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BFI FAN New Releases 2019/20 Summary Evaluation Report

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Background and introduction

From Summer 2019 to Spring 2020, BFI FAN has supported a further four New Releases as part its ongoing work to help exhibitors across the UK engage with more diverse audiences, and programme more titles that might be perceived as being 'risky' or 'too challenging'.

The four films to receive FAN support were

We the Animals

Hail Satan?

The Peanut Butter Falcon

System Crasher

Support for exhibitors includes a marketing pack; access to a small campaign budget; an extended press and marketing campaign in each Film Hub area; intensive audience development support for selected FAN venues from a regionally based freelance marketing consultant.

Aims of this evaluation

The aims of this evaluation were to identify and understand the impacts of the New Release programme on the selected titles, and to help inform future development of the scheme.

Methods

Evaluation activities included:

- Semi structured interviews with distributors and freelancers
- Analysis of box office and audience survey data
- Feedback from exhibitors taking part in the scheme

The release of the final title, *System Crasher*, on 27 March coincided with the start of lockdown across the UK in response to COVID 19. This meant the film's theatrical release was curtailed, and the resulting furloughing of cinema staff has meant that the planned aimed outputs from the evaluation were revised. Along with this report, there are a number of case studies available on [The Bigger Picture](#) created as part of the evaluation.

The Findings

Exhibitors Perspective

Each Film Hub nominated an exhibitor in their area as one of the 'key venues' in the scheme, these cinemas received additional funding for social media advertising, focused support from a freelancer, and the chance to attend workshops and evaluation sessions at Watershed with other participants.

Motivations for applying to be part of the scheme?

- Experiment with programming a broader range of titles
- And in turn broaden their audience
- Benefit from shared learning and experimentation with other venues

How useful was the support provided by the scheme ?

Most useful were the marketing pack and the freelance support

How could it be improved?

Generally positive about their experience. Suggestions included:

- More sharing of information and ideas
- More of a financial incentive to book titles
- A lighter evaluation burden
- A simplified marketing pack
- A more effective use of freelance support

What benefits has the scheme has on the organisations taking part?

- The opportunity to learn and share together
- The additional marketing focus on the particular titles

What have exhibitors learnt?

- Increased their confidence to book more 'challenging' titles
- Developed practical social media skills
- Embedded 'Wraparound' events in their programmes
- Cemented the relationship with their freelancer

How did the 2019/20 titles work?

The Peanut Butter Falcon performed best of the three titles released theatrically, whilst exhibitors noted that other titles were more of a 'hard sell' in particular *We the Animals*.

How important was the New Release as a motivation to book for the films?

Positive impact on decision making for all:

- Some would have been unlikely to book some or all of the titles without the support of the scheme
- Others, although they would have most likely booked these titles anyway, the support provided additional visibility and incentive

Distributors perspective

Interviews were held with representatives from the distributors of *The Peanut Butter Falcon* and *System Crasher*.

Expectations

Reaching exhibitors beyond London is **the** key expectation and benefit of the scheme

What works well

- Access to the FAN network of exhibitors is a key success of the scheme
- The scheme enabled them to establish strong exhibitor relationships, and provided a credibility in the sector that will benefit them in the future
- A valuable learning experience for both distributors, in terms of exhibition generally and in terms of creating accessible cinema experiences
- Both consider BFI FAN New Release a partnership
- For one, the minimal reporting requirement was a plus
- For another the relationships formed during the scheme have led to other opportunities;

What could be improved ?

Both distributors found it hard to find fault with the programme

- One suggested that additional support to improve accessibility would be valuable
- Both were enthusiastic about putting forward titles to the scheme in the future

Freelancer perspective

What role do freelancers have in the New Release

The interviewees consulted for this report undertook some or all of the following activities:

- A 'bridge' between distributors, NRS team at Watershed and exhibitors in their region
- Encouraging exhibitors to screen and promote the New Release titles
- Circulating the marketing pack, assets and merchandise
- Working more closely with one or two key venues in their region
- Grassroots outreach to potential target audiences
- Organizing speakers and events
- Assisting with social media and other promotional activities and managing a modest social media advertising budget that cinemas can access

How is this working out ?

- On the whole, there is increasing clarity about the role of freelancers, though there is some small scale residual confusion about how the scheme has evolved
- Consistent feedback that the four days allocated to each title doesn't always match the workload; not a problem though, as freelancers are happy to flex their time
- The focus on 'key venues' in each region doesn't always work out

What do freelancers consider exhibitors find most useful?

- Trusted individual support is key
- Marketing pack and assets are important
- An extra pair of hands is useful

What do they think makes the most difference to encourage exhibitors to experiment with new programming and marketing approaches?

- The budgets available to support advertising and additional activity
- Freelancers encouraging and supporting programmers
- Marketing assets (as long as they are relevant and useful)
- The financial bottom line (MG)
- The commitment that comes with signing up to a programme

What is the optimum role for hubs?

- Key is embedding New Release Scheme as part of each Hubs programme (rather than coming from 'elsewhere')
- Some freelancers had particularly good relationships with their hubs, whilst others are still struggling to do this
- Hubs play an important role providing contextual knowledge of their members to help the freelancers with relationship development

What works well

- Everyone is very positive about the support provided by the New Release team lead at Watershed
- The regular freelancer check ins were considered really valuable, especially those with distributors, as is the chance to get together face to face in Bristol;
- Peer support from the other freelancers and feeling part of a collective effort is important
- A general sense across the freelancers that the current system is now working well, and that issues have been resolved

What could be improved?

- A request from all the freelancers for exhibitors to share up to date information about film bookings
- Engagement with the catch up calls could be re-started

Box office

Total box office for the three New Releases titles was (as of June 2020):

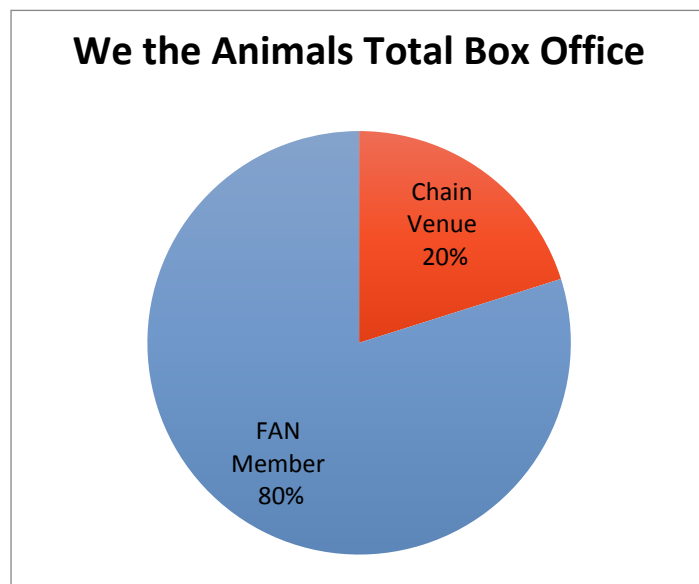
We the Animals £23,636

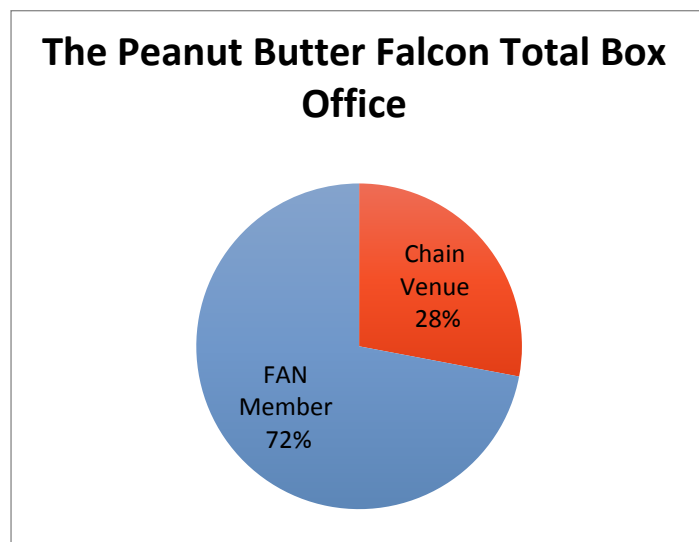
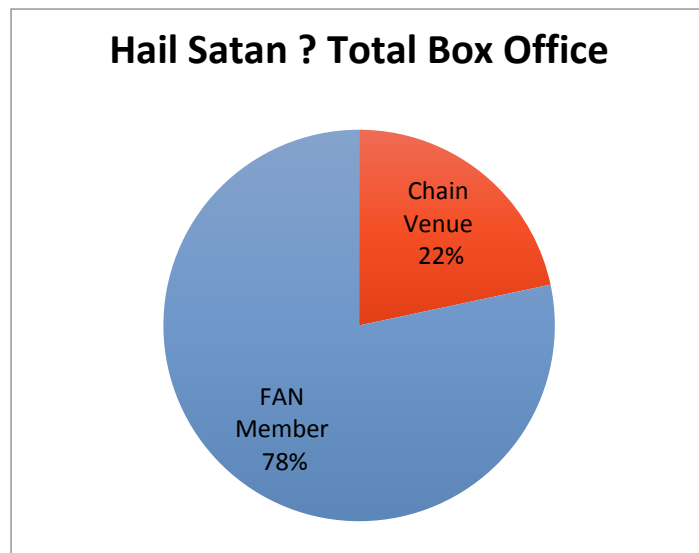
Hail Satan? £50,580

The Peanut Butter Falcon £191,232

The impact of the FAN Network on box office

BFI FAN Network network had a considerable impact of the total box office for all the titles, with these exhibitors responsible for up to 4/5 of total box office.



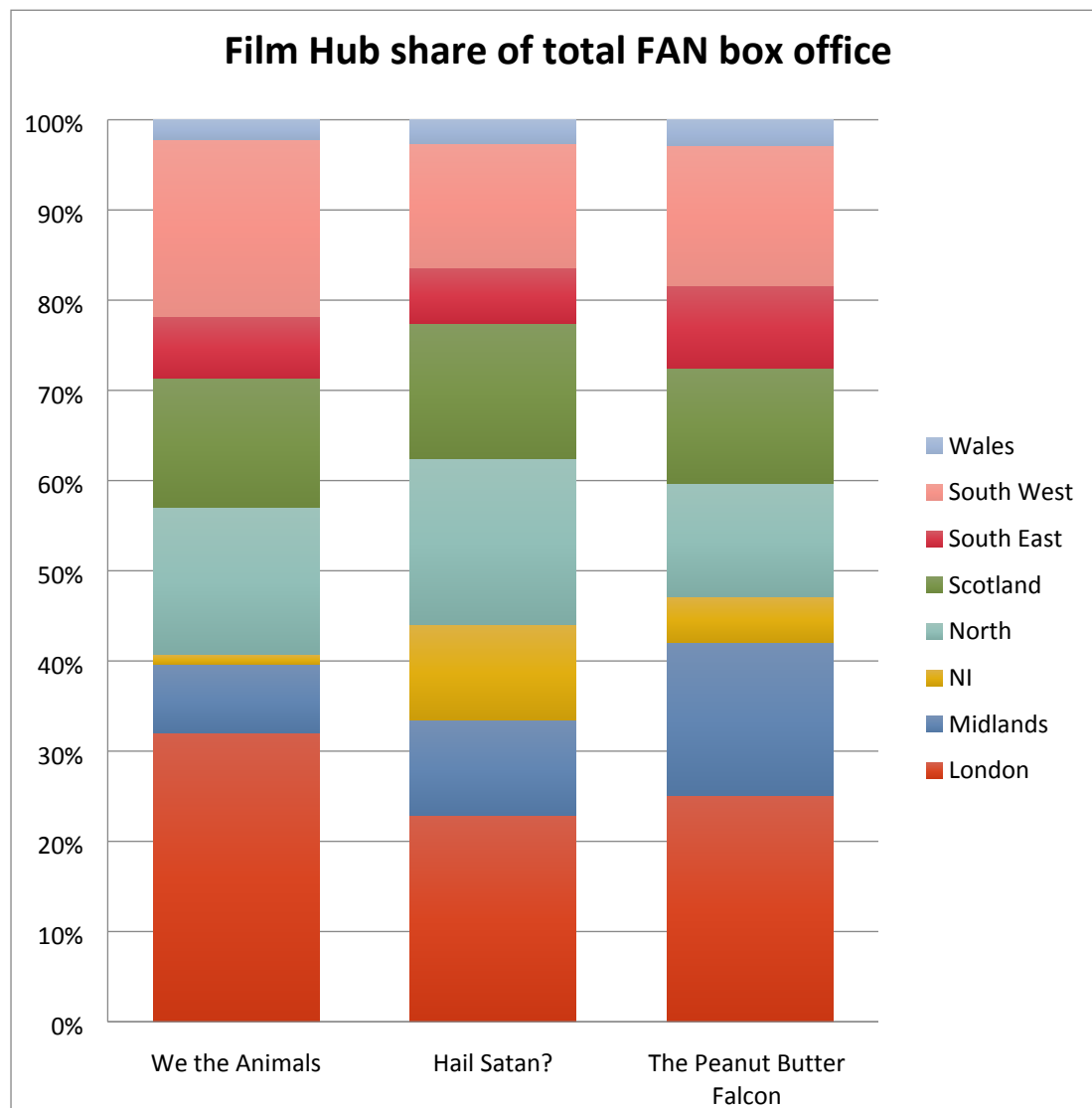


Film Hub Areas

Whilst London is, not surprisingly, responsible for largest share of box office across the New Release films, the proportion of box office generated by the different Film Hub areas varies considerably across the three titles.

- The London share of box office is highest for *We the Animals*
- In the Midlands *The Peanut Butter Falcon* performed particularly well, whilst their share of box office for *We the Animals* is modest.
- Despite screening at just one venue (QFT), Northern Ireland generated 10% of the total FAN revenue for *Hail Satan?* Given the number of relevant venues in NI, this Hub also over performed in terms of box office share for *The Peanut Butter Falcon*.
- *Hail Satan?* And *We The Animals* were particularly popular in the North FAN area
- Scotland's share of box office was consistent across all three titles, representing between 13-15% of the total
- The picture is similar in the South East, with this Hub area responsible for between 6% and 9% of total box office

- In the South West, *We the Animals* performed particularly well, with this Hub area responsible for one fifth of the total box office for the title
- Cinemas in Film Hub Wales generated between 2% and 3% of total box office across the titles



Audience feedback

There was a limited engagement with the audience surveys for these titles amongst exhibitors, with just 76 completed surveys collected across *The Peanut Butter Falcon*, *We The Animals* and *Hail Satan?* These surveys were collected by the Courtyard, Queens Film Theatre, Saffron Screen and Magic Lantern. The limited data we have therefore, isn't representative of the audience for the titles. What follows is a selection of qualitative feedback provided.

We The Animals

"Intro good, but I don't like being told what I'm about to watch"

"Very good film. Thought-provoking and artistic."

"It was a subtle, textured film. Very enjoyable"

"Excellent"

“Upsetting”

Hail Satan ?

“Well organised, great film selection. Unafraid of controversy. Interesting Q&A”

“Excellent Q & A”

The Peanut Butter Falcon

“Really enjoyable - especially good to see diversification”

“Brilliant that films are being made to educate about disability”

“Excellent film”

“Loved the film”

“Amazing all round”

Conclusions and recommendations

- The system of freelancer support is now working well: freelancers are clear about the expectations of their role; marketing assets work well; and the individuals have built up trusted relationships with exhibitors in their area.
- Whilst Hub and freelancer relationships are generally positive, there is still scope to ensure that there is consistency in each Hub area. Freelancers could also be supported to have more contact with Hub's members and hub teams.
- Distributors are overwhelmingly supportive and appreciate of the scheme; in particular the access it provides to the FAN network of cinemas.
- The processes of the New Release Scheme are working well from all perspectives.
- Freelancers would benefit from access to more accurate film booking data from distributors, and the regular check ins with the Watershed team and distributors could be re-energised.
- The ‘key venues’ in each Hub area vary considerably in their engagement with the scheme, and practical ways to address this are already in discussion.
- Access to funding could support costs of creating accessible files to ensure all titles can be seen as wide an audience as possible.
- Obtaining audience perspectives on the titles continues to be challenging. If it is important to include audience perspectives in the evaluation going forward, then this aspect of the evaluation approach will require a radical re-think.

Appendix

Film Hub member bookings

London

	We the Animals	Hail Satan?	The Peanut Butter Falcon	System Crasher *Booked but not screened
Archlight Cinema			✓	
Arthouse Crouch End			✓	✓
Barbican	✓	✓	✓	
BFI Southbank		✓	✓	
Castle Cinema	✓		✓	✓
Catford Mews				✓
David Lean			✓	
Genesis	✓	✓	✓	✓
Haslemere Moving Pictures			✓	
ICA	✓	✓		
Kiln Theatre	✓	✓	✓	
Leatherhead Theatre			✓	
Olympic Studio			✓	
Peckhamplex 6			✓	
Prince Charles 2			✓	
Regent Street Cinema	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rex			✓	
Rio	✓			✓
Ritzy Cinema			✓	✓
Riverside Studios				✓
Showcase Bluewater 17			✓	
Watermans	✓	✓		
West Norwood Library And Picturehouse	☒	✓	✓	

Midlands

		We the Animals	Hail Satan	The Peanut Butter Falcon	System Crasher *Booked but not screened
Broadway Media	Nottingham	✓	✓	✓	✓
Buxton Cinema	Buxton			✓	✓
Courtyard	Hereford	✓		✓	
Electric	Birmingham		✓	✓	✓
Errol Flynn Filmhouse	Northampton	✓	✓	✓	✓

Film Place	Buckingham				✓
Forum Cinema	Northampton				✓
KinoKulture	Oswestry	✓			✓
Light House (Wolverhampton)	Wolverhampton	✓			✓
MAC (Midland Arts Centre)	Birmingham				✓
Malvern Theatres	Malvern				✓
Phoenix (Leicester)	Leicester	✓	✓		✓
Quad	Derby		✓		✓
Savoy Cinema Corby	Corby				✓
Showcase Coventry 14	Coventry				✓
Showcase Derby De Lux 12	Derby				✓
Showcase Leicester De Lux 12	Leicester				✓
Showcase Nottingham 13	Nottingham				✓
Showcase Walsall 12	Walsall				✓
Stafford Cinema	Stafford				✓
Stamford Arts Centre	Stamford	✓	✓		✓
Stoke Film Theatre	Stoke-on-Trent		✓		✓
The Mockingbird Cinema And Kitchen	Birmingham	✓			✓

Northern Ireland

		We the Animals	Hail Satan?	The Peanut Butter Falcon	System Crasher *Booked but not screened
Queens Film Theatre Belfast	Belfast	✓	✓	✓	✓
Brunswick Moviebowl	Derry			✓	

Note – the number of theatrical bookings for the titles is an accurate reflection of the independent exhibition infrastructure of Northern Ireland

North

		We the Animals	Hail Satan?	The Peanut Butter Falcon	System Crasher *Booked but not screened
Alhambra	Penrith	✓		✓	
Arc Theatre	Stockton	✓		✓	✓
Brewery Arts	Kendal		✓	✓	
City Screen York	York		✓	✓	
Dukes	Lancaster	✓		✓	✓
Hebden Bridge Picture House	Hebden Bridge		✓	✓	✓

HOME	Manchester	✓		✓	✓
Hull Independent Cinema					✓
Hyde Park Picture House	Leeds	✓	✓	✓	
Ilkley Cinema	Ilkley			✓	
Jam Jar Cinema	Whitley Bay		✓	✓	
Palace	Longridge			✓	
Savoy	Worksop			✓	
Savoy	Worksop			✓	
Showcase Leeds 16	Leeds			✓	
Showroom	Sheffield	✓	✓	✓	✓
Square Chapel Centre For The Arts	Halifax	✓		✓	✓
Storyhouse	Chester		✓	✓	
The Venue	Lincoln			✓	
Tyneside Cinema	Newcastle	✓	✓	✓	✓

Scotland

			We the Animals	Hail Satan?	The Peanut Butter Falcon	System Crasher *Booked but not screened
An Lanntair	Stornoway				✓	
Belmont Filmhouse	Aberdeen			✓	✓	✓
Campbeltown Picture House	Campbeltown			✓	✓	
Dundee Contemporary Arts	Dundee	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eden Court	Inverness	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Filmhouse	Edinburgh	✓	✓	✓		
Glasgow Film Theatre	Glasgow	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hippodrome	Bo'ness				✓	
Macroberts Arts	Stirling	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Mareel Shetland Arts	Lerwick	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Phoenix (Kirkwall)	Kirkwall				✓	
Phoenix Cinema	Oban	✓			✓	
Robert Burns Centre	Dumfries	✓			✓	
The Cameo	Edinburgh			✓	✓	✓
The Tower Digital Arts Centre	Helensburgh				✓	

South East

			We the Animals	Hail Satan?	The Peanut Butter Falcon	System Crasher *Booked but not screened
Capital	Horsham	✓				
Cinema City	Norwich			✓	✓	
Connaught	Worthing			✓		✓

Depot	Lewes	✓	✓	✓	
Firstsite	Colchester	✓	✓	✓	
Gulbenkian Cinema	Canterbury	✓	✓	✓	
Ipswich Film Theatre	Ipswich	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kino Rye	Rye			✓	
MK Gallery	Milton Keynes	✓			
Norden Farm	Maidenhead	✓			
Riverside	Woodbridge			✓	
Royston Picture Palace	Royston			✓	
	Saffron				✓
Saffron Screen	Walden	✓	✓	✓	
Showcase Peterborough De Lux 13	Peterborough			✓	
Showcase Reading 14	Reading			✓	
South Hill Park	Bracknell			✓	✓
The Odyssey Cinema	Saint Albans			✓	✓
Ultimate	Oxford	✓		✓	

South West

			We the Animals	Hail Satan?	The Peanut Butter Falcon	System Crasher *Booked but not screened
Barn	Dartington				✓	
Bridport Arts Centre	Bridport	✓			?	
Cube Arts Centre	Bristol	✓		✓	?	
Curzon	Clevedon	✓			?	✓
Electric Picture House	Wotton				✓	✓
Flavel Theatre	Dartmouth				✓	
Little Theatre	Bath			✓	?	
Lighthouse (Poole)	Poole			✓	✓	
New Park	Chichester	✓			✓	✓
Newlyn Filmhouse	Newlyn				✓	
Parabola Arts Centre	Cheltenham	✓			?	
Phoenix (Exeter)	Exeter				✓	✓
Plymouth Arts Centre	Plymouth			✓	✓	✓
Poly	Falmouth	✓			✓	
Roses	Tewkesbury	✓			?	✓
Sherborne Cinema	Gloucester				✓	
Showcase Bristol De Lux 13	Bristol				✓	
Showcase Southampton De Lux 10	Southampton				✓	
Showcase Stockton 14	Stockton				✓	
Strode	Street	✓			✓	
Watermark	Ivybridge				✓	
Watershed	Bristol	✓		✓	✓	✓

Wales

		We the Animals	Hail Satan?	The Peanut Butter Falcon	System Crasher *Booked but not screened
Aberystwyth Arts Centre	Aberystwyth			✓	
Chapter	Cardiff	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clwyd Theatr Cymru	Mold			✓	
Galeri Arts Centre	Caernarfon		✓	✓	
Magic Lantern Cinema	Tywyn	✓		✓	
Showcase Nantgarw 12	Nantgarw			✓	
Richard Booth's Bookshop Cinema	Hay-on-Wye	✓		✓	
Riverfront Cinema	Newport (Gwent)		✓		
Taliesin	Swansea			✓	
Theatr Gwaun	Fishguard			✓	