

COMEDY GENIUS



BFI Film Audience Network and the Independent Cinema Office (ICO) announce more than 150 screenings at 50+ venues nationwide, as part of 2018 blockbuster season *Comedy Genius*

<https://www.bficomedy.co.uk/>

Thursday 18 October 2018, London.

The **BFI Film Audience Network (BFI FAN)** today announces details of events and screenings taking place across the UK as part of **BFI COMEDY GENIUS**, the UK's greatest ever celebration of film and TV comedy, running from now until the end of January 2019. From boundary-pushing writers and performers who say the unsayable, to silent slapstick heroes of the past and disreputable and anarchic voices of the present, this season will celebrate comic genius in all its glory. From a screening of *Monty Python's Life of Brian* (Terry Jones, 1979) at Derby Cathedral and pop-up barbershops in selected UK cities influenced by the iconic series *Desmond's*, to a celebration of the hilarious *Derry Girls* in Belfast and a live custard pie fight at the Campbeltown Picture House, the most remote cinema in the UK, *Comedy Genius* will celebrate icons of comedy in fun and surprising ways right across the UK.

As well as events across the country which have been funded by BFI FAN, the **Independent Cinema Office (ICO)** will also be distributing a curated tour of films to bring *Comedy Genius* to cinemas, film societies and community screens across the UK. The tour will cover a wide survey of comedy titles, ranging from the eccentric brilliance of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (Terry Gilliam, Terry Jones, 1975), through to Juzo Itami's heart-warming food comedy *Tampopo* (1985).

Comedy Genius will be a provocative and timely moment to pause and contemplate comedy in contemporary Britain. As we collectively face fundamental questions of identity, social responsibility and nationhood in a post-Brexit and post-#MeToo world, are there now some lines that simply should not be crossed or are the lines more blurred than ever? Is it possible to enjoy un-PC comedy of the past with a clear conscience? And how are a new generation of 'woke' comedians changing up the game? As arguably the most subjective form of entertainment, comedy has the power to provoke exciting and varied debate – and make us laugh with fart jokes.

Heather Stewart, BFI Creative Director said: "In a divided Britain, in a world where we may be uncertain about what we're allowed to find funny anymore, we need a laugh more than ever. Just seeing Sid James holding a sausage roll cheers me up. Whether it's Dolly Parton, Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin indulging in a drug-fuelled fantasy of bringing down their sexist boss, Peter Sellers's maniacal Dr Strangelove, Buster Keaton's deadpan face, Sharon Horgan's hilariously frank take on family and relationships, or Tiffany Haddish's grapefruit tutorial, we think there is enough wisecracking, slapstick, satire, smut and innuendo in our Comedy Genius season for everyone."

Anthony Andrews and Teanne Andrews, We Are Parable said: "We Are Parable are delighted to be part of this National programme, taking our ideas further to new audiences and bringing Comedy legends to cities across the UK. As one of the most loved sitcoms in British history, we knew we wanted to do something with *Desmond's* straightaway, and creating a barbershop inspired by the show is our way of showing how much it meant to us growing up. We wanted to not only celebrate the show but the barbershop itself, which is almost a cast member in its own right. Within the Black community, the barbershop is more than a place to cut hair, it's a place to converse, to catch up, to joke and laugh with people who look like you. It was, is, and always will be, a safe space for us, and this pop-up space is a small homage to how sacred this environment continues to be."

Highlights of the COMEDY GENIUS programme across the UK include:

ACROSS THE UK:

- **We Are Parable** will present '**Barbershops and Black Comedy Legends**', a series of immersive pop-up barbershop installations inspired by *Desmond's* (C4, 1989-94), enabling participants to watch iconic episodes of the classic sitcom, with events taking place in Birmingham, Bristol, Liverpool, London and Manchester. The events will welcome very special guest **Trix Worrell**, the creator of *Desmond's* in attendance. Alongside these pop-up events will be screenings of black comedy films such as *Friday* (F. Gary Grey, 1995), *Girls Trip* (Malcolm D. Lee, 2017) and *I'm Gonna Git You Sucka* (Keenen Ivory Wayans, 1988).
- **The New Black Film Collective** will celebrate black women in comedy with three events across the UK. The locations and dates of these events will be announced soon.
- **Queer Film Network UK & Ireland** will present '**Gay as in Hysterically Funny**', a touring programme of comedy films featuring diverse LGBTQ+ representations. The programme will include a specially curated programme of comedy shorts that will show at SQIFF on 9 December, a screening of *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (John Cameron Mitchell, 2001) at The Cube Microplex in Bristol on 9 November, and 'Free Cheers for Queers' a night of free festive fun at Leeds Queer Film Festival, featuring a screening of *Dyke Hard* (Bitte Andersson, 2014). *White Rabbit* (Daryl Wein, 2018), starring Vivian Bang, will close SQIFF on 9 December, and will also be presented as part of Liverpool Pride at FACT on 29 October.
- **QUAD Derby** will present '**Lighten Up!**', a series of classic comedy screenings at UK cathedrals and churches, launching at Derby Cathedral on 21 November. Classic silent shorts and features such as the uplifting *Sister Act* (Emile Ardolino, 1992) and seminal satire *Monty Python's Life of Brian* (Terry Jones, 1979) and *The General* (Buster Keaton, Clyde Bruckman, 1926) will be included in the series. Further events will be held at Southwell Minster, Liverpool Cathedral and Bristol Cathedral as part of the series. **TECH:SQUAD** will be producing innovative projection mapping installations before each screening celebrating the heritage of British comedy.
- **Pilot Light TV Festival and Live Cinema UK** will present #RIPVine in Manchester on 23 November, hosted by Vine-star and YouTuber **Leslie Wai**; #RIPVINE will pay tribute to the six second icons of Vine, the hit social media platform which launched in 2013. The event will also be presented at BFI Southbank in December, as well as other venues TBC.

LONDON:

- **Picturehouse Cinemas** will present a series of dementia friendly screenings of slapstick comedies such as *Modern Times* (Charlie Chaplin, 1936) and *Ninotchka* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1939).
- **Barbican** profiles some of cinema's most dazzling comedy couples in a trio of screenings in December, with Sophia Loren and Marcello Mastroianni in *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (Vittorio De Sica, 1964), Michel Serrault and Ugo Tognazzi in *La Cage aux Folles* (Édouard Molinaro, 1978) and Claudette Colbert and Clark Gable in *It Happened One Night* (Frank Capra, 1934).

THE MIDLANDS

- **Victoria Park Productions** will celebrate Asian comedy with a season – *Fresh off the Boat* – in Birmingham. Events will include: *Four Lions* (Chris Morris, 2010) at Mockingbird Cinema on 9 November, with a special Q&A hosted by Radio Presenter **Omar Sabir**; *Bhaji on the Beach* (Gurinder Chadha, 1993) at MAC on 10 November with a Q&A hosted by Award-Winning comedian and TV presenter **Shazia Mirza**; and *The Big Sick* (Michael Showalter, 2017) at Electric Cinema Birmingham on 26 November presented by comedian **Tez Ilyas**.
- **Flicks in the Sticks** will host a Comedy Genius tour across Shropshire, bringing comedy classics films to community venues
- **Stoke Film Theatre** will host a special screening of Buster Keaton's classic silent comedy *The General* (Buster Keaton, Clyde Bruckman, 1926), with live piano accompaniment by **Stephen Horne** on 25 October.
- **Broadway Nottingham** will present a *Some Like it Hot* (Billy Wilder, 1959) 'strum-along' led by legendary cabaret performer Tricity Vogue for ukulele enthusiasts, as well as a season celebrating French comedy with screenings of films such as *La Grande Vadrouille* (Gérard Oury, 1966) and *C'est la vie!* (Olivier Nakache, Éric Toledano, 2017).
- **MAC Birmingham** will host a season celebrating comedy talent from the Midlands such as Tony Hancock, Julie Walters, and Meera Syal, with screening introductions from Midlands comics **Jo Enright**, **Ian Boldsworth** and **Luisa Omeilan**. Cast members from *The Real McCoy* (BBC, 1991-96) will join **John Simmit** for a discussion following screenings of episodes of the landmark sketch show on 24 November, and **Alice Lowe** will take part in a Q&A following a screening of *Sightseers* on 16 December.
- On 12 January **Nottingham Contemporary** will celebrate the visionary **Buster Keaton**, as well as paying homage to the experience of the Silent Picture house. *The Buster Keaton Pictureshow* will feature a screening of a Keaton classic accompanied by a live original score by trio *Haiku Salut*, with a mix of rock, folk and electronica intertwined with a lamp show, creating a magical and spectacular evening.

NORTHERN ENGLAND:

- Horror film festival **Celluloid Screams** will host a screening of the hotly anticipated TV series *Wellington Paranormal* (2018) at **Showroom Sheffield** on 20 October. First appearing in the hilarious mockumentary *What We Do in the Shadows* (Jemaine Clement, Taika Waititi, 2014), police officers Minogue and O'Leary, played by **Karen O' Leary** and **Mike Minogue**, investigate paranormal goings-on in Wellington. Actors Minogue and O'Leary will both take part in a **Q&A** alongside writer and producer **Paul Yates** following the screening all six episodes of the series.
- **The Dukes Cinema Lancaster** will host a season of the best comedies to see before you die, as well as a screening of Mel Brooks' homage to horror *Young Frankenstein* (1974) in Lancaster Castle on 15 November.

- **Leyburn Arts** will present a day of comedies as part of the Leyburn Film Festival on 28 October; comedy classics that will be screened will include *The Birdcage* (Mike Nichols, 1996), *Blazing Saddles* (Mel Brooks, 1974) and *The Plank* (Eric Sykes, 1967).
- Every Tuesday and Saturday from 30 October to 22 December, **Showroom Sheffield** will present comedy films as part of their **Funny Fortnights** series. The series will include a range of comedies, from stoner and cult comedies like *Pineapple Express* (David Gordon Green, 2008) and *Dazed and Confused* (Richard Linklater, 1994) to contemporary British comedies like *Four Lions* (Chris Morris, 2010) and *Attack the Block* (Joe Cornish, 2011). Screenings will be complemented by additional in-venue activity include a 'brownie workshop' alongside *Harold and Kumar Get the Munchies* (Danny Leineron, 2004) 10 November, a stand-up workshop on 8 December and a slapstick workshop for families alongside a screening of *The General* (Buster Keaton, Clyde Bruckman, 1926) on 22 December.

NORTHERN IRELAND:

- **QFT** in Belfast will celebrate the hilarious hit TV show *Derry Girls* (Channel 4, 2017) with a screening of the last two episodes of season one, followed by a **Q&A** with actors **Saoirse-Monica Jackson**, **Louisa Harland**, **Nicola Coughlan** and **Jamie-Lee O'Donnell**, writer/creator **Lisa McGee**, and director **Michael Lennox**.
- **Strand Arts Centre** in Belfast will present 'dementia friendly' screenings of *Carry on Sergeant* (Gerald Thomas, 1958) and *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (Robert Hamer, 1949), as well as immersive screenings of *Fawlty Towers* (BBC, 1975-79) and *The League of Gentlemen* (BBC, 1999-2017).

SCOTLAND:

- **Screen Argyll** will celebrate Comedy Genius with a series of screenings and events across the Scottish Highlands.
- **SCOFF (Scottish Comedy Film Festival)** will host a **Slapstick weekender** at the most remote cinema in the UK, the Campbeltown Picture House, with workshops, films and live custard pie fight.
- **Hippodrome Falkirk** will celebrate the brilliant **Bill Forsyth** with screenings of *Gregory's Girl* (1981) and *Local Hero* (1983), as well as special event screenings of *The General* (Buster Keaton, Clyde Bruckman, 1926) and *9 to 5* (Colin Higgins, 1980).

SOUTH EAST:

- **Cine City** in Brighton will host a special event screening of *O Lucky Man!* (Lindsay Anderson, 1973) at Lewes Depot, with an extended introduction by esteemed comedy-writer Graham Duff.
- **Cambridge Film Festival** (25 Oct - 1 Nov) will present *Comedy For Kids with Neil Brand* on 27 October: a uniquely entertaining show for kids of all ages celebrates some of the greatest comics in silent cinema, including the inimitable Buster Keaton. The Festival also presents two screenings of the restored comic masterpiece *Some Like It Hot* (Billy Wilder 1959) on 28 and 29 October.

SOUTH WEST:

- **Cary Comes Home** festival in Bristol will host a screening of *His Girl Friday* (Howard Hawks, 1940) on 25 November at The CUBE Microplex; the screening will be introduced by film critic Pamela Hutchinson.
- **Cheltenham Film Festival** will screen a series of comedies at the Cheltenham Playhouse including *Shaun of the Dead* (Edgar Wright, 2004), *Hot Fuzz* (Edgar Wright, 2007) and *Young Frankenstein* (Mel Brooks, 1974).
- **Come the Revolution** in Bristol will present **No BS!** – a season of films and events celebrating black comic talent.
- **Slapstick Festival** in Bristol will host a *Naked Gun* marathon on 18 November at The CUBE Microplex, compered by comedians Lloyd Langford and Robert Ross; the event marks 30 years since the release of the original film starring the legendary Leslie Nielsen.
- **The Roses Film Theatre** in Tewkesbury will host a week of screenings focusing on early silent slapstick comedies with live piano accompaniment, celebrating the likes of Chaplin, Lloyd and Laurel and Hardy.

WALES:

- **OFF-Y-GRID** venues in Wales will present special screenings of writer Meic Povey's classic Welsh-language biopic *Ryan a Ronnie (The Life of Ryan and Ronnie)* (Rhys Powys, 2009) celebrating the legacy of funnyman Ryan Davies, which will be accompanied by live stand-up performances by new Welsh-language comedy talent. Screenings will take place at Neuadd Dwyfor, Pwllheli (7 December), Pontio, Bangor (8 December) and Galeri, Caernarfon (9 December).

COMEDY GENIUS ON TOUR – PRESENTED WITH ICO

The Independent Cinema Office will be distributing a curated tour of films to bring *Comedy Genius* to cinemas, film societies and community screens across the UK. The tour will cover a wide survey of comedy titles, ranging from the eccentric brilliance of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (Terry Gilliam, Terry Jones, 1975), through to Juzo Itami's heart-warming food comedy *Tampopo* (1985).

The full programme of films being made available to cinemas across the UK is:

9-5 (Colin Higgins, 1980)

Duck Soup (Leo McCarey, 1933)

Blazing Saddles (Mel Brooks, 1974)

Monsieur Hulot's Holiday (Jacques Tati, 1953)
Coming to America (John Landis, 1988)
Sidewalk Stories (Charles Lane, 1989)
Tampopo (Juzo Itami, 1986)
Monty Python and the Holy Grail (Terry Gilliam, Terry Jones, 1975)
The General (Buster Keaton, Clyde Bruckman, 1926)
The Marvellous Mabel Normand (Various, 1913 – 1927)
His Girl Friday (Howard Hawks, 1939)
Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown (Pedro Almodóvar, 1988)

Venues participating in the ICO curated tour will include:

Barbican, London
Barn, Dartington
Broadway, Nottingham
The Cube Microplex, Bristol
Eden Court, Inverness
The Flavel, Dartmouth
Hippodrome Bo'Ness
Leeds International Film Festival
MAC, Birmingham
Poly, Falmouth
Prince Charles, London
Rock Road Library, Cambridge
Showroom, Sheffield
Storyhouse, Chester
Stoke Film Theatre

More venues will be announced in the coming weeks and full listings can be found at: <https://www.bficomedy.co.uk/>

– ENDS –

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About the BFI

The BFI is the lead body for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK - investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

The BFI is a Government arm's-length body and distributor of Lottery funds for film. The BFI serves a public role which covers the cultural, creative and economic aspects of film in the UK. It delivers this role:

- As the UK-wide organisation for film, a charity core funded by Government
- By providing Lottery and Government funds for film across the UK
- By working with partners to advance the position of film in the UK.

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter.

The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger CBE.

About the BFI Film Audience Network

The BFI Film Audience Network is a unique collaboration of eight Film Hubs managed by leading film organisations across the UK. The Film Audience Network is at the heart of the BFI's latest strategy BFI2022 which seeks to ensure the greatest choice of film is available for everyone. Established in 2012 to build wider and more diverse UK cinema audiences for British and international film, FAN achieved over **1,600,000** audience admissions from 2013-17, **40%** of which were new audiences.

Comedy Genius is a celebration of comedy on screen, led by BFI, the Independent Cinema Office and Film Hub Midlands on behalf of the BFI Film Audience network, supported by funds from the National Lottery.



***** PICTURE DESK *****

A selection of images for journalistic use in promoting the BFI can be found via the link below:

<https://bfi.sharefile.com/d-s2057d6254494eac9>

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