other titles and smaller films. However, there was poor uptake on the smaller films and the mainstream replacements, such as *Aquaman* and *Mortal Engines*, which received underwhelming reviews, were unsuitable for the Barbican. The moderate box office hit *Mary Poppins Returns* helped the numbers, but it was not on a par with the Star Wars phenomenon.

Barbican cinema responded with an eclectic programming of 2018 favourites during the holiday season which generated healthy audience and income figures but was unable to match the missing box office hit.

### **1c. Summer weather and sports events**

**“England’s World Cup run and the sweltering weather have hit summer cinema attendance, with UK box office sales slumping 20% since June despite the release of blockbusters such as the Jurassic Park sequel and Ocean’s 8.”** The Guardian, July 2018

The heat wave experienced in summer 2018 alongside the global sports events (FIFA World Cup 2018) had a significant effect on audience attendance in UK cinemas. Barbican cinema was no exception and we took a significant financial hit during this challenging period.

Together with marketing we have evaluated our response to the challenges presented by these specific periods and are planning a carefully in-house curated programme to address audience behaviours and the New Release landscape during the Christmas period and the summer holidays.

### **The Real Box Office Story – Ticket pricing and discounts**

While the UK exhibition industry enjoyed a record attendance in 2018, it did not translate into increases in ticket revenues. The reason for this is commonly put down to an increase in the availability of special ticket offers and discounts, unlimited film memberships offered by the bigger chains as well as the Meerkat Movies promotion

which took up 5.4% of the total UK audience in July and August. The discount market is very dynamic and with the rise of streaming, consumers look to take full advantage of it.

Barbican cinema ticket income has demonstrated this trend and we have experienced a decrease in ticket yield from 17/18.

We have highlighted this phenomenon to finance and marketing and are currently analysing our ticket yield data. This will help us identify trends and take an agile approach to ticket pricing by analysing where our peaks and troughs occur. Alongside internal analysis, we have commissioned, together with marketing, audience research addressing price sensitivities to assist in determining Barbican cinema ticket price going forward. Research results will be available in March 2019.

## **Event Cinema**

After a meteoric rise, event cinema (National Theatre Live, RSC, Met Opera etc.) has reached a plateau and saturated. As the technology to screen these events has been rolled out to an increasing number of sites, the audience has become more thinly spread between venues.

To compound this there have been less widely popular releases and a lack of big names to draw the record-breaking audiences seen in previous years. This lack of star power has meant that the encore performances, previously a good way to prolong the life of successful shows, have shown signs of decline with some reduced figures.

There are now 35 different distributors of event cinema, watering down the quality and consistency, lowering the value of a ticket that is, at least, nearly double that of a standard cinema ticket price.

This trend has been felt in the wider exhibition industry and is something the Barbican must be prepared for should it start to become more apparent in our own figures.

Therefore, we have taken a strategic decision to allocate the programming of event cinema to a dedicated curator (starting in summer 2018) who is assessing the landscape and tailoring of Barbican event cinema programme to our audience, maintaining our offer at current levels rather than increasing it, while being selective about the event cinema content on offer. This has already proven very successful in our Afternoon Arts slot, which continues to be a popular draw in for the matinee audience.

## **Brexit**

As Brexit draws ever nearer it is still not much clearer what the short- and long-term effects on the Cinema Exhibition industry will be. At first glance there did not seem to be too many significant threats to programme content and talent, given the nature of film transport and transmission and the short stay of European visiting film talent.

4a. Film Distribution: However, more recently, there has been a growing degree of uncertainty emanating from UK film distributors. In the short term, the larger distributors fear the decline of Sterling could impact the financial performance of films in the UK market, and they have already begun to factor this into their forecasting. In the long term, there is the threat that UK based distributors could move to the European mainland, meaning the costs and bureaucracy of Cinema Exhibition could increase. This remains uncertain though, with the likelihood the distributors would be keen to maintain a presence in the UK market.

4b. Creative Europe: It is unclear that Creative Europe will continue to be involved in releases in the UK after Brexit meaning that there could be a decline in the amount of European films released here. This could mean more opportunities for British films in the market but there is the likelihood that many smaller distributors will suffer from the loss of Creative Europe funding.

4c. Europa funding: One direct funding opportunity for Barbican Cinema that could be under threat is from the Europa network. We receive this funding based on the composition of our programme every year, according to the percentage of European titles we exhibit. However, we believe it is unlikely that this funding would be threatened due to the fact it is already available to certain countries outside the EU.

## **Barbican Specific**

### **New Local Competition - Cinemas opening in our vicinity**

In January 2017 the Curzon cinema group opened a new 4-screen venue at Aldgate, and in November the Everyman chain opened a 3-screen cinema at Kings Cross, adjacent to the Central Saint Martin's Art School and The Guardian newspaper building. Both cinemas are within our audience catchment area, but closer still will be a new 3-screen cinema which Curzon is currently developing on Pitfield Street, a few hundred metres east of Old Street roundabout. This will be the closest competition that Barbican Cinema has encountered since the Centre opened in 1982.

Whilst Curzon does not provide the world class arts programming (consisting of curated film seasons, festivals and special events) that makes Barbican Cinema distinctive, it is renowned for high quality new release programming. Being in such close proximity could pose a risk to our level of admissions and box office income. This suggests a renewed focus on the local audience (including Barbican residents and City workers) which our marketing team is currently addressing.

However, the most significant competition for our New Release audience is yet to come, as the Everyman cinema chain opens their 3-screen venue at nearby Broadgate, due in 2019. Though there is no fixed completion date, the Broadgate development is now in its later stages and the Everyman will present a serious threat to the Barbican Cinemas New Release programme. The Everyman chain offers a luxury experience and there looms the very real prospect that it will appeal to many of the City workers that make up a significant proportion of our audience. Now, more than ever, it is imperative that we continue to improve our audience experience and invest in our cinema venues, our projection and sound technologies and our marketing.

## **Cinema Audience Perceptions and Trends (Barbican Audience Research Findings)**

In direct response to the audience research mentioned earlier, projects were developed to work on improving the overall social wraparound experience for all Cinema visitors (this includes Business Events clients and Theatre visitors using Cinema 1, and local visitors using these spaces who may not be visiting to see a film) and, to reposition Barbican Cinema in the minds of our potential audience. These were perceived as weaknesses in the Barbican Cinema's offer and it is vital that they are addressed.

### **Focus on our Unique Offer**

One of the rather surprising findings of the recent audience research was the lack of awareness within our non-attending, potential audience about the bespoke cinema arts programme and the highly professional curatorial work of the Barbican cinema team.

While we have successfully continued our commitment to art house cinema across our programmes: from first run titles to our bespoke series and carefully selected film seasons, we have acknowledged the fact that our unique offer must be positioned as such through our marketing and press strategies and through repositioning of our cinema programme.

Given the undoubted success of our arts programmes, both critically and in terms of audience attendance and feedback, we have taken the perception challenge as well as the unfulfilled potential to maximise the Barbican audience from other art forms as an opportunity for new strategic plans for Barbican cinema. This is manifested in an increased arts programme offer in the next financial year as well as marketing repositioning campaign positioning our unique voice as part of the Barbican arts centre across all platforms. The positioning campaign for Cinema is designed to reinforce Barbican's curated cinema programming among its warmest potential audiences (Members who don't currently visit Cinema, Barbican bookers who don't currently visit Cinema, local workers and residents). It is intended that follow-up research be undertaken in January 2020 to scrutinise improvement in overall perception of Barbican Cinema.

### **Cinema Visitor Experience**

With the rise in Netflix subscriptions (half the UK population is now subscribed), and the opening of competitor Cinemas (Everyman and Curzon) on the doorstep in 2019, the cinema-going experience and the unique physical and cultural environment that the Barbican provides, has never been more important to improve and celebrate.

The newly formed Cinema Venue Experience working group has identified and addressed short and long terms changes to be implemented and is currently working with the Destination Group as well as engineering and building teams to bring about much needed improvements.

## **Opportunities**

The local competition from high market boutique cinemas that focus on New Releases, is an opportunity for us to refine our voice as an art cinema within a world class arts centre. Blurring the boundaries between our New Release programme and our in-house curated programme, including our many unique programme partnerships with film festivals, external curators, art & culture organisations is aimed at creating a bespoke cinema programme and experience, one which cannot be found elsewhere.

Growing membership: through an attractive programme and film experience we aim to cultivate our relationships with existing Barbican members and grow a membership who are loyal to Barbican cinema and see it as their go to place, for any film outing, be it the latest critically acclaimed New Release or a unique film in one of our themed programmes.

Planning special cinema events for our member has become part of our ongoing programming endeavors, culminating in the following:

- Members' Screenings
- Adrian Wooton Hollywood Legends: continuation of this successful series
- Filmmaker/artist members talks: Asad Malik - artist talk for Alternate Realities; planned for 2019 – bespoke talks part of Merce Cunningham, Lina Wetmuller, and Shubbak programmes.

## **Investing in our visitor experience through the improving of our venues and wrap around offers**

### **Cinema's Technical landscape**

Investing in our Cinemas is a key aspect of delivery the best visitor experience we can, especially given the constant technical improvement of our competitors. Larger cinemas and national chains make huge technological investments which means they will start to pull away. This could present a challenge should we fall behind our competitors.

### **Recent technical improvements**

The lighting systems in Cinemas 2 & 3 have been upgraded. There is now a Mosaic system installed with new user stations. These systems can easily be programmed in-house and link seamlessly to the cinema automation. Masking control, screen washes, houselights and stage lighting all been integrated into one control system. This brings the venue in-line with the other Barbican venues like the Concert Hall, Hall Backstage, Fountain Room, Auditoria 1 & 2 and the Garden Room.

New sound desks have been installed in all three cinemas and the speaker system in Cinemas 2 & 3 was upgraded to have additional cover for conferences and

ScreenTalks. This further enhances the usage potential of the Cinemas for private hires and Cinema events and this can lead to potential revenue.

A new Audio-Visual infrastructure is being installed with the final works completed in February 2019.

The assisted hearing capability in Cinemas 2 & 3 has been upgraded to include an induction loop in both venues. Now patrons can use the T-setting on their hearing aids to enjoy the film or the infra-red system which allows for improved film sound or audio description.

Our technical team have identified the need to update our sound system in all Cinemas as well as the projectors in Cinemas 2 and 3. The 5.1 sound system we currently have is becoming redundant as increasingly more films are delivered in the much higher quality 7.1 sound. Improving the sound system will stop instances where Barbican Cinema is unable to screen films only available in 7.1 sound.

The projectors in Cinemas 2 and 3 are coming to the end of their lives thus presenting an opportunity and need to upgrade to future-proofing 4K projectors. This will improve the quality of the projection as well as safeguarding our ability to screen 16/35mm prints and 3D, giving us the variety of options needed to compete in the current cinema exhibition landscape.

## **Departmental Challenges and Opportunities**

The cinema department has gone through major changes during 2018 as a result of Robert Rider's departure in April 2018 after many years at the helm. In May 2018 Gali Gold, who worked at the department as a cinema curator since 2012 was appointed as Head of Cinema.

The leadership change presented an opportunity to reshape the department, refine the roles of the team members and develop a new vision going forward.

By November 2018 replacements for the departures were in place, streamlining the cinema team and the delivery of the programme according to areas of expertise and our programme and audience development objectives. All changes were made within existing budgets. These included:

- Promoting a previous assistant curator to a curator leading on NR and Event cinema programming
- Appointment of a new Arts programmes curator (replacing Gali Gold who was previously in the role)
- Refining the role of our part time curator to focus on young audiences, looking after: Barbican Family Film Club; Family young Programmers and Chronic youth Film Festival, engagement with Parent & Baby strand audiences and working closely with CL on our offer for school, integrating it to our public programme (e.g. work with HRWFF, Shubbak etc).

- Replacing the Cinema Administrator and Cinema Assistant

A new vision and direction have been developed (details in strategic statement and objectives above) aiming to develop and promote a unique voice within the independent exhibition sector in London and beyond and create Barbican cinema as an attractive cultural place for artistic expression, experience and exchange.

### 3. Artistic Programme: 18/19 Programme Review and 2019 Highlights

Extensive engagement with Barbican annual theme **Art of Change**, which explores how the arts respond to, reflect and potentially effect change in the social and political landscape, marked some of cinema programme's most critically acclaimed seasons: **Nevertheless She Persisted: Suffrage, Cinema and Beyond; Returning the Colonial Gaze; Artists and Activists; Generations: Russian Cinema of Change and, Channel 4: The Television will be Revolutionised.**

**Nevertheless She Persisted: Suffrage, Cinema and Beyond**

'a don't miss Barbican event' The Guardian

'Brilliant Things to do in April' Another magazine

Inspired by the centenary of UK suffrage, the programme showcased a timely season of feature films and documentaries which look at women's rebellious and often dangerous efforts to gain equality, as captured in selected cinematic journeys from around the world. The eclectic international lineup was an ode to the women filmmakers who have brought poignant stories to the screen and in so doing have contributed to the way we see the world, with women's points of view being seen and heard as a crucial part of the spectrum.

With the current spotlight on gender discrimination and women marginalisation and harassment within the film industry and beyond, these films could not be more relevant in their representation and inspiration for change.

**Chisholm 72 - Unbought and Unbossed** which documents Shirley Chisholm, who ran to be the first black female presidential candidate of the United States in 1972, opened the season in a sold-out cinema 1 screening, while the powerful portrait of Chisholm, was the leading image on Barbican website homepage throughout the year.

The programme enjoyed sold out screenings and anchored cinema's year-long Art of Change highlights.

#### **Returning the Colonial Gaze, 2-30 May 2018, Cinemas 1 & 3**

A season of five films from 1950s-70s by pioneering filmmakers from France and Francophone African countries challenging colonial values. Included a screening of the first French anti-colonial film, *Afrique 50* (Rene Vautier, 1950), and some of the earliest films, and self-representation on film, by Africans from newly-independent nations, including Senegal, Mauritania and Niger. All five sessions were sold out; one, *Little by Little* (Jean Rouch, 1970) – a comedy, and famous example of 'reverse-ethnography', in which Africans 'discover' Pari and its strange 'tribe' of

inhabitants, Parisians – moved to Cinema 1 by popular demand. The programme generated strong interest from audiences, as it tapped into contemporary discussions around the politics of representation.

### **Artists & Activists: Second Wave Feminist Filmmakers, 1 & 2 June 2018, Cinema 3**

A weekend of pioneering films from the American Women's Movement of the 1970s – six programmes of short films and features. Second Wave Feminism empowered women to take control of the camera; they seized the opportunity to make films platforming previously ignored perspectives on motherhood, marriage, and careers – and to call for social change. The season was curated by the New York Women's Film Preservation Fund and was intended as a showcase for their recent preservations. There were introductions by high-profile guests including Bonnie Greer, Susie Orbach and Sheila Rowbotham, and the Chair of the WFPF and two of the filmmakers travelled from the US to attend. The weekend sold well, without selling out; of note, there was a strong take-up on the multi-buy and festival passes. Positive partnership with Girls on Tops t-shirt brand, and strong feeling of festival 'buzz' on the day. Marketing wash-up identified possible 'feminism fatigue' after the Nevertheless She Persisted season, and clash with Agnes Varda event at the BFI.

### **The Television Will Be Revolutionised, 13-16 Sep, Cinema 3** **"...Barbican's essential programme" Stuart Jeffries, The Guardian**

Screenings of short films and features from Channel 4's first decade, when they financed 'alternative', left-wing filmmaking collectives across the country, and brought new voices and stories from diverse ethnic, regional and socio-economic groups to UK TV screens. Rare work, introduced by workshop members, commissioners, and trade unionists, drew interest of Guardian journalist Stuart Jeffries whose full-page article for the paper saw huge engagement from Guardian readers online. The season sold well without selling out and the department made useful contacts which may lead to further collaborations.

### **Generations: Russian Cinema of Change, Sep 2018 Cinema 1,2**

*"A new season at the Barbican tells the story of the USSR's final generation through the lens of its pioneering film-makers."* Catriona Kelly, The Guardian  
*"The Barbican celebrates Russian cinema at its most revolutionary over five days of cult films and rarities."* Time Out (Phil De Semelyn)

A programme of cult and landmark films that charted an extraordinary century of seismic change in Russia since the 1917 Revolution. Many of the films, which had a focus on the lives of young people, had never been seen in the UK before.

Generations was curated with our regular partner Olya Sova from New East Cinema and backed by a highly successful marketing campaign. The programme was a great success with our audiences, with almost all six screenings - all of which featured live elements, including a live piano performance as part of the opening night screening of Goodbye Boys – selling out.

## On-going Series

**ScreenTalks:** We continue to find success with our wide variety of extended introductions, interviews and panel discussions. We had 30 extended introductions and over 50 ScreenTalks in total, divided across our New Release and Arts Programmes. These events are always very popular, the most recent with the now Oscar-nominated Richard E. Grant selling out in a matter of days. We are proud of the diversity of the talent on offer for these events as we boast a near 50/50 split between male and female guests & hosts.

**Architecture on Film:** 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Sep 2018 marking successful bi-monthly film series offering an expanded and dynamic view of how architecture and the city are represented through the moving image. Established in 2008 by the Architecture Foundation in partnership with the Barbican, the programme regularly features UK premieres, specialist introductions and ScreenTalks, alongside double bills and repertory screenings with mostly sold out screenings.

**New East Cinema:** continued this successful series and expanded though a one-off highlight season, linked to barbican Art of Change: **Generations – Russian Cinema of Change** developing our creative relations with series curator while cultivating existing audiences and growing new ones.

**Science on screen:** The successful bi-monthly series in collaboration with the London Mathematical Laboratory, offers enlightening readings of film classics through the prism of contemporary science. In 2019 it has been dedicated to 2019 Life Rewired theme and launched in February 19 with a screening of Robocop and an extended introduction by Will Jackson, founder and director of robotics company Engineered Arts, contemplating the question whether technology is to blame for its misuse.

## Framed Film Festival

In November 2018 saw the annual festival expand into a two-day programme of screenings. The in-house festival was a huge success, engaging its audience with the best international children's films that often do not receive theatrical distribution as well as bespoke shorts programmes and special guest filmmakers, helping to inspire the next generation of film lovers. The festival plays host to live events including workshops and activities inspired by the programme, with the affordable ticket offer ensuring the offer is accessible to families. Highlights included an interactive on-stage event with Art Director/Animator Lily Bernard from Cartoon Saloon and sold out screenings of our Animal Antics shorts programme and Moomins and the Winter Wonderland. Audience feedback about the festival programme of films and workshops was universally positive and the atmosphere over the weekend was buzzing. The success of guest festival introductions also led us to integrate more of these into our regular weekly family film programme as 'Show and Tell' sessions, designed to explore themes and filmmaking techniques with our younger audience.

## Our work with GSMD

We continue our successful collaboration with GSMD Jazz and Electronic music departments. In June 2018 GSMD Electronic studio musicians performed with *Phantom of the Opera* (US Rupert Julian 1925) while in January 2019, GSMD Jazz musicians, performed with *The General* (US 1926 Buster Keaton, Clyde Bruckman) a full house success which was also part of our collaboration with The London International Mime Festival.

## New Initiatives

**“Who doesn't love Tove Jansson's family of hippo-like creatures? Here Moomintroll explores the snowy valley where he lives. The first announced screening of this film sold out pronto but the Barbican has put on another. Move quickly!” Phil De Semelyn, Time Out**

### Framed Film Club shake up

In September 2018 we renamed our weekly Saturday framed film family club as '**Barbican Family Film Club**' emphasizing the link to Barbican cinema and centre and our unique offer of international cinema to young viewers. This crucial entry point to the experience of collective viewing and the richness of cinematic cultures has gained further attention as part of our strategic objectives and E&I plans.

An expert curator specialising in young audiences was allocated the programme, taking ownership of all our young audiences offer including: Family Film Club, Family Film Festival (in Nov), our flagship Young Programmers scheme (in collaboration with Creative Learning); Chronic Youth FF which the former curate and audience engagement with our Parent & Baby screenings, seeing these as vital entry point to audiences for our early year offer. As of January 2019, we are curating batches of 2-month long programmes for Family Film Club including thematic monthly programmes and have added a monthly live event 'show & Tell' on top of the monthly workshop, inviting guest speakers to elaborate and animate the film screening. For the FFC screening of *Frozen*, poet and film activist So Mayer spoke to the audience about the power of sisterhood, friendship and teamwork, on and off-screen. At the screening of the Oscar-winning documentary *March of the Penguins* Will McCallum, Head of Oceans at Greenpeace UK, presented the 'Show & Tell' session and talked about the important work that still needs to be done to protect this much-loved species.

## 2019 Programme Highlights and Future Plans

As part of cinema's new vision and in light of the audience research findings and the looming competition for NR cinemas in our vicinity, 19/20 will see a **rise in arts programmes, a focus on strongly conveying this aspect of our programme** and a **comprehensive curatorial approach** to all our programmes.

Given the heavy workload involved in our arts programmes we will dedicate much attention to the level of arts programme increase and the nature of these events, making sure delivery is within departmental capacity.

Our many partnerships will be characterised by a hands-on approach, making sure that all the programmes presented in our cinemas are in line with our curatorial priorities and departmental objectives. This has a particular impact on our work with national film festivals and cultural institutions, where a clear stamp of our vision must be applied, rather than the sheer showcasing of eclectic films, worthy as they might be.

A case in point is our 2019 programme **Lem on Film**, dedicated to rare adaptations of the renowned science fiction writer. The programme, part of Cinema's Life Rewired offer, has been initiated and developed by our cinema team, proposed to **Kinoteka, The Polish Film Festival** and then becoming part of its coming annual edition as a bespoke Barbican programme.

Similar work is currently being done with **The London Indian Film Festival** and **The London Korean Film Festival**, both hosted by the Barbican during 2019.

We will look to maximise the output and income of our **Arts Programming** whilst acknowledging that it brings the heaviest impact on our workload.

### **2019 Highlights**

**Hidden Figures:** In March 2019 we will launch our new strand celebrating filmmakers who have been unjustly neglected in cinema history. The first programme will shed light on the work of Italian director Lina Wertmüller, the first woman to be nominated for the Best Director Oscar®.

**Life Rewired:** Cinema related programmes will include the aforementioned **Lem on Film** and **Anime's Human Machines**, looking at moral and social questions through the challenge of human-machine interface, as explored in this much celebrated Japanese animation genre which has embraced robotics, cybernetics and artificial intelligence.

**Poetry in Motion - Contemporary Iranian Cinema:** A film season showcasing emerging voices in contemporary Iranian cinema through the prism of Persian poetry (in line with our cross arts focus) will be presented throughout April. The programme will include our first online expansion through MUBI through streamlining one of the film *Fifi Howls from Happiness* in association with the programme. This collaboration is a first of its kind for Barbican Cinema, it expands our presence on online platforms and builds the foundations for future partnerships in the same vein.

**Shubbak** cross arts festival celebrating contemporary Arab Culture will hold its film programme exclusively at the Barbican.

Our **cross arts** highlights include **York Bebop** in association with Art Gallery exhibition Lee Krasner: Living Colour, showcasing films shot in NY of the late 50s and 60s which mark the birth of Independent American cinema as we know it.

**Oscar Creatives** Drawing on the success of Oscar Scores in previous years, we have decided to expand our collaboration with AMPAS and launch **Oscar Creatives**. The series will host Oscar winners from a variety of film crafts, starting in April 2019 with Oscar®-winning costume designer **Lindy Hemming** following Mike Leigh's *Topsy Turvy*.

#### 4. Equality and Inclusion

In 2018/19 Barbican Cinema developed an Equality & Inclusion plan in line with the Barbican's 5-year strategy. The plan highlighted previous success and challenges and laid out the objectives of the department going forward.

In summer 2018 we appointed a New Release curator whose programming choices are informed by the need and ambition to achieve a diverse programme, making sure we use any possibility to showcase films by and about groups which have been under-represented thus far. This also applies to our arts programming where our work with diverse partners like **Shubbak festival of Contemporary Arab culture**, **Underwire**, **the largest UK film festival celebrating female talent** and **Fringe! Queer Film & Arts Festival** has ensured that gender, ethnicity and sexuality have all been well addressed within our programme.

In addition to this we were the first major cultural institution in London to adopt the '**F-Rating**' system across the cinema programme. The system helps keep track of the number of films directed by, written by and/or featuring significant women on screen. In 2018 we had 83 films were given our F-Rating.

We also strive to reflect the same diversity in our add-on events like ScreenTalks and panel discussions. We have had over 50 throughout 18/19 and the gender divide was close to 50/50 with the majority of the hosts and guests being women. This is something we will continue to promote and monitor going into 19/20. In addition to this, we will monitor the Access and Relaxed screening numbers more closely to be able to react to trends and respond to the needs of the audience. We also look to ensure our cinemas as accessible as possible to the widest range of audiences. We introduced 'Access Screenings' over 5 years ago, subtitles and audio-described screenings which cater for the deaf and hard of hearing and those with visual impairments. In September 2018 we committed to have one New Release access screening per week.

In 2018 Barbican Cinema introduced monthly '**Relaxed Screenings**', new release films set in an environment specially tailored for adults on the autistic spectrum, who have Tourette Syndrome, anxiety, sensory or other learning disabilities. Every other month there is relaxed screening of a performance cinema encore. Plans to provide bespoke Relaxed Training for our Cinema team in March are being finalised as this report is being drawn up. Our staff provide the introductions to the screenings and this training will help these be delivered more effectively. It will also help us engage with this audience to improve the delivery of these screenings. We will extend our access offer in collaboration with the Human Rights Watch Film Festival where we have planned two ScreenTalks translated into BSL and captioned for the hard of hearing. We are working with press, marketing and development on creating an access package that can reach a wider audience and attract funding opportunities.

In a bid to attract the sometimes elusive young audiences Barbican Cinema have put into place an extensive offer to ensure that ticket price is not a barrier. The **Young Barbican** ticket offer has been extended to the weekend and on arts programmes to make the full gamut of cinema available to them.

Barbican Cinema believes that engaging in partnerships with other organisations is a key to reaching more diverse audiences. We will continue to cultivate our existing relationships with the likes of Underwire and Fringe! but we also initiate new

## **5. Conclusions**

The last year has seen significant changes to the Cinema department as a result of the findings of the audience research conducted in January 2018, the departure of Robert Rider, cinema's HoD for the last 25 years, the appointment of Gali Gold as the new Head, introducing a new vision and direction for Barbican cinema and recruitment of new members to the cinema team.

The imminent opening of an Everyman Cinema in Barbican's immediate vicinity, (a high market New Release 3 screen venue), alongside the increased popularity of streaming services, namely Netflix, present a tangible risk to cinema's First Run programme.

However, the current rise in cinema attendance in the UK is an encouraging trend which presents an opportunity for growth, alongside a sober acknowledgement of the limited effect this has had on cinema's income, as ticket prices are more often discounted in an increasingly competitive market for all.

The repositioning of Barbican cinema 'Bold Cinema, Bravely Curated' promoting a 360 approach to a selective programme of international cinema: timely and relevant, while highlighting its cross arts character and appeal and, with a careful attention to Equality and Inclusion on and off screen, is aimed at refining our unique voice and increasing public awareness of it.

With the current and planned work to improve the audience experience of our venues, our wrap around offer and the work we do Beyond Barbican, we aim to secure Barbican Cinema as a 'go to' place for cinema and art lovers of all ages and for a wide variety of London audiences.

## **Appendices**

- None

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