

## A Simple Guide To: AUGMENTING FILM SCREENINGS

Putting on a film screening doesn't have to be about just showing a film. Venues can make their events stand out and attract new audiences by augmenting their screenings with something extra.

Remember to contact your regional or national [Film Hub](#) to find out how they can support such events.

### TALENT Q&AS

With many indie film releases, distributors often take the talent (director, actors, writers, producers) out on tour so they can talk about and promote the film. Depending on when you're planning on showing the film, the distributor may be willing to bring the talent to your venue!

The opportunity to see the cast and crew talk live about their experiences making the film are likely to draw new audiences eager to learn behind-the-scenes details. It's also worth considering craftspeople such as costume designers, special effects artists, sound designers or cinematographers to offer a behind-the-scene perspective particularly if you are hoping to attract local talent interest in filmmaking.

If someone from your team isn't able to host, you might want to think about asking a local journalist or influencer to step in.

**EXAMPLE: Watershed (Bristol), MAC (Birmingham), Showroom (Sheffield) did Q&As with star/writer Greg Sestero as part of a mini-UK tour during the release of [The Disaster Artist](#).**

If the talent isn't able to be there in person, a Skype Q&A might be an option so the talent is still able to answer any questions that your audience might have. This has been very popular with certain venues who have made it a regular occurrence such as the Cinéma Le Méliès, France whose 'Skype Me If You Can' events have attracted a number of stars such as [Beasts of the Southern Wild](#) director Benh Zeitlin.

In some instances, distributors offer added-value talent Q&As via satellite providing that the venue is set up to receive it such as this preview screening of [Dogman with a Q&A](#) with director Matteo Garrone live from the BFI London Film Festival.

**[Subscribe to Booking Now to access information about such talent tours.](#)**

### GUEST SPEAKERS

Sometimes a film's subject matter lends itself to getting a guest speaker in to either [introduce the film](#), do a post-movie Q&A or help to facilitate a [post-film discussion](#) with the audience which can be incredibly insightful and fascinating for a more challenging or complex film.

This can be anything from a specific expert, such as a professor in world cinema or someone who has a specific insight or perspective such as the victim of a traumatic event and/or clinical psychologist ([as held by Genesis Cinema for \*Utøya\*: July 22](#)).

You don't always have to look for experts in film and cinema. Academic speakers can also make ideal guest speakers if the film is on a specific subject. Is the film about space or the environment? Contact your local university's science department for a professor. Does the movie deal with a significant political or historical event? There are plenty of academics who might be great at providing a context to the film. It's worth doing your research to find academics that enjoy public speaking and brief them well.

Also, don't discount your own team. You might have an expert in Korean Cinema working in your box office or a projectionist that is currently studying for a masters in International History! You could already have potential guest speakers in your midst.

**EXAMPLE: Watershed box office staff member (who also happens to be an independent film blogger and programmer), [Sven de Hondt did a talk on South-Korean director Lee Chang-Dong \(to tie in with the release of \*Burning\*\)](#)**

## **SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL (MAKING OFs, INTERVIEWS, ETC)**

In some instances, distributors might have supplemental material that be screened before or after a film which might be a cost effective way of contextualising a film without a guest.

This could be anything from a recorded director's interview, a short 'making-of' documentary, a look at the 'real life' subjects of the film or a cast/crew round-table.

Make sure to ask the distributors if there is any additional supplemental material that you could use to enhance your event.

**EXAMPLE: Independent label Troma often go out of their way to send out '[personalised](#)' intros for screenings of their films as well as director/producer Q&As videos.**

## **CULTURAL CONNECTION**

Introducing lesser known world cinema titles into your programme might prove a little daunting at first for audiences and venues alike but by enhancing your screening with a cultural experience, the whole event can take on a much more fun and social dimension - one that new audiences might connect with, share online and tell friends about.

This can be anything from having culinary tie-ins (e.g. sushi or a [Japanese tea ceremony](#) at screenings of *Shoplifters*), having the [UK wushu team perform](#) before a martial arts screening or have local cultural / activist groups participate in the event.

By reaching out to local cultural groups, your screenings also have the potential to find a whole new audience, whether it's the local university's Korean society coming to your screening of *Burning* or a poet performing live at a screening..

**EXAMPLE:** [Black History Walks screening of Black Panther with Dr Michelle Asantewa, Dr Lez Henry, Terry Jervis and Tony Warner to discuss the history, impact and future of this and other African superheroes - Q&A can be viewed \[HERE\]\(#\)](#)

## **MEDIA TIE-IN (BOOK/MUSIC)**

With so many movies based on books and graphic novels these days, it doesn't take much to organise a tie-in event with the publisher or a local bookstore. Many publishers are willing to send some complimentary copies of the book to offer up as competition prizes or bookshops are willing to offer a discount to patrons that show up with a cinema ticket of the relevant film.

Likewise, if the film has a particular musical theme, perhaps hire a local DJ to get the audience in the mood with tracks before or after the screening or partner up with your local record shop for a cross promotion.

**EXAMPLE:** *Queen's Film Theatre in Belfast collaborated with a local book group for a [screening of Burning](#) and a reading of the Murakami's book that it was based on.*

## **ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVITY**

Many people shun the cinema for fear of being excluded for disability or their social or ethnic backgrounds. It could also just be that the idea of an independent cinema can be off-putting or the ticket price prohibitive.

If you want to bring films to as wide an audience as possible, it's really worth thinking about how you might remove barriers to engagement.

**EXAMPLE:** *BFI FAN platform [Inclusive Cinema](#) is packed full of advice and tips on how to create more inclusive events and case studies on everything from autistic, disabled, sight loss and LGBTQ+ screenings and more.*

## **BESPOKE MERCHANDISE**

Everyone loves free stuff! Having a bit of merchandise that attendees get to take home with them is always going to be appreciated and talked about. It's worth finding out what distributors are able to offer in support of their film releases. T-shirts can be a great way of making a film more visible across your venue and a nice perk for your team.

Merchandise just doesn't have to be t-shirts, badges, fridge magnets, beer mats or beanie hats. It can be something much more bespoke to your event.

**EXAMPLE:** *Jemma Desai from [I Am Dora](#) invited guest curator Romola Garai to curate a screening and write on a piece of paper her choice of film and the female characters in it. These were then turned into two very simple, yet elegantly designed, inserts and placed with a boiled sweet in a candy stripe paper bag and were handed out as limited edition film notes at the screening. [Jemma Desai on I am Dora](#)*

## **LOCAL CELEBRITY / INFLUENCER ENDORSEMENT**

Is there a local celebrity that might be able to champion a film in your programme? Inviting a notable influencer to your event could be a great way to get added publicity (especially if they talk about it on social media) as they are likely to draw a large crowd.

**EXAMPLE:** *Cornwall based Film Critic Mark Kermode regularly introduces screenings at the Plaza Cinema in Truro which has become a hugely popular ongoing strand: [Kermode Presents](#)*

## **GIMMICKS**

One way to get a lot of press and social media attention is through a gimmick. Picturehouse Cinemas recently did film screenings for pets which, while it might sound like a logistical nightmare, generated a lot of press.

**EXAMPLE:** *[Dog-friendly screenings at Picturehouse](#)*