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**Transformative Film Culture for Hull 2017:**

**Strategic Partners**

**REPORTING Template**

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| **Please note: Your FINAL REPORT should be made up of the following items:** |
| 1. **This completed NARRATIVE REPORT Template**   **Please use the EVALUATION tab on the KPI BUDGET Spreadsheet you received with your Project Plan as a guide to inform this NARRATIVE REPORT.** |
| 1. **Updated BUDGET sheets**   **Please update the BUDGET sheets on the PROJECT REPORT TABLE to provide your actual income and expenditure for the project set against your original proposed figures.** |
| 1. **An updated KPI and PROJECT REPORT TABLE**   **Please complete the PROJECT REPORT TABLE and feed screening activity information into the KPI tab. Please ensure to provide explanations for any variance (either way) to your projected figures.** |
| 1. **Copies of any marketing or other materials created for your project. Please ensure you include (where possible) images, press cuttings, and any other relevant materials.** |

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| **Organisation:** | University of Hull |
| **Project Title:** | Hull: City of Cinema |

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| 1. **Please provide a summary of the delivery of your project, highlighting in particular any critical successes, and any significant issues, you encountered.** |
| Hull: City of Cinema was a three-day event hosted by the University of Hull, celebrating Hull’s filmmakers, television makers and cinemas – past, present and future.  The programme was of the highest quality, and encompassed a huge range of film and television material, with a range of supporting events. Our headline names, the producers Jeremy Thomas, Tracey Seaward, and Chris Hees, hold between them hold one Academy Award, three BAFTAs, and countless other awards and nominations. It was particularly gratifying to be able to bring Jeremy Thomas back to the childhood home of his father and uncle, and to have him participate in the ceremonial unveiling of a plaque commemorating Ralph and Jeremy Thomas and their contribution to the British film industry, as part of Hull’s Lord Mayor’s centenary plaque project. The appearances of these three top producers were accompanied by screenings of their films: *Sexy Beast* (2000), *Florence Foster Jenkins* (2016) and *The Bigger Picture* (2014). The event’s programme of screenings also included BFI archive screenings of two television dramas filmed in Hull, and written by Hull writers: Alan Plater’s famous *Land of Green Ginger* (1973), and the lesser-known *Small Zones* (1990), which was introduced by its writer, Jim Hawkins.  The event also included scholarly talks on topics including Hull’s historical cinema sites, J Arthur Rank, COUM Transmissions (the subject of a major Hull2017 exhibition), and Marjorie Rhodes. Professor Neil Sinyard delivered an excellent keynote lecture, ‘Hull: City of Cinema’. And on the Friday night, local public figure Michael Wood, East Riding town crier, kicked off proceedings in style with an entertaining talk about his life in the movies (which featured early cinema-going memories in Hull, and a trip to Hollywood to act as town crier there!).  On the Sunday we were delighted to host Pavilion’s ‘The Problem of Perspective’, a travelling exhibition of experimental films. In addition to the programme curated by William Rose, we were able to screen filmmaker Esther Johnson’s film ‘Abstractions of Holderness’, inspired by Basil Kirchin (the subject of another Hull2017 event). Even better, Esther Johnson was present (as was David Woods, maker of one of the films in the ‘Problem of Perspective’ selection), and some aspiring filmmakers took the opportunity to talk to her. Sunday’s programme also included a talk by Jaq Chell of Cinema For All about regional film programming, and a roundtable featuring exhibitors and filmmakers from Hull.  The event was very warmly received by those who attended. Free-form feedback comments included: ‘Excellent. Need more events like this!’; ‘Enjoyable – very interesting, informative – different!’; ‘Very enlightening! Super interesting’; ‘superb 3 day event… Well organised, fascinating subject material’.  University students who attended sent me personal emails of thanks, stating that there ought to be more such events, and that they had valued greatly the opportunity to have contact with filmmakers.  The event was not as well attended as it ought to have been. Further reflection upon this is offered below (mainly in B and C).  (A parenthetical note on the budget: the event was delivered, it turned out, at remarkably low cost. This is mainly due to the fact that all three ‘big names’ ended up making a minimal draw on the money available. Jeremy Thomas was not interested in a fee or claiming travel; he just wanted a hotel room. Chris Hees needed neither travel nor accommodation as he was already in Hull for another purpose. Our short films did not require license fees. Fox ultimately decided to waive their already modest Florence Foster Jenkins fee as it was a screening organised at the request of a producer, and the 20% box office cut they request in such instances would have been very small. Our academic speakers funded their own travel and requested no fees.) |
| 1. **Did the project meet your aims, objectives and intended outcomes (please see the Evaluation tab on your project’s KPI & Budget spreadsheet for guidance)? Please demonstrate how these were achieved. If they were not achieved then please outline why you think this is the case.** |
| The programme ended up being even broader and more ambitious than was planned/projected – thanks to the inclusion of two archival television screenings, and a range of experimental shorts. We delivered more screenings and more ‘talent’ than projected (see above).  If the audience target of 120 is construed as 120 across the three days, with attendance being counted separately each day, then the target was reached. If it is construed as 120 or so people attending the whole thing, the target was not reached.  It has to be said that the event felt somewhat sparse, especially in Middleton Hall, due to its high seating capacity. This was compounded by the fact that, as is inevitable at all-day/weekend events, not all ticket holders attended all elements.  As this is a question of target audience, it can be reflected upon at greater length immediately below. |
| 1. **Please outline how your marketing strategy helped you achieve your Audience target figures. If you did not reach these figures, please explain why you think this is, and what you might do differently if dealing with a similar situation in the future.** |
| As I hope the comms activity in the spreadsheet indicates, there was quite a lot of marketing activity, spread across a range of platforms. Indeed, after Minghella, I thought I had learned some critical lessons: I got the posters designed earlier and the tickets on sale sooner; I got more flyers printed and distributed; I made the poster design more eye-catching and less information-heavy; I engaged with Facebook; I set up a dedicated Twitter account. I tried to piggy-back on other sources of regional film interest through social media, and got Screen Yorkshire, the Yorkshire Film Archive, Hull Independent Cinema, and others, to cross-promote events. Despite this activity, ticket sales were slow. I have agonised over this outcome for many hours. Here are some possible reasons:  1. The timing of the event in the Hull2017 year?  Hull: City of Cinema was one of the last few events in the Jan-Mar ‘Made in Hull’ season. By the time it came around, the new season/brochure had been launched. This timing did not affect big events like Ziggy Stardust and Under the Skin from selling, but perhaps it may have somewhat impacted something slightly more marginal.  2. The particulars of the weekend 24-26 March?  When fixing a date for the City of Cinema weekend, we of course made sure to steer clear of Easter, but Mother’s Day seems to have had a bit of an effect. My attempts to get Screen Yorkshire to participate on the Sunday stalled because I was told the team had made Mother’s Day plans. The weekend was also gloriously sunny (the first weekend of British summertime), which may have affected walkup.  3. Marketing?  As stated, there was a multi-channel marketing push. Now that the City of Culture year is in full swing, it may be more difficult to cut through the noise. Some of the standalone marketing requests for this event that I made to the University were rolled into more general announcements, covering several events.  4. Overestimating the appetite of the audience?  The appetite of Hull audiences for film content is growing, as evidenced by Hull Independent Cinema’s increasing number of screenings. However, perhaps a full weekend event, including in the middle a 13-hour day, is a step too far. It is notable that the event was much better shared on social media than it was attended – as though people thought it was a good idea in principle and were glad it was happening, but didn’t want to devote a whole weekend to it! This observation will feed into my recommendations in H.  5. Selling points?  Film producers are almost certainly the filmmaking personnel who suffer/enjoy the lowest visibility/prestige to significance ratio. Perhaps people will be attracted to come and hear actors and directors, but not producers. (It is worth briefly mentioning that having producers rather than actors makes for an event that can be more easily planned and confidently advertised – producers are less of a flight risk than actors. They are also cheaper!) The film programme offered was also – almost inevitably due to the content/theme of the event – retrospective. As one of our other projects, Middleton Movie Mondays, has demonstrated, selling retrospective content to a Hull film audience is a challenge. It needs a strong theme/banner (eg. Cult Cinema Sunday to succeed).  6. Missing the target audience?  The event was designed to be accessible to all, and to appeal to all with a general interest in film and the city. Our lowest audience was on Sunday. As this was the day most geared towards the industry/’the future’, this suggests that we did not successfully reach a young/student audience – student meaning pre-university as well as university. This is further reflected upon in H. |
| 1. **Please describe how the project addressed issues of access, and how it engaged with diverse audiences and differing perspectives in the programme and activities.** |
| The University’s venues are designed for physical accessibility, and the Middleton Hall is equipped with an audio loop. Ticket pricing was modest, in an attempt to neutralise, as far as possible, cost as a barrier to entry.  The space in the programme for Q&As and discussion led to some lively debate about Hull’s representation and its identity – particularly following the screening of *Land of Green Ginger*.  Overall, the range of programming content aimed to range from experimental film to prestigious television to mainstream successes, thus catering to a range of interests. |
| 1. **Please provide an outline of your work with partners on this project. What went well? What didn’t? Did you engage with all the partners listed in the project plan? If not, why not?** |
| The delivery model for this event was forged in the sustained and close engagement between the University (represented by me), Hull2017 (represented by Liam Rich) and Film Hub North (represented by Anna Plant) during the planning and delivery of the Minghella retrospective.  Film Hub North and Hull2017 had input chiefly at the press release/promotional design stages, offering useful feedback on the press release copy/approach and the poster concept and information. In the immediate run-up to the event, Hull2017 provided some useful, high-visibility social media presence, and secured a Hull Daily Mail online feature about the event. |
| 1. **Please provide an overview of the press and media coverage that your project achieved.** |
| I recorded an interview for local radio station Beverley FM that went out periodically in the run-up to the event.  I also recorded an interview with Estuary TV that was used as a spot in their coverage.  The Hull Daily Mail website published a feature about the event. |
| 1. **Please outline any further legacy from your project, and any potential for its future sustainability. How will your project’s outcomes contribute to future growth for a cinematic audience in Hull?** |
| The event energised and inspired its attendees and contributors. It put students in touch with aspiring filmmakers, and it put members of Humber Film and Hull Independent Cinema in touch with one another, and provided a forum for discussion of and reflection upon the future of film in Hull. |
| 1. **Please provide any other conclusions or recommendations you may have about any aspect of your project.** |
| Reflecting honestly and critically, I can say that ‘Hull: City of Cinema’ was at least the equal of the film events surrounding it in terms of quality, but in terms of audience, it underperformed. The night after the event ended, *Moonlight* was screened in the same venue to an audience of 300+. A week later, *Under the Skin* with the London Sinfonietta played to a sold-out Middleton crowd (admittedly, some seats were removed to make way for the orchestra). The Yorkshire Film Archive’s ‘Hull on Film’ screening sold out at Vue cinema – twice!  City of Cinema lacked the marketing hooks of these events (respectively, a surprise, and surprising, Oscar win; a live orchestra; a distilled collection of old images of the city). It would be a shame if this led to an unduly cautious programming strategy. However, my three main lessons learned are as follows:  1. The University has not yet built a reliable film audience of its own. Hull Independent Cinema can bring an audience to Middleton Hall, but that audience tends to come mainly for HIC events. The University will not currently be able to sustain a programme of standalone films. It ought to focus instead with special events with plenty of sellable supporting content.  2. A three-day event risks spreading a film audience too thinly. If an event is to take place over multiple days, it is probably best to sell tickets for individual screenings (in the Hull Film Festival model). Content with historical/intellectual value is perhaps best ‘packaged’ in a programme that leads with a stronger marketing hook (for example, experimental shorts with a Humber connection could precede an HIC screening).  3. Events aimed at a student audience probably have the best chance of succeeding if the students are targeted via their institutions rather than individually, through the auspices of organisations like INTO FILM, or the University’s own connections. Crucially, this implies also that the events will be best held during term time, on weekdays. |
| 1. **In what way(s) did your project benefit from its association with the wider Transformative Film Culture for Hull 2017 project? Were there any negative implications to being associated with the wider project? In what way did your project contribute to the cultural objectives of the wider project? If you have any further comments on this relationship, please also add these here.** |
| This event was all about showcasing Hull and East Yorkshire’s contribution to film and television, and as such made a valuable, unique contribution to Hull’s developing film culture. It was able to form part of the larger narrative of film events happening in Hull – and every opportunity was taken to use other organisations and screenings benefiting from the TFC project to cross-promote – on social media, and at screenings themselves. The large proportion of survey respondees who report having heard of the event through ‘word of mouth’ are perhaps testament to this. I have speculated that the event perhaps suffered from being part of an embarrassment of riches, but I don’t think this had a major negative effect. I am proud that the University has been able to contribute an event of this kind to the project, and to bring together international producers, scholars, local enthusiasts, students, and those actively involved in shaping the future of Hull’s film culture. |

**Please email all elements of your report to** [megan@filmhubnorth.org.uk](mailto:megan@filmhubnorth.org.uk)

**OR post to Megan Liotta**

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**Thank you.**