

The BFI

A preview



British Film Institute

ACTION!

TIME FOR

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The big idea

The big idea

Film and television have the power to inspire us and influence our lives. They allow us to take on new identities, to hear new voices and to see the world through other people's eyes. They increase our understanding of our own lives and of the ever-changing global world in which we live. The universal ability of film to excite and enthrall us, to make us think and help us empathise, the way it moves us to tears and laughter, makes it a uniquely important art form.

The big idea

Such powerful arts should be celebrated and understood – that is why the *bfi* exists. If the *bfi* didn't exist, we would be busy inventing it. Seventy years ago, this was the Big Idea. Today, in a world permeated with moving images, the British Film Institute's role is even more vital. It exists as a national champion for British film and television culture and heritage in all its richness and diversity, a leading critical and educational voice, an open door to opinions and interest that are invisible to the mainstream. It exists to stand alongside individuals, the industry and collegiate organisations across the UK, who are working to foster a diverse film culture and to collaborate in ways that add greater value.

The big idea

To remain relevant, every organisation needs periodically to examine itself. The *bfi* has looked again, listened to criticisms, suggestions and determined a new way forward.

Radical overhaul

Radical overhaul

Our strategy is to maximise impact through partnership and by being more responsive. To seek in every way we can to engage wider audiences across the United Kingdom, especially among socially and culturally diverse communities, children and young people. We will operate more efficiently and pass on that benefit to our audiences. We will balance the dynamic between supporting, championing and delivering an enriched moving image culture across the regions and nations, helping to ensure that the excellence of the UK's film and television heritage leads the agenda on an international stage.

Radical overhaul

To do this, we are literally going to turn the *bfi* inside out – change it from an inward looking to an outward facing organisation. This is a fundamental change in priorities.

**Here is
what we
are going
to do:**

Archive & Library

The National Film & Television Archive is an unsurpassed collection of international scope. In title terms alone, it is significantly larger than the moving image collection of the Library of Congress. Jewels in the collection include the films of Powell and Pressburger, David Lean, the industrial collection of the National Coal Board, Shell Oil, British Transport, documentaries by the GPO, films by Humphrey Jennings and John Grierson, a definitive collection of pre-1910 European cinema – several thousand silent shorts from the dawn of cinema, not to mention over two hundred and fifty thousand television titles. We also look after a magnificent library; in fact, the only major library in the world that specialises in both film and television.

Archive & Library

We have two aims to balance:

The first is to make sure the collection is safe for future generations. We will be making a long-term investment to significantly upgrade the Archive stores.

The second is to radically re-orientate the Archive and the Library, putting further energies into curating and interpreting our collection to increase distribution. A new archive curatorial team will set the priorities for a proactive programme of preservation and restoration and we will make sure this rich resource will actively contribute to a renaissance in film and television research and scholarship. We will seek a formal agreement with an educational institution with the aim of creating a **Teaching Hospital for Film** where active restoration and scholarship meet.

Education

A renewed emphasis on Research and Scholarship completes the strands of the *bfi* Education strategy. The objectives of the *bfi*'s Education activities are:

- To establish the value of learning about the moving image media both for individuals and for UK culture.
- To increase understanding and enjoyment of the moving image by learners in all sectors across the UK.
- To drive moving image media literacy up the agenda of educationalists, policy-makers, employers and society at large.

Archive portals

We intend to create, with partners, a network of **Archive Portals** - or mediatheques - across the UK. Our vision is that these will be user-friendly and attractive new facilities within existing cultural destinations where individuals or families can choose to view, on demand, a canon of classic film and television drawn from the National Archive. We will work with our partners and with regional archives on replenishing and regularly adding new material which isn't available today, and which otherwise might never be available.

Virtual BFI

We will invest heavily over the coming years in the future of **Virtual *bfi*** – access for anyone no matter where they live. This year alone, we launched ‘screenonline’ which tells the story of British film, with three hundred and fifty hours of clips drawn from the archive. Every student (or library-goer) in the UK can access this site, for free, at the click of a button. But the *bfi* still has vast reservoirs of information. It possesses a legendary and comprehensive database, with over 70 years accumulated knowledge, facts and wisdom about film and television. At present, this is only available to visitors who visit the *bfi* premises. This is an example of just one of the initiatives we will prioritise to accelerate information into the public domain.

Virtual BFI

We intend to go further than simply providing a rich seam of information.

We plan a strong offer of educational resources, a web presence for young adults, web-casting of *bfi* events, an online debating chamber and a platform and theatre for those creative experimenters working in the digital ether. The **Virtual *bfi*** will be a destination in its own right, where the *bfi* can debate into the night with friends and colleagues across the UK.

Digital network

We are extremely excited by the advent of the UK Film Council's proposed digital network and the huge potential this offers for distribution and exhibition. There is a powerful connection between this initiative and our avowed intent to increase the number of films being released from the Archive. The digital network offers unprecedented opportunities to share these films, economically and simply with exhibitors across the UK, within the constraints of existing Rights agreements. Programmes such as the up-coming Fellini season from the National Film Theatre or films from the London Film Festival will be available.

We can and should be a **major content provider**. The new *bfi* National Partnership Office will be charged with brokering partnerships in this respect, to push the potential of these collaborations to the full.

National Partnership Office

We will create a one-stop shop point of contact for all colleagues in the Regions and Nations - **A National Partnership Office** - so that it is much easier for everyone to work with us.

Film Centre

A critical consideration of the review has been how, within one organisation, we will balance the dynamic between supporting, championing and delivering an enriched moving image culture across the regions and nations and at the same time, fulfill our responsibility in an international context. We believe we should provide that national focus for film heritage and culture in such a way that can influence and at times lead the international agenda.

There is a strong argument for a specific national destination for film – a flagship that can at once be owned and used by the Nations and Regions, and have a clear identity internationally. Film is a major art form, highly popular, highly accessible and hugely powerful in influencing national identity – and yet, disappointingly, one without a home to match the flagships of other art forms.

Film Centre

We re-affirm our commitment to achieving such a focus, a place which embodies the holistic nature of film culture, offers a rich diet of filmic experiences, windows into the rich treasures of archives, a venue for celebratory exhibitions, a stage for the experimental and the avant garde. The Film Centre will be a home for the London Film Festival and a whole range of industry events and celebrations.

We envision a vibrant meeting place where anyone and everyone can come together to enjoy and experience film in all its richness – on any day of the year, at any time of day – with the confidence that they will find kindred spirits and the widest range of film to view.

Film Centre

This is an ambitious project of international importance but we are impatient to see some improvements now. We will develop a 'test bed' film centre on the South Bank, creating a more welcoming aura around the National Film Theatre. This will include scaled down versions of our film centre innovations – visitors can sample the new mediatheque module, access our rich data in an information zone, a new exhibition space, and more friendly and convenient café facilities, all set in an environment which celebrates film.

Young adults initiative

The *bfi* has a sustained commitment to reaching **cross-cultural audiences** with a dedicated policy office which was responsible for the highly successful pan-UK *ImagineAsia* festival. The 2005 project *Blackworld* is already gathering momentum. These major events bring focus to an ongoing programme illustrated by the recent Chinese Martial Arts season and the upcoming Dilip Kumar season in conjunction with “Bite The Mango”.

Young adults initiative

We are proposing a new and additional focus on young adults and have committed to resourcing a dedicated initiative. Run by young adults, with the remit to experiment and be adventurous, this initiative will be empowered with driving a new and provocative cultural perspective across all *bfi* activities.

**And
what's
more...**

Trading Arm

Many of the *bfi*'s activities bring in revenue through ticket sales or through areas of cultural enterprise such as the internationally celebrated DVD label. We will be forming a **Trading Arm** to run ourselves more effectively, introduce an entrepreneurial culture and realise more profit for reinvestment into *bfi* activities.

Estate rationalisation

Finally, in order to achieve this ambitious vision, we have looked carefully at our overheads and made the decision to rationalise the *bfi* estate. A full feasibility study will determine later this year the extent to which we can vacate Stephen Street and relocate to the South Bank.

Summary

We believe these initiatives are bold, ambitious and entirely deliverable. This new vision has grown out of extensive consultation, with every member of staff meaningfully involved at some stage. We are also indebted to the many individuals and organisations who have contributed and whose views are reflected in this review.

This is not the end of a Review – it is a preview of what's to come.