CINEMA FOR ALL STARTER PACK
SCOTTISH EDITION 2014

EQUIPMENT AND VENUE CONSIDERATIONS

Equipment can often seem like the biggest obstacle when it comes to showing films in your local community, with issues such as cost, knowing what you need and knowing how to operate it being some of the first things you'll need to consider. In this part of the Cinema For All Starter Pack – Scottish Edition, we look at all the basics you'll need to get started, including a list of what you'll need, how to deal with unexpected issues on the day, what tools you'll need and where you can buy/ hire from. We've also included some advice on how to make a venue cinematic from Neil Chue Hong, Chair of Cinema For All Scotland, as well recommendations from some of our Scottish members.

For full advice on where to start when thinking about equipment please refer to the Cinema for All equipment start up pack.

Equipment can be an expensive and overwhelming element of showing films in your local community. However, in order to ensure audience satisfaction and consistency of projection it's important to have reliable equipment that will screen films to a cinematic standard. Whether you are high or low on funds there are some items you should always make sure you have.

EQUIPMENT CHECKLIST

When showing films in a community cinema or film society, there are 6 essential pieces of equipment you will need:

1. **PROJECTOR:** Most projectors are now digital. Almost all projectors can work in most circumstances, however if operating in a particularly bright environment a higher brightness level (lumens) can help.
2. **PLAYER**: Sometimes referred to as film transport. Most community cinemas and film societies currently use a DVD/ Blu-ray player or use a computer. Some groups are able to screen using 35mm or have upgraded to DCP projection, however this can be very expensive if your venue doesn't already have these facilities.
3. **SCREEN**: In more permanent venues this can be mounted. Screens average in size between 12' and 16' (measured diagonally). Standard screens are usually white, but you can also get glass and silvered. Silvered screens are required for most 3D systems.
4. **SOUND SYSTEM:** A sound system contains a processor and an amplifier. In many cases these will be combined and most venues are likely to have a sound system in place, however if not many home cinema processors are sufficient for small venues.
5. **SPEAKERS:** A 3 speaker set-up - a centre speaker and identical left and right speakers – is usually fine for most venues. Larger venues may require more, or you may wish to consider surround sound if you plan to show a lot of action films or films with a lot of sound effects. Speakers used for music/discos are usually just as appropriate for film screenings, however, be wary of mini speakers and speakers designed for home cinemas.
6. **CABLES:** You will need cables for power, video, audio and network. When budgeting, remember to bear in mind that good cables will cost around 10% of the overall cost of equipment, and are

essential. It's also important to think about the distance between your equipment and that the longer cables are the more difficult they are to manage. Don't forget to label both ends of a cable, as it might not always be the same person setting up. If there are quite a lot of cables running through the venue having thicker, well insulated cables can reduce interference.

MAKING A VENUE CINEMATIC – ADVICE FROM NEIL CHUE HONG

BLACKOUT/ LIGHTING - The lighting in your venue can greatly affect the quality of your presentation. By making sure that there is darkness at the front once the film starts, you will improve the projection. Keeping the area around the screen dark will also make it easier to focus on the image. You can do this with masking (cotton masking is fine as long as it is fireproofed by your local fire services). To generally increase darkness in your venue it may also be worth investing in some light cancelling blinds for any windows that let light in. Bear this in mind when choosing your venue – a room with lots of large windows will present a challenge on light summer evenings.

CREATING A CINEMATIC ATMOSPHERE - Having control of the lights in the room can also be useful. A light on the screen and light on the audience before the screening can help create a cinematic feel. Lights that can be dimmed are also useful here.

LOOKING PROFESSIONAL - Making an effort to not show the DVD menus will make a big difference. To do this you can either use the projector's blanking function, the player's pausing function or even by just putting a piece of cardboard in front of the projector. If you invest in a computer, you can switch between sources more seamlessly. If you have a dedicated switcher box this will allow you to play music and have images on screen before the film starts. Think about advertising upcoming films, local businesses or other similar events.

ACCESSIBILITY - When considering your venue, accessibility is very important. Is there enough room in the aisles and are the seats comfortable? Can people get to the exit/toilet without disrupting the screening? Have you thought about access for people with disabilities? It's very important to make sure your audience is both comfortable and safe.

TOP TIPS

Things to remember and ask yourself before the screening:

- How does the screen look to the audience? Try to make sure the DVD menu is hidden.
- How does the film start? When does sound/image come in? When is the first speech? Make sure you know these points so you can check the sound levels.
- If showing a foreign language film do you know where the subtitles appear? Are they on screen, visible to everyone, or have they slipped off the bottom?
- When should the house lights be on/dimmed/off/raised?
- What order are you playing pre-film material/ shorts? Make a running order for your projectionist.
- Do you have announcements to make before the film? Does your projectionist know?
- Keep in communication with your staff/volunteers. Make sure everyone knows where to be and what to do.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If there is a technical problem during a screening try to keep calm and:

- Try to remember the last thing you did
- Work backwards from end output
- Try one thing at a time, swap one thing at a time
- Most things do not catastrophically fail, apart from bulbs and fuses
- Other things will have failed for a reason
    - Wear and tear on cables
    - Accidentally pulling something out / switching something off

TOOLS

Things to keep to hand in case something goes wrong:

- Gaffer tape
- Spare projector bulb
- Spare fuses
- A 'kettle lead' power cable and a 'figure 8' power cable and an extension lead
- Three phono / RCA cables + a couple of couplers
- A headphone to twin RCA cable
- A craft knife
- A Phillips screwdriver
- Air in a can / airblower
- Spare batteries for remotes

EQUIPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

When starting out most groups look into borrowing a set of equipment for their initial screenings. This can either be done through Cinema For All's equipment hire scheme, finding other local groups who will share their equipment with you, or borrowing from a local audio-visual equipment seller or hire firm. As well as learning what *you* need from your own test screenings, finding out about other people's experiences with sellers and equipment in these situations can be invaluable. With that in mind, below are some top tips from our members in Scotland:

CINEMA FOR ALL SCOTLAND:

Neil Chue Hong: *'My current picks for projectors include the Sanyo PLC XT series which are 3 chip LC. They have good lens options and are very robust and good for temporary venue projection. However, they have poorer blacks and contrast than DLP projectors, and are only available second hand now. Another popular series right now is the Panasonic PT-D series. These are DLP projectors which have a good lens options, a good range to suit different budgets and what's more a great warranty.'*

AYR FILM SOCIETY:

Ron Currie: *'We used [AVCOM](#) when we purchased our equipment and they were really helpful. Before we were able to buy, Cinema For All Scotland had a supply of equipment which we were able to borrow. This really helped us get on our feet.'*

WEST SIDE CINEMA:

Mark Jenkins: *'Stromness Town Hall installed everything before my time, but I advised on the projector they purchased: http://www.projectorcentral.com/Christie-LWU505.htm*

We have been very happy with that for our purposes, and it's well advised to keep a track on lamp life (and always have a spare which is an extra £200) and also to take out some kind of warranty with Christie. We had a problem and they replaced the projector straight away while fixing it.

One major change in our equipment since starting has been that we stopped using the installed Blu-ray player because the presentation was awful, seeing all the menus on screen. We purchased a laptop with a Blu-ray drive, which included a lovely free bit of software called 'display fusion', which allows you to work on your laptop window and when ready pop it over to the cinema screen, to give a seamless and menu free presentation.'

COLINSBURGH COMMUNITY CINEMA:

Peter Marshall: *'Before winning the Filmbank Audience Award at the Cinema For All Film Society of the Year Awards 2012, we used to use a Draper Fastfold 16 ft screen. Since winning we upgraded to a Draper Evenroll 18ft screen. As it is a permanent installation and manually operated the screen is now much easier to set up.*

For sound it is best to choose what fits your budget and needs. Surround sound in a hard hall is often a bad idea as it causes sonic confusion and you lose dialogue. We use 5 speakers - 3 at the front and two half way down the hall. All the speakers are angled so that the sound hits the audience. We were lent a new L1 system by Bose. It is compact and very good (however a bit expensive) but for a group starting out might be worth checking out. They have a representative who tours Scotland.'

MOORFLIX COMMUNITY CINEMA:

Ian Hyslop: *'We did a lot of research for our kit, which is all fully portable but involved many different retailers depending on prices. This has resulted in us having 3 easily moveable flight cases on wheels and handles that fit our Blu-ray players, switching boxes and amplifiers all wired up with power. We have a fixed electric screen and 2 portable screens, 5 speaker surround and subwoofer and one crate with all the cables. It takes about 20 minutes to fully setup in a hall. Below is a list of our suppliers':*

- Portable screens: avcom.co.uk
- Projectors: Purple-Cat.co.uk
- Preview Monitor: Lilliputuk.com
- Speakers, Sub and Stands: dv247.com
- Portable cases: Casemarket.co.uk
- Case drawers and fittings: Swanflight.com
- Speaker connectors: canford.co.uk
- Projector Stand and Custom Cases: chaseav.co.uk
- Projector Case Padded: waterproof-cases.co.uk
- Amp, Blu-Ray players and various cables: amazon.co.uk