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# **Film Festival and Cinema Audiences: A study of exhibition practice and audience reception at Glasgow Film Festival**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy



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School of Culture and Creative Arts

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## Abstract

This thesis takes the view that film festivals are ‘social constructions’ and therefore need social subjects (people) to function. From global media audiences to those physically present at screenings: it is people who make film festivals (Dayan 2000). Nevertheless, Film Festival Studies, with its preoccupation with global economics and/or the political nature of these events, has arguably omitted the ‘audience voice’ meaning much of the empirical work on offer derives from market research by festivals themselves. As such, there is little conceptual contribution about what makes festivals culturally important to audiences or the ways in which festival practice differs from, or synergises with, broader cinematic practice.

This thesis investigates exhibition practice *and* audience reception at Glasgow Film Festival (GFF) over three years (2011-13). In just nine years, GFF has expanded significantly, increasing from 6000 attendances in its advent year to over 39,000 in 2013. Now the UK’s third largest film festival, it prides itself as a ‘local audience festival’ and continually articulates its provision of ‘something for everyone’, both in terms of texts (films and paratext) and contexts (the environments where the event takes place). Thus, unlike specialist festivals (identity-based, genre), it does not segment its audience by a shared identity or taste, but by its audiences’ shared locality and appetite for film.

The originality of the work is found in its contribution to the burgeoning field of Film Festival Studies and its methodological intervention as one of the earliest studies on film festival audiences. Using qualitative audience research methods, elite interviews and ethnography, it approaches film festival analysis through a nuanced lens. Furthermore, the positioning of the research within the interdisciplinary landscape of Film Festival Studies, Film Studies and Cultural Studies offers a broad context for understanding the appeal of ‘audience film festivals’ and the exhibition practices that exist within this often neglected type of film festival. Adopting a mixed-method approach, fieldwork is supplemented by box office analysis and archival research, which situates this contemporary investigation within the festival’s cinematic heritage - its connection to a 1930s former art house

cinema which now functions as the festival's hub venue, and its inherent connection to various sites of 'institutionally and spatially located' exhibition spaces (a multiplex, art house, art gallery/centre) (Harbord, 2002).

In terms of exhibition, the thesis argues that GFF constantly negotiates its position as an event that is both populist and distinct, and local and international. Through its diverse programme (mainstream and experimental films, conventional and unconventional venues) and its discursive positioning of films, it manages its position as both a local and inclusive event and a prestigious festival with aspirations of international recognition.<sup>1</sup> In a broader sense it also suggests that festival exhibition is a multi-layered operation that strives to create a 'total experience' for audiences, and in this respect differs greatly from standard cinematic exhibition.

With a distinct focus on the festival audience, it presents accounts from the mouths of real festival-goers about why they attend GFF and how they navigate the programmes and make choices about what to attend. Moreover, it offers experiential testimonies about the dominant pleasures of the festival experience, and provides the first conceptual framework of vocabularies of pleasure in a film festival context. Moreover, it argues that despite the fact that the *raison d'être* of film festivals is to present films, audiences privilege the contextual conditions of the event in their experiential accounts. Indeed, research participants articulate their festival experiences in spatial and corporeal terms, and take great pleasure in the reduced proximity granted by the frenetic festival environment, which places them physically close to other festival-goers. As such, the thesis serves to problematise Film Studies' conventions of immersion and disembodiment by proposing that film festivals are predominantly sites of heightened participation, active spectatorship, and spatial and embodied pleasure.

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<sup>1</sup> GFF programmers want the event to be recognised as a leading audience festival on the festival circuit.

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<sup>2</sup> Where appropriate, Stuart Crawford is identified as SC, Neil Douglas as ND, Eoin Carey as EC, David Monteith-Hodge as DMH, Ingrid Muir as IM, and Euan Robertson as ER.

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## **Author's Declaration**

This thesis represents the original work of Lesley-Ann Dickson unless otherwise stated in the text. The research on which it was based was carried out at the University of Glasgow under the supervision of Professor Raymond Boyle and Professor Karen Boyle, and at Glasgow Film Theatre with the supervision of Jaki MacDougall and Emily Munro, during the period October 2010 to April 2014.

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## **Abbreviations**

The following abbreviations are used often in this thesis.

GFT - Glasgow Film Theatre

GFF - Glasgow Film Festival

CCA - Centre for Contemporary Arts

CRS - Cineworld Renfrew Street

GFF11 - Glasgow Film Festival 2011

GFF12 - Glasgow Film Festival 2012

GFF13 - Glasgow Film Festival 2013

GFF14 - Glasgow Film Festival 2014

EIFF - Edinburgh International Film Festival

TIFF - Toronto International Film Festival

IFFR - International Film Festival Rotterdam

UC - Cineworld Unlimited Card

FG1 - Focus group session one

FG2 - Focus group session two

FG3 - Focus group session three

FG4 - Focus group session four

FG5 - Focus group session five

FG6 - Focus group session six

FG7 - Focus group session seven

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century film festivals have become an increasingly significant area of scholarly interest. Regarded as global phenomenon owing to the rate at which they have proliferated locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, festivals present fertile ground for investigating film texts, film cultures, film industries and film audiences. Indeed, given their position as ‘driving forces behind the global circulation of cinema,’ interest in the subject has been linked to other expanding areas of scholarship within Film Studies and beyond, such as exhibition, distribution and cultural policy (Iordanova & Rhyne, 2009: 1; Archibald & Miller, 2011b: 249). Thus, festivals have been studied from a variety of perspectives, such as, organisational studies (Fischer 2013), anthropology (Dayan 2000), tourist management (Lee et al 2004; Lee et al 2008; Grunwell 2008), marketing (Unwin et al 2007) and media studies (de Valck 2007). Film festival studies, therefore, has acquired a rather multidisciplinary disposition.

Film festivals themselves are multifaceted agents and can take various thematic forms from business festivals (Cannes, Venice, Toronto) to identity festivals (Out on Film, UK Jewish Film Festival) to genre festivals (Sheffield Doc/Fest, Hippodrome Festival of Silent Cinema). With such a spectrum of different types of festivals, much effort has gone into categorising and defining them. Kenneth Turan (2002) suggests that there are three types of film festivals - those with geopolitical, aesthetic or business agendas. On the other hand, Mark Peranson argues that there are two ‘ideal’ festival models: business festivals and audience festivals (2009: 23-37). In simplest form, however, film festivals are temporal events where films are programmed, screened and viewed. As the following description from Encyclopedia Britannica notes:

Film Festivals: gathering, usually annually, for the purpose of evaluating new or outstanding motion pictures. Sponsored by national or local governments, industry service organisations, experimental groups, or individual promoters, the festivals provide an opportunity for filmmakers, distributors, critics, and other interested persons to attend film showings and meet to discuss current artistic developments in film. At the festivals distributors can purchase films that they think can be marketed successfully in their own countries.

(Encyclopedia Britannica, undated)

This description introduces many of the key intermediaries involved in film festivals (filmmakers, distributors, critics, local government), however, an important stakeholder remains absent or at best located within a broad category (other interested persons): the festival audience. Indeed, this omission of the audience is somewhat typical. To date most research on film festivals has focused on the industry and/or political role of these events (Iordanova 2006; de Valck 2007; Archibald & Miller 2011a; Cheung 2010). Of particular interest to researchers has been the functioning of international film festivals on the global festival circuit and the historicisation of these events as economic and political power forces (Iordanova & Rhyne 2009; de Valck 2007; Wong 2011). Thus, with such a global outlook, many of the smaller local festivals, which unlike large exclusive events like Cannes and Venice exist because of attendance by the general public and local communities, are largely underexplored from a critical perspective.

For local communities the open-access film festival potentially offers an alternative way of watching films in a public space and social context. Yet we know little about the meaningfulness and value placed on local film festivals by the audiences who attend them in droves. Less is known about festival practice as a variety of cinematic practice, for instance, festival-goers' motivations, attendance patterns, experiences, behaviours and taste formations, although Marijke de Valck offers a valuable foundation for conceptualising festival cinephilia using International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR) as case study (2007: 97-109). Nevertheless, there is a lack of empirical research on festival audiences and little or no consideration of the relationship, synergies and differences between local festival audiences and local cinema audiences: information that would arguably

advance understanding of contemporary cinema culture and film consumption more broadly.

This thesis responds to this deficit by contributing a specific empirical study of festival audiences at Glasgow Film Festival (GFF). Drawing on scholarship from Film Studies, Film Festival Studies and research on film/cinema audiences from various subject areas<sup>3</sup>, the research offers an eclectic theoretical base for studying film festival audiences as adaptations of cinema audiences: potentially comparable yet markedly different. A key strength of the work is that concepts are shaped by empirical findings and not driven by theoretical frameworks, which I believe, offers a more sophisticated and reflexive account of practices and pleasures at GFF. In terms of research design, I adopt a mixed-method social science approach, which aids the triangulation of the work providing a rich and rigorous account of the research setting. Together, the focus (festival reception), theoretical stance and methodological approach taken in this work mark its original contribution to the budding field of Film Festival Studies, and studies of contemporary cinema-going and film culture more broadly.

### **Case study - Glasgow Film Festival**

Glasgow Film Festival defines itself as an open-access audience festival that provides films for all tastes. As a relatively young festival, it has matured and grown at a rapid speed increasing attendances by 551% in just nine years.<sup>4</sup> The festival openly attributes its success to its local audiences and their appetite for film, which festival marketers strategically connect to Glasgow's heritage as a cinematic city. The festival takes place across a multitude of urban venues including art galleries, multiplexes and independent cinemas, however, it is centralised within a cultural cinema, Glasgow Film Theatre (GFT), which arguably gives the event a degree of cultural worthiness. Nevertheless, what makes the festival particularly interesting is that it was founded on a concept of mapping and mixing different cinema audiences. In essence, its *raison d'être* was to boost local audience choice (programming mainstream to obscure content), to diversify audience taste

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<sup>3</sup> Cinema audience studies emerge from various other areas such as sociology (Hollinshead 2011) and leisure studies (Hubbard 2001).

<sup>4</sup> The festival reported 6000 attendances in 2005 and 39,106 in 2013, indicating an increase of 33,106 (551%) (EKOS 2013: 4)

(exposing people to films and cinema spaces outside of their usual preference) and to cultivate a less segmented film culture in Glasgow by catering for multiplex-goers, independent cinema-goers and audiences with a penchant for more experimental works.

Thus, GFF is fertile ground for exploring the various guises of festival audiences and for further understanding different modes of cinema-going practice. Through a focused study of GFF this thesis will use the specificity of the Glasgow case to offer broader understanding of the value, function and experience of open-access, local and/or regional film festivals as valuable facets of wider cinematic culture.

### **Research questions**

The central concern of this thesis is the relationship between an event/organisation (GFF) and the public it serves (multiple cinema audiences). Given that the PhD was set up as a collaborative project, a set of pre-established research objectives accompanied the proposal. Thus, the core question that underpins the project was outlined in the original tender: how do GFF audiences understand their festival experiences relative to year-round engagement with specific cinemas and their programmes? Of course, this question opened up many supplementary areas of investigation relating to the cultural significance of the event and the challenges of its measurement as well as broader questions about contemporary cinema exhibition and cinema-going practice. Thus, the overarching research inquiry, and supplementary lines of questioning, relate to both exhibition *and* reception. As such, the study aimed to address the following six research questions, which were split into two camps: one concerning the organisation (exhibition) and the other concerning the audience (reception).

#### *The organisation*

1. What types of films and venues are programmed at GFF and what key agendas, or factors, drive programming decisions?
2. What do programmed films, their presentation and exhibition in different spaces, tell us about perceptions and constructions of the festival audience?



3. How does GFF define its current and future identity (ethos, image and values) and how is this transmitted to, and understood by, its audience?

#### *The audience*

4. What are audience members' prime motivations for attending GFF and in what ways do their choices and festival experiences differ from, or synergise with, year-round cinema-going choices and experiences?
5. What taste patterns emerge in terms of content and space and to what extent do GFF audiences segment in terms of year-round patterns of engagement with specific cinemas?
6. What are the main pleasures and experiences of festival-going and how might this compare to year-round pleasures of attending the cinema?

#### **Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is structured in three parts; academic context, industry context and analysis chapters. Chapters 2 and 3 locate my work and approach within the current academic theoretical and methodological landscapes. Chapter 4 functions as a transition chapter which sets up the contextual positioning of GFT, GFF and existing industry audience research, and provides a historicisation of the cinema and the festival using archival research. Thus, the chapter contains both context and analysis, complementing earlier contextual chapters and leading onto the analysis stages of the thesis. The latter, and most substantive, part of the thesis (Chapters 5-8) includes the analysis and findings chapters.

To provide a more detailed synopsis, **Chapter 2** is a review of the current literature that has informed this project. It situates my interest in film festival audiences within studies of contemporary film culture more broadly and draws on the overlapping fields of research, namely Film Festival Studies, contemporary and historical studies of cinema-going, and audience research on film audiences. The chapter examines current approaches being used in Film Festival Studies and locates this audience project within that context. Finally it proposes an eclectic mixed-theory and mixed-methodology approach to studying film festival audiences, exhibition and reception.

**Chapter 3** outlines the methodology and research design used in this work and discusses the context in which the research project came to be. It provides the rationale and justification for my methodological choices and discusses the mixed-method and reflexive approach adopted. Moreover, it highlights the limits and constraints of a mixed-method approach and draws on other audience research projects as comparatives. This chapter also introduces focus group participants and proposes a preliminary framework for the different ‘types’ of audience members involved in the research.

**Chapter 4** draws on archival research to offer an overview of key moments in GFT’s history and locates GFF within that historical context, charting key changes in programming practices and brand identity from 1939 to date. Drawing on archival and industry materials specific to GFT/GFF, the chapter illustrates the relationship between GFT and GFF and charts the journey toward the festival’s inception in 2005. It then considers GFF in its current context and discusses existing audience research, using it as a launch pad for the successive analysis chapters.

**Chapter 5** advances from Chapter 4’s exploration of programming practice. Considering the types of films that are programmed at GFF - and asking why and how these films come to be screened at GFF - the chapter proposes a film typology for GFF.

**Chapter 6** turns to the audience direct and, drawing on focus groups conducted during Glasgow Film Festival 2012 (GFF12) with patrons and interviews with staff at GFF over the research period, pulls out key forms of textual pleasure using the typology proposed in **Chapter 5** as a framework. It also looks at the paratextual features of the festival.

**Chapter 7** moves away from texts and programmes to consider the spatial aspects of GFF. It considers the ways in which venues, which function as non-festival spaces outside of festival time, are transformed into ‘festival spaces.’ It proposes a concept of the ‘enveloping address’ wherein the omniscient voice of the festival is present in all venues. Also discussed is the potency and dilution of the

festival across different venues, as well as the spatial hierarchies that exist when it comes to programming spaces.

**Chapter 8** explores the spatial pleasures of the festival by drawing on audience data and participant observation. Here I discuss questions of embodiment and the pleasure audiences find in reduced proximity. It presents the film festival as a mode of embodied practice that gives audiences licence to engage with one another both verbally and physically during festival time, and argues that an alternate mode of cinema etiquette exists within film festival practice, which contrasts with year-round cinema-going practice.

**Chapter 9** provides a conclusion to this research and unites the main issues and themes that have emerged throughout the thesis. It applies these findings to the initial research questions and presents the significance of the work within the field. It also outlines the potential value of findings for the non-academic partner and concludes with ways in which this research might be developed further.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of academic materials that connect with the overarching concerns of this project. It situates my own research on an aspect of contemporary film culture - film festival exhibition and reception - within the context of this existing scholarship. As Film Festival Studies is a relatively nascent discipline and has yet to offer firm conceptualisation of festival audiences, the chapter is not restricted to literature on film festivals and engages with debates about film culture and cinema audiences within Film Studies more broadly. Indeed, materials from various disciplines, namely sociology, television studies, media studies, leisure studies and anthropology, offer insight that is transferable to festival inquiry. Nevertheless, it is the fields of Film Studies and Film Festival Studies that offer the most valuable conceptual and methodological frameworks.

The chapter is split into three main areas of research and is framed thematically rather than by discipline: the study of cinema exhibition and cinema-going; the study of film festivals; and the study of screen audiences. Certainly there are overlaps between these areas (for example, I discuss audience research both in the context of Film Festival Studies and cinema exhibition), however, this structure provides a manageable overview of the wide-ranging scholarship that has shaped the conceptual foundation of this thesis.

### **The study of cinema exhibition and cinema-going**

Reflecting on the dawn of Anglo-American Film Studies, Douglas Gomery writes that a 'text above context hierarchy' emerged in the late 1950s as a result of Film Studies' literary ancestry (1992: 43). Indeed, the field began academic life with an inherent loyalty to texts as objects of study, and formalist readings of texts as a routine research method. Textual readings allowed researchers to evaluate the merit and style of filmmaking, and so narrative convention, cinema apparatus and distinctive authorial style came to the fore as principal concerns for scholars. While the director became the subject of study, the text became the object of analysis

through which artistic merit was measured (Sarris 1979). As a consequence, the film audience was largely overlooked from the outset.

Nevertheless, with reference to Film Studies in the 1960s, Thomas Austin suggests that audiences were in fact acknowledged, but that viewers' responses and positions on texts were deduced by scholars (2002: 9). Austin argues that textual analysis sought to establish the 'operations of textual mechanism on the individual viewer' but failed to engage with actual audiences or consider the historic, social or cultural context of their viewing (Austin, 2002: 9). In 1985 David Bordwell wrote of 1960s American Film Studies - that conditions of film consumption and reception, which would 'examine the changing theatre situation, the history of publicity, and the role of social class, aesthetic tradition and ideology in constituting an audience' was 'yet unwritten' (Bordwell et al, 1985: xiv). In fact, the textual hierarchy was so firmly adopted that it was to continue throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, a time when spectatorship concepts began to emerge. In his 1979 book, *Stars*, Richard Dyer highlights the seriousness of the absence of audience research within the discipline:

Throughout this book - as throughout most Film Studies - the audience has been conspicuous by its absence. In talking of manipulation [...] consumptions, ideological work [...], subversion [...], identification [...], reading [...], placing [...], and elsewhere, a concept of the audience is clearly crucial, and yet in every case I have had to gesture towards this gap in our knowledge and then proceed as if it were merely a gap. But how one conceptualises the audience - and the empirical adequacy of one's conceptualisations - is fundamental to every assumption one can name about how stars, and films, work.

(1979: 182)

Certainly the late 1970s saw a shift towards research that was concerned *with* audiences, however, spectatorship theory principally positioned audiences as hypothetical spectators and offered deterministic frameworks for understanding them (see Baudry 1974; Mulvey 1985; Bergstrom and Doane 1989). Feminist film theory and Film Studies of the 1970s and 1980s has been criticized on many levels for a presupposition of the audience as a collective entity with a gendered set of responses to texts, a subjective analysis of constructed meanings as one-

dimensional, a disregard for the social, cultural and economic contexts of spectatorship, and most notably a blatant omission of the ‘real’ viewer’s voice (Kuhn 2002; Jancovich et al 2003).

Jackie Stacey’s 1990s influential work on female Hollywood spectatorship of the 1940-50s marked one of the earliest attempts to connect spectatorship theories in Film Studies (feminist film theory in particular) with empirical models in cultural studies (1994: 24). Acknowledging the historic division between these disciplines in terms of theory and method, Stacey noted that fellow film scholars were not concerned with the ‘real’ spectator, but with the ‘psyche’ of the imagined, passive, spectator (Stacey 1994) (see Figure 2.1). Stacey argued that a reluctance to engage with real viewers existed within Film Studies as scholars were in ‘fear of dirtying one’s hands with empirical material’ (1994: 29). In contrast, engaging with real viewers through letters and questionnaires, Stacey’s research considered viewing contexts and practices, and concluded that the social and material conditions of cinema consumption were dominant in cinema-goers experiential accounts, in many cases more so than specific texts. Such findings were early indications that cinematic conditions (spatiality and materiality) and viewing contexts (attendance modes, social conditions) were critical in understanding the meaningfulness of cinema for film viewers.

Film Studies	Cultural Studies
Spectator positioning	Audience readings
Textual analysis	Ethnographic methods
Meaning as production-led	Meaning as consumption-led
Passive viewer	Active viewer
Unconscious	Conscious
Pessimistic	Optimistic

Figure 2.1 Contrasting paradigms in Film Studies and cultural studies, proposed by Jackie Stacey (1994: 24).

### *Historical accounts*

Indeed, the last two decades has revealed a more optimistic picture for cinema audiences as the importance of cinema-going as a cultural activity has gained

credence in film debate. In fact, in a keynote address at ECREA Film Studies Conference in 2013, Daniel Biltereyst - who programmes The History of Movie-going Exhibition and Reception (HoMER) group - noted that audience research was in fact becoming 'somewhat fashionable' in Film Studies (Biltereyst 2013). However, much of the work on cinema exhibition and consumption involves sociohistoric accounts of early cinema-going (1900s-1960s), including Biltereyst's own work (Willinsky 2001; Jancovich et al 2003; Kuhn 2002; Allen 2011; Maltby, Biltereysyt & Meers 2011; Biltereyst, Maltby & Meers 2012), or accounts of contemporary rural cinema-going (Corbett 2008; Aveyard 2011). Richard Maltby has referred to this wave of research on historical cinema as the 'new cinema history', which he distinguishes from 'film history' on account of its focus on film exhibition and reception (Maltby, Biltereyst & Maltby, 2011: 4).

While this current undertaking is focused on contemporary cinema exhibition and consumption in an urban space, 'new cinema history' is highly instructive on account of its focus on the sociality of cinema and its use of audience research methods. Moreover, it is equally useful for its focus on the physicality and spatiality of cinema venues, and the assertion that 'location and physical sites of exhibition are essential to an understanding of the meanings of cinema' (Jancovich et al, 2003: 11). In her work on the popularity of cinema-going in Scotland in the 1930s, Adrienne Scullion highlights the significance of the cinema's material attributes and its distinction from the domestic space, which positioned it as a 'distraction' from everyday surroundings:

For a shilling or less, ordinary people could enter a richly decorated milieu that had little or nothing in common with their own domestic environment. It was full of ushers and attendants [...] It was a world full of indulgent distractions - marbled foyers filled with plants, plush carpeted walkways and staircases leading to grand auditoria.

(Scullion, 1990: 42)

Likewise, Annette Kuhn's expansive ethnohistoric study of cinema memories has become an influential model for audience research in cinema studies. Kuhn's (2002) work serves as an important model in defining what makes cinema-going a memorable social activity for audiences. In *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and*

*Cultural Memory*, Kuhn explores cinema recollections from inter-war Britain when cinema was the 'essential social habit of the age' (A.J.P Taylor cited in Richards, 1984: 11). What makes Kuhn's work especially relevant to this project is its alignment with cultural studies in focusing on the context and place of cultural exhibition and consumption, and her positioning of cinemas as distinctly social spaces. Drawing on interviews with people reflecting on their experiences of cinema-going in the 1930s (from the perspective of the 1990s), she provides recollections of cinemas being used for family outings, romantic dates, voyeurism and an opportunity to worship film stars (to 'star gaze'), and in most cases found, like Stacey (1994), that the sociality of the cinema-going experience took precedence over the films themselves. Kuhn (2002) also found that subjects constructed memories around place, spending some time attempting to map locations of specific cinemas, which she labels 'walking tour' recollections.

What is most useful about these historical accounts is a move away from readings of texts as the shared component of audience analysis and a focus on shared locations and shared spaces. Evidence suggests that historical cinema sites were not unremarkable backdrops for film screenings, rather, the cinema space - its physicality, architecture, location - all contributed to the pleasures of a shared, social, cinematic experience, which Jackie Stacey terms the 'material pleasures of cinema-going' (1994: 99). This prompts questions around contemporary cinema culture, and the extent to which cinema experiences might still be considered a fusion of social, material and textual pleasure, and to what extent this might be the case in the festival context.

Of equal significance to festival study is the ways in which these historic accounts present cinema-going as special yet everyday, ordinary yet extraordinary (Kuhn 2002; Allen 2006; Allen 2011). As the title of Annette Kuhn's (2002) book suggests, cinema was both 'everyday' and 'magic'. Film historian, Robert C. Allen has also argued that early cinema can be understood in terms of an extraordinary/ordinary axis. Noting how cinema became 'unremarkable' and 'unremarked on' in the early cinema era, Allen warns that:



Emphasising the ordinariness of the experience of moviegoing runs the risk of obscuring the character of cinema's eventfulness, of taking it out from the shadow of the screen only to push it back against the distant horizon of the quotidian. The eventfulness of cinema in the era of moviegoing was always poised between the everyday and the extraordinary.

(Allen, 2011: 52)

The notion of the extraordinary/ordinary is particularly interesting when looking at film festivals which, on account of their temporality, are shaped by concepts of 'eventfulness' yet remain embedded with everyday rules, performances and cultural scripts and take place in familiar sites, which for some, may form part of their regular daily, weekly or monthly social environment (Dayan, 2000: 43).

### *Contemporary accounts*

Despite a surge in historical studies on cinema exhibition and consumption there still remains a dearth of contemporary research on this area (Jancovich et al, 2003: 11). Nevertheless the last few years have seen an increase in journal articles which interrogate the value of contemporary cinema-going using empirical research methods, and it is this small, yet important, pool of scholarship that this project joins (Boyle 2010; Hollinshead 2011; Evans 2011a, 2011b; Aveyard 2011; Barker 2013).

Of particular significance is Karen Boyle's (2010) article 'Watch with Baby: Cinema, parenting and community' in which she augments the importance of place and the multiple ways that different audience groups use cinema sites. Like Scullion (1990), Boyle found that cinema was used as a tool for distraction - in this case for new mothers to revert to their former selves - highlighting 'distraction' as a recurring theme in both historical and contemporary cinema-going practice. Boyle (2010) also found that the actual films were 'incidental', which echo Kuhn's (2002) findings. However, most useful is Boyle's concept of the 'reconfiguring' of cinematic spaces for special programmes, which is interesting when considering how cinema spaces are 'reconfigured' for events such as film festivals. For instance, how is spatial transformation achieved, and how are reconfigured/transformed spaces experienced differently by audiences?

Similarly, Martin Barker's (2013) recent work on alternative content - or 'livecasting' (live theatre, opera and ballet streaming) - in cinema venues is particularly useful to this work for two main reasons. Firstly, Barker's study again suggests that cinema has become a fragmented space providing diverse cultural output. Having used participant observation and online questionnaires, he concludes that during livecasts, cinemas and their attendees took on distinct characteristics: some venues organised drinks order systems at the intervals, audiences dressed up in formal attire and adopted behaviours of appreciation that mirrored those acted out in theatrical and operatic spaces such as clapping despite the fact that the performers could not hear the applause (Barker, 2013: 65). This further complicates straightforward notions of cinema exhibition as a place we simply go to watch films and offers a way of thinking about cinema spaces as possible sites of festivity, eventfulness and liveness. Moreover, it suggests that eventfulness at the cinema potentially constructs new cinematic practice. This raises an important question about festival behaviour and etiquette; in light of GFF's eventfulness, what forms of practice play out at the festival and how might these compare with year-round cinema practice?

Secondly, drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's (1979) seminal work on social, economic and cultural capital, Barker considers the ways in which alternative content's 'cultural and aesthetic' properties potentially fashion its attending public and their behaviours (2013: 9). For instance, Barker finds that 'sharp differentiations' emerged between those attending theatre streams and opera streams. Those attending the opera emphatically declared their adoration of the art-form ('I/we love opera', 'I'm an opera fan/nut', 'We are passionate about opera') and firmly established their identity as opera-goers, while there was no such pattern with theatre attendees (Barker, 2013: 34). This connects with questions about the relationship between cinephilia and film festivals (is it just cinephiles who attend film festivals?) and relationships between festivals and specific cinema audiences more broadly (festival-goers as art gallery patrons, art-house loyalists *and* multiplex-goers): to what extent do film festival audiences declare their identities as 'festival-goers,' 'cinephiles', 'movie-buffs', 'art-film

connoisseurs’, ‘foreign-language aficionados’ etc.? Such questions will be revisited later in the thesis.

Indeed, Bourdieu’s (1979) concepts of taste culture and distinction emerge in other contemporary studies of cinema audiences, particularly with reference to art house and independent cinema exhibition and patronage. As Barker (2013) notes, different types of content attracts different kinds of audiences to the cinema, however, the cinematic space itself also arguably constructs specific types of audiences. In an ethnographic study on cultural cinema in the East Midlands, Elizabeth Evans discusses the ways in which art cinemas are ‘indirect communities’ where patrons share a ‘communal identity based on taste, ideology and etiquette despite lacking direct, consistent interaction’ (2011a: 329). Connecting with the Bourdieuan notion that ‘cultural needs are the product of upbringing and education’, Evans found that her research sample - who she defines as ‘educated’ - demonstrated anti-commercial views and formed distinct allegiances around independent cinematic venues (2011a: 335). Her subjects associated cinema exhibition with taste and ‘being part of the “right” kind of audience’ and a vernacular code of ‘like-mindedness’ emerged from her questionnaires and focus groups (Evans, 2011b: 11). In some cases some audience members ridiculed multiplex audiences, stating that independent cinema was ‘not full of human detritus and crap popcorn’ (2011b: 11). Cultural identity can, therefore, be fashioned around cinema practice and specific venues wherein a distinct sense of ‘otherness’ emerges between the ‘multiplex-goer’ and the ‘independent cinema-goer’, which Evan’s connects to broader debates around high-low culture and cultural capital and anti-commercial ideologies (2011a: 335).

Another informative study that explores the question of choice and taste is Ailsa Hollinshead’s study on art house cinema-going. In ‘“And I felt quite posh!” Art house cinema and the absent audience - the exclusion of choice’, Hollinshead (2011) investigates how cultural discrimination is manifested in cultural cinema exhibition. From a sociological standpoint, she also engages with debates on cultural and symbolic capital, as outlined by Bourdieu (1979), to investigate social exclusion in film culture. Usefully, Hollinshead positions audiences as social

subjects and argues that social segregation manifests itself around art house institutions. Her findings reveal that certain groups from deprived areas excluded themselves from visiting these cinemas based on perceptions of cultural cinema as 'posh' (2011: 392). They felt they did not fit the profile of the quintessential 'cultured' cinema-goer and a distinct sense of 'otherness' was felt between them and art house-goers. As such, a relationship between leisure and social class emerges, as class distinction is manifest in cinema practice and 'in the types of film chosen for, and by, different classes of consumer' (James, 2011: 273). These findings arguably counter claims that the line between cultural and commercial cinema has become less pronounced in recent years (Myerscough, 2011: 26).

However, there is a lack of work on multiplex cinema-going to offset accounts of art-house cinema practice. The most instructive work is Phil Hubbard's (2001) investigation of multiplex-going as a mode of urban leisure in which he uses human geography as a theoretical framework. Conducting interviews with audiences in Leicester, Hubbard notes that 'we can only understand the appeal of multiplex cinemas by considering the embodied geographies of cinema-going' (2001: 255). Hubbard argues that the spatial characteristics of multiplexes - usually positioned outside cities - offers audiences a 'light' social experience meaning that they do not have to interact or socialise with other people, which contrasts Evans' (2011a) notion of indirect communities (2001: 262). This is also an interesting comparative with Boyle's work (2010) on independent cinema in the West End of Glasgow. While Boyle found that reduced social distance was a key attraction for mothers attending the 'Watch With Baby' screenings, Hubbard found that for multiplex-goers maintaining social distance was a key attraction. Nevertheless, both accounts offer great insight into the spatial significance of cinematic venues and the ways in which audience experience is often embodied, which has helped shape the conceptual framework in Chapter 8 of this thesis.

As noted, this empirical project is interested in the social and cultural context of contemporary cinema-going and cinema-goers' experiences, and is, therefore, influenced heavily by historic accounts of cinema practice (Kuhn 2002; Jancovich et al 2003). Of equal importance here, are the meanings and identities

that are constructed around specific spaces (sites of exhibition) and places (cinema cities) by both audiences and institutions (Harbord 2002; Stacey 1994; Geraghty 2000). Moving on from cinema exhibition, I will now discuss the mode of exhibition central to this overall thesis, film festivals, and locate this project within the expanding body of literature on the budding subject.

### **The study of film festivals**

In a 1947 article eminent British film critic Dilys Powell noted that:

The value to critic and creator alike of detaching himself from his normal surroundings and looking at the cinema against a neutral background will remain. And here, I fancy, in this temporary escape from the national projection room, is the lasting value of the film festival.

(Quoted in Stringer, 2003: 58-9)

What Powell provides here is an early conception of the film festival as a ‘temporary escape’ from one’s ‘normal surroundings’, positioning festivals as something different, a temporal break from the typical cinematic experience. This provides an interesting contrast with contemporary festivals like GFF, which serve to generate interest in year-round cinema-going as well as offering a temporal break from it. On the other hand Powell’s notion of the film festival as a ‘neutral backdrop’ has been somewhat overturned by the burgeoning interest in film festivals as ‘researchers [have come] to recognize that film festivals [are] not just an adjunct to other activities but a phenomenon in their own right’ (Archibald & Miller, 2011: 249b). Nevertheless, it has taken some time for film festivals to develop as objects of academic curiosity given that festival scholarship emerged some sixty years after the first film festival took place in Venice in 1932. Early theoretical works include Bill Nichols’ seminal article ‘Global image and consumption in the age of late capitalism’ (1994), Daniel Dayan’s anthropological study of Sundance Film Festival (2000), Janet Harbord’s work on festivals as ‘spaces of flow’ (2002), Julian Stringer’s much-used, yet unpublished, PhD thesis *Regarding Film Festivals* (2003), and Thomas Elsaesser’s work on film festival networks (2005). Yet, while Kenneth Turan offered a book-length industry contribution in 2002 with

Sundance to Sarajevo, it was not until Marijke de Valck's monograph - *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (2007) - that the field had its first single-authored title dedicated wholly to festival inquiry.

Thus, it is fair to say that when this project started in 2010 film festival scholarship was in its formative years both conceptually and methodologically. Indeed 'insider' anecdotes (mostly from journalists and festival practitioners) were the dominant form of reportage on festival culture, accounts Richard Porton suggests are 'trivial', 'narcissistic' and 'largely pedestrian' (2009: 1-9). While it remains a developing field, Film Festival Studies - which seems to have settled most comfortably within film or media studies - has matured significantly over the course of this PhD. Since 2010 a growing body of research has emerged in dossiers (Fujiwara & Martin 2010; Archibald & Miller 2011b), anthologies (Iordanova & Cheung 2010; Iordanova & Cheung 2011; Iordanova & Torchin 2012; Ruoff 2013; Marlow-Mann 2013; Iordanova 2013), and monographs (Lloyd 2011; Wong 2012; Fischer 2013). This surge in festival scholarship suggests that the field is experiencing something of a groundswell with new projects emerging internationally and a mounting number of film festival panels appearing at key international Film Studies conferences such as Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS), European Network for Cinema and Media Studies (NECS) and Screen Studies Conference. A key driving force for this groundswell is arguably the Film Festival Research Network (FFRN) founded in 2008 by Skadi Loist and Marijke de Valck, which has gained significant momentum in the last three years.<sup>5</sup> Although the FFRN is described as a 'loose connection of scholars working on issues related to film festivals', it functions as an online epicenter for film festival scholars and a place where enthusiasm for the subject is galvanized (FFRN 2014a). Moreover, the FFRN mailing list allows scholars to engage in real-time debates during international festivals and facilitates the promotion of new scholarship, as well as the creation of collaborative opportunities such as publications and conference activity.

On the publishing front, there has also been an upsurge in festival-specific publications. St Andrews Film Studies Publishing House (StAFS) has become a key

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<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.filmfestivalresearch.org>

publishing hub for developing film festival scholarship, publishing an annual yearbook that explores thematic and topical areas of festival investigation.<sup>6</sup> Since 2009 StAFS has produced nine titles dedicated to film festivals including two book series: 'The Film Festival Yearbook Series' and 'Films Need Festivals, Festivals Need Films'. Although StAFS was most definitely a leader in terms of festival-specific publishing, many other publishers are now actively pursuing work on the subject. In early 2013 Palgrave Macmillan announced a new book series dedicated to film festivals, entitled 'Framing Film Festivals', which would 'highlight the various faces of festivals and/or set the agenda concerning topical debates' (de Valck 2013b). Also, at SCMS 2013 it was announced that Routledge had commissioned a film festival textbook geared towards undergraduate and graduate level teaching, which, as the first textbook, indicates pedagogical development for the subject.<sup>7</sup> Thus, while it is important to acknowledge that Film Festival Studies has a long way to go, it is in the early stages of establishing itself as a vitally important area of Film Studies.

### *Festivals as complex entities*

Like most emerging subject areas, early research on film festivals has been focused on justifying why the subject is an important area of enquiry. Therefore, two central questions have been: what are film festivals?; and what role do they play in the film industry? Since Film Festival Studies began to bloom in the early 2000s there have been differing views of what film festivals actually are, their purpose, value, and significance in the wider film world. Some scholars have suggested that historically festivals have positioned themselves as anti-Hollywood and perform the role of 'interventionists' by prioritising culture and aesthetics over commerce and blockbuster thrill (Elsaesser, 2005: 93-4). However, Janet Harbord puts forth a different picture, noting that there is much concern within industry over the depletion of aesthetic and cultural priority, which has led to antagonistic relationships between 'commerce' and 'culture', 'serious' and 'cosmetic' (2002: 59). Others position film festivals as Hollywood appendages that project glitz and

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<sup>6</sup> St Andrews Film Studies Publishing House (StAFS) is based within the Centre for Film Studies at the University of St Andrews. It was founded in 2009 and is headed up by Dina Iordanova.

<sup>7</sup> The Routledge contract was announced during a SCMS Film and Media Scholarly Interest Group (SIG) meeting, which I attended at Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference (SCMS) in Chicago on 26 March 2013. Expected publication March 2015.

glamour onto a global stage; take for example, Andrew Sarris' evocative portrait of Cannes as 'Hollywood's licentious French mistress' (1982: 29).

In contrast, Marijke de Valck suggests that festivals operate alongside the mainstream film industry that they oscillate between commercial and cultural leisure and aesthetic agendas in 'flirtatious encounters between art and entertainment' (2007: 129). As such, de Valck argues that the European vs. Hollywood festival model, which is essentially a two-pillared distinction between art and entertainment, no longer functions as an effective conceptual framework because the distinction 'between high and low culture is untenable' when investigating film festivals (2007: 129). Such claims echo Elsaesser's earlier framing in which he suggests that film festivals in fact stand face to face and side-by-side with the Hollywood system (2005: 101). He argues, convincingly, that film festivals unlike other exhibitors, such as museums or art galleries, are not determinate entities fostering an overt allegiance and, therefore, cannot be pinned down on the Hollywood (commercial) versus European (cultural) spectrum, as is often the case (Elsaesser, 2005: 101).

This notion of film festivals as multifarious agents has instructed more recent works. In *Film Festival Yearbook 1: The Festival Circuit*, Ragan Rhyne examines the formation of public/private partnerships at festivals and proposes that they are 'unique institution[s], which straddle art, commerce and governance' (2009: 10). Alluding to Venice Film Festival's geopolitical roots, she states that it paved the way for international film festivals as institutions that support the economy, state and culture (Rhyne, 2009: 10). Indeed, unification of commerce and culture remains a leading structure given that today many festivals - international, national and regional - are heavily subsidized, either privately or publicly or both. However, as Rhyne notes, this financial structure results in many conflicting agendas between financiers' interests (advertising, distribution and city promotion) and cultural agendas (non-mainstream programming, transnational screening, and informal education):



The film festival phenomenon might be understood [...] as a play between the local and the global, mediated through supranational cultural policies and motivated through a complex negotiation between government bodies and corporations.

(2009: 13)

Adopting this position, the functioning of festivals, therefore, involves the negotiation of various stakeholder interests and opposing agendas, local versus global, cultural versus commercial etc, and is inextricably linked to cultural policies within particular geographic locations. Such policies are often attached to a sense of place and the projection of both the festival's identity and a city's identity within the context of its geographic locale and municipal and/or national objectives.

### *Festival spaces and places*

Sense of place has also interested several scholars looking at film festivals (Harbord 2002; Stringer 2003; Iordanova & Rhyne 2009; de Valck 2007). Particular interest is given to the connection between film festivals and cities, nations, and the global network. Indeed, de Valck claims that festivals are greatly concerned with their own survival and sustainability, and often rely on their existence and repute in the global arena (2007: 207). Using Venice as example, de Valck notes that the correlation between the 'local' event and the 'global' propelled the festival beyond its national boundaries onto the international arena, and despite many reformations throughout the twentieth century, Venice has maintained a local/global equilibrium and sustained itself as a key player in the festival calendar (2007: 123).

On the other hand, Stringer draws particular attention to the importance of the city in globalising film festivals. Noting that the 'national festival' has become outdated, Stringer argues that the 'nation' has been replaced by the 'global city' as the spatial hub for festivals (2003: 104-129). Furthermore, it is the 'global city', which is the vessel around and in which the image of the festival is communicated to the global circuit. He notes that 'the circuit exists as an allegorization of space and its power relationships; it operates through the transfer of value between and within distinct geographic localities' (2001: 138). In agreement, Tony Fitzmaurice

notes in the introduction to *Cinema and the City*, the primary business of a film festival is 'spectacularizing' its home city (2001: 24). Also of relevance is de Valck's argument that the illusion of a festival is just as important as the festival itself, she writes that 'Cannes as a city is not sexy. However, when captured on camera during the festival the city in the atmosphere of stars, premières, debates, scandals, and hype continues to shine' (2007: 110). Thus, the importance of the captured festival and captured city defines it as a media event and media place, and a 'virtual city that seduces' (de Valck, 2007: 119).

Certainly, while building prestige and repute is critical for international film festivals, generating differentiation and distinction are also key operations. Indeed festivals constantly compete to find markers of distinction, or unique selling points to use marketing terminology. That is to say, that while most international festivals may aspire to the same goals - book premières, attract global media, draw big talent, secure sponsorship - they do not all aspire to have the same brand identity. In fact many of the larger festivals have very different philosophies about their own significance. Take for instance, Toronto International Film Festival and Cannes - both of which are major players on the global circuit - however; while Cannes radiates exclusivity and grandeur, centred on in-competition films, Toronto nurtures a culture of inclusivity and has a rather unassuming nature centred on cinephilia and audience awards. On a much smaller scale, the general non-profit model of regional and national festivals means that they also have a great impetus for self-definition and distinction. As Rhyne notes, each festival must carve out 'its own mission, its own agenda, and its regional or programmic focus' in order to 'prove that its activities and use of funds uphold its mission' (2009: 19).

The festival landscape includes a plethora of different 'types' of festivals; identity festivals, industry festivals, audience festivals, activist festivals and so forth. As such, straightforward classification of festivals only underestimates their formative complexity and cultural and commercial propensity, as well as the burgeoning authority they have over the production, distribution and exhibition of world cinema (Elsaesser, 2005: 101). Such opposition to the conceptualisation of festivals is mirrored within industry. Former editor of *Cahiers du Cinema*, Jean

Michel Frodon notes that ‘scholars should not attempt to build a comprehensive model for festivals, as they are all so different’ (Frodon 2010). Nevertheless, what the mentioned works offer is a theoretical backdrop for understanding film festivals as complex social, cultural, political and economic agencies.

### *Festival language*

The main way in which festivals communicate their identity to various stakeholders is through language. Indeed one of the very first pieces of festival scholarship is most instructive in terms of approaching festival identity and language, namely Daniel Dayan’s ethnographic account, ‘Looking for Sundance Film Festival: The Social Construction of a Film Festival’ (2000). Dayan’s anthropological study explores the festival as it is lived out in popular media, the chronicled event, or as he terms it, the ‘written festival’;

In a way, a film festival is mostly spent answering questions about self-definition, identity and character [...] Each party involved in the definitional process (or struggle) issues printed material [...] film festivals live by the printed word, they are verbal architectures.

(2000: 45)

Dayan (2000) claims that popular events like film festivals are transmitted and lived out by broadcast, print and online media. Conveying identity through printed material (marketing, branding, press), is certainly not a method unique to film festivals, yet, what is interesting is the way in which festival organisers use the ‘written festival’ to negotiate their own positions within the festival network, presenting their event as both similar to the major festivals in terms of reputation and importance, yet at the same time, distinctively different. With thousands of festivals worldwide, competition for dates, films, funding, endorsements (often celebrity), and audiences, is fierce. As such, large-scale festivals that once commanded both local and global audiences, now find themselves competing not only with fellow mega-festivals, but also with small-scale local and niche festivals (Barber 2008).

Through the ‘written festival’ many festivals project their particular personalities to their audiences and to other festivals. For non-profit festivals, this

is inextricably linked to their location and the municipal branding outside of the festival context. However, it is fair to say that many festivals maintain a relatively 'worthy' image. In a historical assessment of Edinburgh International Film Festival (EIFF), Colin McArthur states that the impetus for the festival's creation was not 'to confer prestige on a locality to attract tourists' (1990: 91). Rather, the thrust behind EIFF 'was a passion for cinema, and more, a politics of cinema, the wish to advance interests of certain cinema forms and institutions and to create knowledge and debate about them' (1990: 91). Another example is Solothurn Film Festival in Switzerland, which is described as 'the place to see the results of Swiss productions; the place where opinions are formed' (Stringer, 2003: 43). This message connotes an industry 'worthiness' (nurturing national talent) and places the festival in a position of agenda setting (decision-making) and intellectualism.

Of course, image and identity are inextricably linked to programming and the ability to attract audiences. Another study of particular use is Stringer's investigation of audience types at Shots in the Dark Film Festival (a horror festival in Nottingham). Using Celeste Michelle Condit's (1985) 'epideictic discourse' theory, Stringer uses festival catalogues and local newspaper copy to explore the ways in which communities are constructed through the language of the festival, which he terms 'rhetorical devices' (2008: 53). Stringer's work invited reflection on the rhetoric of GFF's printed materials by asking which films within the programme are being promoted to which imagined audience groups and why (see Chapter 3 and Chapter 5).

Indeed slight changes in a festival's language and ethos can have grave consequences. For example, in 1989, EIFF underwent a restructure, moving more towards mainstream films with a new focus on public spectatorship, a reformation arguably motivated by economic pressures (McArthur, 1990: 91). However, McArthur (1990) argues that this led to a period of demise wherein the once 'producers' festival' had become a 'public festival', which shattered the foundations of the event as a hub of politics of cinema committed equally to cinematic discovery and critical debate (1990: 91). EIFF experienced a similar disturbance when it announced a 'radical shakeup' in 2011, moving from a single artistic director

formation to multiple guest curators and one festival producer (Mulligan, 2011a: online). With the removal of red carpets, awards and juries, the shakeup removed the 'VIP element' of the festival (Anon, 2011a: online). As a result of its new direction and a dip in funding, the festival 'failed to appeal to critics or the box office' (McLean, 2012: online). Thus, a festival's programming ethos and the way it speaks about itself can significantly affect an event's success and popularity.

### *Festival actors*

In a similar manner to Film Studies' tradition, scholarship on film festivals talks at length about audiences. In fact, in almost every piece of scholarship with which I have engaged since 2010 the audience is explicitly mentioned, however, to my knowledge there are no published studies that have engaged directly with audiences and have evidenced findings using audience data. Of course, individual festivals often conduct internal audience research (larger events will commission external consultancy companies to conduct this work). For instance, each year GFF commissions a company called EKOS to conduct an Economic Impact Assessment Report. However, often this data resembles market research and usually explores quantitative concerns that align with funders' economic expectations; how many audience members traveled for the festival (indicating tourism numbers) or how many nights visitors stay in the city (indicating expenditure and return on investment - as discussed in more detail in Chapter 4). While this kind of research is useful as a starting point for understanding the GFF audience - EKOS reportage indicated that GFF attracts few visitors and its patronage is primarily made up of audiences in the Glasgow or Greater Glasgow area - it offers very little information about why audiences attend film festivals and what makes their festival experiences particularly meaningful.

On the other hand, most scholarly discussions of festival audiences are framed by debates around cinephilia. In *Dekalog 3*, Robert Koehler presents a rather grave view on the future of Anglo-American film festivals, noting that the threat to these events is their 'general and unexamined aversion to cinephilia, and an unwillingness to place cinephilia at the centre of the festival's activities' (2009: 81). Koehler's concerns clearly lie in programming decisions that demote films with

‘explicitly cinephilic goals’ to the sidelines so that they stand in the shadows of ‘in competition’ films, premières and events with attending stars, which, he argues, speaks to an (incorrect) assumption that only ‘a dwindling set of cinephiles’ attend festivals (2009: 82). Despite his rather pessimistic view of film festivals, Koehler does offer an interesting portrait of cinephilia as ‘operat[ing] with double vision: radar directed forward to the new, binoculars pointed back to the past’ (Koehler, 2009: 83). This view is useful when investigating festival practice at GFF, which defines itself as programming ‘mainstream to art house, vintage to futuristic’ content (GFF 2011b).

Like Koehler, Liz Czach (2010) also discusses the anxiety over the death of cinephilia within the film festival realm. However, Czach notes that audiences themselves present the biggest threat to the death of festival cinephilia by ‘embrac[ing] noncinephiliac dispositions’, which she connects to star-gazing tendencies (2010: 142).<sup>8</sup> However, she also notes that in fact film festivals also present an opportunity for classical cinephilia to make a return with their ‘promise of a unique, unrepeatable experience frequently offering a rare opportunity to view films on the big screen before they disappear into the ether or only reappear on DVD’ (Czach, 2010: 141). However, like Kim (2005) and de Valck (2005), she also acknowledges that new perspectives on cinephilia have begun to emerge within popular culture (Czach 2010). Citing an article in *Toronto Life*, she discusses five types of festival-goer – the diehard, the festival staffer, the cineaste, the stargazer and the scenester – which again complicates the notion of the festival-goer as a classical cinephile (although they are still often present in audience taxonomies) (2010: 142-3) (see Figure 2.2).<sup>9</sup>

In contrast, de Valck (2005) offers a more optimistic view on film festivals and their audiences in her examination of International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR). While de Valck’s work does not engage directly with audiences, she demonstrates a commitment to further understanding festival audiences.<sup>10</sup> In her

<sup>8</sup> In her article, Czach suggests that cinephilia is concerned with genres, directors and actors, while non-cinephilia is more about the festival scene and stars (2010: 7).

<sup>9</sup> The classical cinephile is most closely connected to the Lone-List Maker in de Valck’s (2005) classification and the cineaste in *Toronto Life*’s typology.

<sup>10</sup> On pp.104 of ‘Drowning in Popcorn at the International Film Festival Rotterdam’ de Valck (2005) notes the following in parentheses when referring to the Social Tourist: “(e.g., not too much violence, because Helen doesn’t like it [...]),” which I have taken as a hypothetical example.

examination of the ‘types’ of audiences that attend festivals, she proposes the following preliminary taxonomy, which includes six classifications of cinephiles at IFFR:

The Lone List-Maker: Follows his/her own tastes and prepares rigorously, studying the programme, and devises an intense schedule.

The Highlight Seeker: Selects based on recommendations and privileges the ‘hottest hits’ and films with established cast and/or crew.

The Specialist: Selects films based on established interest and uses the festival’s thematic categorisation (strands in the case of GFF) as a tool.

The Leisure Visitor: Treats the festival as a leisure outing and is less strategic in film selection usually attending what is on in the evenings or weekends.

The Social Tourist: Attends with groups of friends and treats the festival as a social outing, usually alongside dinner and drinks.

The Volunteer: Works for the festival in order to enter screenings for free.

(de Valck, 2005: 103-5)

De Valck’s typology suggests that in fact film festivals manifest new modes of cinephilia that cannot be defined merely by film tastes but by cinematic practices: selection processes, attendance modes and key pleasures. In many ways this aligns with de Valck’s later festival-specific monograph, in which she attributes the growing popularity of film festivals to ‘the increasing importance of “experiences” in contemporary culture’ (2007: 19). Thus, de Valck notes that festival-goers now seek ‘spectacle,’ ‘attention’ and ‘experience,’ which has bred new modes of festival-going practice (ibid). Similarly, Kim offers an earlier take on non-Anglo-American festival audiences in 1990s Korea in which she notes that a population of ‘cine-maniacs’ emerged in Korean youth culture 1990s (2005: 82). She states that this resulted in a new mode of cinephilia - which she terms ‘cine-mania’ - that saw ‘a frenzied mode of film consumption’ emerge (1998: 82). Kim’s notion of film festivals as spaces for frenzied film consumption is particularly pertinent when considering GFF’s patronage in relation to year-round cinema culture in Glasgow, and provokes questions about whether or not the festival is an ancillary event to

cinema culture or an event which, in its own right, is a principal channel for film bingeing.



Figure. 2.2 Illustrations of 'scenesters', left, and a 'cineaste', right, in *Toronto Life* in August 2006.  
Source: Czach, 2010: 142-3

The scholars mentioned each present diverse ways for thinking about film festivals as contested sites of cinephilic activity, which may be tested in an audience research project such as this. These debates also connect back to Barker's (2013) self-proclaimed opera aficionados in his livecasting study whereby attendees adorned specific roles, performances we might say, as high culture consumers. While Barker's observations emerge from empirical audience data, studies of audiences in Film Festival Studies have tended to discursively construct the festival public. These constructions are often based on observations of audiences and centre on the appearances of audience members and the particular identities they seem to embody. In considering the identity and image of festival audiences, I am pulled back to Daniel Dayan's ethnography of Sundance (2000). Drawing on Erwin Goffman's (1974) 'dramaturgic view of everyday life', Dayan positions festival audiences as performers and argues that 'the notion of performance is not to be restricted to those areas where it is conspicuous' (2000: 43). He argues that film festivals - as temporal 'social constructions' - prompt audiences to perform (behave



and act) in ways that align with a festival's set of rules and scripts (Dayan, 2000: 43).

Also of use is Dayan's conceptualisation of film festivals as 'fragile equilibriums' wherein different, and often contending, performances, roles and scripts are acted out by different groups of festival participants (organisers, audiences, journalists etc). This is particularly useful when thinking about the nature of these seemingly celebratory events whereby some mode of live action is occurring (2000: 45). Also in a methodological sense, Dayan's work positions participant observation as an effective means of understanding audiences (see Chapter 3). As he writes of audiences at Sundance:

Those who came were collectively imbued with the values of shared culture, used to a certain type of discourse in their debates and dialogues, capable of connecting aesthetic concerns and political choices. In a word Sundance allowed observing an audience that was reflexively aware of its identity and capable of articulating dissent or disagreement. The audience was a true public.

(Dayan, 2000: 44)

The notion of behavioural norms within the festival context was very influential in this overall work, informing the theoretical approach to researching audiences and thinking about them as a shared audience with shared values and culture. Indeed this framing of behavioural characteristics of festival actors as crucial to understanding the construction of festivals as something 'social' was highly enlightening and forced me to consider the behavioural norms and etiquette operating at GFF (as explored in Chapter 8).

Nevertheless, there are limitations to existing work on festival audiences, or festival actors. For instance, Dayan's work categorises different types of festival actors, directors, sales agents, audiences and journalists, but forms observational conclusions about the audience experience as a 'pilgrimage' which separates them from everyday life: '[Like] religious occasions, attendants cannot adopt the role of mere spectators. Those who perform and those for whom the performance takes place share intense feelings of community' (Dayan, 2000: 51). While useful, Dayan's portrayal of the audience is embedded with dramaturgic concepts and, therefore,

has limitations when considering the authentic festival experience. While equally instructive in terms of viewing the festival audience as heterogeneous and multifaceted, a similar limitation can be found in the taxonomies proposed by de Valck (2007) and explored by Czach (2010), which also focus on how audiences appear at film festivals and less on their actual experiences of these events. Nonetheless, the common theme of performance and identity that cuts across each of these key works on festival audiences, suggests that these performative aspects should not be overlooked when engaging directly with festival actors during fieldwork.

### **The study of screen audiences**

I now move on to look at the study of screen audiences more broadly. In her article 'Audience Research at the Crossroads: the "implied audience" in media and cultural theory', Sonia Livingstone asks; 'can we not theorise audiences just because the term is also used by the media industry?' (1998: 197). Livingstone's (1998) viewpoint responds to common criticism that deems scholarly audience research as reductive and comparable to market research. Indeed in my own study I found that my work was framed as market research on occasions within GFF (see Chapter 3). While it is understandable that the two can at times be conflated given that both use similar approaches - focus groups, questionnaires, and surveys - they differ in terms of the level of criticality and in-depth qualitative analysis that empirical scholarship offers.

Despite Livingstone's concerns, since the late 1980s work on screen audiences has slowly surfaced within Film Studies, arguably informed by audience work emerging from cultural studies (Janice Radway 1986) and television studies (David Morley 1980; Ien Ang 1991; and Camille Bacon-Smith 1992). Indeed, film scholars Valerie Walkerdine (1985), Jacqueline Bobo (1988), Helen Taylor (1989) and Jackie Stacey (1994) have offered cross-disciplinary approaches to spectatorship that position the audience at the heart of their inquiries. However, it is interesting that each of these scholars (with the exception of Stacey) takes a specific film text as a catalyst for their investigation, for instance, Walkerdine's

(1985) study centres on one male spectator and offers analyses of his response to violence in *Rocky III* (1982), on the other hand, Bobo (1988) interviews black American female spectators in order to gauge reception of *The Color Purple* (1985) and *Daughters of the Dust* (1991), while Taylor (1989) explores the cultural significance of *Gone with the Wind* (1939) by engaging with spectators' memories of the film. What this suggests is that film texts are a methodological way of locating and organising particular audiences. Certainly this reliance on text continues in later studies, for instance, Martin Barker's work on *Judge Dredd* (1998) and *Lord of the Rings* (2008), and Thomas Austin's investigation of *Natural Born Killers*, *Basic Instinct* and *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (2002). Investigating audiences through specific texts, however, becomes more problematic in a film festival context whereby the event is characterised by its presentation of numerous, and often very different, texts, which in turn attract numerous, and very different, audiences.

Nevertheless, some of these works have been highly instructive in terms of thinking about ways in which to conceptualise audience engagement with particular cultural forms. In a review of the state of audience research, Barker (2006) notes that the following 'unarguable certain truths about audiences' have been established:

There is no such thing as "the audience", rather; there are a great variety of "audiences" that nonetheless display patterns and processes, which bind them together into researchable communities of response.

Being an audience for anything is never a simple or singular process. It is a process that begins in advance of the actual encounter, as people gather knowledge and build expectations. These prior encounters are brought to bear in different - but researchable - ways within the encounter, guiding selections... In other words, audiences bring their social and personal histories with them.

(2006: 124)

Indeed comparisons can be drawn between Ang (1991), Stacey (1994) and Barker's frameworks in which they position film audiences as a 'great variety of audiences' that have shared pleasures with other audiences (through specific films, movie stars

or cinema locations and memories), but also as individuals (not a homogenised entity as found in spectatorship). In particular, Ang suggests that audiences are 'active' and must be constantly 'seduced, attracted and lured' by production companies, and indeed distributors and exhibitors (1991: 15). Within the exhibition context, audiences, therefore, decide when, where and if they attend screenings and events. As such, Barker's notion of 'advance encounters' in which audiences 'gather knowledge and build expectations' prior to their cultural encounter is particularly insightful (2006: 124).

In contrast, Janet Harbord (2002) explores the marketing and branding of both films and audiences noting that film texts have been 'recontextualised' as one of the many components of the film product and ancillary markets (2002: 78). She argues that these products are channeled through strategic marketing and public relations, with the aspiration of achieving 'a concept of individualism as the exercising of free will, which brings film into being as an experiential culture of pure "choice"' (Harbord, 2002: 78). Harbord also states that genre audiences are 'constellated communities emerging in shared response to the text, in opposition to the notion that the studio formulates the genre, and then constitutes a community of viewers [sic]' (2002: 79). While Harbord and Barker's views do not differ entirely, they propose interesting takes on the subject of audience choice, which is explored further in the analysis stages of the thesis.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has reviewed a range of studies that theoretically underpin this research project. Firstly, I have drawn on research from 'new cinema history', which positions cinema as a social and cultural activity and the cinema space - location, architecture and materiality - as intrinsic elements of the overall experience for historic audiences. Indeed, the significance of 'material pleasure' is interesting in a contemporary film festival context given that these events are characterised by textual (films, written materials) and non-textual forms (red carpets, media presence, visiting talent, ushers), which Chapter 7 explores in more detail. Also instructive are the ways in which new cinema history has problematised

the experience of cinema-going as both an ordinary and extraordinary occasion (Allen 2011; Kuhn 2002). This reveals a potential contrast between contemporary cinema-going as routine and festival-going as event and is particularly pertinent given the rise in cinema loyalty schemes, which arguably encourage more casual modes of attendance (discussed in more depth in Chapter 6).

Along similar lines, Karen Boyle's (2010) audience study on independent cinema-goers in Glasgow, which also draws on historical accounts of cinema-going, usefully suggests that spatiality is a dominant forms of pleasure for contemporary cinema audiences (in her case, for new mothers). Boyle (2010) also argues that cinemas are reconfigured for particular events and particular audiences. This notion of cinema as a 'fragmented space' that can be temporally transformed is a useful framework for considering the ways in which cinema space is transformed into festival space, which is the focus of Chapter 7.

Indeed, questions of spatiality can be found in each of the contemporary cinema audience studies discussed in this chapter, particularly in terms of the ways in which cinematic spaces facilitate differing forms of sociality. Boyle (2010), Evans (2011) and Barker (2013), suggest that in certain contexts the importance of community, shared space and shared experience remain unwavering in the contemporary landscape. For instance, Boyle's (2010) subjects took pleasure in the reduced proximity between them and other cinema-goers and actively conversed with fellow patrons. However, in contrast, Phil Hubbard's (2003) study of multiplex-goers suggests that certain cinema spaces offer forms of 'light' sociality whereby individuals only engage with one another through eye contact (2003: 262).

Certainly questions of community are conducive to our understanding of the meaningfulness of contemporary cinema culture. Interestingly, Evans (2011a, 2011b) and Hollinshead (2011) offer complementary accounts of community formation around cinematic sites. While Hollinshead (2011) engages with the 'absent' art house audience and suggests that art cinemas are places where social exclusion manifests, Evans (2011a, 2011b) endorses this from the opposite standpoint noting that the art-house audiences with which she engaged were focused on 'being part of the right kind of audience'. Constructive to both scholars

is Bourdieu's (1979) work on taste culture and distinction, also used by Barker (2013) in his livecasting study. Given Glasgow Film Festival's close connection with a former art house (which remains its hub venue), discourses of 'types' of audience and narratives of 'otherness' could potentially emerge from audience research. In such instances, questions of taste culture and distinction may be meaningful in understanding how particular cinemas, and festivals, manifest debates around exclusivity/inclusivity and high/low culture.

It is clear that both cultural cinemas and film festivals are entangled in many debates around institutional agendas and identity, as well as audience identity and scope. Interestingly, the cultural/commercial predicament of film festivals mirrors existing questions around the differing roles of art house and multiplex cinemas. Also, while cultural cinema exhibitors seek to distinguish themselves from other cinemas, film festivals too are caught up in establishing their own unique identity. As Stringer notes (2003) festivals must compete to brand and distinguish themselves from thousands of competitors in the global network if they are to attract audiences, gain industry reputes and generate all important press coverage. As such, festivals form identities around certain discourses (inclusive, friendly, influential, discovery, reputes, subversive) and transmit their 'festival image' through printed materials such as programmes and press, thus, any consideration of the festival must acknowledge what Dayan (2000) refers to as the 'written festival'. Further, they are perpetually negotiating tensions between localism and internationalism, exclusivity and inclusivity, commercialism and cultural, art and entertainment. It is, therefore, no surprise that any attempt to define film festivals as a collective form is problematic when we consider how diverse their formations can be.

The complexity of festivals themselves is mirrored in approaches to studying them. There is a plethora of ways in which one could approach a study of a film festival/s. In considering the exhibition and reception of a specific case (Glasgow Film Festival), this thesis draws on the works of Dayan (2000), Stringer (2003), de Valck (2007, 2009) and Czach (2010), each of whom consider the festival audience in some respect. In many of these cases the festival audience has been conceptualised in terms of performativity. Indeed, dominant narratives about

festival audiences are rooted in visibility: what festival-goers look like, how they perform, and what their identity as ‘scenester’, ‘highlight seeker’, ‘cinephile’ or so forth might say about their film tastes. Indeed, de Valck (2007), Koehler (2009) and Czach (2010) suggest that film festivals have arguably bred new forms of cinema audiences, which forms a stable concept throughout this thesis.

As the latter section of this chapter suggests, there has been a tendency to rely on texts as a way of organising and locating particular audiences. However, this approach is problematic when investigating film festivals like GFF, which by its very ethos provides ‘something for all’ programming a plethora of genres and national cinemas, as well as more educational and participatory events such as seminars and workshops. With such a repertoire of texts, how does the researcher privilege one genre (for instance, French comedy) over another (horror) or one national cinema (German film) over another (Brazilian film)? Also, focusing on one particular kind of film, genre or national cinema would inevitably shape the findings and offer a narrow view of a particular section of the GFF audience. For instance, to focus on the opening and closing gala films, which are more often than not French comedy or British independent film, would potentially offer an account of art-house Francophiles and/or what de Valck (2007) terms ‘highlight seekers’. My objective is to give a broader account of the multifaceted festival patronage, therefore, extended focus on a specific text or texts would be ineffectual. Nevertheless, these reception studies - Martin Barker’s work in particular - provide useful templates for gathering, analysing and communicating audience data.

I now move onto discuss the methodological models adopted in this work, and to discuss the strengths, limitations and practicalities of the research design employed.

## Chapter 3: Methodology & Research Design

The previous chapter introduced some of the theoretical questions raised in this thesis and discussed their contribution to the work. Aside from a shared interest in film festivals as objects of study and cinema audiences as subjects of inquiry, many of the explored works also share an empirical approach and a preoccupation with the sociality and spatiality of historic (Scullion 1990; Kuhn 2002) and contemporary cinematic pleasures and experiences (Hubbard 2003; Boyle 2010; Evans 2011a, 2011b; Barker 2013), which I apply to a film festival context. This chapter now moves on to discuss the methodological frameworks adopted and the research methods used to investigate festival audiences (pleasures, identities, tastes, perceptions, behaviours, and experiences) and their environment (patronage, programme, presentation, location, atmosphere and spatial characteristics). However, first it locates this PhD within the Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) framework from which it emerged.

### Project background

The PhD studentship was first conceived at the Edinburgh International Film Audiences Conference (EIFAC) in 2009 during a conversation between Dr Karen Boyle (Senior Lecturer, Theatre, Film and Television Studies, University of Glasgow) and Dr Emily Munro (Head of Learning, Glasgow Film).<sup>11</sup> Discussing the relationship between cultural cinema audiences and film festivals audiences and how little is known about each in a contemporary context, together they designed this project, submitting a proposal to the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) that year. The project secured funding in 2010 under the AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) scheme and, following a panel interview, I took up the position of PhD candidate in October that year.

A relatively new type of PhD, CDA studentships are distinctive in their format. With a focus on collaboration, the scheme involves the partnering of non-

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<sup>11</sup> Karen Boyle is now Professor of Feminist Media at the University of Stirling.



academic institutions, businesses or organisations with Higher Education Institutions (HEI) both of which work together on a research project with mutual value for each stakeholder. In the case of this PhD the collaborating institutions were Glasgow Film Theatre (GFT) and University of Glasgow.<sup>12</sup> The AHRC highlights the key benefits of the CDA studentships as: '[...] providing access to resources and materials, knowledge and expertise that may not otherwise have been available [...]' (AHRC 2014).<sup>13</sup> 'Access' is the operative word here given that tensions often exist between research aims and realistic methods, as Kate Egan and Martin Barker note:

Methods involve complicated ways of bridging the broad spaces between questions that researchers want to answer, and the pragmatics and possibilities of their research.

(Egan & Barker, 2006: online)

To some extent the CDA arrangement alleviates the strain between what the researcher wants to answer and 'the pragmatics and possibilities' of what they can feasibly do method-wise. In his assessment of 'festivals as communities' Stringer calls for more ethnographic audience research and a more 'hands on' approach, noting that the 'key to success of this kind of work is the researcher's access to the festivals themselves' (Stringer, 2003: 242). This notion of 'access' was also raised at a workshop I attended at SCMS in 2013 entitled *Behind the Velvet Rope: Insider/Outsider Dilemmas for Film Festival Researchers*, during which the workshop participants, Skadi Loist and Diane Burgess, noted that film festival research which has not had exclusive access to the event is instantly recognisable, and tends to lack certainty and rigour (SCMS 2013).

Thus, it was my aim to fully utilise the level of access to resources and people granted under the CDA so that the finished work would be distinguishable from a study with restricted access. For that reason, this project has taken full advantage of unobstructed access to the following eight research resources:

- 1) Internal documents (archival data, consultancy reports, business plans,

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<sup>12</sup> The Collaborative Doctoral Award scheme launched in October 2004. The first round of awards began in October 2005.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundingOpportunities/Pages/CollaborativeDoctoralAwards.aspx>

funding proposals, internal archive)

- 2) Data (box office statistics, sales reports, audience data)
- 3) Training (software skills)
- 4) Free screenings (one film screening per week over the research period)
- 5) Events (company meetings, networking and press events)
- 6) Research subjects (staff and audience members)
- 7) Resources (room facilities, incentives for research subjects)
- 8) Communication channels (social media, e-Newsletters etc)

Nevertheless, being faced with such a wealth of potential data, sources and resources was at times overwhelming and became one of the first challenges I faced in designing my research strategy. Moreover, it prompted me to think more about the drawbacks of having unlimited access and the importance of problematising research within the CDA structure. The next section will discuss how my chosen methodology helped me navigate potential methods, overcome the insider/outsider dilemma, and arrive at a final research design.

### **Reflexivity & constructivism**

One of the first challenges I faced was that this project was expected to deliver two outcomes; ‘intellectual contribution’ to the academy and ‘operational usefulness’ to the non-academic partner. As such, it required me to navigate tensions between academic/industry agendas. On one hand, the University of Glasgow sought to expand interdisciplinary work on film audiences and improve intellectual knowledge of particular ‘types’ of contemporary film audiences (‘film festival’ and ‘cultural cinema’) by way of qualitative research, while on the other, GFT sought to enhance understanding of its audiences and its relationship with the cinema venue. This is not to say that each partner did not share some intellectual and practical objectives and goals, rather, it suggests that these goals and objectives were weighted in different directions. As scholars in the discipline of education, Hermine Scheeres & Nicky Solomon, write in their essay on methodological dilemmas in collaborative research;

As researchers and educators we need to problematise ‘collaborative’ research and question the nature of collaboration and compliance, given the potentially opposing interests and goals of the various partners.

(Scheeres & Solomon, 2000: 130)

Of course, I was the third partner on the project as the PhD candidate. It was clear to me from the outset that my objectives were principally academic, my goal being to produce an original piece of scholarship that would result in a doctorate, however, under the format of the CDA scheme, I also had an opportunity to produce something of value to GFT. This meant a close partnering between *the researcher* and *the researched*, which made it important for me to continually reflect on the tensions that might have existed between each partner and to question to what extent I was maintaining some degree of researcher neutrality and avoiding compliance. Thus, from the outset I began the project with a distinctively reflexive approach. Being reflexive allowed me to ground myself - as a ‘recruited research candidate’ and the main tool for data collection - as a central component in the research.

During my initial review of scholarship I found that one of my main frustrations was that research methods were not always explicit in the works I was engaging with. In contrast, I was keen to make my research methods visible and to give due space to the methodological narratives that have shaped the overall thesis. For me, an instructive model was Georgina Born’s vivid, candid, and sometimes quirky, depiction of the BBC, which I found to be both rigorous and engaging. In *Uncertain Visions* (2004), Born places herself explicitly in the research narrative via her fieldwork journal, which gives the overall work a level of honesty and reflexivity that would not have been achieved had she been labelled the omniscient ‘researcher’.

I was also highly influenced by Martin Barker’s tendency to give significant attention to his research design and methodological delivery. Barker considers his research a ‘story’ and positions himself and his research partners explicitly within the narrative. With reference to his work on *Lord of the Rings*, he notes:

As two people centrally involved, we have tried to tell the story of this project honestly and fully, admitting the parts where we got it wrong, and the places where we made it up as we went along.

(Egan & Barker, 2006: online)

This notion of honesty and reactivity is particularly constructive when thinking about oneself as an academic trainee. As a PhD candidate, I felt from the outset that I was essentially undergoing an academic traineeship, a process of learning and development that would inevitably shape the finished product. In many ways I viewed it quite holistically, informed in part by David Kolb's (1984) cycle of 'experiential learning' in which the learner (in this instance, the researcher) must make the connection between experience, observation, experimentation and conceptualisation. Kolb notes in his much-cited work that 'knowledge is created through [...] the combination of grasping and transforming experiences' (Kolb, 1984: 41).

Adopting this perspective, knowledge is therefore a construct of experience, thus, the way in which we experience the world that we observe as a researcher, impacts on our interpretation of that world. In many ways this problematises the notion of objectivity. Such a viewpoint draws connection with Thomas Schwandt's notion of constructivism, in which he notes that:

Human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as construct or make it. We invent concepts, models and schemes to make sense of experience, and further, we continually test and modify these constructions in the light of new experience.

(Schwandt, 1994: 118)

He goes on to note that:

The inquirer must elucidate the process of meaning construction and clarify what and how meanings are embodied in the language and actions of social actors. To prepare an interpretation is itself to construct a reading of these meanings; it is to offer the inquirers construction of the constrictions of the actors one studies.

(Schwandt, 1994: 222)

As such, it was important for me to reflect on how my data-set was constructed and how my knowledge was gained; from whom it was communicated ('social actors'), in what way ('language'), in what situation/setting ('action'), and also to question what information was perhaps being omitted. Indeed, Ann Gray also suggests that by implementing regular epistemological reflection we are able to understand 'how we know what we know and the relationship between the knower and the known' (Gray, 2003: 2). While none of these approaches resolves the problematic notion of objectivity, they offer useful ways of thinking about reflexive practice as a means of scrutinising and monitoring co-dependent relations with researched subjects and settings.

As Bent Flyvbjerg notes, in order to build 'concrete experiences' it is important for researchers to be close to the object of study in order to avoid 'academic blind alleys':

Concrete experiences can be achieved via continued proximity to the studied reality and via feedback from those under study. Great distance to the object of study and lack of feedback easily lead to a stultified learning process, which in research can lead to ritual academic blind alleys, where the effect and usefulness of research becomes unclear and untested.

(Flyvbjerg, 2006: 223)

Indeed, the relationship between Gray's (2003) 'knower' (me) and the 'known' (Glasgow Film Festival) was continually tested throughout the project. During my PhD tenure I had a responsibility - under the terms of the CDA - to provide annual reports and/or presentations of my findings to the non-academic partner (senior staff) following each festival event. This gave me an opportunity to discuss, and to test, what I had found with key stakeholders at work-in-progress stage and contributed to my 'experiential learning'. Furthermore, it was beneficial to Glasgow Film personnel who were able to gain access to some of my findings as they emerged, as opposed to waiting until the end of the PhD. It was very satisfying to find that some of my key terms and concepts were being used in funding reports and during introductions at the film festival itself, indicating that the project was

having an impact outside of the scholarly realm, suggesting that I was not falling into the ritualistic 'blind alley' to which Flyvbjerg (2006) refers.

The next section provides an overview of the research and timeframe within which the research took place.

### **Fieldwork overview and timeframe**

This project formally began in October 2010 and participant observation began immediately with me attending GFT one day per week to explore the space and attend screenings. In terms of the timeframe for participant observation of GFT, it took place between October 2010 and January 2013, however, in the latter six months (November 2012 - January 2013) participant observation was less intensive and dipped to 1-2 visits per month. At this point visits were often scheduled around research presentations, meetings, debriefs, staff interviews or times when I had to access reports or archival material. Nevertheless, I attended the venue up until February 2013 at which point I entered what I considered to be my 'writing up' stage and maintained contact with staff at GFT via email to ensure they were kept up-to-date with the progress of the thesis.

During the film festival each year (of which there were three during the research period: February 2011, 2012 and 2013) participant observation was intensified. I was present at the festival on a full time basis for the eleven consecutive days of the event and attended numerous host venues around the city. Nevertheless, 2012 was a particularly important festival for research. During GFF12 I recruited for, and delivered, seven focus groups with audience members during festival time on GFT premises.

The last stage of my research took place between April 2013 and August 2013 when I conducted interviews with GFT and GFF personnel. This was the final stage of my fieldwork, although, as stated, I attended GFT at intermittent times. I also met with GFT/GFF staff at external policy events, such as Creative Scotland's Film Sector Review meeting (2013) and BFI Film Forever - One Year On event (2013).

It should now be clear that I have adopted a mixed-method approach. The next section goes on to briefly explain my justification for choosing a mixed design.

### **Mixed-method approach**

In contrast to economic impact assessment, measuring the importance of a cultural event/organisation for the public it serves is more problematic. Firstly, measuring meaningfulness does not arise from a single problem or question, such as: how many tourists did Glasgow Film Festival 2011 (GFF11) bring to the city of Glasgow? Instead it results from a set of foreshadowed open-ended questions or problems: Why do people attend the festival? How do they engage with the event and other audiences members? What pleasures do they take from it? As such, this project began with no clear hypothesis, rather, a formulated set of interconnected problems, questions and issues that collectively would shed light on the cultural significance of GFF and GFT. At this point it is useful to refer back to some of the key research questions relating to festival audiences:

- What are audience members' prime motivations for attending GFF and in what ways do their choices and festival experiences differ from, or synergise with, year-round cinema-going experiences?
- What taste patterns emerge in terms of content and space and to what extent do GFF audiences segment in terms of year-round patterns of engagement with specific cinemas?
- To what extent does GFF create a festival community and do audiences perceive themselves as forming part of a local, regional, national or/and international festival audience?

It immediately became clear that many of the questions I hoped to answer could only be addressed by communicating directly with the GFF audience, and, as a result, this project instantly adopted a qualitative character. However, as evidence-based policy drives funding decisions, the need to evidence the impact of cultural organisations and events continues to grow. Thus, I knew that a straightforward audience research endeavour would not be strong, or rigorous, enough on its own.

A single-method was ruled out in part by Greene et al's (1989) instructive article 'Toward a Conceptual Framework for Mixed-Method Evaluation Designs' in which the authors note that 'use of one method to assess a given phenomenon will inevitably yield biased and limited results', which tapped into existing anxieties around my position as both insider and outsider (Greene et al, 1989: 256). My decision was also informed by academic debates on subjective meaning in audience research, and the increasing recognition that in order to build a fuller and more comparative picture of the value of particular cultural experiences triangulation between qualitative work and other methods would be necessary.

Adopting Clive Seale's (1998) argument that bringing together the traditions of quantitative methods in social science research with more new age qualitative approaches is key for the practicing researcher, my mixed-method approach included qualitative methods (focus groups, interviews, participant observation), desk research (literature review, archival research) and quantitative methods (statistical analysis, database building) (Seale, 1998: 2). This mixed approach would enable me to present a fuller picture of GFF as a cultural institution (engaging with its programme, history, personnel and box office data), as well as its meaningfulness for real audiences. Furthermore, gathering institutional *and* audience viewpoints offered the chance to present a more complete and detailed portrait of the ways in which audiences experience and value GFF, but also allowed me to unravel the cultural scripts that surround the event and the perceptions of audiences that exist in the minds of decision-makers.

I now move on to discuss each stage of the research in more detail, drawing out the strengths and weaknesses of each method and highlighting any challenges I faced, as well as some of the trickier practicalities of planning, organising and conducting fieldwork. Given the mixed-method approach, research design is split into three parts: desk research (literature review, archival research, textual analysis); databases and statistical analysis; and fieldwork (participant observation, focus groups, interviews).



## **Desk research - literature review, archival research, textual analysis**

As noted in the introductory chapter, this study is motivated by a desire to explore the exhibition practices at a film festival (GFF) as well as festival-going practice (GFF audiences). As such, it was important for me to firstly familiarise myself with GFF and GFT (programming, branding, business models, internal policies) and so I firstly embarked on a period of desk research. This meant engaging with the first of the eight resources granted under the CDA scheme:

- Internal documents (archival data, consultancy reports, business plans, funding proposals).

I also conducted desk research on existing scholarship on film festivals, cinema exhibition, and audience research as discussed in Chapter 2. However, desk research also involved looking at policy documents (business plans, funding applications) within the organisation and industry reports and policy reviews on exhibition in the UK. Also included were existing materials on GFT and GFF audiences, in particular, the annual economic impact assessment reports produced for the festival each year. In addition I engaged with GFT's internal archive located on-site, which included cinema programmes all the way back to 1939 and festival programmes from 2005 onward.

Thus, textual analysis of the festival programmes over the research period (2011-2013) also consumed much of my desk research stage. Collectively, this literature was critical to my understanding of the ways in which GFT and GFF's identities are shaped by key moments in its history, its programming, business models, and internal and external policies.

While archival research was conducted over an intense two-week period (July 2013) at the offices at GFT and in the Mitchell Library Archive, reviewing contemporary literature (academic and industry) continued throughout the course of the thesis. This enabled me to keep abreast of developing commentary on film festivals from within the academy as more scholarship appeared on the subject, to trace developments in policy in terms of cultural cinema exhibition and film

festivals, and to monitor any changes in the identity, or perceived identity, of GFF by patrons, media or the cultural sector in Scotland.

### **Databases and statistical analysis**

Another stage of research meant engaging with a further two resources granted by the collaborative nature of my PhD:

- Internal data (box office statistics, sales reports, audience data).
- Training (software skills).

In ‘Unanswered Questions in Audience Research’, David Morley discusses a general reluctance to engage in statistical methods by audience researchers, he notes;

To my mind it is a real puzzle as to why so few people ever use numbers in contemporary audience research [...] There is also a particular irony, and one that will perhaps be particularly resonant in France, that Anglo-American cultural studies scholars, who themselves would never resort to the use of numbers in their own research, nonetheless often quote work by Bourdieu (1994) which was, of course, founded on the use of sophisticated statistical methods.

(Morley, 2006: 106-7)

With a wealth of box office data available to me, I was keen to avoid falling into the trap of qualitative only study to which Morley (2006) refers. I therefore asked to be trained on GFT’s in-house box office system called The Patron Edge, not-for-profit ticket management software. My rationale was that if I was fully competent on the system I could independently run reports, therefore, Front of House Manager, Angela Freeman, trained me on the system in August 2012. As I was developing a typology of films programmed at GFF over the research period, I was keen to extrapolate more data (sale by %, sales by £, venue details, show times, target sales etc) (see Chapter 5 for typology). I was therefore able to merge my own data-set with GFT/GFF’s data and conduct analysis in Excel; looking at the types of films programmed (according to my film typology), the most popular types of films programmed, most popular venues and show times, and top-selling films.

One of the main limitations I faced in terms of dealing with the numeric data generated from The Patron Edge was that I lacked the statistical skills to fully exploit the dataset, which is not uncommon for researchers working in my discipline. Nevertheless, I researched how to work out the distribution of my data (films programmed at GFF over the research period) and generate median sales by percentage, which indicated ‘probable’ sales for each of my film types (see Chapter 6). This was a particularly important piece of analysis that would be very useful for the non-academic partner (it forecasts sales based on capacity and film type).

I now move on to the third and final stage of my research, fieldwork.

### **Fieldwork - GFF case study**

Julian Stringer has warned that approaching film festivals in a purely ‘localized and/or provincial manner runs the risk of producing insights that are too narrow and too restrictive in their non-transferability’ (2003: 7). Nevertheless, to date, single case studies have been the most prominent method for ethnographic research because they enable the researcher to become immersed in the research setting. This can be seen in the work of Born in her ethnography of the BBC (2004) and Dayan’s (2000) anthropological work on Sundance Film Festival. While both of these institutional studies are focused on one organisation, their worth is transferable on account of the level of insider knowledge and insight which forms the basis for solid conceptualisation, as well as offering valuable methodological frameworks. Indeed, Dayan’s study is considered one of the most conceptually sound pieces of work within Film Festival Studies, and one of the most cited works, despite focusing solely on one particular festival.

Thus, while I acknowledge Stinger’s notion of the dangers of specificity (looking at only one festival), I would argue that, given that this work is one of the earliest festival studies to use audience research as a principal method, it will be transferable to other studies which attempt to understand and conceptualise contemporary festival audiences, including events for other mediums (for instance, music concerts). Also, while the project focuses on a single case study (GFF), it inevitably considers other institutions as part of that case inquiry, particularly

cinema institutions: GFT, Cineworld and the Centre for Contemporary Arts amongst others. As such, it is my hope that its usefulness will extend to scholars concerned with contemporary cinema/festival exhibition and the rise in event culture, and for those with an interest in the meaningfulness and pleasures of cinema as well as the identity of today's cinema-goer.

### **Participant observation**

This PhD began in a rather unconventional way with ethnographic fieldwork commencing in the very first weeks of the project. This stage involved two of the resources I set out to utilise at the start of the project:

- Free screenings (one film screening per week over the research period).
- Events (company meetings, networking and press events).

In October 2010 I began weekly participant observation at GFT, attending screenings, special events, and generally exploring the space (foyer, café bar, and box office). This initial observation period allowed me to become fully acquainted with the research setting at different times of the day and days of the week. Also, my face quickly became a familiar one around the GFT space and I arranged informal chats with many staff members to introduce the project and myself. Spending a significant amount of time at the venue proved invaluable in helping me formulate key questions I wanted to address in relation to GFT and GFF audiences (habits, behaviours, popular films and show times etc) and how the cinema functioned as a cultural institution. Furthermore, it gave me the chance to observe programming practices at GFT and identify key decision-makers within the organisation (programme director, festival director) that I would later engage with in interviews. As such, I began enriching my knowledge of the research setting and its subjects from the outset, and I started to think seriously about the ways I could investigate internal practices and audience activities at the film festival.

Nevertheless, new to ethnography, I found that it took some time for me to ease into my position as observer, or as David Walsh states, 'the primary research instrument' (1998: 221). My most pressing concern was that the information I was

collecting - snippets of conversations, notes on lone/group attendance, notes on 'types' of film (cross-over, foreign, art-house, commercial), walk-outs - was rather open-ended information. My concerns were linked to David Morley's claims that ethnography has the potential to morph into anecdotalism, as he states 'we should not mistake the vividness of the examples it offers us for their general applicability' (2006: 106).

However, Philip Elliot has presented a more optimistic view of participant observation. He writes that fragments of information enable the ethnographer to address a wide range of research questions and interests continuously, which chimes with my aim to address a set of problems and issues around questions of cultural value (Elliot, 1972: 7). Also, further investigation of the methodological challenges of participant observation suggests that these fragments of information are in fact the foundations of ethnographic analysis. Hammersley and Atkinson describe ethnography as:

A particular method or set of methods which in its most characteristic form [...] involves the ethnographer participating overtly or covertly in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions - in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of inquiry.

(Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995: 3)

Thus, by the time the first festival took place in 2011 I was very much attuned to the practice of ethnography, noting all observations in a fieldwork journal. Participant observation was conducted during Glasgow Film Festival 2011 (GFF11, 17-27 February 2011), Glasgow Film Festival 2012 (GFF12, 16-26 February 2013) and Glasgow Film Festival 2013 (GFF13, 14-24 February 2013), which, collectively, involved attending 60 screenings over 20 strands and across eight sites in the city.

Another of the main anxieties I had to overcome was what position I would take as observer. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) note, the ethnographer participates in a research setting over an 'extended period of time'. Thus, I was concerned about the possibility of becoming too entrenched within the Glasgow

Film organisation. Indeed Stringer too has warned of the dangers of exclusive access and deep immersion, noting that participant observation can have ‘unpredictable value’ because the researcher’s position as outsider has been compromised (Stringer, 2003: 242). In contrast, Born argues that ‘The task of the anthropologist is to experience the culture from within’ (2004: 16). Thus, there are often opposing views on the position the participant observer should take, which provokes the question; how immersed does one actually get?

In John Brewer’s opinion, the researcher - as participant observer - must play a double role in which they act as ‘part insider and part outsider [...] simultaneously member and non-member’ (Brewer, 2000: 60). Thus, I positioned myself as a ‘passive observer’ when it came to institutional inquiry and ‘covert observer’ when it came to observing audiences.<sup>14</sup> While gatekeepers (senior GFT/GFF staff) knew I was conducting participant observation, audience patrons and front of house staff tended not to know. This put me in a strong position as it allowed me to observe naturally-occurring situations, and the behaviours of staff and audiences.

Regular participant observation meant that I spent a lot of time at GFT and built positive working relationships with most staff. However, I remained fairly hands-off and a ‘passive observer’. In this sense, I did not get involved in operational duties or help out when resources were low. Also, there was less need for me to be around administrative staff as my time was often spent in the actual cinema and surrounding spaces (foyer, box office) observing audiences, as opposed to behind-the-scenes activity in the offices. More than that though, I felt it was important for me to keep a relative distance from personnel (I did not socialise with staff or form strong friendships during the project), so that there was no chance of my work being swayed in particular directions based on bonds I had formed. However, this approach had its drawbacks in that, with some members of staff, I felt there was a degree of caution in that they too kept a distance from me.

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<sup>14</sup> While GFT/GFF staff knew I was conducting ethnographic research, GFF/GFT patrons tended not to know, unless I engaged in direct conversation with anyone.

## Semi-structured interviews

As my investigation was concerned with both the exhibition and reception of film festivals it was important for me to include the voice of the organisation by engaging with the people who make the festival happen, which meant using another of my key resources:

- Research subjects (staff and audience members).

Of course from the outset I communicated with many staff members at GFT, however, it was not until April 2013 that I began to formally interview the senior management team. I delayed formal interviews on the basis that I would have a more formulated and comprehensive line of questioning following an extended observational period. Thus between April 2013 and August 2013 I conducted seven semi-structured interviews. Interviews were audio-recorded to ensure I could engage in free-flowing conversation and each participant completed an ethics form which authorised me to tape our discussion prior to interview. Interviews lasted approximately one hour each, resulting in a total of seven hours of recorded dialogue. While this may not appear to be an extensive amount of interviews, it covered 100% of the senior management team, as Glasgow Film is a small organisation with very lean resources:

- Jaki MacDougall, CEO at GFT.
- Allison Gardner, Head of Cinemas GFT and Co-Director of GFF.
- Allan Hunter, Co-Director of GFF.
- Julie Cathcart, Head of Marketing at GFT/GFF.
- Seonaid Daly, Festival Producer.
- Angela Freeman, Front of House Manager at GFT/GFF.
- Emily Munro, Head of Learning at GFT.

I opted for a semi-structured technique, as it would allow me to cover each point I wanted to address, but also made sure I was not confined to a specific set or linearity of questions. I had also anticipated that my interviewees would raise interesting topics specific to their area of responsibility and at times I would need

to gain clarification or tease out discussion further, therefore, I decided that a flexible semi-linear structure would work best (a sample interview script can be found in Appendix A).<sup>15</sup>

Given the close relationship with Glasgow Film, I did not encounter any instances whereby personnel refused to be interviewed, in fact, in the most part interviewees were very forthcoming. I did have one instance where a participant wanted to know more about the line of questioning prior to the meeting, however, this individual's reasoning was that it would allow for preparation. In retrospect, this actually denaturalised the interview as a degree of polished preparedness obstructed open discussion. Also, while several participants were clearly excited by the research and eager to contribute, I did feel that some felt obliged to take part because the project was endorsed by both the company's Head of Learning and the CEO, which is something that Lynn Whitaker - a former CDA candidate at the University of Glasgow - also found in her interviews with BBC personnel (Whitaker, 2011: 64). This also links back to the slight degree of wariness I felt on the part of some staff members throughout the project.

However, in contrasts to Whitaker's findings (2011), I did not feel that overall participants entrusted in me their most private opinions. While some were very frank about issues such as 'low salaries' and 'a shortage of resources', in the main discussions were very professional with participants projecting a very positive image of the organisation. This may be in part because I had not mentioned anonymity in the interview invitation email I sent to each participant (I discuss ethics later in this chapter).

Another disadvantage of the interview method was that some staff members left during the research project. An example would be Jen Davies, former Head of Marketing, who devised the brand for Glasgow Film (an umbrella trade name for GFT, GFF and Cinema City) and was involved in the branding and marketing of the festival at the beginning of the research project. Also, there were restrictions on staff time, which meant I could not conduct longer interviews. Personnel at GFF are

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<sup>15</sup> The appendix sample is for the interview with Allison Gardner; however, it is important to note that each interview script differed slightly depending on which department the interviewee managed.



very busy during the festival; therefore, I held interviews in quieter times of year (spring/summer).

### Focus groups

The next stage of my fieldwork constitutes the primary research method, in which I engaged directly with film festival audiences. For this, I drew on three key resources; again on research subjects (staff and audience members), but also:

Resources (room facilities, printing, incentives for research subjects).

Communication channels (social media, e-Newsletters).

Audience engagement offered three main options to me; interviews, surveys or focus groups. Given that GFF commission a small scale audience survey each year that takes place during the festival, I was keen to avoid use of a questionnaire or survey as festival audiences may have become tired of being asked to fill out more forms during their visit. On the other hand I felt that interviews gave off a rather formal impression of the research and that audiences who were in the midst of an exciting film festival might be put off by a one-to-one encounter with an academic researcher. Thus, I decided to use focus groups as a key method because they would allow me to observe the way in which festival-goers interact with one another in a group formation, which mirrored the sociality of the film festival experience.

In their extensive study on audience reception of *Judge Dredd* in which they opt for focus group methods, Martin Barker and Kate Brooks note:

Our wish was to use focus groups as a way of exploring how viewers made sense of a film in light of their assumptions, experiences and expectations, and to see what ‘natural vocabularies’ they used. We also wanted to explore how they positioned themselves in relation to others, and their perspectives.

(Barker & Brooks, 1998: 24)

Most interesting to this project is the notion of ‘natural vocabularies’ and self-positioning as I was interested in the ways in which festival-goers interact with one another; whether or not there would be any conflict of opinion (particularly in

groups with different cinema loyalty); and whether or not certain sub-groups would emerge and form alliances. There were lots of interesting questions that relied on interaction and self-positioning that focus groups would allow me to observe. In this respect, focus groups offered an opportunity to both interview and observe and became a hybrid method; an amalgamation of the semi-structured interview and participant observation.

In Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures*, he describes the public (or 'man' as he collectively terms it) as 'an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun and I take culture to be one of those webs' (1973: 5). Adopting this viewpoint, focus groups would allow me to try to unravel a number of these 'webs of significance', which, to return to Schwandt, may be found in the 'language' and 'actions' of participants ('social actors') as they converse and interact with one another in a social setting (1994: 222).

Keeping in mind the influence of Dayan's work (2000) on festival actors, it was important for me to explore the performative aspect of group research (how people presented themselves within the group) and to provoke some debate between audience members. In fact performance often emerged in relation to cinephilia. For example, I was interested in audience members' cinema practices outside of festival time and found that within the sessions an unprompted multiplex/art house debate continually arose; often resulting in Cineworld Unlimited Cardholders vigorously defending their positions as cinephiles. Given that focus groups are a dynamic method, when interesting discussion went slightly off-topic I could let it unravel and bring it back on track when it became tired or meaningless. I could also assess tonality, fervour, disinterest or joviality around particular discursive topics, and take additional notes on non-verbal modes of communication and behaviour. Indeed, in many instances quieter participants in groups became rather self-deprecating and provided a disclaimer that they did not know a lot about film ('I mean I'm not a big movie buff'), which was very telling about their perceptions of other film festival-goers. In contrast, some participants positioned themselves as dedicated festival-goers or cinephiles and took every opportunity to showcase their film knowledge. Such findings are a testament to

focus group research as they would not have emerged in a one-to-one interview situation or survey, which in many ways validates my decision to observe and interact with audiences in a group formation.

### *Planning*

In terms of the timing of the research, the decision to run the focus groups during the festival certainly came with its logistical challenges. However, I felt that it made sense to conduct the research during the event; firstly, the people I wished to engage with were already in the research space which meant I had access to them, and secondly, I felt that in order to capture the ‘buzz’ of the festival the research had to take place within real time. GFF had also offered to provide free festival tickets for participants and so it made sense to hold the sessions during the event (as it turned out, following the focus groups, most participants went straight to the box office to book tickets for the following evening).

Nevertheless, before conducting the festival focus groups I conducted four sessions outside of festival time (November 2011, January 2012). These sessions were run first and foremost to test the method: were focus groups the best way of understanding cinema/festival audiences? As such, they also enabled me to test lines of questioning, ascertain optimum group sizes, test recruitment strategies, give the project a profile by generating awareness pre-festival, and gauge the appetite for group discussion amongst audience members at GFT and Cineworld Renfrew Street (CRS).<sup>16</sup> They also flagged up particular group behaviours that would recur during the live sessions: the cinematic divide between multiplex-goers and art cinema-goers. Certainly, while these early sessions lacked in-depth festival discussion, making them of tangential relevance, the data could potentially be used in a cinema-specific piece.

Organising the live sessions within festival time, essentially meant organising an event within an event. Footfall at GFT during GFF is increased significantly as festival-goers are packed into the foyer or queued round the block for sell-out

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<sup>16</sup> Several participants in my festival focus groups noted that they recognised me from pilot session recruitment.

shows. As such, the scheduling of focus groups had to be strategic as the meeting point for participants was in the main foyer. As such it was important to schedule them outside of times when busy screenings were about to begin. At first I had drawn up my own schedule and sent it to the Front of House Manager Angela Freeman for approval, however, it clashed with many film times and would cause congestion in the foyer. One of my main aims of the research was to minimise tension between my academic agenda and the organisation agenda of GFF in running a successful film festival. Therefore, I met with Angela and we sat down together and drew up a revised schedule. It became clear during this meeting that 1.5hr sessions (which had been my preferred duration) would not be possible and so I cut the focus groups to one hour.

Once I drew up the schedule I ran into another problem - facilities. For pilot sessions, I had used the Education Room, a spacious area next to the main cinema. However, during the film festival this room is reserved for press. As such, I had no session room and with no budget for venue hire I was faced with a problem. Following a discussion with Jaki MacDougall (CEO at GFT), we decided to use her office above the cinema as a research venue. Given that the GFT offices are entered through a secure door, this came with its problems. Most importantly, there was a potential security issue and so I would have to wait for all participants in the cinema foyer and then lead them outside the building and up to the GFT office. Once there, I could not leave participants unattended in the offices, which contain confidential data, staff personal belongings and computer and filming equipment, therefore, returning to collect tardy participants would not be possible. Thus, it became apparent that I would have to recruit volunteers to help me with the physical movement of participants. As such, I recruited three assistants; one through the University of Glasgow, one through GFT and another through a personal contact. Dealing with volunteers also meant that I had to employ leadership skills and ensure that volunteers had health and safety training prior to the festival.

### *Recruitment & sample*

In my original recruitment strategy I had opted for a drop-in format, thinking this would fit with the casual aloof image I had of the festival-goer. However, in the

end I decided it would be too difficult to manage; what if only one person turned up? Would I have to turn them away leaving bad feeling or indeed wasting incentives? What if large groups came along and I had to turn away some participants? In my pilot session I had had six unexpected drop-ins meaning my focus group included 12 people, an almost unmanageable amount. As such, my recruitment strategy hastily went from 'drop-in' to 'absolutely no drop-ins'. I also later discovered that many GFF-goers are in fact not casual attendees but very strategic and active patrons.

In terms of sampling, criteria for the sessions was simple; individuals had to be over 18 years old and had to have attended GFF prior to coming to a focus group as they would be expected to talk about their festival experience/s. Recruitment began two weeks before the festival took place. Participants were recruited through various channels. Firstly through social media; GFF and GFT Facebook and Twitter, my own Festival Research Focus Group Facebook page and my personal Twitter, 38 Minutes (a local arts and media social networking site), GFF e-Newsletter, posters in the foyer, flyers at box office (see Appendix B). I acknowledge that the channels I went through would draw individuals who already had a connection to GFT or GFT (having signed up to the e-Newsletter, following them on Twitter etc), however, I was unfazed by this as the project did not set out to engage with absent audiences.

During the festival, I recruited at 15 screenings along with my volunteers, covering most strands and focusing on two main venues. On-site recruitment involved passing a flyer to attendees before they went into the auditorium and waiting for sign-ups as they exited following the film. Also, I arranged with the festival organisers to make a quick announcement before each film started (those which I had targeted as recruitment films) to inform audiences about the project and encourage them to sign up (highlighting the 'free ticket' incentive).

In selecting recruitment films, I chose 15 different strands covering foreign-language film, galas, events (workshops), Scottish and British titles, American independent film, music, youth films and fashion events in the hope that I would attract a sample with an assortment of film tastes. In order to gauge the variety of

tastes within the sample, participants were asked to name three events they had or would be attending at the festival. Leading film types were gala titles, European cinema and films from the youth film festival, with documentaries and American independent film representing the lowest figures (see Figure 3.1)<sup>17</sup> This data would suggest that participants were drawn to the festival's highlight events (gala films, which often have visiting talent and are scheduled at peak times (weekends, evenings). Indeed, 30% of all focus group participants had attended the opening gala event. Nevertheless, the variety of film choices represented (16 out of a possible 19 strands) was the type of wide-ranging interests I sought.

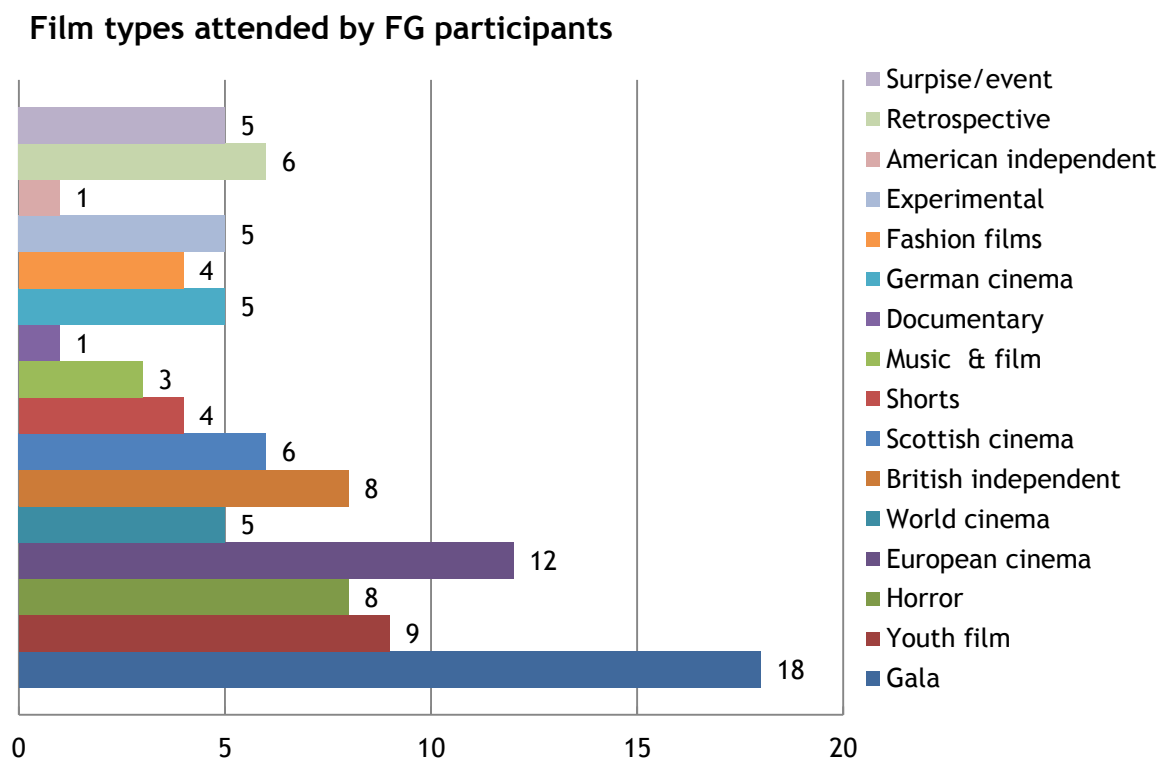


Figure 3.1. This bar chart details what types of films the collective research sample had attended, or would be attending, during GFF12. Source: researcher's own.

Besides film taste, I also wanted to balance the number of recruitment films across venues (7 from GFT, 8 from CRS). I had concerns about solely recruiting at GFT in case I attracted GFT patrons only and that this would pre-classify audience

<sup>17</sup> This bar graph details film types as opposed to GFF strands. For instance, I have ascribed FrightFest data to the horror category and Out of the Past data to the repertory category. This has been done for readers unfamiliar with GFF strand titles.

responses. The decision to recruit at a non-hub venue was also driven by Clive Seale's argument that it is sometimes necessary 'to go outside the setting to understand the significance of things that go on within it' (1998: 224). Despite actively attempting to avoid a GFT bias, in the end, over half of my research sample were cultural cinema patrons (see Figure 3.2).

In terms of the sample's involvement with film culture year-round, the majority of participants were very much involved in film culture. While the most frequent form of attendance was 1-2 times per month, over half the sample attended the cinema once per week or more, which indicated a rather 'invested' cinema audience. This was substantiated by the ways in which participants self-identified as avid, keen, occasional or rare cinema-goers with 'keen cinema-goer' emerging as the dominant mode of identification for the group. Interestingly the most dominant identification for Cineworld-goers was 'avid' (9 out of 15 identified this way), while for GFT the most common identification was 'keen' with very few identifying as an 'avid' cinema-goer (only 4 out of 21 GFT-goers).

#### Year-round cinema of choice

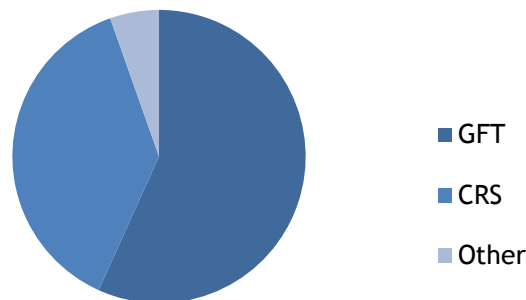


Figure 3.2. Ratios for year-round cinema affiliation: 57% GFT, 37% CRS and 6% other cinemas.  
Source: researcher's own.

### Year-round cinema attendance

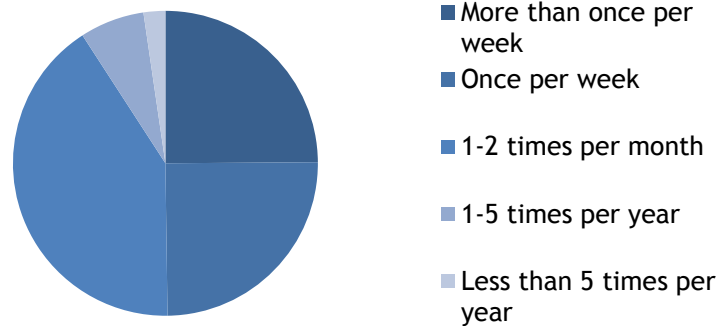


Figure 3.3. The highest proportion of the sample attended the cinema 1-2 times per month (21%). However, as shown, 50% of the sample attended once per week (25%) or more (25%). Source: researcher's own.

### Self-identification

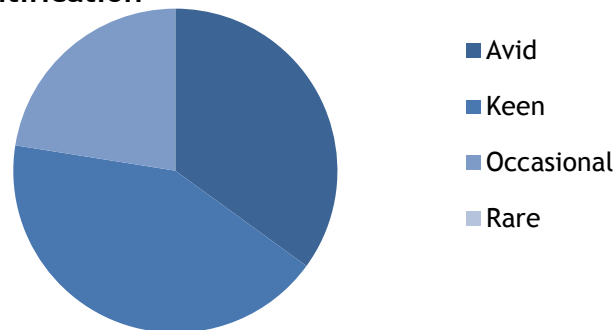


Figure 3.4. The dominant identification was 'keen' cinema-goer. Source: researcher's own.

### *The GFF Audience*

In terms of what GFF currently knows about its audience, before each annual event, the festival commissions EKOS Consultants to conduct an Economic Impact Assessment Report. The report evaluates the festival's performance using comparatives with previous years. While the festival uses the data to strategise for forthcoming events, the main purpose is to report the event's social, cultural economic benefits to its key funders: Creative Scotland, Event Scotland and Glasgow City Marketing Bureau. Indeed, providing such a report is one of the key requirements of funding. In many ways it is therefore unsurprising that the EKOS reports very much show a positive case for the festival in terms of the economic benefits on national and municipal level; additional expenditure (the amount of money people spend while attending the festival), additional employment (the



number of jobs GFF creates) and the return on public sector investment, findings which position GFF as a particularly fruitful event for Glasgow and Scotland. The EKOS reports for 2010 and 2011 included face-to-face audience surveying and showed very consistent audience profiles and stable demographics.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, while EKOS reportage predominantly functions as an economic account, it offers a useful demographic comparative for my audience research. In terms of demographic data, I captured the following information from my FG participants: age, gender, occupation and postcode. The final sample comprised of 40 participants - 16 males and 24 females (see Appendix C for more information on participants). In terms of age range, 25-34 year olds were the most dominant group in my own sample, followed by 18-25 year olds and 35-44 year olds (see Figure 3.5). In comparing this to data from EKOS data from 2012, age ranges were more varied with the dominant group being 35-44 year olds (26%) (see Figure 3.6). Nevertheless, there was coalescence in the sense that the majority of festival-goers were 44 years and under.

**Age of FG participants**

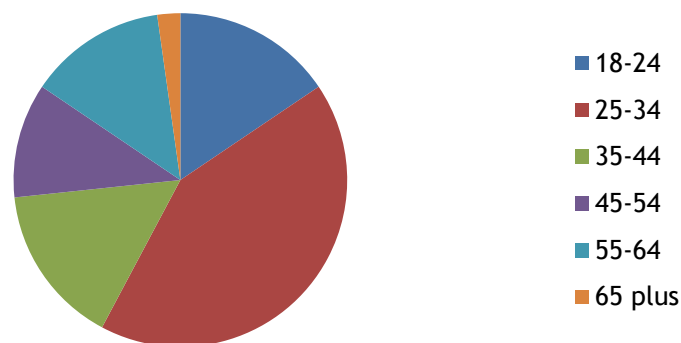


Figure 3.5. 25-34 year-olds represented the most dominant age category. Source: author's own.

<sup>18</sup> In 2012 GFF reverted to a shortened version of the report that took averages over 2010, 2011 and 2013.

### Age of participants in GFF research

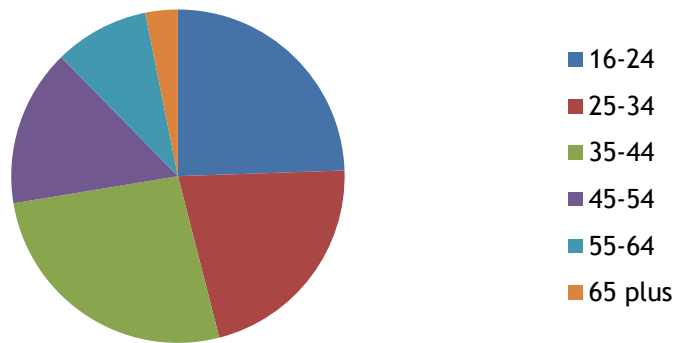


Figure 3.6. EKOS report suggests that 35-44 years olds were the dominant group (26%) followed closely by 16-24 year olds (24%). Source: EKOS 2012.

With reference to occupation, over half of my sample was employed (55%) with students representing the second highest occupational category (28%) (see Figure 3.7). There were very few unemployed participants in the sample (3%). Occupational status in my own research was highly consistent with findings in the EKOS survey (2012), which reported the dominant category as full-time education (56%) and second highest category as students (25%). Again, there were very few unemployed participants (3%) (see Figure 3.8). In terms of occupation, most of my participants were professionals or white-collar workers, while only one participant was a blue-collar worker, which suggests a rather middle-class sample (see Figure 3.9). While the EKOS report does not outline specific occupations, it suggests that survey participants were drawn from higher social class groups with 80% identifying as middle-class in 2012. On the other hand, 26% (2012) self-identified as belonging to the upper middle/middle class group (e.g. higher or intermediate managerial or professional), while 54% (2012) fell into the lower middle class group (e.g. junior managerial, supervisory or clerical). Working class categories (semi skilled workers, unskilled manual workers, state pensions, casual or lowest grade workers) represented 20% of the 2012 EKOS sample. As such, much of the data from GFF aligns with audience data for GFT in the *Vision 2020* report, which is discussed in Chapter 4.

### Occupational status of FG participants

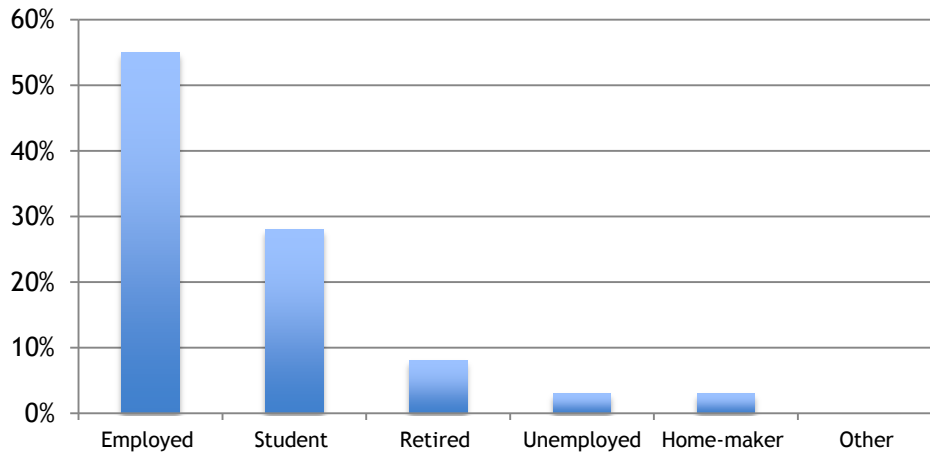


Figure 3.7. The most dominant category was 'employed' (55%). Source: author's own.

### Occupational status in EKOS survey (2012)

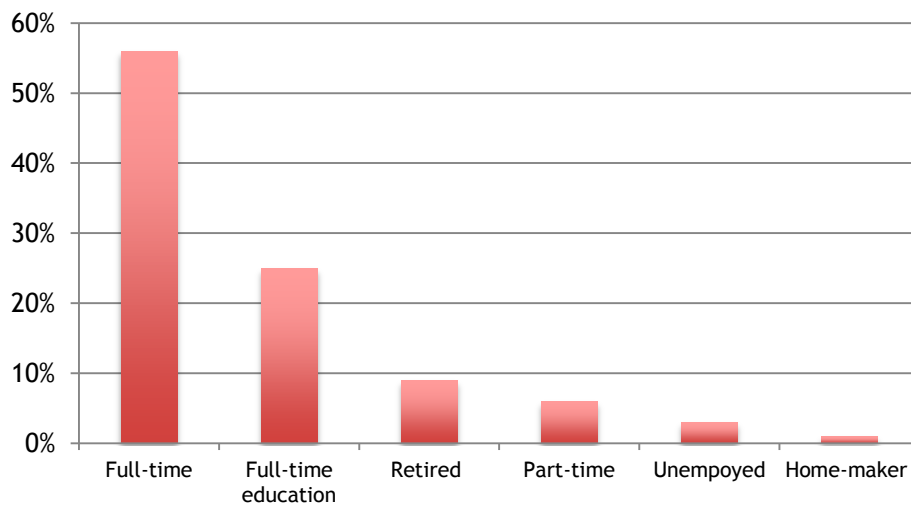


Figure 3.8. Occupation for EKOS survey respondents (by %) in 2012. Source: EKOS 2013.

## Occupations of FG participants

Professional roles	White collar	Blue collar
Product designer Software developer Policy advisor Graphic designer Academic researcher Physiotherapist Nurse Teacher Lawyer Filmmaker	Area sales manager Charity shop manager Retail manager Ward clerk IT technician Charity worker Data assistant Young development worker Party planner	Barista

Figure 3.9. FG participant were predominantly professionals or white-collar workers. Source: author's own.

Current research shows that the GFF audience is a distinctively local patronage: 80% of all patrons are from Glasgow or the Greater Glasgow area (EKOS, 2013: 5). As such, the post-code data capture was intended to gauge whether or not my sample included any tourists or if it constituted a local group. Indeed only two participants from my sample were not from Glasgow (one from Dundee, the other from Edinburgh) (see Figure 3.10). However, although Glasgow is a multicultural city with a large migrant community - the National Records for Scotland notes that 27,699 people migrated to Glasgow between 2010-2012 (Anon 2010) - in terms of ethnic demographics, the EKOS report suggests that the GFF audience is predominantly White origin (97.5% average) and are predominantly White-Scottish or White-British (87.7%) (see Figure 3.11). This would suggest that although GFF is attracting a distinctively local audience, it is failing to appeal to, and connect with, immigrant communities despite its apparently democratic programming practice, which includes a vast array of World Cinema titles.

### Residency of FG participants

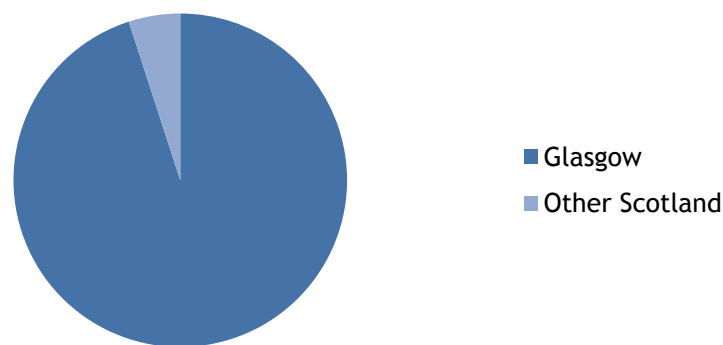


Figure 3.10. Individuals were predominantly from Glasgow or Greater Glasgow (95% of the sample). Source: author's own.

### Respondent ethnicity in EKOS survey (2011-2013)

Ethnic Background	2011%	2012%	2013%
White-Scottish	64%	95.6%	76.7%
White-Other British	18%	0.7%	11.0%
White-Other background	11%	1.5%	8.4%
White-Irish	2%	0.7%	1.4%
Chinese	1%	0.2%	0.7%
Other Asian	1%	0%	0.7%
Indian	1%	0%	0.7%
Mixed background	1%	0.2%	0.6%
Bangladeshi	0%	0.2%	0.1%
Black African	0.2%	0%	0.1%
Pakistani	0.2%	0%	0%
Black Caribbean	0%	0.2%	0.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Figure 3.11. Ethnicity for EKOS survey respondents (by %). 2011 and 2013 come from new audience data, while 2012 represents average figures taken from previous EIA findings for the event (2010-2012). Source: EKOS 2012.

## *Delivery*

In the end I conducted seven focus groups between 19-23 February 2012. I had planned to conduct eight sessions; however, the last session had to be cancelled as I did not have enough attendees. Focus groups lasted one hour in duration and sessions ranged from 4-8 people. All sessions were recorded and participants were given two free tickets to a GFF screening, which was provided by Glasgow Film under the terms of the CDA. As mentioned above, the total sample for focus groups was 40 participants.

In similar form to my interviews, I opted for a semi-structured technique for focus groups which again provided the flexibility to follow interesting discussion and bring it back on track when it went off-topic (see Appendix D for FG questions). I had anticipated that audiences would repeatedly have to be pulled back from text-specific discussion ('what did you think of that film?', 'have you seen his other film?'), however, this only happened on a few occasions with avid cinephiles. In the main, specific titles did not emerge as a dominant talking point, rather, the overall programme and space were leading topics - hence the structure of the thesis.

## *Transcription & analysis*

Focus group tapes were transcribed using Microsoft Word and a participant database was created in Microsoft Excel. I then imported the data into an online web application for qualitative and mixed method research called Dedoose.<sup>19</sup> As a web-based platform, Dedoose enabled me to access my data-set on any computer, and provided a high level of security: multi-tier authorisation, encrypted databases and encrypted nightly backups.<sup>20</sup> The main drawback was that I had to self-train myself on the system, which took some time.

Once my transcriptions were in Dedoose I worked through the text clustering responses into areas that connected with the three part structure within my focus group scripts: (1) motivations, experience and choice, (2) identities, perceptions and behaviours, and (3) film festival and cinema spaces (see Appendix D). I then

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<sup>19</sup> For more information see [www.dedoose.com](http://www.dedoose.com)

<sup>20</sup> For more information on Dedoose security protocols, see [www.dedoose.com/Discover/Security](http://www.dedoose.com/Discover/Security)

began coding participant responses to dominant discourses and modes of pleasure and displeasure. It became clear that responses could be allocated to two overarching themes: festival programmes and festival space (see Figure 3.12). It was these themes that shaped the structure of the thesis whereby I deal with programming from an organisation (Chapter 5) and audience perspective (Chapter 6), and space from an organisation (Chapter 7) and audience perspective (Chapter 8).

### Discursive themes from FG transcription

Theme	Dominant discourses	Audience pleasure/displeasures
Festival space	Spatio-temporal factors, spatial distinction, narratives of 'otherness', space-identities, life cycle and identity, comfort, loyalty, self-policing, ownership, space-behaviours relations, etiquette, reduced proximity, spaces of flow, anti-commercialism, materiality of the festival, and non-cinematic spaces.	Community building, spatial ownership and familiarity, being part of a unique moment, performed appreciation, shared experience, quirky spaces, like-mindedness, red carpets, physical closeness to other people, watching other audiences.
Festival programme	Spatial programming, stranded choices, 'active' festival-going, 'event' screenings, multi-layered experience, trust in the programme, choice, taste, distaste for genre, quality over quantity.	Paratextual content, planning festival schedules, escapism, being challenged, seeing films first, seeing rare content, surprises, delayed gratification, sharing films with others (including strangers), closeness to programming team, special selections (from Cannes etc).

Figure 3.12. List of themes, dominant discourses and key pleasure and displeasure orientations.  
Source: author's own.

### *Challenges and limitations*

Focus groups are an extremely time-consuming method as they involve various stages; piloting/testing, early planning (developing questions, ethical considerations, questionnaires), event logistics (facilities, incentives, refreshments, recording equipment, extra staff in addition to the moderator), recruitment (strategy, designing materials, marketing, on-site promotion), delivery (moderating, managing volunteers), transcription, data entry (audience profiles, coding responses, entering data into qualitative software), analysis, and finally

reporting findings meaningfully into the relevant work. In fact, the majority of my second year (2012) was spent planning, delivering, coding and analysing my focus groups. Much time was also taken up with transcription. I independently transcribed seven hours of recorded dialogues (focus groups take much longer to transcribe on account of the multiple voices on the tapes). A significant proportion of time was also spent developing a strategy to recruit participants.

Another key challenge is that focus groups are notoriously difficult to promote to participants. Looking back on my strategy, around 80% of my recruitment was done before the festival started, and unsurprisingly, the most successful channel was social media. In comparison, recruitment for pilot sessions before the festival began were much more successful than attempts to recruit during the festival itself. On reflection, I believe that this can be attributed to several factors; firstly, there were no advertisements before films during the festival, which meant that attendees were often anxious to get into the cinema, leaving little time for me or my volunteers to promote the research. Secondly, I found that announcements were beneficial and indeed crucial when recruiting at GFT for pilot sessions; however, the announcement strategy did not function well during festival time. At CRS, where there is no manual projection, speakers were cut off mid-way through introductions and staff were unable to fit in information about the research. There also seemed to be a misunderstanding about the nature of the project as it was regularly referred to as market research by festival staff ('we're conducting market research, come tell us how we can make the festival better' - Allan Hunter, GFF12) (Fieldwork Journal, February 2012). I find the term 'market research' to be slightly off-putting and think that in this specific instance the project was being undersold.

One of the main criticisms of focus group research is that it is a very unnatural and contrived setting. However, I would argue that in this case focus group research (in an unnatural setting) was complemented by ethnographic work (in a real setting). Nevertheless, sometimes the responses that were shaped by the unnatural setting were the most interesting. For instance, another issue that focus group researchers often find is that one or two confident members of the group



dominate conversations. This often happened in my sessions, however, I was very interested in group dynamics, self-positioning and the ways in which people performed a role within the group - as cinephiles, film buffs, loyal festival-goers, self-deprecating occasional movie-goers etc - in a social setting. That said, where I felt that dominant individuals were closing down conversation by the rest of the group I moderated and directed questions to other members of the group.

In spite of the challenges and limitations, focus groups offered the best option for engaging with a 'social audience' and measuring and making meaning from the ways in which these 'festival actors' - to use Dayan's (2000) terminology - presented themselves and their experiences to other festival actors during festival time.

## **Ethics**

As a researcher of the University of Glasgow I was required to adhere to the ethical procedures of my institution. As such, I formally submitted my ethics consent application in early 2012 before any of my interviews or focus groups took place and it approved on 03 February 2012.

The main ethical considerations outlined by the university's ethics committee that were applicable to my investigation were:

- Issues of confidentiality of information provided by research subjects, and anonymity of respondents.
- Issue of consent and the transparency of the purpose and potential uses of the research.
- Issues of security in relation to where the data will be stored.

As part of my research I engaged with human research subjects throughout my participant observation period, and during interviews and focus groups. For participant observation, I seldom knew the identities of the people I was observing and so they remained anonymous in any case and would not be identifiable in any publication. Nevertheless, questions of anonymity and confidentiality did require much thought in relation to the interview subjects and focus group participants.

In terms of the semi-structured interviews, given the size of the organisation (one senior manager for each department) and the fact that the content of interviews would explicitly reveal the identity of the interviewee - for instance, discussions of box office would blatantly suggest I was interviewing Angela Freeman, Front of House Manager - anonymity would be redundant in this situation. Also, interviews varied slightly from interviewee to interviewee depending on their job role at GFT and GFT. Thus, the only way around anonymising staff would have been to design a one-size-fits-all interview for personnel. Nevertheless, I felt this would have restricted the information I collected. Also interviewee identities may still have been implicit from their responses, which would inevitably be drawn from connections between my questions and their specific job functions. In this respect a standardised line of questioning would have been futile as I could control the questions, but not the answers. Also, given the subject matter of this project - exhibition and reception of a cultural event - I did not foresee any contentious issues that would require anonymity, nor did any controversial information emerge during the actual interviews. The only issue that emerged in one interview was in relation to some 'festival gossip' about a celebrity at another festival which was accompanied with a cautious 'off the record' caveat, however, the information was not particularly meaningful to the research and so it was omitted. Thus, after careful consideration, I concluded that no interview subjects would be anonymised, and each of them signed an ethics form agreeing to this prior to interview (see Appendix E).

On the other hand, with focus group participants I decided to anonymise all individuals on the basis that identities would not add any more meaning to my findings: GFF12 had over 35,015 attendances and of that number, I engaged with 40 individuals. Also, given how difficult it is to recruit participants for focus groups I did not want to add any unnecessary barriers, and pre-empted that people may have been more likely to attend if their identities were not revealed. Additionally, I hoped that audiences would be more forthcoming in the actual sessions, knowing that their identities would never be revealed to GFF practitioners: bearing in mind that some very loyal GFF and GFT patrons attended my sessions. Each participant

signed a consent form prior to the session, and was given a pseudonym at transcription stage (see Appendix F).

As noted, I collected the following demographic information on a pre-focus group form: age, occupation, post-code and gender. I very much hoped to attract a diverse group in terms of age, gender, sexuality, religion, race, nationality, and ethnicity, however, I decided to omit the latter five categories from the form. My reasoning was two-fold, firstly I felt that many of these questions were invasive and unnecessary for the particular type of festival I was looking at; had I been investigating LGBT film festivals then perhaps sexuality may have been relevant demographic information. More importantly, I did not want to homogenise participants or draw any conjectural connections between demographic profiles and participant accounts. In 'Diasporas and Audience Studies: A Fruitful Match? Reflections from a media ethnographic study on Turkish and Moroccan film audiences,' Kevin Smet draws on Harindranath's (2005) work noting that 'it is deeply problematic to emphasise those factors [race, ethnicity and nationality] for audience behaviour and experiences' (Smet, 2013: 107). Smet goes on to note that:

Through a process of de-essentialising, scholars of media and diaspora have advocated a de-ethnicization of their own subjects. This shift notwithstanding, diasporic audiences might still essentialize/ethnicize themselves in a process of differentiation.

(Smet, 2013: 108)

Adopting this method of de-essentialising my participants meant that if they themselves felt that their race, religion, nationality or ethnicity was important in the context of our discussion, or in a process of differentiation, then they could contextualise that information. Indeed, several participants chose to talk about their religion, nationality, religion and race in relation to film choices. Thus, any experiential narratives that were connected to these demographic factors naturally unfolded.

In relation to issue of consent and the transparency of the purpose and potential uses of the research, each participant (focus groups and interviewees) signed a consent form that stated that the material may be used for future

publications (print and online) and future academic research. With reference to issues of security, it was also noted on the consent form that material would be retained in secure storage.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has offered a self-reflexive assessment of the methodological position adopted for this project, and the research design used to answer my research questions. It has contextualised the research within the CDA framework, as this shaped the research design, given that access determined what I could and could not do methods-wise. Moreover, it has made clear the resources that have been fully utilised in this thesis, which would not have been accessible had there not been an established partnership between the University of Glasgow and Glasgow Film.

Although the project was an inherited one - written and conceived by Karen Boyle and Emily Munro - the original research proposal was not at all limiting; rather, it was treated as a launch pad for the development of the finished research design, which is a thorough, and admittedly ambitious, mixed-method approach. Given that the project did not have one single hypothesis at the outset, a mixed approach enabled me to answer a cluster of related problems and questions surrounding GFF's position and value as a cultural organisation. Yet with no determined focus and a close proximity between the researcher and the researched, the project required a high level of reactivity and reflection, which is where a constructivist and reflexive approach was particularly valuable. Indeed, the reflexive approach was much informed by Egan and Barker's (2006) notion that research should be a 'story' and that the researcher should exist within the narrative. As such, this chapter not only discusses the rationale for my decisions, but also gives due space to the benefits and limitations of each method, as well as some of the thornier practicalities of qualitative inquiry, focus groups in particular.

Proceeding to the first of four findings chapters, I now locate GFF within the wider context of GFT as a historic cultural institution in Glasgow. Through this, I attempt to chart the 'road to GFF' by pulling out key moments in the cinema's

history, particularly in relation to programming, branding and patronage, highlighting the festival's historic links to 'local' art-house exhibition and 'international' film culture.

## Chapter 4: Glasgow Film Festival in Cinematic Context

Launched seventy years after the world's first film festival (Venice Film Festival, established in 1932), Glasgow Film Festival (GFF) is an adolescent on the festival scene. Nevertheless, while the festival is too young to have a rich history itself and offers more in terms of understanding contemporary festivals, the cinema to which it is attached was opened in the same decade as Venice Film Festival and provides an important historical backdrop to the event. Thus, drawing on fieldwork (participant observation, elite interviews) and desk research (box office reportage, archival research), this chapter considers GFF's inherent connection with Glasgow Film Theatre (GFT), which originally opened its doors in 1939. As such, it locates the event within its cinematic context (formed and managed by a cultural cinema and former art house) to trace the ways in which GFF's cinematic ancestry has shaped the festival's character, philosophy, and patronage.

In essence, the chapter looks at the cinematic traditions from which GFF emerged in an attempt to understand its current position within film culture in Glasgow. While this means an interim shift away from a contemporary context to a historical one, the chapter does not aim to form a comprehensive history of GFT. Rather, it identifies key moments and shifts in the cinema's life story which are useful for understanding GFF: how it established an alternative cinema culture in Glasgow; its brand identity and narratives of exclusivity and inclusivity; its changing audience; diversification of its programme; and how it gained impetus for creating a film festival (see Appendix G).

The latter part of the chapter returns to a contemporary setting and considers what GFT currently knows about its audiences by looking at existing audience research. In this respect, the chapter serves as both a historical foundation for exploration of GFF exhibition, and a baseline for my own audience research, which treats the festival audience as a constituent of broader cinematic culture.

## **‘Films for the Discriminating’: 1939-45**

From 1935 the UK saw a sharp increase in cinema attendances, rising from 912.3m admissions in 1935 to 1,027m in 1940 (BFI, 2013a: 13). In Glasgow, cinema-going was considered the social habit of the age and thought to be embedded in the patterns of everyday life for many of the city’s residents (Scullion, 1990: 42-3). Indeed, by 1937 Glasgow had ‘ninety-eight cinemas [...] with a total seating capacity of 133,659’ and was reported to have had more cinemas per head of population than anywhere else in the world outside of America at that time (Scullion, 1990: 42-3; Historic Scotland, 2007: 6). However, despite an abundance of picture houses spread out across the city and outer city areas and a ravenous appetite for film, the city lacked its own art house cinema.

Indeed, local cinema exhibitor, George Singleton - son of ‘pioneer exhibitor’, Richard Singleton, who screened films in local Masonic Halls in the early 1900s - was alert to the lack of non-mainstream exhibition in one of the most cinematic cities in the world (Bruce 1995). Having witnessed the success of the Curzon Cinema in London, Singleton, who also owned the Paragon cinema in the Gorbals<sup>21</sup> felt that given the enthusiasm for film in Glasgow, the city should have its own art house, and so he built one (Scottish Screen Archive, undated). Hence, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May 1939 the Cosmo Cinema opened its doors to the public and not only marked the launch of *another cinema* in the city but the beginning of an alternative mode of cinema consumption and experience, and the emergence of an alternative film culture in Glasgow.

Designed by architects James McKissack and W. J. Anderson, the cinema is considered to have been the first purpose built art house cinema in Scotland (Historic Scotland, 2007: 5) (see Figure 4.1). Although it was set back from the main street (Sauchiehall Street) it featured a prominent tower, which brandished the Cosmo name to passersby. The building was thought to be decadent and novel with apparent influences of the art deco style of 1930s France (Anon, 1939: 6). It had one screen and held 853 people: 448 in the stalls, 371 in the balcony, and a standing area for 34 people (Anon, 1939: 6).

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<sup>21</sup> The Gorbals is an area in the south bank of the River Clyde in Glasgow.



Figure 4.1. Cosmo Cinema in the 1940s. Source: [www.nls.uk](http://www.nls.uk)

In her work on the emergence of art house cinema in the war and post-war period in America, Barbara Wilinsky notes that these cinemas were defined by their distinction from other cinematic venues in terms of ‘intellectual’, ‘artistic’ and ‘high culture’ programming:

Art house offered an image of an intellectual film going experience. Attached to this image were notions of high culture, art, prestige. Industrial reports on art houses support the idea that art house operators attempted to offer patrons a sense of prestige and status by promoting art houses as sites of intellectual, artistic, and high culture leisure.

(Wilinsky, 2001: 3)

With reference to its opening, the Cosmo was promoted in the *Glasgow Herald* on Friday 19 May 1939 as ‘a real intellectual centre’ for industrial Glasgow (Sutherland and Kenna 1989). From the outset, an ethos of cosmopolitanism surrounded the space - ‘Cosmo’ was in fact a shortening of cosmopolitan (Bruce 1995). Opening with a screening of French dance film *Carnet De Bal* (Duvivier, France, 1937), the Cosmo set the tone for its programme as one that would not shy away from foreign language film or niche titles. In fact, Singleton’s vision was to bring world cinema to Glasgow audiences whom he considered to be ‘deprived’ of international content:



[...] many wonderful films were being produced in France, Italy and Germany, as well as Norway and Sweden, and they were not being seen. There was no reason why the people that had any taste at all should be deprived of these films because they had their distinctive contributions to make.

(George Singleton, quoted in Young, 1990: 87)

Indeed, as part of 'All-Continental' month in May 1941 Cosmo screened its first Czech film, *Reka* (Rovensky, Czechoslovakia, 1935) for audiences who were unlikely to have encountered Czech filmmaking before. And so the cinema was immediately positioned as a continental space where patrons were provided with a world cinema and distinctively cosmopolitan experience.

However, the Cosmo was not only promoted in terms of its distinct programming. Distinction was also articulated through notions of refined taste. The cinema's slogan was 'Films for the Discriminating', which evoked a particular image of the cinema as a place for consuming quality films with similarly discerning audience members. Moreover, the audience categorisation as 'discriminating' also created an image of the Cosmo audience as an exclusive community of cinema connoisseurs, aficionados and seekers of 'high culture' (see Figure 4.2). Certainly early programmes suggest that the cinema was catering to an informed, culturally refined and potentially intellectual patronage. In fact, programmes often mentioned academic disciplines in relation to films (philosophy, sociology, physics) and made connections with 'high cultural' forms such as opera (Cosmo 1941b). In some cases, Cosmo materials even openly addressed the audience as intellectual, for instance, the synopsis for *The Old King and the New King* notes:

Mr Cosmo has debated several times whether he should show [this film], for while it is simply the story of Frederick the Great in his younger days, it has another theme - Make Prussia Great. To intelligent people of this country, it has, however, certain qualities.

(Cosmo 1941b)

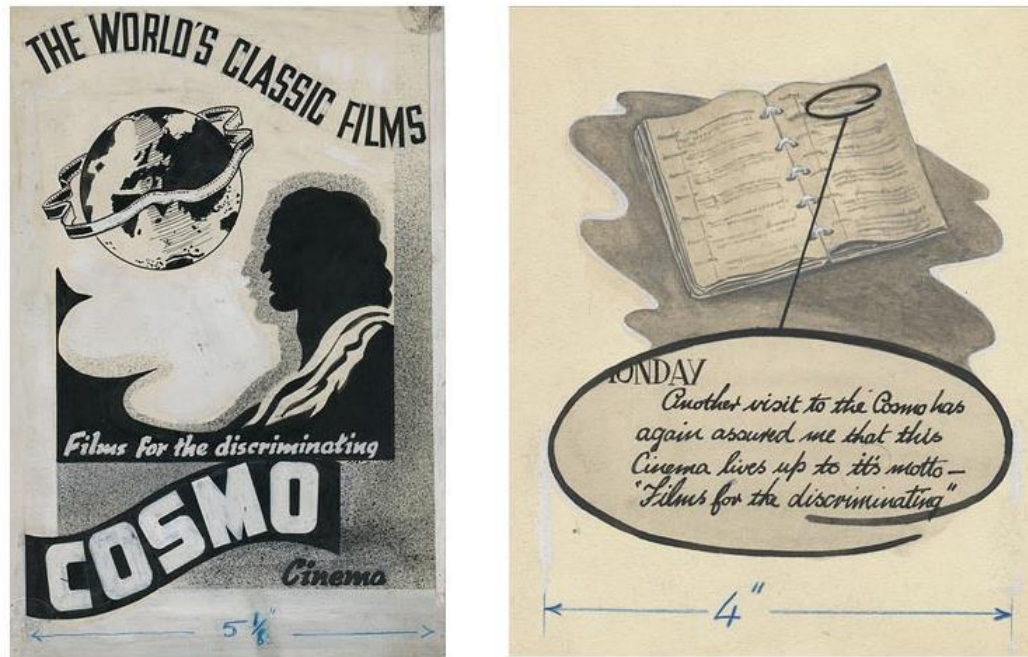


Figure 4.2. Original drafts of two Cosmo promotional illustrations. Poster on the right reads: 'Monday: another visit to the Cosmo has again assured me that this cinema lives up to its motto - "Films for the discriminating."' Source: Scottish Screen Archive.

Nevertheless, beyond the visual distinctiveness of the building and narratives of distinction within its printed materials, contemporary writings about Cosmo suggest that it was not an exclusive or elitist institution (Bruce 1995). For instance, the imagery of a classic Roman profile and a globe in Figure 4.2 (left) arguably suggests intellectualism, classicism, cosmopolitanism and wealth. However, on the contrary, the Cosmo was regarded as an inclusive, welcoming and unassuming cinema, often referred to as a place for 'the working man's education' (Bruce 1995). In fact, Singleton held the view that both middle and working class audiences had discriminating taste:

Here we are in this fine city with all these people, university and art school, and all the professional people that were here and I knew perfectly well too, that working class folk had taste about films, too [...] We were not just doing it to pander to a few intellectuals. We would go into it and try to make it as popular as possible.

(George Singleton quoted in Young, 1990: 87)

Indeed, Jeffrey Richards notes that in the late 1930s Britain's most enthusiastic cinema-goers were predominantly working class and urban (1984: 15). Thus, Singleton's strategy was one of both parity and logic. If he were to make the cinema as 'popular as possible' it would have to cater for, and speak to, the working class population in Glasgow.

Thus, narratives of ordinariness and unpretentiousness were filtered through the Cosmo's down-to-earth brand. Soaked in local personality, the cinema brand was fashioned around a mascot: an illustrated cartoon character sporting a bowler hat named Mr Cosmo (see Figure 4.3). The mascot was based on Singleton, who was said to have 'the style of a showman' (Bruce 1995). Mr Cosmo was embraced as the face and voice of Cosmo by audiences and remains a permanent fixture in the cinema's brand identity today. The endurance of the Mr Cosmo brand illustrates Singleton's popularity and prominence within Glasgow film culture where he is considered to have been 'one of the great characters of the cinema business' (Bruce 1995). Singleton died in 1995 yet his legacy lives on at GFT; a commemorative plaque is displayed in the foyer, his image appears on GFT merchandise and Mr Cosmo's Bowler Hat - a central light in the Cinema 1 auditorium - remains a key feature of the building (see Figure 4.4).



Figure 4.3. Mr Cosmo cartoon. Source: [www.glasgowfilm.org/mr\\_cosmo](http://www.glasgowfilm.org/mr_cosmo)



Figure 4.4. Mr Cosmo's Bowler Hat light feature. Source: [www.scottishcinemas.org.uk/glasgow/gft/screen1/Pages/17.html](http://www.scottishcinemas.org.uk/glasgow/gft/screen1/Pages/17.html)

The cinema programme was framed around the notion that the fictional Mr Cosmo was responsible and accountable for all programming decisions. He was the authorial figure in all marketing materials, accompanied by an omniscient narrator who elevated him to a position of authority. Indeed, the omniscient voice often provided rationale on behalf of Mr Cosmo for programming certain films: 'It is comparatively rare for Mr Cosmo to show what may be described as a "story film", for there are usually some other reasons beside the plot for his choice of film' (Cosmo 1940). Mr Cosmo was also framed as a gatekeeper noting when films were inappropriate for young audience members. With reference to *Spellbound* (Harlow, UK, 1941) in 1941 the programme reads: 'Mr Cosmo wishes to point out that, in his opinion, it is not suitable for children' (Cosmo 1941a). On the other hand, Mr Cosmo was used to present a jovial tone and down-to-earth image for the cinema. For example, when the cinema screened *Vivacious Lady* (Stevens, 1938, USA) in 1941 the monthly bulletin described Ginger Rogers as a favourite of Mr Cosmo's on account of the fact that she never 'gives herself airs' (Cosmo 1941c) and the following year, Rogers was described as 'Mr Cosmo's favourite hard-boiled working-girl' (Cosmo 1942b).

Furthermore, the political landscape was often referred to in a somewhat jovial manner. For instance, the August-September 1945 brochure noted that ‘Mr Cosmo had almost forgotten what the “blackout” was like’ around two months after Winston Churchill’s famous broadcast declaring Germany’s surrender on 8 May 1945 (Cosmo 1945). Indeed, there were often references to political circumstances and political figures of the late 1930s/early 1940s. In March 1942 the Cosmo programme featured a rare screening of *Shchors* (Dovzhenko, Russia, 1939), a Soviet biopic about Nikolai Shchors, a Ukrainian Bolshevik and leader of the Russian Communist Party. The film listing was followed by an endnote which read; ‘Mr Cosmo says that Stalin sent his weather to Glasgow this year as well as his films’ (Cosmo 1942a) (see Figure 4.5). This type of tongue-in-cheek political referencing was often used in the programme notes adding a sense of flavour and personality. Nevertheless, in some cases, references were less jovial and more politically weighted; for example, on the 27th November 1939 (54 days after Britain declared war on Germany following the invasion of Poland), Cosmo listed *Musik Im Blut* (Waschneck, Germany, 1934) in its programme and added the following endnote; ‘Mr Cosmo wishes it was only music that the Germans had in their blood!’ (Cosmo 1939a) (see Figure 4.5).<sup>22</sup>

There is suggestion here that Cosmo was in many ways a subversive institution that did not shy away from current affairs. The programme offered political commentary and frames of reference, often implanting humorous or ironic jibes toward the UK’s political opposition. Nor did it fail to acknowledge the relationship between leisure practice (cinema-going), film culture and the political landscape within which films were circulated internationally and brought to audiences. Moreover, its programming was committed to a diverse assortment of foreign films, even German and Russian films, which, in the height of wartime anxiety and discord, could have potentially created much resistance from audiences. Its programme reflected the times and did not shy away from the difficulties of the moment. Rather, Cosmo was so committed to discovering World Cinema that it often screened films from hostile nations. For example, in a listing for *Savoy-Hotel 217* (Ucicky, Germany, 1936) in 1940, the programme noted that

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<sup>22</sup> Translated as *Music in Blood*.

the rationale for programming the film was a dedication to screen quality films from nations around the world, and although it was ‘a German film about Russia it contain[ed] no propaganda for or against’ (Cosmo 1940).

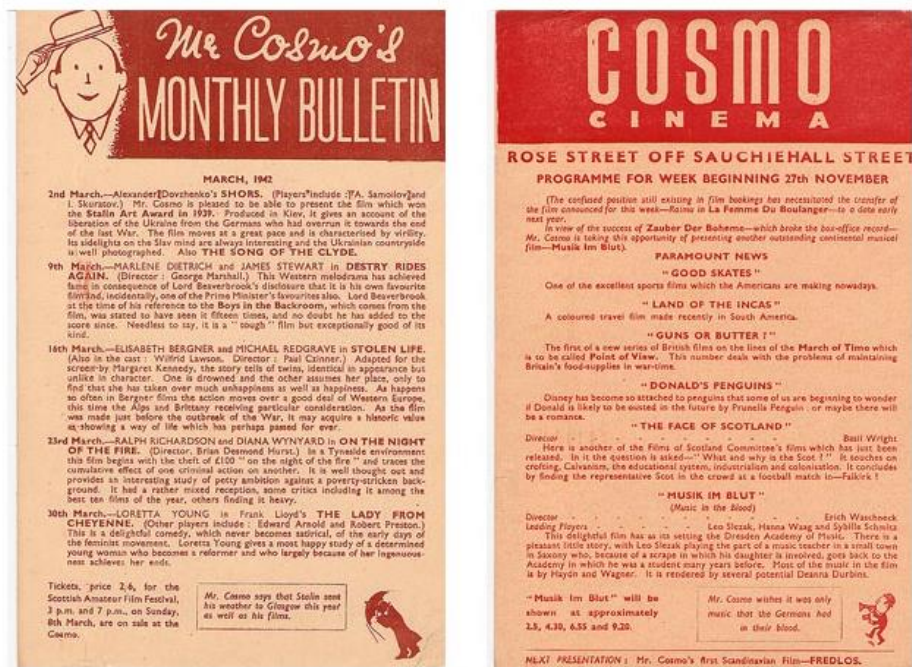


Figure 4.5. March 1942 Monthly Bulletin with an endnote reference to Stalin [left]. Programme w/c 27 November 1939 with reference to Germans [right]. Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmtheatre/sets/72157618083521416/>

While there is no existing audience data on Cosmo audiences of the 1930s, analysis of the early programmes suggests that beyond being classified as a ‘discriminating’ patronage, the Cosmo, while firmly located within the city, was understood to be open to all discerning patrons within and across it. Indeed, the ‘Glasgow audience’ was often explicitly referenced in monthly bulletins and weekly programmes, which suggests that the cinema was very rooted in its sense of place and embraced its connection to the city and its wide range of inhabitants. Certainly distinction existed within the Cosmo, but as Singleton’s views on taste suggest, the cinema discriminated on the grounds of good taste as opposed to social class (Young, 1990: 87). Thus, cinematic taste was not stratified along class lines in Glasgow in the 1930s and early 1940s as it was later to become.



## Peak, plateau and decline: 1945-74

Following the war period, UK cinema attendance continued to increase and reached an all-time high in 1946 (1,635.0m) (BFI, 2013a: 13) (see Figure 4.6). Drawing on Peter Hennessey's (1993) account of popular pleasures in the UK after WW2, Christine Geraghty notes that the boom in cinema-going is best explained by three main causes: firstly, people wanted to revert to activities they had taken part in before the war (to reclaim their pre-war pleasures); secondly, there was a focus on 'going out and finding a social space where people could get together'; and thirdly, with the advent of the Arts Council in 1946 came a national effort to 'upgrade people's taste and improve their minds' through cultural engagement (Geraghty, 2000: 5). Glasgow responded to the boom in cinema-going with mass exhibition and in the mid-1940s the city increased its number of cinemas to over one hundred (Peter 1996).

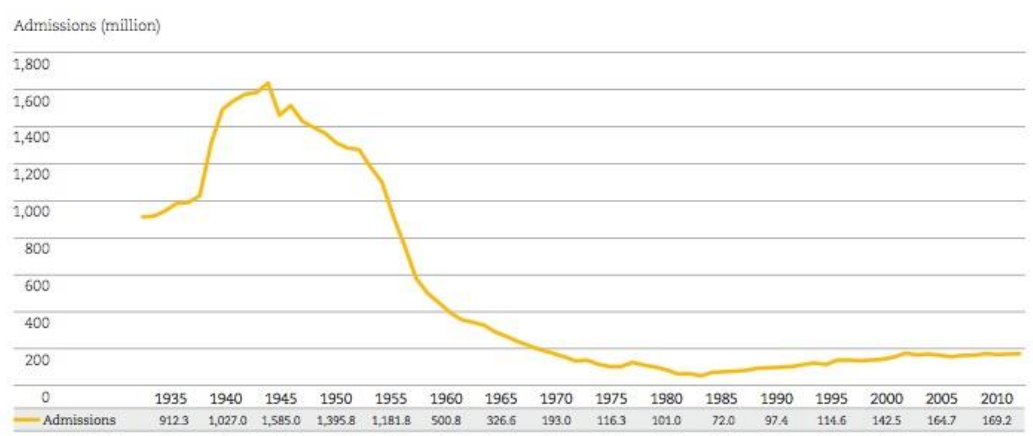


Figure 4.6. Annual UK Admissions 1935-2010. Source: <http://www.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/bfi-statistical-yearbook-2013.pdf>

Cinema culture appeared to be thriving. However, by the 1950s its popularity as the principal leisure practice began to weaken and attendances dropped by 500 million between 1954 and 1958 (Corrigan, 1983: 30). With low unemployment throughout the 1950s many people in the Britain found themselves more economically comfortable than they had ever been and wartime austerity was replaced with a growing appetite for consumer goods in the UK (Pugh, 2004: 279). As a result, the Conservative government lowered taxes and loosened lending

criteria to accommodate this new wave of consumerism, which in turn saw a rise in two-income families as women went to work in the retail sector (Pugh, 2004: 279). All in all, people had more money to spend, however, they also had more options to spend it on. The period saw a property ownership boom as building societies offered cheap mortgages that allowed people to buy their own homes (Pugh, 2004: 280). Home ownership indirectly affected cinema culture by triggering a socio-cultural shift away from public sites as a principal leisure space to the family domestic space, as well as an economic shift away from public consumption to domestic consumption. Surplus money was then spent on 'consumer durables' and furnishings for homes, and more and more time was spent in the domestic setting (ibid). Also car ownership consumed much surplus income in the period, and while personal transport suggested more mobility for families outside of the home, 'it was still a family centred activity' and was therefore used for family holidays, day trips and camping vacations (Jancovich et al, 2003: 148).

Nevertheless, there is suggestion that this decline was not felt in Scotland, not least in 1950s Glasgow. Historian Christopher Harvie suggests that 'to the Scots the movies were magic' and that in the 1950s Glaswegians went to the cinema 51 times a year on average (approximately once per week) (1998: 121). By comparison, Scots as a whole went 36 times per year while English audiences paid only 28 visits to the cinema per year on average (ibid). While these figures suggest that cinema culture in Glasgow was alive and well in the 1950s, several cinemas began closing by the end of the decade.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the Scottish Cinema Project reports around fifty-three cinemas closures between 1958 and 1968 in Glasgow (Scottish Cinemas, undated: online).

In an economic study of cinema decline in the UK (1950s and 1960s), John Spanos (1962) suggests that a rise in television ownership was accountable. While only one household in seven had a television in 1951, two out of three had one by 1960 (Pugh, 2004: 279). Families switched from watching films in the social space to huddling around the television in the family living-room, and so the mass popularisation of television (ownership/rental) had become 'an important

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<sup>23</sup> Between 1955 and 1960 cinema attendance in the UK dropped from 1181.8m to 500.8m, representing a more than 50% decrease in just 5 years. For more information, see <http://www.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/bfi-statistical-yearbook-2013.pdf>



alternative to cinema-going - as well as an alternative way of seeing films' (UK Film Council 2009).

Despite the rise in television and a decline in cinema attendance throughout the UK, the Cosmo was able to sustain itself throughout the 1960s. The 1960s was the beginning of the 'heyday of art film' as new cinematic movements such as New Hollywood and the French New Wave gained wider global distribution, providing an abundance of Cosmo-suitable films (Heise & Tudor, 2007:181). Works by the likes of Francois Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard and Eric Rohmer dominated the cinema's programme, which very much championed filmmaking that sat outside of the mainstream industry. As Kenneth Turan notes of French New Wave films of the 1960s: 'if you wanted to be considered film-literate or even just culturally sophisticated, these were the pictures you had to see' (2002: 162). Indeed, the decade saw the stirrings of a shift in the Cosmo audience: from the mass movie-going audience to a much smaller patronage of self-identified 'film-literate' and 'culturally sophisticated' cinephiles. As Robert Murphy notes, the cinema's status as a social space for a 'mass audiences' was changing as smaller exhibitors began fragmenting and catering for more specialised and targeted audiences (1992: 105). Thus, its survival lay in the commitment of a smaller, niche, patronage than that of the 1930s-1940s. However, fewer attendees resulted in a struggling box office and by the late 1960s it was becoming almost impossible to keep the 'little theatre' which *The Herald* had once described as 'in step with the contemporary trend' open (Anon, 1939: 6).

By 1970 UK attendance figures had dropped to 193m and while there was still an appetite for cinema in Glasgow (1967 saw Scotland's first post-war cinema built in the city) the 'changing times were bringing the Cosmo to its conclusion' (Plowright, 1974: 3). Thus, in April 1973 Singleton sold the Cosmo to the Scottish Film Council on the undertaking that it would be reopened the following year (see Figure 4.7).



Figure 4.7. George Singleton pointing at the cartoon rendition of himself the day Cosmo was sold to the Scottish Film Council (21 April 1973). Courtesy of Scottish Screen Archive. Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmtheatre>

### **‘Cinema for All’: 1974-2005**

On 01 May 1974 the Cosmo re-opened its doors for the launch of Glasgow Film Theatre (GFT) with a première screening of John Boorman’s *Zardoz* (Boorman, 1974, UK) starring Sean Connery (see Figure 4.8). The event was attended by various dignitaries such as the city treasurer, the secretary of the Scottish Education Department and the chairman of the regional committee of the British Film Institute, as well as John Boorman himself (Plowright, 1974: 3). The following night it opened to the public with an evening screening of Federico Fellini’s *Roma* (1972, Italy/France). Local press suggests that the cinema’s revival was welcomed with open arms:

We’ve got it at last - Glasgow Film Theatre, which was opened last night on the site of the original Cosmo, with the blessings of the city, the Scottish Education Department, and indeed the whole of Scotland. Because, and we must make no mistake about this, it is the centre for the country over which a network has been cast for developing film appreciation and education.

(Plowright, 1974: 3)

One of the main changes from Cosmo to GFT was the cinema's brand identity. While GFT would continue to develop film appreciation like the Cosmo, there were distinctive visual and linguistic shifts in the overall branding of the cinema. The re-opening saw the removal of the 'films for the discriminating' brand, as well as the demise of Mr Cosmo as the man at the helm of the cinema and its programme. Visually, the brand of the cinema was rather erratic throughout the 1970s with the only consistency being the presence of an eye in the GFT logo, which suggested a move away from the personality and friendliness of the Cosmo days towards something more depersonalised and arguably more intellectual (see Figure 4.9).<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the language within the programmes was more neutral with an omniscient voice, a very brief synopsis of each film, and little or no personal notation from the programme team at GFT. Overall, the cinema's brand was more restrained and less personalised as the quirkiness of Mr Cosmo's meanderings disappeared in place of uniform filmic commentary on auteurs and titles that seemed to be speaking to a more specific film literate audience. The programme was presented in two formats; as a foldout A4 document which was referred to as the 'monthly diary', including very short film synopses and screening times (see Figure 4.10) and a 45-page A5 quarterly booklet costing 10p containing comprehensive information about films, directors, film history and the rationale behind particular programming choices. As such, paratextual content - which was once accessible to all patrons of Cosmo - was now only available to those who were willing or could afford to pay for the 10p brochure.

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24 From 1977 the cinema began branding itself as GFT and moved toward a more streamlined visual style.



Figure 4.8. Image of GFT in 1974. Courtesy of Scottish Screen Archive. Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmtheatre/3528284266/in/set-72157618082872566/>



Figure 4.9. GFT monthly diaries (1974-9): an A4 double-sided document folded into four sections. The visual branding of the cinema was fairly erratic in the early years of GFT. Image taken by the researcher. Source: author's own image.



Figure 4.10. Programme for May 1974: the very first programme for Glasgow Film Theatre. Source: researcher's own image.

One of the main changes between the Cosmo and GFT was in programming. While GFT did attempt to bring some new releases to local audiences, showing films that would be unlikely to appear elsewhere in Glasgow, new content was not the prime focus of its programming efforts in the 1970s. Rather, the cinema's new brand as 'Scottish Centre for Educational Technology' saw an emphasis on film education and learning. While the new programme promised not to be too 'academic or scholarly', it was dedicated to screening films that were 'in any historical perspective, the cornerstones of the house of cinema' (GFT, 1974: 32-3). Seasons were dedicated to auteurs such as Ingmar Bergman, Andrei Tarkovsky, John Boorman and Sergio Leone, which cultivated an ethos of cinephilia and attracted an adult audience who 'were more likely to think of film as an art form rather than as light entertainment' (Wilinsky, 2001: 94). Indeed, the cinema was reframed as a predominantly adult space. With the exception of children's matinee showings at Christmas in the late seventies, which featured films like *The Magnificent Seven* (Sturges, 1960, USA) and *Mr Hulot's Holiday* (Tati, 1953, France), GFT scheduling was evening only with three screenings each day: two between 6pm and 8.30pm and one late night screening at 11pm each evening.

Late night screenings were dedicated to retrospective films and key moments in film history. Films and filmmakers were framed as constituents of the wider 'house of cinema' and offered historical seasons that explored filmmaking 'stories and styles [...] techniques and equipment' (GFT, 1974: 32). For instance, in June

1974 a late-night series was dedicated to the silent film era. As the quarterly May-June booklet illustrates, narratives of cinephilia and film as art (film history, genre, aesthetics, cinematic apparatus and technical aspects of filmmaking) were embedded within GFT's promotional language:

There are two main reasons for choosing silent films. Firstly, there are few opportunities now to see them [silent films] in the cinema situation, even if they are more common than they used to be on television and in film societies, and to see these silent films on a fullsize cinema screen can be a revelation. Secondly, the silent cinema still presents some problems for contemporary audiences, despite the current popularity of Keaton and Chaplin. The whole style of silent cinema, from camerawork to acting, sets and make-up, is vastly different from film with sound; it almost constitutes a genre, like the Western or the Musical.

(GFT, 1974: 33-4)

Thus, GFT was arguably offering the 'intellectual film going experience' that Wilinsky describes in the US context, which would not necessarily connect with the entertainment seeking audience (2001: 3).

No doubt the boom in television and mainstream cultural consumption changed the status of art house cinema throughout the 1970s and resulted in it becoming more stratified in terms of high and low culture. As Mark Jancovich et al note, by the 1970s the BBC and ITV were screening weekly films on television, meaning that domestic space had become the primary site for film as family entertainment (2003: 154). In a US context, Wilinsky notes that the 'cultural position of art cinema' changed due to various shifts in broader film culture, which chimes with the Cosmo and GFT's narratives to this point:

The idea of film as art, which was reflected in art film culture, moved from a position as emergent culture in the 1940s and 1950s to an idea accepted by mainstream culture in the 1960 and 1970s. However, by the late 1970s and 1980s, the dominant film culture retreated from the position that film is an art form, returning to the use of cinema mainly as a form of entertainment [...] Therefore, in the 1980s, the function of art film theatres (as well as their looks) changed as they moved from embodying groundbreaking modern ideas to a remnant of the culture of previous generations.

(2001: 136)

Wilinky's accounts of art house cinemas in America is useful when looking at GFT, which by the 1980s had arguably become an antiquated space within mainstream 80s culture - revered by some patrons as a relic of the past, and avoided by others who viewed it as old-fashioned. As Jancovich notes, in Nottingham, in the 1970s, 'the meaning of what was up-to-date had changed: a cinema was now seen as "old fashioned" if it could not be converted to a multi-screen' (2003: 137). While the Cosmo had attracted a demographically diverse local populace (people from all social backgrounds) and was considered an exciting space where an emergent, alternative film culture was born, by the late 1980s it was somewhat of an old toy bound up in history and a modernist past whereby the multi-screen cinema was the epicenter of social activity.

More importantly, while the Cosmo had been able to make claims about being 'discerning' it did so at a time when the socioeconomic divisions around taste culture were not as embedded around cinema (most people went to the cinema), GFT was not able to make such claims. By the 1980s particular tastes were becoming attached to different leisure activities, which made catering for discriminating audiences a more political position. Thus, while GFT became an alternative space for a particular type of patron - one less enthused by contemporary popular culture and more aligned with the notions of refined taste and art film, which the relic building of the 1930s provided - the venue's brand was faced with a contentious relationship between maintaining its loyal and discerning patronage and sustaining itself by bringing as many people to the box office as possible.

As such, the 1980s saw several organisational changes at GFT. It began engaging in alternate revenue streams such as advertising, featuring brochure adverts for local supermarkets, restaurants and nightclubs. It also underwent a structural change by becoming a registered charity (independent company limited by guarantee). With its new charitable status came an increased social responsibility and a new rhetoric of 'inclusivity' entered the cinema's branding whereby it positioned itself as a welcoming space for everyone and anyone. Its dedication to inclusion also saw the introduction of a concessionary rate for

students in the summer of 1980. Deindustrialisation throughout the 1980s meant Glasgow was hit by widespread unemployment, as were many other cities in the UK as nationwide unemployment reached 3.1m and signalled the ‘worst depression since the 1930s’ (Pugh, 2004: 347). In response to such hard times, in April 1982 GFT introduced a concession for unemployed people who would receive a discounted rate on display of their UB40.

The mid 1980s also saw the friendliness of the Cosmo days return to the cinema’s brand. A foreword by the head of GFT<sup>25</sup> appeared in each monthly programme and there was a clear attempt to engage with audiences on a personal level, rewarding and paying homage to them in the programme, as a 1985 programme reads:

GFT’s one-millionth patron, Matthew Harvie of Hamilton, can definitely afford to taste all this Festival flare. It was my recent pleasure to present him with a golden passport to GFT for one year, and he is pictured below on the left holding a few of his free tickets.

(GFT, 1985: 2)

Following the introduction of a new broadcasting regulation that scheduled more films on television, the rise of VHS ownership and the ongoing popularity of television, it was critical that GFT distinguish itself from mass cinema exhibition and home viewing and retain its existing audience. GFT had to present its unique selling point given that the Cosmo’s novel status as ‘emergent culture’ was a thing of the past. Therefore, the programme adopted a thematic and diverse strategy and featured paratextual content such as programme notes and introductions. Programming included auteur seasons (Roman Polanski season in 1989) or thematic seasons like ‘Extra-Terrestrial Month,’ which included retrospective screenings of big Hollywood blockbusters such as *E.T.* (Spielberg, 192, USA) and *Close Encounters of The Third Kind* (Spielberg, 1977, USA). In attempt to compete on price, it also broke away from its evening and late night only scheduling to include ‘Midday Movies’ at GFT (12:20pm/1.10pm), which had a reduced rate on tickets.

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<sup>25</sup> The head of GFT was Ken Ingles.



With the 1990s came a new challenge for the independent cinema sector with the arrival of the multiplex. Indeed, by 1990 Glasgow city centre had two multi-screen cinemas. In 1979 the five-screen ABC Film Centre opened its doors and in 1988 the Odeon cinema doubled its screen capacity to six screens (Scottish Cinemas, undated: online). By 1991 there were around 500 multiplex screens across the UK and as audiences gravitated toward the new futuristic experience - new technology, widescreens, surround sound - the gap between cultural cinema and mainstream film culture widened further (Hoad 2010). Along with the advent of cable and satellite channels in the 1990s, the multiplex boom led to a fragmentation of film audiences and the initial stirrings of a trend in high versus lowbrow debates around art house and multiplex cinema practice.

As a result of the arrival of multiplexes, cinema attendance grew steadily over the decade throughout the UK (Hubbard 2001). In line with these trends, GFT saw stable box office numbers throughout the 1990s and maintained a loyal patronage due to its credible and trustworthy programme. Nevertheless, the one screen format meant that GFT patrons had a very limited choice of films and so the cinema made the case for the development of a second screen. Cinema 2 would be a 'smaller and more intimate auditorium' that would enable GFT to programme what Ken Ingles (former manager) referred to as more 'modern work' and provide a space for 'the regular promotion of European Cinema Seasons' (Sutherland and Kenna 1989; GFT, 1990: 8-9). It would also free up the large auditorium, Cinema 1, for mainstream crossover films that would attract a wider audience and generate more box office revenue.

After fundraisers, auctions and sponsorships from Scottish celebrity supporters such as actors Gregor Fisher and Tilda Swinton and pop band Wet Wet Wet, work commenced on Cinema 2 in 1990. The development was carried out by MDW Ltd Contractors, a company that had been involved in the 'construction of many buildings associated with Glasgow's renaissance, including the new Glasgow International Concert Hall and the Arches' and had also agreed to donate £25,000 to the project (GFT, 1990: 8). The development of Cinema 2 brought a more confident GFT, one that would revert back to a focus on new foreign language films

and new independent content. In particular, there was a real dedication to European Cinema, in part as a result of a partnership with Europa Cinemas and the fact that Glasgow was named European City of Culture in 1990. In fact, so dedicated to the circulation and appreciation of new European film was GFT, that in order to encourage people to come see new European content the cinema introduced £1 Bargain Matinees just for European films.

The decade also saw the implementation of a new company motto that would formalise the cinema's mission of inclusivity and diverse patronage. The cinema that had once been marketed as being for the discriminating was now for everyone as the slogan 'Cinema for All' was introduced in the early 1990s. In line with 'Cinema for All' GFT launched an adult education programme, which offered basic level evening courses for a fee. The aim was to attract people who were interested in discovering more about film history and criticism and included courses such as 'Cinema as Spectacle' and 'Scotland on Screen'. The cinema began to screen 'patron's request' films, which reconnected with its former style of informal audience interaction. The late 1990s also saw special events become more frequent at GFT with in conversation evenings and screen debates, as well as local partnerships with voluntary groups and communities such as LGBT groups. It also upped its community responsibilities by collaborating with local organisations to bring particular issues to the fore. For instance, from 1996 the cinema has partnered with the Women's Support Project to host screen debates every September during the month of action against child sexual abuse.

There was also a real sense that the cinema was in a process of revamping itself as an edgy and cool place. The development of the second screen enabled it to offer art film and foreign language titles to its loyal patronage while also screening films that were dissident, provocative and attractive to younger 90s MTV audiences, titles such as *Pulp Fiction* (Tarantino, 1994, USA) and *Wild Things* (McNaughton, 1998, USA). This revamp included the redesign of its promotional materials, for instance, the brochure was given a dramatic makeover: a sleek black and white design which, through use of film stills and typographic layout, imitated a magazine style that was further enhanced by the fact it folded out to become a

movie poster (see Figure 4.11). As such, the brochures arguably became more desirable and collectible. While internal advertising in the brochure stopped in the 1990s, each monthly programme was privately sponsored and included alcohol companies (Absolut Vodka, Becks), contract firms (Melville Dundas) retailers (John Smith Booksellers) and universities (Caledonian).



Figure 4.11. GFT brochure style in the early 90s. The programme folded out to a movie poster. The text above *Pulp Fiction* (right) reads '1994 Cannes Festival Palmes d'Or'.

In contrast to its previous programming strategy, which included mostly seasons and retrospectives, the cinema was weighting its programme with new releases and there was a strong emphasis on discovering new talent and connecting with global film culture. This focus on discovery saw more award-winning films from festivals such as Berlin and Cannes appear on the programme, which were then promoted to GFT audiences via their international accolades and awards. Indeed, film festival narratives became embedded in the language of the cinema as titles were promoted via their connections with other festivals (see Figure 4.11). In terms of the titles screened, programming became more risk-taking and subversive than it had been in previous years, screening films that GFT staff members considered to be too controversial and daring for other cinemas (Interview, Angela Freeman, April 2013). One example of this was *Reservoir Dogs* (Tarantino, 1992, USA), which was screened out of competition at the 1992 Cannes Film Festival. The film, which was noted in the programme as 'not for the sensitive or the squeamish!' screened in

January and August 1993 (GFT 1993b). In an interview with Front of House Manager, Angela Freeman, she recounted the championing of *Reservoir Dogs* (Tarantino, 1992, USA) back in 1992, clearly a recurring anecdote for the cinema:

It played here. It didn't play anywhere else. [...] We had it on for three weeks and it was practically sold out every night. [...] As soon as it finished we had a visit from the council saying that they'd had loads of complaints about it. [...] At that time Tarantino was unknown but we chose to show it. So there's definitely an element of 'we got it first!'

(Interview, Angela Freeman, April 2013)

The booking resulted in a visit from Glasgow City Council after GFT received many complaints regarding the film's hyper-violent scenes. Nevertheless, the film sold out each night and was considered a 'runaway success' for GFT box office as the 'money was flying through the door' (Interview, Angela Freeman, April 2013). GFT wrote of the film's young director; 'Tarantino's thriller bears all the hallmarks of a blistering new cinematic talent,' which positioned Tarantino as the discovered and GFT as the discoverer, at least on a local level (GFT 1993a). The director has since visited the cinema for the launch of his later film, *Death Proof* (Tarantino, 2007, USA).

Marijke de Valck notes that the 1990s saw trends in the 'festivalisation' and 'eventisation' of film culture (2012: 36). Certainly the 1990s saw GFT becoming more events-focused in terms of its annual programme, forming partnerships with other cinematic institutions and organisations. The programme began to have a festival flavour with regular visiting festival tours, which provided patrons with access to film premières. In 1990 GFT welcomed the Latin American Film Festival to Scotland. Later came the French Film Festival and Italian Film Festival, both of which still take place at GFT today (2014). In 1995 came the German Film Festival in partnership with the Goethe-Institut. That same year, GFT would also partner up with Scotland's biggest film festival by welcoming the Edinburgh International Film Festival to its visiting programme, screening gala and world premières at GFT while the festival took place in Edinburgh in August. Thus, long-lead scheduling of touring festivals was driving the programme at GFT throughout the late 90s and early

2000s. The cinema was breaking into an alternative cinematic culture, which was based less around drop-in social visits to the movies and more around calendarised special events that offered patrons unique experiences such as premières, Q&As and a different cinematic atmosphere. In essence, it was building itself an ‘event’ audience: a festival audience.

### **The launch of GFF and GFT today: 2005 - present day**

In 2005 Glasgow was in the mid stages of building the Digital Media Quarter (DMQ) at Pacific Quay, an architectural development on the River Clyde. The DMQ would establish the city as a mixed media hub for Scotland: Glasgow Science Centre and an IMAX Cinema had been completed in early 2000s, and the development of BBC Scotland and STV’s new headquarters was underway (Lomholt, 2014: online) (see Figure 4.12). Thus, GFF’s inception in 2005 was located within a broader initiative that sought to enhance Glasgow’s image as a vibrant cultural and creative location. The initial funding proposal positioned the event as a catalyst for developing and marketing Glasgow’s image as a ‘festival city’. The proposal was framed by an argument that film festivals were proven to boost the image of their host cities. Thessaloniki Film Festival had ‘injected new life into the city and, above all, contributed towards giving it an image abroad’; Tampere Film Festival had ‘enliven[ed] municipal policy on image and culture’; Oberhausen Film Festival had contributed to the ‘birth of a film production centre’; Cologne Film Festival had advanced the city’s profile as a media centre; Valladolid Film Festival was a ‘benchmark for the image and attractiveness of the city and the development of quality tourism’; and Cork Film Festival had increased tourism and improved the city’s cultural image despite its long held struggle with ‘second city syndrome’ (GFF, 2004a: 4). In all of these examples, the film festival was positioned as a civic asset and crucial ‘part of the fabric of city life and its annual calendar’ (Harbord, 2002: 60-1).



Figure 4.12. DMQ at Pacific Quay today. BBC headquarters (left), Glasgow IMAX (centre) and the Glasgow Science Centre (right). Source: [www.clydewaterfront.com](http://www.clydewaterfront.com)

The festival was originally scheduled for June each year but was moved to off-peak season in February where it was more likely to ‘increase financial and cultural benefits to the city by providing a focus for the city’s enthusiasm for film and the steadily increasing recognition of Glasgow as a centre for creativity in the movie industry’ (GFF, 2004b: 1). February also offered the opportunity to meet funders’ desires to ‘grow the shop window on Glasgow’ by positioning it as ‘a premier winter destination’ (GFF, 2010b: 36).

However, beyond these broader benefits for developing the city’s profile and increasing tourism, the festival’s inception was also driven by local audience development aims. It formed part of a project called the ‘Cinezone’, which was the brainchild of GFT CEO, Jaki MacDougall (‘it was conceived at my kitchen table’ she notes). The Cinezone initiative involved three exhibitors located on a central strip in the city centre (within a 0.5 mile radius of each other): UGC/Cineworld, Centre for Contemporary Arts (CCA) and GFT (see Figure 4.13). The venues would come together to deliver an annual festival to Glasgow cinema-goers in all their guises. The event sought to map audiences across the three types of exhibition: a multiplex cinema (then UGC), an arts venue (Centre for Contemporary Arts) and an art house

cinema (GFT) during ‘festival time’. The logic behind Cinezone was economic as well as cultural. On one hand it would cultivate a more eclectic cinematic culture and complicate the mainstream/art house divide, but it would also serve to increase box office figures at each venue outside festival time because each space would become accessible, inclusive and familiar to audiences through their festival experiences. For example, audiences who had never attended GFT would be exposed to the venue and its programme during GFF and would be more likely to attend at other times of year. The diversity of venues would be mirrored in the festival programme, which would screen a range of popular and award-winning films and reflect the wide assortment of titles screened at its three core venues year-round (GFF 2004a) (Cinezone venues are discussed in more depth in Chapter 7).

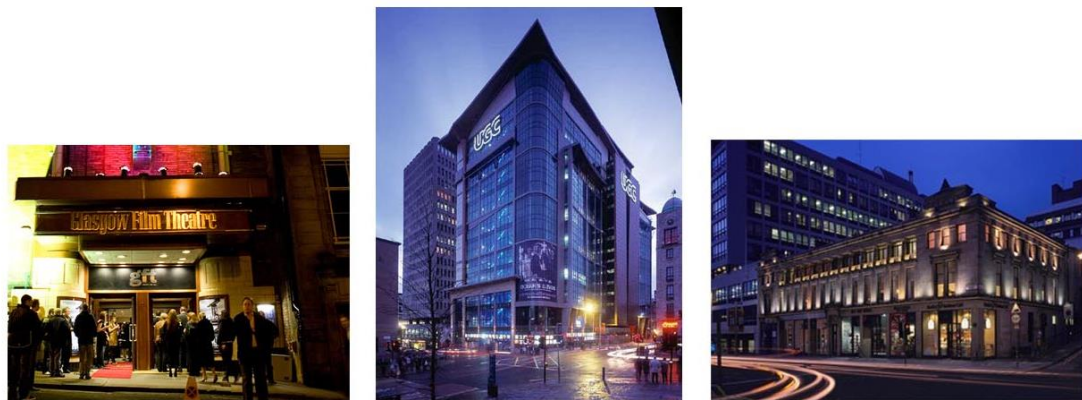


Figure 4.13. Cinezone venues: GFT [left], UCG [centre] and CCA [right]. Sources: The List, WDL Architects, CCA.

Funded by Scotland’s national tourist organisation, Visit Scotland, the inaugural event took place 10-17th February 2005 and was headed up by then Managing Director of GFT, Nick Varley. Initially named Glasgow World Film Festival, the festival had ambitions of cosmopolitanism and internationalism from the outset. In fact, the festival was once to be called ‘Cosmopolitan: The Glasgow Festival of Film Festivals’. As its patron, Scottish actor Peter Mullan, explained in the inaugural programme, the festival would highlight and celebrate Glasgow’s embedded cosmopolitanism:

The range of films from all over the world should remind Glaswegians we are, and always have been, an international and cosmopolitan city and our origins go far beyond the boundaries of our city and our country.

(GFF, 2005: 3)

In line with the aims of mapping audiences across the city - and indeed across the world through its international programme - the event took place across seven venues including the Cinezone partners, and included 68 screenings, previews, premières and special events, with tickets priced at a reasonable £5 (£4 for concessions). Nevertheless, the mission to introduce audiences to 'other' cinematic spaces through the programme was not evident in the inaugural programme. Certainly, the content on offer was diverse and despite its lack of status on the festival circuit, it was able to secure some UK premières and opened and closed with two of 'America's finest directors': Woody Allen's *Melinda and Melinda* (Allen, 2004, USA) was the opening gala film (it had its general UK release on 25th March 2005) and Wes Anderson's *The Life Aquatic* (Anderson, 2004, USA) was the closing gala film (it had its general UK release on 25th February 2005) (GFF, 2005a: 12). However, the opening and closing films were presented at Cineworld along with other premières such as *Coach Carter* (Carter, 2005, USA/Germany) *It's all Gone Pete Tong* (Dowse, 2004, UK/Canada) and *Spanglish* (Brooks, 2004, USA) and retrospective screenings of box office hits like *Schindler's List* (Spielberg, USA, 1993) and *Titanic* (Cameron, 1997, USA).

On the other hand, GFT was reserved for special events, retrospectives that represented key moments in film history such as Classical Hollywood (a Valentine's Day double bill with *Casablanca*, Curtiz, 1942, USA and *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, Edwards, 1961, USA) and the Silent Era (a screening of *Faust*, Murnau, 1926, Germany with live accompaniment). GFT was also used for screening new non-mainstream content, in particular American independent features such as *Down to the Bone* (Granik, 2004, USA), *Palindromes* (Solondz, 2004, USA) and *Land of the Plenty* (Wenders, 2004, USA/Germany) and films from the country focus strand (Canada) including *Falling Angels* (Smith, 2003, Canada/France), *The Republic of Love* (Mehta, 2003, Canada/UK) and *Night Zoo* (Lauzon, 1987, Canada). It was also



home to all of the 14 foreign language films screened at the inaugural event.<sup>26</sup> Thus, the allocation of specific types of films to particularly suitable venues aligned with the festival's goal of catering for different cinema-going practice and taste formations. However, this approach to spatial programming arguably restricted audience mobility by presenting conventionally mainstream films in a mainstream venue and foreign language and independent films in their conventional home at the art house. As such, the early days of the festival suggest that spatio-textual programming practices conflicted with the festival's conceptual aims of mobilising and diversifying cinema audiences.

In terms of the written presentation of the programme in the brochure, there was no real order or rationale for programme choices; screenings of *Titanic* appeared side-by-side with new American independents and new South Korean features, and there was very little context given for the programming of these very different films which could be rather confusing to audiences. Similarly, the programme lacked structure in terms of its presentation with little or no film information such as the year films were made, whether or not they were foreign language and the duration of each film. Alongside poor typesetting, design and proofreading, the festival's first brochure had all the markings of a new and fairly inexperienced event. Nevertheless, it attracted 6000 attendances and was considered 'an overwhelming success' by practitioners at GFT, press and key stakeholders (GFF 2006).

In light of the festival's inaugural success its objective was firmly established; make it bigger. Like many other festivals on the circuit, GFF was beginning to measure its success and achievements quantitatively: it would become bigger and, as a result, better. It would increase its size by showing more films, in more venues from more countries around the world. In 2006 it was announced that Scottish Screen would amalgamate with the Scottish Arts Council in 2010. While there was no immediate threat to the funding structure at GFF given that Visit Scotland had been its main funder and it had performed so well in its first year,

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26 There were two foreign language films screened within the Canada country focus strand; *White Skin* (Roby, Canada, 2004) and a retrospective screening of *Night Zoo* (Lauzon, 1987, Canada). There were an additional twelve foreign language titles; nine European films from Spain, Belgium, Germany, France and Italy and three World Cinema titles: *Tropical Malady* (Weerasethakul, 2004, Thailand/France), *Havana Suite* (Pérez, 2003, Cuba) and *Untold Scandal* (Lee, 2003, South Korea).

there was an awareness that the event would have to ensure it continued to meet, even surpass, funder expectations in terms of its economic and socio-cultural value if it was ever to secure support from the governmental body for film. To do so, it would need to tighten its brand identity, increase its distinctiveness on the festival scene, and raise its local and visiting audience figures. Also, by 2006 the festival had smoothed over much of its marketing issues and began refining its brand image. In fact, 2006 was a pivotal moment in the festival's brand when its name was changed from Glasgow World Film Festival to GFF - a transition that seemed to occur quite close to the festival's launch.<sup>27</sup> The name change was made because 'World' was considered to be superfluous and meaningless, as Jaki MacDougall notes;

I dropped 'world' as I don't think this, or 'international' mean anything to our audience [...] although we may have been better perceived by funders if we'd included 'international' in the title [...] in the end it was changed to GFF as it rooted the festival firmly in the city.

(Fieldwork Journal, August 2013)

Nevertheless, while the festival lost 'World' from its name, it was not any less international in scope. In fact, in 2006 the event arguably became more dynamic in its programming of new and old content and increased its output, screening 119 screenings over 11 days (the inaugural event was only 9 days long). A festival saver pass was introduced (five films for £20) to give audiences value for money and encourage multiple attendances, and the team developed a livelier mode of festival-going practice. The festival programme was thematically carved up with a dedicated retrospective (for Carol Reed), Midnight Movies, New Features (UK, USA, European and World Cinema) and a Country Focus (in 2006 it continued its commitment to new Canadian filmmaking with a North of Hollywood country focus). When GFT assumed full command of the festival with Cineworld and CCA acting as venue partners only, spatial programming shifted.<sup>28</sup> This shift saw the opening and closing galas move from the multiplex to GFT, and was the initial step toward the cinema becoming known as the festival 'hub'.

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<sup>27</sup> Some marketing flyers for the 2006 festival include the former title (Glasgow World Film Festival) while the brochure includes the new title (GFF).

<sup>28</sup> Cineworld took over UCG in 2005.

In terms of the festival's patronage, there was an assumption that it remained a very local audience. However, much of what the cinema knew about its own audience was impressionistic. There was a perception, by GFT staff, that the people attending the cinema year-round were families (Saturday morning screenings), retired people and students, while non-attendees were considered to be people from areas of deprivation, teenagers, minority ethnic groups, and mainstream film audiences including Cineworld Unlimited Cardholders (GFT, 2006: 45). In response to a lack of audience knowledge, in 2006 GFT published a report, entitled *Vision 2020* (GFT 2006). Conducted by Scottish Cultural Enterprise, the report was the first piece of in-depth audience research undertaken by GFT and one that would aid long-term strategy for the cinema and its new festival. The report would measure what GFT was doing right, what it was doing wrong, determine what it might improve according to audience and staff responses, and make recommendations for how GFT might strategise for the future. It included focus groups with staff members, audience surveys and a short period of participant observation (four days), which would provide a 'snapshot' of audience behaviour in GFT.

Very much embodying the characteristics of market research, the report gauged questions around service standards (how good customer service was at GFT), complaints processes (how well complaints were dealt with) and the physical space (how the building and programme were thought of), as such, it presented straightforward responses to such questions. It did not offer further analyses or complicate the reasons people came to GFT at all (why it was important to them). The report engaged with a survey population of 412 GFT cinema-goers and while there were definite factors of self-selection (cinephiles are interested in film research and debate) that must be acknowledged, the survey found that the majority of people who came forward were very loyal patrons of GFT. Indeed, over half of the survey sample had been patrons of the cinema for more than 10 years (53%), while the smallest proportion of people had been coming less than two years (11%) (see Appendix H for visual representation of data from *Vision 2020*). In terms of demographic findings, the report found that more than 64% of respondents were working, 16% were retired, 10% were students, 2% were at school and 2% identified

as other (the 'other' category included 'housewife,' 'self-employed,' 'carer,' and 'incapacitated'). In terms of age, the most dominant groups were 31-40-year-olds and 41-50-year-olds. The majority of participants read *The Herald* as their main newspaper and none were tabloid readers. The highest percentage of participants (51.7%) fell into the ACORN category of 'Urban Prosperity', meaning they were likely to be educated, prosperous, older and young professionals, students and graduates, and cosmopolitan people (see Figure 4.14).<sup>29</sup> Thus, *Vision 2020* painted a rather middle-class picture of the GFT patronage and bore out some of the expectations of the staff.

However, another key finding from the *Vision 2020* report was that GFT seemed to have 'reached a state of maturation' and while it still contained two markets ('mainstream and specialist cinema exhibition') in order to grow it would need to either 'make its offer more distinctive or [build] new audiences' (GFT, 2006: 26). The report maintained that contemporary cinema viewing, in contrast to home viewing, was more about the 'total experience', as such, exhibitors like GFT would need to offer audiences more than just films (ibid). Indeed, 'community' came to the fore as a key element of the cinematic experience, and the report noted that 'the chance to feel part of a community [was] as important as the range of products on offer' (GFT, 2006: 24). This had serious implications for the strategy for GFF.

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<sup>29</sup> ACORN is a classification system that segments audience according to 'demographic data, social factors, population, and consumer behaviours' (Acorn 2013). See [www.acorn.caci.co.uk](http://www.acorn.caci.co.uk) for more information.

## ACORN categories for survey population: *Vision 2020*

ACORN Description	Category	% UK Pop	% GFF Survey Pop
WEALTHY ACHIEVERS Successful, affluent, wealthy areas, older, middle aged and families.	A	25.1	12.5
URBAN PROSPERITY Educated, prosperous, older and young professionals, students and graduates, cosmopolitan.	B	10.7	51.7
COMFORTABLY OFF Comfortable, all life stages, suburbia and semi rural areas, professional and skilled occupations.	C	26.6	10
MODERATE MEANS Former industrial areas, service and retail jobs, incomes average and below average, some pockets of unemployment and illness.	D	14.5	3.7
HARD PRESSED Poorest areas with high unemployment, low incomes, difficult social conditions.	E	22.4	19.1

Figure 4.14. Acorn data. As shown, 51.7% of the GFF survey population fell into the urban prosperity category. Source: GFT 2006: 62.

Thus, equipped with the findings from the report, and under the new co-directorship of GFT's Head of Cinemas Allison Gardner and film journalist Allan Hunter, the 2007 festival kicked off with the aims of attracting a larger, more diverse audience and improving the 'total' festival experience (see Figure 4.15). Working her way up from box office at GFT, Allison Gardner's background in cinema operations armed her with great insight into cinema attendance and film choice; 'I know what people are buying' she noted in an informal chat (Fieldwork Journal, August 2012). However, as Allison Gardner explains, in 2007 she did not have a strong enough status within the film industry and media sphere to run the event as a single director:

I wasn't the right person to do it on my own because in those days I didn't have the kudos to just be the director. I think you need some sort of profile and I didn't have it at that point.

(Interview, Allison Gardner, August 2013)

And so Allan Hunter, a film journalist with connections at the *Scotland on Sunday*, *The Daily Express* and *Screen International* was brought onboard to give the event

an industry profile, a more critical dimension, and media connections (Figure 4.16). The duo continues to operate as a co-directorship to date (2014).



Figure 4.15. Allison Gardner at GFF in 2013. Photo: SC. Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival/8484384240/>



Figure 4.16. Allan Hunter at the closing gala in 2012. Photo: SC. Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival/5488941761>

Under its new directorship, GFF promised to provide something for everyone from the ‘casual filmgoer to the diehard movie buff’ and began tapping into different genres, which were likely to bring in new communities (GFF, 2007: 3). In many ways its new directors were braver and more innovative in their programming choices, screening more World Cinema and cross-arts events. In fact, for the first

time the programme included a foreign-language film as its top-spot closing gala, screening a Chinese film, *Curse of the Golden Flower* (Yimou, 2006, China) (up until that point only English-language American and British films had been granted the top spots on the opening and closing gala films). Another key move was welcoming touring horror festival FrightFest onboard, screening five horror features from the UK, Ireland, South Korea and Japan, which brought with it an army of avid horror aficionados - GFF was beginning to diversify its audience.

The following year staple strands were introduced, which would feature in the programme throughout the research period: Great Scots - a strand dedicated to Scottish productions old and new, European Cinema - focusing on the best new features from the continent, and World Cinema (It's a Wonderful World) - new features from around the world. Another key advance in 2007 was the introduction of the Glasgow Schools Film Festival, a programme created by GFT's education department, which offered screenings specifically for young people, each of which would feature a guest speaker or educational resource. The event was viewed as a mini 'festival within the main festival' and contributed to a wider strategy to make GFF a 'festival of festivals' and introduce younger audiences to the GFT space (Interview, Seonaid Daly, April 2013).

In line with GFF's aspirations of expansion, the number of screenings was further increased in 2008 (157 screenings took place). There was also the introduction of a Hollywood Icon as the retrospective focus, programming that arguably catered for a more mature audience (these films were scheduled as late morning screenings, which also influenced the audience demographic). John Wayne kicked off the trend (2008), followed by Audrey Hepburn (2009) and Cary Grant (2010). Other stars celebrated were Ginger Rogers, Errol Flynn and Gene Kelly. Also, even more strands were introduced in 2008 to enable audiences 'to identify the film genre which most interests them' (GFF, 2008: 2). Some of these strands included The Best of British (new British cinema), Reel Life (documentaries), and The State of the Independents (new US indie films), as well as another 'festival within the festival' event dedicated to short films, Short Film Festival.

In its existence as the Cosmo and as GFT, the cinema had experienced first-hand the impact that cultural, social and economic shifts can have on cinema culture, and, after the recession began in September 2008, it acknowledged that the festival might be hit by austerity. As such, the 2009 festival opened with an acknowledgement of the hard economic times faced by audiences:

In times of trouble the cinema is always the first place we turn to for escape [...] This year at Glasgow we hope the films will entertain, astonish, make you think and maybe make you cry but, above all, they will convince you that it is (still) a wonderful life

- Allison Gardner and Allan Hunter.

(GFF, 2009: 2)

However, despite the recession, attendances sharply increased from 20,509 in 2008 to 28,619 in 2009. It seemed that despite austere times the appetite for the festival was rapidly mounting.

Nevertheless, GFF was hit by the recession in other ways with the loss of Scottish Screen Big Lottery as a key funder in 2009. However, despite apprehension about the economic context, the number of screenings once again increased (211 titles) and the festival successfully booked even more première events and special guests. Courtesy of Optimum Films, the event opened with Glasgow-born Armando Iannucci's *In the Loop* (2009, UK), which was introduced by the director himself alongside actors Peter Capaldi and Chris Addison. The festival was beginning to attract big talent. Indeed, its non-competitive structure enabled cast and crew to attend the event without the pressures and anxieties that accompany 'in competition' festivals (Interview, Allison Gardner, April 2013).

The programme continued its strand formation, focusing on Mexican film for its country focus. It also introduced another 'festival within a festival' event, which would capitalise on Glasgow's vibrant music scene. Glasgow Music and Film Festival would allow the festival to develop new audiences by celebrating 'the cross-fertilisation between clubbing culture, visual art, live music, theatre and the moving image' (GFF, 2009: 28). With this new strand came more innovative curation of cross-arts events, such as a screening of *Nosferatu* (Murnau, Germany,



1922) in 2009, which was accompanied with sound effects, live narration and a live musical score. These types of layered curated events were to become significantly more central to GFF's programming strategy in coming years.

Another key moment in 2009 was the renaming of the schools festival to Glasgow Youth Film Festival (GYFF), although there remained a separate programme of films for school visits. The idea was that school activity and leisure activity would be disconnected. The development of the youth festival was also part of GFT's increased year-round youth education initiative and its youth group: a small group of 15-17-year-olds, who would plan, organise and deliver GYFF each year. Youth education was, and remains, part of a long-term, holistic, audience development strategy which aimed to implement a 'pro-active policy regarding young audiences' (FNE 2012: online). Given the Modernist space at GFT, which could feasibly be off-putting and out-of-date for the young multiplex-going spectator, youth activities at GFT would form part of a long-term strategy to develop audiences of the future by handing over the space to young people at an early stage and '[involving] them in the life of cinema' (FNE 2012: online). The cinema and festival would later become a member of the Young Cinema Audiences Network Scotland (YCANS) - 'a network of cinemas committed to activities geared toward young Scottish film-goers' - and would go on to win the Europa Cinemas Award for Young Audiences alongside Dundee Centre for Contemporary Arts (DCA) and the Filmhouse in 2011 (FNE: 2012: online).

In terms of programming, the 2009 festival opened with *Micmacs* (Jeunet, 2009, France) and was attended by Jean-Pierre Jeunet who introduced the film and took part in a Q&A afterwards. The closing gala film, *Legacy* (Ikimi, 2010, UK), also attracted core talent for the film. In fact the film's director, Thomas Ikimi, also attended the opening gala film and stayed in Scotland for the duration of the festival. *Legacy* was a particularly important booking for GFF because it was a real world première, as *The List* noted; 'It's impressive that the GFF can claim an all-out world première with this movie; the audience that sees it next Sunday night will be the first ever, bar none - an incredibly rare occurrence for a UK film festival' (Gallagher 2010). There is a suggestion that, at times, film festivals present films as

premières - Scottish Première, Glasgow Première - but in many cases the term becomes meaningless as a result of its hyper-localised status. Nevertheless, in the case of *Legacy*, it was an ‘all-out world première’ booking for GFF.

Beyond the gala screenings, GFF also continued its innovative programme by introducing another mini festival to the line-up; Fashion Art Film was dedicated to short film, visual art, literature and fashion. Again, the incorporation of different art forms offered the festival access to other audience groups and the chance to develop and diversify its following for non-mainstream content. The festival also attracted new media partners and gained more coverage in national press outlets. Increased press coverage, teamed with a bigger programme (249 screenings), more premières and visiting talent boosted the festival’s appeal and helped it achieve its best year yet, selling 30,180 tickets. This marked a 760% increase in ticket sales in just 6 years, positioning the festival as one of the fastest growing film events in the UK.

## **Present and future**

This brings us to the research period, which ranges from 2010-13. While the festivals explored in this thesis (GFF11, GFF12, GFF13) are considered in more depth in the following chapters, at this point it is important to position the event within the current festival circuit to consider how it is viewed externally, before I go ‘behind the velvet rope’ to observe it internally in Chapters 5-8.

When we consider that Cannes is 67 years old (1946), Berlin is 62 years old (1951), Venice is 81 years old (1932) and Edinburgh 67 years old (1947), it becomes clear that GFF is a youth on the festival circuit. Nevertheless, the event has grown significantly in its nine years. Mirroring the success of its earlier days, the event has shown steadily increasing attendance figures throughout the research period, reaching 39,106 attendances in 2013 (see Figure 4.17). To illustrate its rapid growth, I look to Edinburgh International Film Festival (EIFF) for comparison. While EIFF’s attendance figures were considered low in 2011 (as discussed in Chapter 2), there is a close performance trend between GFF and EIFF in terms of attendances with GFF sitting around 5000 tickets behind its Edinburgh counterpart. Given the

considerable difference in maturity - GFF was established some 58 years after EIFF - this demonstrates how speedily the event has caught up with Scotland's number one festival (see Figure 4.18).

#### GFF tickets sold (by number) since launch

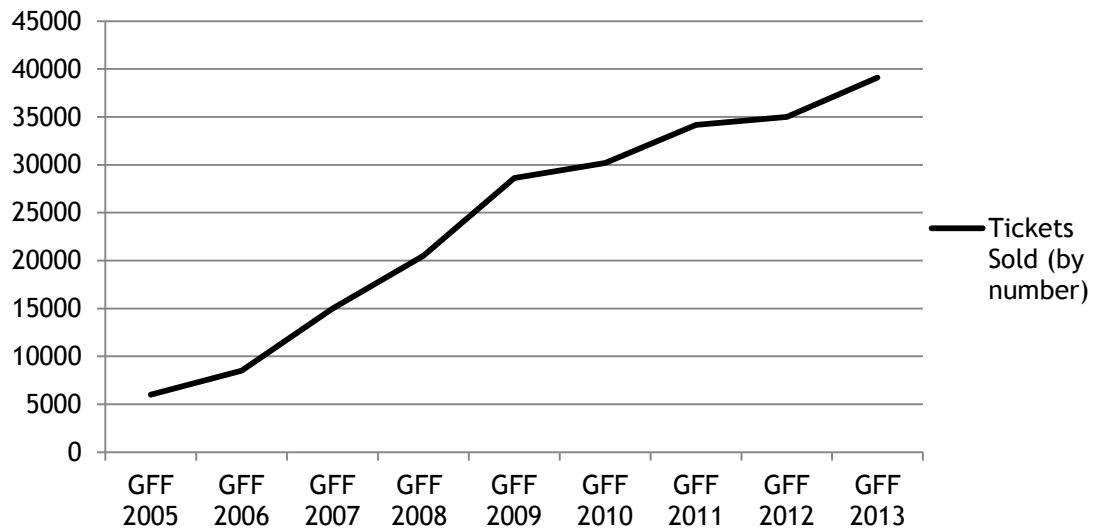


Figure 4.17. Line graph demonstrates the significant increase in tickets sales over the festival's lifespan up until 2013. Source: author's own.

#### Comparative look at tickets sold (by number) at GFF and EIFF (2011-13)

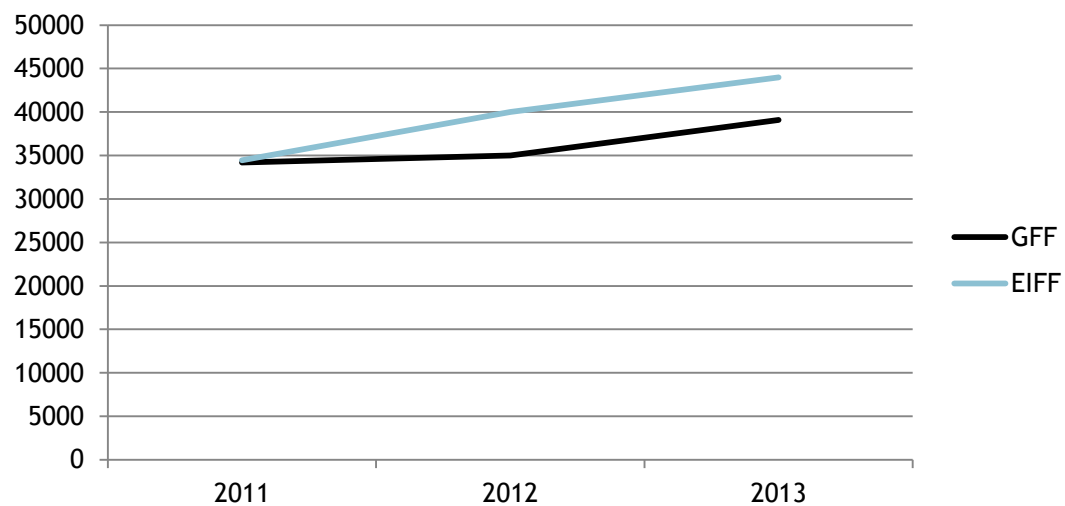


Figure 4.18. Line graph shows attendance figures for GFF and EIFF over the research period and demonstrates a fairly comparable pattern of attendance for each festival. Source: author's own.

It is important to also note the significant difference in funding for these events. While EIFF boasts a £1.6m budget, which includes significant aid from both Creative Scotland and the BFI, GFF's budget is around £294,202, which it generates predominantly through three main funders: Creative Scotland, Glasgow City Marketing Bureau and Event Scotland (see Figure 4.19). Working on what many GFF practitioners refer to as a 'shoe-string budget' demonstrates the festival's resourcefulness to date (Interview, Allison Gardner, August 2013). However, while GFF functions on a minor budget compared to other events, it has now reached saturation: 'we're at the point now where the festival cannot grow any further without increased funding' (Interview, Seonaid Daly, August 2013). This is of course the war cry of many film festivals, which call on government funding bodies to part with more cash. Even at the close of EIFF 2013, artistic director Chris Fujiwara suggested that the support it received was not enough and that it could do 'a lot more once it [was] on stable financial footing' (Ferguson 2013b: online). However, GFF does not have the international profile of EIFF and has to be more creative in finding alternative funding streams, building local partnerships and programme/strand-specific support. For instance, the country focus strand is often supported by institutions that are affiliated with the particular nation explored. In 2012, the Goethe Institute sponsored the festival because it was celebrating German film. Similarly in 2013 Boteca de Brazil - a local Brazilian restaurant and nightclub - sponsored the country strand, which celebrated new Brazilian cinema. The implications of project funding and local partnership sponsorship are that it only supports programming and does not contribute to the core structure of the festival - resources, staff, technology etc (Interview, Seonaid Daly, April 2013).

Nevertheless, despite a shortage of core funding, GFF, like many festivals continues to promote and celebrate its success in quantitative terms. As Stringer points out, this is a common promotional approach because it ensures festivals can compete and be measured against other festivals: 'expansion is also necessary if the individual festival is not to be left behind by its rivals; festivals are advertised as Bigger Than Ever, Better Than Ever, Comprising More Films Than Ever' (2001: 109). Each year GFF press releases highlight how many films are programmed, how many venues are used, how many premières are being screened, and following the

event it celebrates overall attendances. Nevertheless, if the festival is to expand in quantitative terms - screening more films and accommodating more audiences - then it needs more screen capacity. Thus, in the latter stages of this research GFT's third screen, Cinema 3, opened after six months of building work in summer 2013. The creation of the sixty-seat auditorium was to allow for development of GFF and to increase the cinema's education and outreach output. It would also function as a hub space for Glasgow Youth Film Festival and enable the cinema to 'screen more niche films and provide longer runs for popular films' (Visit Scotland 2013: online). As Cinema 2 did in the 1990s, Cinema 3 will allow GFT to expand and diversify its year-round programme once again (see Figure 4.20).

Likewise, aims of expansion and diversification are being addressed by digital developments at GFT. The festival now provides content to audiences outside of festival time with the advent of an online-curated programme - the GFT Player - which targets audiences who predominantly consume film in the domestic space or on the move.<sup>30</sup> In many ways the GFT Player responds to a recent rise in the number of online film festivals, however, there are risks attached to the presentation of festival content in 'open all hours' format. Following the festival, audiences can rent GFF films via the player before they return to GFT for main release, which challenges the Cinezone initiative's *raison d'être* - to encourage festival audiences to attend cinemas outside of festival time. Moreover, the online platform in many ways counters the unique selling point of the film festival as a public exhibitor of limited content within limited time (Harbord 2002). Thus, the experiential aspects of festival-going become somewhat reconfigured within this online rental model, which raises interesting questions about the endurance of the physically-present festival experience and notions of the festival community, as will be explored in later chapters.

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<sup>30</sup> GFT Player is a collaboration between Glasgow Film and Distrify. This initiative sees the cinema attempting to engage with audiences outside of the cinema. The player is 'part of an innovative trial' supported by a £90,000 grant from Nesta and enables people from more remote places - in particular the Highlands and Islands - who cannot visit GFT in person but have an appetite for a curated programme.

### GFF core and total funding (2011-13)

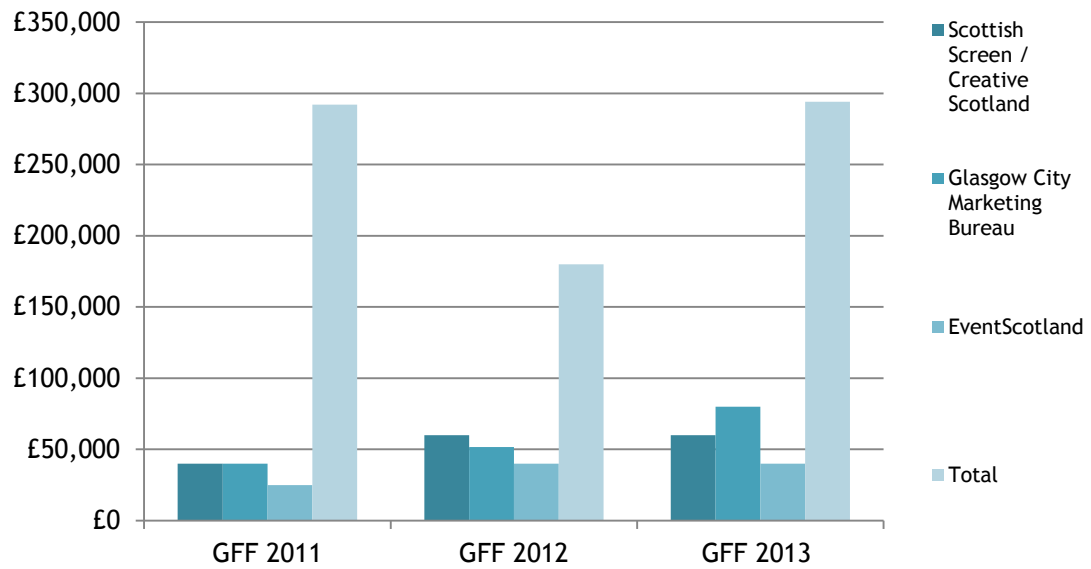


Figure 4.19. Bar graph shows the amount (by £) of funding GFF has received over the research period. Source: author's own.



Figure 4.20. Cinema 3 at GFT. Photo: SC. Source: GFF marketing team.

Thus, with ambitions of expansion, growth and internationalism, questions arise around the direction that GFF will take, given that its founding features were built on localism and bringing the world - international content - to Glasgow (as

opposed to taking Glasgow to the world). As such, the festival's current image is embedded within complex narratives: the local/international narrative ('the festival is now a magnet for thousands of cinema-goers and film lovers from all around the world - and right around the corner') and the mainstream/alternative narrative ('a programme that pays homage to established favourites while brandishing a cutting edge' (GFF 2011b). However, despite the marketing department noting that it is a 'magnet' for audiences from around the world, data still suggests that the festival's growth comes from increased local audiences (in 2013 80% of GFF's audience was said to be from Glasgow or Greater Glasgow) (EKOS 2013: 5). The festival is very much a local treasure and renowned for being a localised and inclusive event, as a BBC article published during GFF13 notes:

The Glasgow Film Festival has quietly grown up over the past eight years. But its charm is in the fact it retains a modest presence. The main hub - the Glasgow Film Theatre - despite plans for expansion remains a small and friendly independent cinema. Film fans are treated just like film stars at this festival - and everyone gets an invite to the première party, at least on opening night [...] It is a festival which takes film seriously but does not take itself too seriously.

(McLean, 2013: online)

Thus, while narratives of expansion surround the event there is a definite resistance, by GFF practitioners, the media and potentially the GFF audience, to lose the local, unpretentious and personable nature of the event, which can be traced all the way back to the Cosmo days.

## Conclusion

This chapter has charted the journey to GFF's inception in 2005. It illustrates the ways in which the festival is rooted within a rich cinematic history that began in the 1930s when cinema was the principal social pastime for the masses. Indeed, I argue that GFF cannot be adequately explored in isolation and must be located with its cinematic heritage in order to understand its festival image and its patronage. George Singleton's vision for the Cosmo was one of populism and inclusivity. It was a place of film connoisseurship, branded an intellectual space for the discerning

patron, yet, it remained a welcoming locale for the masses. I believe that this personable, humble and distinctively local disposition of the Cosmo - articulated through the Mr Cosmo brand - is entrenched in GFF's cinematic make-up today. Through its efforts to programme populist and alternative content, and use of a diverse range of cinematic spaces, it has successfully increased its attendances year on year.

However, while the Cosmo was able to make claims about its distinctiveness at a time when cinema-going was the dominant social/leisure practice of the age in the UK, the socio-cultural shifts in the 1960s and 1970s meant that a new movement of cinema aficionados - who considered mainstream culture (TV, bowling etc) to be lacking in good taste - emerged and galvanised around non-mainstream exhibition. Thus, upon opening in the early 1970s, GFT was faced with a more complex task of identifying its image and its audience. Cinema culture had changed significantly with the arrival of television and mass circulation of art film, which saw exhibitors target specific audiences and cinema culture became fragmented (Heise & Tudor, 2007: 181; Geraghty, 2000: 5). Thus, the art house/independent cinema audience became an invested patronage with distinct taste, treating film as art as opposed to entertainment (Wilinsky, 2001: 36). As such, this new divisive cinematic culture sat somewhat uncomfortably with GFT's quest to be a welcoming space.

Nevertheless, throughout the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s, GFT - likely aware of the shifts in its patronage and the perception of the space as exclusive - continued to increase its efforts to become an inclusive cinema. This included its focus on equality and learning, which is central to the cinema's overall strategy today (2013). More importantly, it was this culture of inclusivity and audience diversification that would see the cinema begin to tap into different cinematic practices, in particular festival-going. Visiting festivals became more frequent and began to change the cinema from a week-by-week programme to a scheduled annual calendar with frequent touring events. With these touring events came new audiences. Indeed, what also emerged on a local plane was a new mode of film



consumption - the cinema was building and developing a local festival audience for itself.

And so GFF - an audience festival for all - came to be in 2005. The festival brought the best of World Cinema to Glasgow audiences offering a calendarised event around which year-round cinema enthusiasm in Glasgow could galvanise. It also resurrected the city's image as a 'cinematic city' and capitalised on its position as a media centre. Ideologically, the festival would also reimagine conventional cinephilia by including audiences from various cinema venues; it would not assume that film lovers only attended art house cinemas and consumed art film. Indeed, its initial links with the multiplex ensured that all lovers of film would form part of the festival community and that the mapping of audiences across different types of exhibition spaces would cultivate a more eclectic film culture in Glasgow. The once static art house audience would become mobilised. While they would experience a post-modern cinematic experience at the multiplex, multiplex-goers would be presented with a different experience in a Modernist art house space. Programming would reflect the diversity of the audience and cater for all tastes from art film to (credible) mainstream releases. In other words, it would aim to bridge the complex gap between the Cosmo ('films for the discriminating') and GFT ('cinema for all').

However, current audience data suggests that the profile of the audience, in terms of demographics, remains weighted in terms of social class and tells us very little about the taste formations and experiential desires of its patronage. As such, while it paints a rather straightforward picture of the GFT and GFF crossover, it is less useful in ascertaining what makes GFF important to people and says little about the key experiential aspects of festival-going in relation to year-round cinema-going. It also says little about the ways in which GFF speaks to a particular audience through presentation of its programme and its overall 'festival image'. As such, the next chapter moves onto look at the current programming practices at GFF more closely in order to understand the apparent tensions between being 'specialised' and 'for everyone'.

## Chapter 5: Programming Audiences

Earlier in this thesis I position the project as one that moves away from a fixation with film text to instead consider a specific exhibition context and its subjects: a particular film festival and its audience. However, adopting Julian Stringer's instructive assertion that the film festival is 'an external agency that creates meanings around film texts' it would be remiss to shirk consideration of the content screened at GFF (2003: 6). Of course, consideration of text in a festival context is challenging due to the vast number of, and diversity of, films presented during festival time, take for example, the 880 screenings presented at GFF over the course of this research period alone (2011-13). As such, this chapter does not attempt to examine texts as individual objects, but instead considers text as part of the festival programme: a single entity constituting numerous sections (called 'strands'), each of which in turn includes a number of titles which are unified by a strand's thematic makeup. In doing so, the chapter considers the ways in which GFF constructs its identity and its audiences' identities, through its programme by asking: what types of films are programmed at GFF and under what principles, and how are these films presented to audiences both in and out of screenings? With a focus on festival programming, the chapter offers input to a growing pool of debate on festivals and their programmes (Marks 2004; Ruoff et al 2012; Czach 2004; Stringer 2008; de Valck 2014).

In her research on art house cinema-going in the East Midlands, Elizabeth Evans finds that participants put a great amount of 'trust' in the choices of programmers and used the programme booklets as 'taste guides' (2011a: 333). Such findings suggest that in circumstances where there is trust between programmers and audiences, the cinema brochure becomes an influential object. As such, as a research source it is incredibly valuable to the researcher both in terms of the films that are selected, but also the way in which they are presented and expressed.

Indeed, in her work on melodrama spectatorship, Barbara Klinger notes a revived importance placed on film reviews as objects of study, arguing that reviews are 'type[s] of social discourse, which, like film advertisements, can aid the

researcher in ascertaining the material conditions informing the relationships between films and spectators at given moments' (1994: 69). Adopting Klinger's notion that consideration of the 'material' is vital in order to understand reception of the 'textual', this chapter engages with the important textual features of the festival - part of what Daniel Dayan has referred to as the 'written festival': content produced by and around the event (2000: 43-52). While Dayan refers to materials both by and around the festival (i.e. marketing materials, brochures, reviews), I focus mostly on materials produced by the festival, namely the festival brochures - an approach first used by Bill Nichols in his pioneering work on film festivals and new cinema (1994: 16-7). At GFF the festival brochure is the emblem of the event and its public release is marked each year by a celebrated press launch in Glasgow wherein the printed programme is concealed and then handed out to press and industry practitioners after several speeches are delivered by the programming team and local dignitaries.<sup>31</sup> The importance placed on the physical programme is also one shared by the festival audiences, an observation supported in an E-Survey conducted by GFF in 2013, which found that the physical brochure was the principal source used for planning festival attendance and selecting films (GFF 2013d).

Together with staff interviews and participant observation, this chapter draws on textual analysis of the festival programme and looks at the 'markers of value' for films and the various modes of clustering (strands) within it. By questioning what makes selected films distinctive within the GFF exhibition context, it proposes a classificatory system of film types and sheds light on the programming practices at non-industry audience festivals like GFF. The latter half of the chapter then considers the ways in which films are positioned discursively in the programme so that they are 'sold' to audiences as distinct, culturally valuable objects. Conducting textual analysis of all film synopses for GFF 2011-13, I highlight the descriptive trends that emerge from the programme and consider what these patterns might reveal about GFF's ideological position, identity aspirations and the ways in which it envisages its audiences' motivations, pleasures and tastes.

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<sup>31</sup> In 2013 GFF held a programme launch in London. The initiative behind the London launch was to attract more national and international press and distributors.

## Programming in context

Independent programming is scarce in year-round cinema exhibition in the UK. Of the 2767 cinemas only two - both based in Scotland - remain wholly independently programmed by an in-house practitioner; Glasgow Film Theatre (Allison Gardner) and Filmhouse, Edinburgh (Rod White).<sup>32</sup> Therefore, one of the main qualities that generally sets 'texts screened at film festivals' apart from 'texts screened year-round in cinemas' is that they are handpicked by a programmer, or team of programmers, who will have watched all, or most, of the films selected for exhibition. At GFF, GFT programmers select titles for the festival line-up, therefore, the festival inherits many of its programming characteristics.<sup>33</sup> As Chapter 4 highlights, GFT's programming practices have evolved significantly since it opened its doors in 1939. In its current position, as a cultural not-for-profit institution nurturing a 'Cinema for All' axiom, it constantly manages a dichotomous tension between mainstream and alternative content. On one hand it seeks to deliver a nuanced programme that showcases experimental films and independent titles that sit in opposition to the homogeneity of multiplex programming, yet on the other, it needs to sustain itself by attracting as wide an audience as possible.

Indeed, 80% of GFT's income is generated from box office (Fieldwork Journal, April 2013). Given that most box office revenue comes predominantly from what GFT employees term 'middle-of-the-road titles', the cinema cannot afford to be entirely niche or oppositional to mainstream taste (Interview, Angela Freeman, August 2013). According to Allison Gardner, middle-of-the-road titles are considered fairly risk-free on account of their guarantee to draw an audience and 'pay the electricity bill!'. The most obvious examples of middle-of-the-road titles are award season front-runners. Indeed, analysis of GFT programming over the research period shows that in-competition award films are embedded in GFT programming, in particular front-runners in the Golden Globes (mid-January), BAFTAs (mid-February) and Academy Awards (late-February). For example,

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<sup>32</sup> I recognise that there are several institutions that self-identify as 'cross-artform venues' and offer film screening as part of a broad cross-arts programme, for instance, Watershed in Bristol (Mark Cosgrove), Dundee Contemporary Arts in Dundee (Alice Black) and Eden Court in Inverness (Paul Taylor), however, here I refer to cinematic institutions where screening film is their prime purpose.

<sup>33</sup> With the exception of two regular festival-specific programmers - notably Allan Hunter and Matt Lloyd and from time-to-time specific strand programmers - all members of the GFF programming team, including Festival Co-director, Allison Gardner, are permanent members of staff at GFT year-round.

Academy Award nominees/winners that have screened at GFT between 2010-13 include; *Life of Pi* (Lee, 2012, USA/Taiwan), *Les Misérables* (Hooper, 2012, USA/UK), *The King's Speech* (Tom Hooper, 2010, UK), *The Descendants* (Payne, 2011, USA), *The Artist* (Hazanavicius, 2011, France), *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (Fincher, 2011, USA/Sweden/Norway) and *Black Swan* (Aronofsky, 2010, USA). Each of these films screened at GFT as main titles - given the larger screen at GFT - upon UK release, while also screening at the local multiplex, Cineworld Renfrew Street (CRS).

Middle-of-the-road titles are also privileged in marketing. In each of the three years of this project, GFT's January/February brochure (released just before GFF) has featured a front-running film for the Academy Awards on the cover (see Figure 5.1). Interestingly in each of these examples, other titles, which were arguably more aligned with the programming style at GFT (independently-made, Scottish film and foreign-language film), could have been used as an alternative to the big-budget films selected as lead titles. To illustrate, the privileging of *Black Swan* was interesting given that other films screening that month were Scottish independent *Neds* (Mullan, 2010, UK), US independent *Blue Valentine* (Cianfrance, 2010, USA) and foreign-language film *Biutiful* (Iñárritu, 2010, Mexico/Spain). This example illustrates the privileging of films with bigger budgets and more hype in the promotional strategy at GFT in the lead-up to the festival and awards season.



Figure 5.1. Cover of GFT January/February brochures over the research period all of which feature Academy Award winning films, *Black Swan* (Aronofsky, 2010, USA), *The Artist* (Hazanavicius, 2011, France) and *Les Misérables* (Hooper, 2012, USA/UK).

However, GFT employees maintain that the selected films still have merit as non-mainstream content. As Emily Munro, Head of Learning at GFT, points out: 'GFT didn't show the new *Superman* movie (*Man of Steel*, Snyder, 2013, USA/Canada/UK) whereas many other independent cinemas did' (Fieldwork Journal, September 2013). Indeed GFT's programming practices are guided by the former UK Film Council's policy on 'specialised film'. According to the UK Film Council, specialised films 'do not sit easily within a mainstream and highly commercial genre [and] are often characterised by an innovative cinematic style and by an engagement with challenging subject matter [which] challenge and educate audiences of all ages and backgrounds' (BFI 2013b). The BFI now manages a database that includes all existing and forthcoming 'specialised' films, which have been or are due to be released in the UK. This has become a key tool for programming practice at GFT given that it enables programmers to check the 'specialised status' of titles they intend to programme. The specific categories outlined by the former UK Film Council policy for specialised film includes foreign language films with subtitles, documentaries, archive/classic films, titles which cannot be defined within a specific genre, titles which deal with challenging subject matter and titles which have an innovative cinematic style (BFI 2013b). These rather indistinct categories range from film form and trans-nationalism to narrative and aesthetics. Indeed, all of the Academy Award runners mentioned earlier - *Black Swan* included - are classified as 'specialised' films under the UK Film Council's framework, with the exception of *Les Misérables* and *The Descendants*.<sup>34</sup> These films are fruitful for independent cinemas because they satisfy the economic and cultural tensions that exist within independent exhibition; they are legitimate as specialised content and sustain the box office.

Nevertheless, despite positioning itself as a specialised cinema exhibitor - leading the way in specialised cinema for over 39 years' - GFT also programmes films that do not fit within a specialised category (GFT 2013b). The difference is that non-specialist films are framed within a different narrative. Films that are not identified by the BFI as 'innovative', 'challenging', 'educational' or 'non-

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<sup>34</sup> It is likely that *Les Misérables* and *The Descendants* are discounted because they are attached to large studios - Universal and 20th Century Fox respectively. In fact, the 'specialised' film database contains very few titles by major American film studios. For more details see <http://industry.bfi.org.uk/specialisedfilmsdb>

commercial' screen at GFT outside of their initial release period within a strand entitled 'Did You Miss?' This section includes big-budget US titles that have already had their saturated release in multiplex cinemas throughout the UK and have received much media hype around the Academy Awards (many of them have picked up top awards). Some examples of 'Did you Miss?' films, which GFT practitioners term 'off-date titles', include *War Horse* (Spielberg, 2011, USA), *Argo* (Affleck, 2012, USA), *Zero Dark Thirty* (Bigelow, 2012, USA) and *Django Unchained* (Tarantino, 2012, USA).<sup>35</sup> Therefore, what we find is that GFT is able to make claims about being a specialist exhibitor while screening bigger hit films because they exist within a 'second chance' narrative that targets patrons with an appetite for blockbuster films, but a dislike for multiplexes. There is suggestion here that audiences would prefer to wait for mainstream films to appear in an independent cinema programme off-date than see them in a more mainstream space during release.

Nevertheless, GFT's alternative-mainstream programming approach is not unusual in art house and independent cinema programming in the UK. As Elizabeth Evans points out in her study of three art house cinemas in the East Midlands, while art house exhibitors now programme mainstream content, multiplexes are screening foreign-language film, documentaries, independent film - and I would add alternative content (livecasts of theatre, opera and ballet) to the mix - thus 'any clear delineation of "art cinemas" in terms of programming is problematic' (2011b: 331). What is clear is that GFT's strategy of screening 'specialised' films and second chance 'mainstream' is an effective method. Between 2012-13 the cinema welcomed over 187,500 people through its doors, which was reportedly 'more than double the screen average for UK cinemas in 2012' (GFT, 2013a: 2). GFT's ability to negotiate this tension between 'specialised' and 'mainstream' or 'alternative' and 'popular' film is crucial to understanding the festival's identity and ideological position, and its audiences' taste patterns.

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<sup>35</sup> As of the time of writing (February 2014), none of these films were deemed 'specialised' in the BFI database.

## Filling the gap or reproducing the gap?

In *The Moving Image* (2004) dossier dedicated to festival curation, Mark Haslam - Festival Director of Planet in Focus environmental film festival in Toronto - puts forth a framework of curatorial values for programmers. One of the values proposed, labeled 'fill the gap, don't reproduce the gap', suggests that festival programmers should 'fill the gaps in the media environment and not reproduce the popular programming that already exists', which means prioritising titles that will not have a commercial release or broadcast in the festival's geographical location (Haslam, 2004: 51). To do so, Haslam states that programmers must:

Scan the contemporary and historical media environment for the voices that have been excluded, the genres that have been marginalized, the topics that have been suppressed, the filmmakers whose contributions have been undervalued, the audiences that have been ignored or underserved. This should be the ground from which our curatorial vision and *raison d'être* emerge.

(2004: 51)

In many ways, Haslam paints a rather problematic picture of the film festival as an alternative, innovative and subversive mode of exhibition, as well as positioning the curator's vision as a foundation on which the event's prestige rests. Firstly, it assumes a particular type of festival spectatorship - a cinephile audience with an appetite for obscure and marginal content, which altogether ignores the changing modes of traditional cinephilia (de Valck, 2005: 103). Secondly, it takes little account of the industrialisation of the cultural economy - the 'creative industries' - and the need for film festivals to function as commercial enterprises. As Dayan has noted in his ethnographic study of Sundance, film festivals are 'fragile equilibriums' where different groups of participants act out their, often opposing, festival performances and agendas (2000: 45). Thus, while some scholars and practitioners maintain that film festivals are cultural agencies that must treat film as art and seek out distinction at all costs, a recent *Screen* dossier asserts that any 'naïve notion that festivals are utopian spaces with unlimited choice and freedom of expression ignores the commercial and cultural factors that shape programming' (Archibald & Mitchell, 2012: 279).



In considering the support of art cinema in the commercial festival landscape, de Valck notes that film festivals are sites that continually negotiate ideological positions and commercial agendas. She argues that ‘cinema can never exist solely in the cultural realm’ and that they would ‘fail to survive if they concerned themselves with cultural issues alone’ (de Valck, 2014: 45). Drawing on Bourdieu’s notion, de Valck considers ‘both the “autonomous” logics as one of the driving forces in the festival network’s commitment to cinema and the “heteronomous” festival practice that facilitates industry needs’. She notes that:

The progressively complex organization of our cultural industries makes it difficult to understand processes of commercialization. While cultural and economic fields become more and more intertwined - at the autonomous, as well as at the heteronomous pole - people continue to believe in the value of art, culture and creativity in itself, for itself and as something essentially not correlated with money.

(2014: 41)

While the economic structure of GFF - public-funded predominantly by the Scottish Government under Creative Scotland - means that the festival avoids any rigid proviso from private sponsors in terms of what it programmes, it still has responsibilities and key performance indicators (KPIs) under the terms of its funding. As outlined in GFF’s funding application to Creative Scotland in 2012, the festival promises to ‘enhance the programme of commissions, events and happenings, and festivals within the festival’, to ‘increase attendance and global recognition from UK and international film professionals’, and to ‘launch Glasgow as Europe’s premier audience-focussed film festival and the destination for those seeking a collective, innovative, creative experience’ (GFF, 2012e: 1-3). Thus, it is clear that the festival has a distinct policy of expansion - to grow its programme, its profile and its audience. However, growth is challenging for a non-industry event like GFF as festival programmers find themselves searching for independently-made films and international content in a saturated marketplace, competing with larger festivals for UK premières, booking and financing visits for special guests on an exceptionally lean budget, as well as providing a platform for emerging Scottish and British talent. Thus, like its mega-festival counterparts (Venice, Cannes, Toronto and Berlin), GFF finds itself in a perpetual state of tension between economic,

political and cultural imperatives, which inevitably shapes programme decision-making.

Echoing GFT's ethos, GFF positions itself as an inclusive, open access audience festival. The aim of the festival is to provide 'something for everyone' as opposed to 'everything for someone'. In one respect, it is a populist event screening mainstream films that are scheduled for cinematic release in the months following the festival, and, in another respect, it has a cultural imperative to screen alternative or 'specialist content', which the now dissolute UK Film Council defines as 'films that are characterised by an innovative cinematic style and by an engagement with challenging subject matter [...] specialised films will challenge and educate audiences of all ages and backgrounds' (quoted in Evans, 2011b: 330). It therefore both 'reproduces the gap' and 'fills the gap', which complicates the programme identity by suggesting that it is both different (programming marginal content) and for everyone (programming mainstream content). In his investigation of Nottingham's Shots in the Dark Festival between 1991 and 2000, Julian Stringer encounters this dual proposition, as he writes: '[the festival] wants to have its cake and eat it too - that is to say, to be of both specialised minority interest and also "for everyone"' and in many ways the same could be said of GFF (2008: 53).

Each GFF strand includes a repertoire of between five and sixteen films that have some connection with each other under a theme devised by the programming team. The festival has fourteen staple strands which appear each year in the GFF programme; Great Scots (Scottish cinema), Best of British (British cinema) Gala, Eurovisions (European Cinema), It's a Wonderful World (World Cinema), State of the Independents (American independent film), Stranger than Fiction (documentary), Kapow@GFF (comics and superhero), FrightFest (horror/ fantasy), Fashion in Film, Out of the Past, Retrospective (tribute to a cinematic icon), and a strand entitled Crossing the Line, which focuses on experimental art film and performance. Each year the festival has an annual country focus. Over the research period these have included Beyond Bollywood (India, 2011), Welcome to Germany (Germany, 2012) and Buena Onda: New Brazilian Cinema (Brazil, 2013).<sup>36</sup> There are also fleeting

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<sup>36</sup> In addition to the GFF main programme there are Glasgow Short Film Festival (GSFF) and Glasgow Youth Film Festival (GYFF), which both sit outside of the main 11-day festival schedule.

strands that pop up for one year only, for instance; in 2011 a strand entitled Ceol's Craic: Gaelic Film Festival was curated to celebrate Gaelic and indigenous cultures around the world; 2012 included two strands that were programmed independently by the Goethe-Institut to accompany the German country focus: Weimarvellous (events inspired by the cabaret movement of Weimer Republic Germany) and The Stasi Are Among Us (a two-day event which explored the experience of four directors working under the Staatssicherheit in East Germany);<sup>37</sup> while in 2013 Game Cats Go Miaow! introduced video gaming to the programme. Thus, while GFF audiences are presented with a staple diet of strands, the festival incorporates new themes to the mix each year in an attempt to keep the programme fresh. Rejuvenation of the programme also enables it to find new audiences, as exemplified in 2013 when the festival adopted an ethos of being a 'geek friendly' festival which allowed it to draw in a younger demographic through the Kapow and Game Cats strands.

Films for GFF are sourced via three main routes: through an open call for submissions from filmmakers, via distributors with whom GFT has a longstanding relationship and by identifying films that have shown at other film festivals. An open call for submissions is put out in summertime, at which point filmmakers can submit their films direct to the festival directors for consideration. Although there are no exact records of how many films are programmed each year from the open call, Emily Munro, Head of Learning, suggest that very few films are programmed via this channel (Fieldwork Journal, September 2013). The second route - via distributors - involves distribution companies presenting forthcoming titles that have release dates after GFF. These films include 'tent-pole' films but also some smaller titles.<sup>38</sup> Thirdly, programmers see films at other film festivals and actively pursue distributors, sales agents or producers in order to negotiate the many terms of festival screening. Indeed, other festivals are the main channels through which programmers find films, however, booking a film via this route is never straightforward for programmers. Once programmers have decided that a film would be a good fit for the festival, the next question is whether or not the film is

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<sup>37</sup> The Goethe-Institut is the Federal Republic of Germany's cultural institution, which promotes German culture exchange worldwide.

<sup>38</sup> Tent-pole films are larger titles that are expected to be commercially successful. Distributors place these films at smaller festivals quite close to their main release date in order to exploit the event's press attention.

actually available. This question then unfolds into a multifarious discussion of the many factors involving the film's potential appearance at GFF; where else has the film screened? What is the fee? Will the film be a UK première? Will the film be given an opening/closing slot? Will the distributor send talent? Is it likely that there will be press attention? The international festival circuit is a competitive and hierarchical space, and, given that sales agents are predominantly in the business of selling films to distributors, industry festivals with marketplaces take priority.

Indeed for some distributors, sales agents or producers, GFF is not an appealing showcase for their tent-pole release, which is in part because the festival is not prominent on the global circuit. In a UK context, BFI London Film Festival (LFF) is the key festival where films can potentially attract distributors because it has the most money and concentration of media. As GFF Co-Director, Allan Hunter notes:

I always assume that the hope for them [sales agents] is to get into London. To get lots of positive reviews, be seen by distributors and get UK distribution. So the place that they ideally aim for is there and then everybody else comes after that. So for instance, if a film has been in London they'll [sales agents, distributors] likely be fine about us showing it. If it hasn't been in the UK before and they're still hoping that they might get a distributor or they're still in negotiations with people, that's what makes it slightly trickier to get titles.

(Interview, Allan Hunter, April 2013)

In other ways it comes down to the festival's schedule in February at the same time as award season, which also positions it at the same time as the Berlinale. While the synchronicity was viewed as positive in the past - many films came to GFF after their European Première at Berlin - it has now become a programming drawback as GFF attempts to increase its profile, secure more premières and attract more international press. As such, following the 2013 festival, programmers decided to push the dates back by one week so that GFF will fall outside Berlinale (Interview, Seonaid Daly, August 2013).<sup>39</sup> However, one fruitful link is GFF's close connection with the Jameson Dublin International Film Festival

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<sup>39</sup> In the past, the festival has taken place mid-February and concluded on the evening of the Academy Awards each year. However, from 2014 onwards, GFF will take place 20 February-02 March 2014. This pushes the festival outside of Berlinale's dates.

(JDIFF). UK films that have a big springtime cinematic release opt to come to GFF and JDIFF so that they can really capitalise on press coverage. As Festival Producer, Seonaid Daly, notes; ‘the connection with Dublin really floats the boat of distributors because they get the big Irish market with Dublin where all the big cinemas are, and then we’re now getting enough UK press for them to care about us being a British launch pad for those UK releases’ (Interview, Seonaid Daly, August 2013). Nevertheless, audience festivals like GFF still stand in the shadows of mega festivals like Berlinale, London Film Festival, Venice Film Festival, and Toronto International Film Festival in terms of securing film premières.

However, while GFF stands somewhat in the shadows of these mega-festivals, many of them are crucial to its programming methodology, in particular, Cannes, Venice and Toronto. While the festival co-directors attend Cannes and Toronto, GFT CEO, Jaki MacDougall, attends Venice annually. In particular, TIFF is fertile ground for GFF as the event takes place in November just three months before Glasgow and there are no other large UK festivals between TIFF and GFF - London Film Festival (LFF) takes place in October and Edinburgh International Film Festival (EIFF) is in June. Given its significance to the programming practices at GFF, Allison Gardner attends TIFF every year. Using other film festival screenings as a programming resource is highly effective as it enables programmers to assess the quality of titles based on their knowledge of film and awareness of audiences’ taste formation in a cinematic space, as opposed to a mailed DVD or film synopsis by a distributor. More importantly, it allows programmers to gauge critical reception while in the company of other festival practitioners, film critics and distributors. In the presence of these fellow decision-makers and assessors of quality, programmers are able to anticipate the popularity and reception of films. While Liz Czach notes that ‘the “taste” of the programmer can never be extinguished’, Allison Gardner states that decision-making is often made instinctually, based on her knowledge of her audience (2004: 84):

When I'm watching a film generally for GFF, if I like it within 20 minutes then I think it's really good. I mean sometimes I hate films that we show at GFF but it's not called 'The Allison Film Festival... yet!' [laughs].

There are some films I don't like but I can see the value in that people would be interested to see it and value the opportunity to see it. I always try to put my personal taste aside. Things like *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* (John Madden, 2012, UK). I mean, I thought 'Oh my God! This is so awful,' but I knew that there was a particular section of the GFF community who would really like and embrace it, and enjoy being the first to see it. [...] I watch them [films] with a punter's head on because you're asking people to part with money so you have to make sure it's good. But there's no particular magic formula.

(Interview, Allison Gardner, August 2013)

There is a suggestion here that there is no *modus operandi* for programming the festival, however, Allison Gardner - who has worked in independent cinema for nearly 30 years, progressing from an usher (Filmhouse in Edinburgh) to Head of Cinemas/Festival Co-Director (GFT & GFF) - bases programming decisions on a combination of instinct, knowledge and experience of working in box office for years. Her long engagement with art house cinema and festival audiences enables her to channel audience taste and the differing patterns of taste amongst clusters of GFF audiences.

This notion of instinctual programming is reminiscent of selection processes in what de Valck terms 'The Age of Programmers' wherein directors such as Huub Bals (Rotterdam 1937-88) - who once noted that 'you have to watch films with your belly' - adopted an idiosyncratic programming practice (2007: 168). De Valck also notes that Huub Bals' 'task as festival director was to find an audience for his films and not to find films for his audience' (2007: 102). While some programmers in the period to which de Valck refers (1970s-80s) could be said to have a degree of cinephile egoism, GFF presents a distinct lack of ego when it comes to programming, prioritising the audience above personal taste. This is demonstrated in interviews with practitioners, wherein each interviewee focused on how the audience was at the heart of the festival. It was also apparent when observing the introductions made by practitioners to audiences before screenings; 'it's all about

you’ ‘the audience is king’ (Fieldwork Journal, February 2013). Nevertheless, unpretentious or not, festival programmers remain arbiters of audience taste - ‘cultural gatekeepers’- and ultimately judge the quality of titles and make selections based on the perceived taste formations of audiences (Ruoff, 2012: 3).

### **Programming talent**

Another important aspect of the programmer’s job is programming talent. Visitors with celebrity status attract future funders, national and international press, as well as other talent. They also give the event cultural prestige, credibility and reputé on the international festival circuit. Thus, if GFF hopes to become more prominent on the international stage, attracting talent to the festival is crucial. Certainly, festival directors themselves have voiced concern over the ‘pressures to bring in commercial works and celebrities may overshadow any curatorial values [of] festival[s]’ (Haslam, 2004: 4). Nevertheless, while there seems to be an unanimous view that talent is important for the festival, GFF practitioners maintain that the festival will never pay for talent to visit the festival or programme specifically around talent. As Allison Gardner told the *Scotland on Sunday* in an interview on 22 January 2011:

The festival doesn’t count premières, or cater to the film trade, or focus on guests or VIPs... I hope distributors come to Glasgow and see films and buy them but that’s not what I’m thinking about when I programme the festival.

(Anon, 2011b: online)

While the notion of GFF not counting premières is not entirely the case - all press releases contain the number of films and premières - the core of Gardner’s point is that the festival will not cater to big names or become an event solely for stargazing. Indeed the festival has a commitment to limited pageantry and pomp and an imbedded ethos of humility akin to Toronto. Indeed, many parallels between GFF and TIFF can be drawn. As Czach notes, TIFF has sold itself on its spectatorship. Quoting from TIFF’s website she notes that the festival’s success is ‘largely attributed to Torontonians’ cinemagoing habits:

Toronto was becoming a key screening location for both Hollywood and international cinema in large part because of its audience, which was cinematically literate, diverse in its tastes, and curious. If other festivals were relatively exclusive, Toronto provided a true, and accurate, public testing ground.

(2010: 144)

Czach offers an interesting comparison between TIFF and Montreal's Festival des Films du Monde (FFM) in terms of the different ways in which the festivals are promoted. As she notes, while FFM sold the festival through its 'home city as a beautiful location combining old-world charm with the allure of cosmopolitan foreignness' Toronto used its local cinephile audiences as a key selling point. Quoting Gupta and Marchessault (2007) she notes; 'it [TIFF] turned toward its local audiences, which have been sold ad nauseam as the biggest commodity of all' (Czach, 2010: 144). This draws many parallels with GFF, which also shapes its uniqueness around its loyal, and local, Glaswegian patronage. As Allison Gardner notes in a *Movie Juice* interview it is 'the audience who make this [GFF] the best festival in the world' (STV, 2013: online).

Nevertheless, despite its firm focus on its audience, GFF has continued to increase its links with Hollywood personalities and its overall number of guests (see Figure 5.2). And while GFF does not pay personal appearance fees, it covers travel and accommodation costs for visiting talent, which can amount to significant costs. For example, in 2013 it cost \$20,000 to fly Joss Whedon to Glasgow for the première of *Much Ado About Nothing* (Joss Whedon, 2013, USA), which featured as the closing gala film that year.<sup>40</sup> Such costs are justified by media exposure (see Figure 5.3). When the Hollywood director - who is considered to be the 'biggest' celebrity to have attended GFF by the festival producer - was in Glasgow he conducted 'back-to-back press interviews', which resulted in significant press national and international coverage (Interview, Seonaid Daly, August 2013). Moreover, his presence at GFF also arguably gained the festival kudos on the festival circuit, and generated public awareness of the film, which returned to GFT during its UK cinematic release in May 2013.

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<sup>40</sup> The cost was shared with The Jameson Dublin International Film Festival (JDIFF).



### Number and origin of guest attendees at GFF (2010-13)

Origin of visiting talent	2011	2012	2013
Glasgow	48	59	66
Elsewhere in Scotland	65	52	30
Elsewhere in the UK	74	78	124
Overseas	64	42	53
Total	251	231	273

Figure 5.2. The number and origin of guest attendees at the GFF (2010-13).



Figure 5.3. Joss Whedon at the UK première of *Much Ado About Nothing* (Whedon, 2013, USA) during GFF13. Photo: ND. Source: [www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival](http://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival)

As a knock-on effect the festival has drawn more press attention (see Figure 5.4). Aside from the significant talent costs (air travel and accommodation), the other challenge for GFF is its timing in February when many A-list celebrities are busy with their Academy Award campaigns. However, this is not a real issue for the festival at the moment, as Seonaid Daly notes; ‘We’re not yet in the position where someone like Jeff Bridges is going to come to our festival, but the date clash with the Oscars may be an issue in the future as we get bigger’ (Interview, Seonaid Daly, August 2013). Nevertheless, in 2013 GFF did attract some A-list celebrities,

however, there were indications that the festival was very new to this level of talent. In 2013 Gemma Arterton attended GFF to promote her new film, *Byzantium* (Jordan, 2013, UK/USA/Ireland), which was premièring as part of FrightFest, an appearance that attracted much press attention. However, during the GFF13 debrief meeting, GFF's press officer noted that she had received feedback from photojournalists who had experienced problems selling images of Gemma Arterton to press agencies because there was not a suitably branded backdrop for the image (see Figure 5.5 for a comparative look at GFF and TIFF promotional images) (Fieldwork Journal, February 2013). While this is a very simple mistake, it illustrates a degree of naïveté on the part of GFF when dealing with A-listers and suggests that the festival is currently undergoing a phase of trial and error as it increases its presence of prominent talent. Nevertheless, increased reputation and brand awareness are core objectives for GFT and in recent years there has been a more active approach towards increasing the festival's profile internationally. A key development occurred in 2013 when GFF contracted London-based press agency, Organic, to increase national and international press (see Figure 5.6).



Figure 5.5. Gemma Arterton at the UK première of *Byzantium* (Jordan, 2013, UK/USA/Ireland) during GFF13 [left] and at TIFF12 for the world première for the same film [right]. Photo: EC. Sources: [www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival](http://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival) and [www.justjared.com](http://www.justjared.com)

### Attendance for media representative at GFF (2011-13)

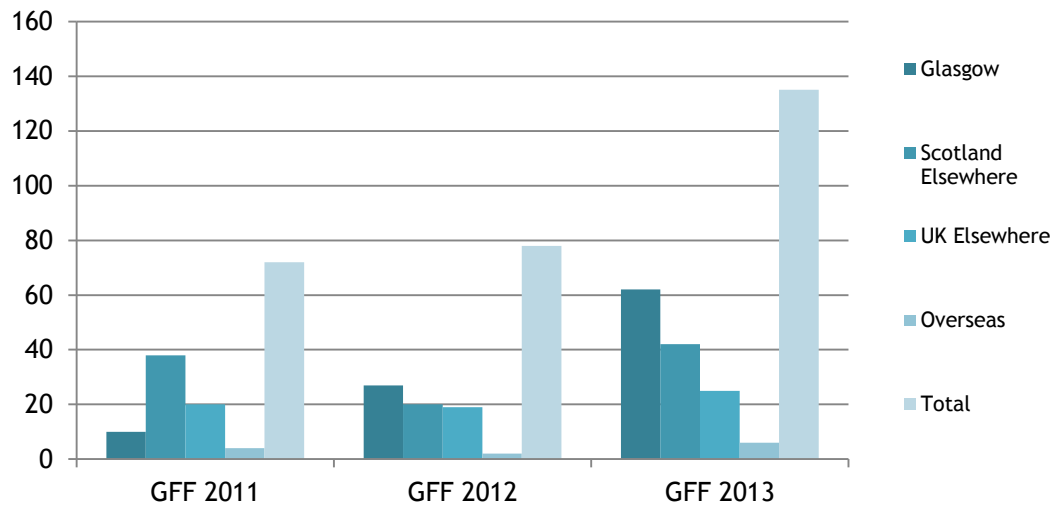


Figure 5.6. Bar chart shows the number of media representatives, by region, attending GFF across the research period. As the chart highlights, GFF still predominantly attracts Scottish journalists and has low attendance figures for international press, however, the number of media representatives attending the Festival increased by 57 (73%) in the last year. Figures taken from EKOS 2013: 8-9.

The programme also includes non-film guests who arguably add a more localised form of value and interpretative context for certain films. These may include local novelists, academics or political figures. During the 2013 festival, there were two particularly prominent politicians in attendance. For the annual Geek Night, part of Kapow@GFF!, the special guest was Scotland's First Minister, Alex Salmond. Also in attendance at GFF13 was the Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop, who introduced *We Are Northern Lights* (Higgins et al, 2012, Scotland) as part of the Great Scots strand (see Figure 5.7). Both members of the Scottish Nationalist Party, these were particularly interesting guest bookings given the forthcoming Scottish Independence Referendum, the date for which was announced just 34 days before GFF13 took place. Interestingly, while the number of Best of British titles has remained stable over the research period the number of events programmed in the Great Scots strand has doubled (from 9 films in 2011 to 19 films in 2013). Of course, it is important to acknowledge that 2013 was an especially strong year for Scottish film, which may account for the increase in Great Scots films.



Figure 5.7. Alex Salmond at Geek Night GFF13 [left]. Fiona Hyslop at the UK première of *We Are Northern Lights* at GFF13 [right]. Photos: EC & SC. Source: [www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival](http://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival)

The presence of public figures in Scotland at the festival suggests that it is not only famed Hollywood celebrities that add value to GFF programming, but that local and national public figures are also perceived as being valuable additions to events and screenings. Arguably, the programming of both local and international personalities supports an argument that GFF continually negotiates dual objectives: to remain a local, inclusive festival with a loyal local patronage, but to also become a prestigious international event with repute on the festival scene and distinct presence in global media.

As discussed so far, programming is a complex process that involves many different factors - visiting talent, cultural and economic considerations and access to films. So while idiosyncratic programming is a viable and popular approach adopted by festival programmers past and present, markers of value extend beyond the aesthetic and narrative features of individual films and personal tastes of programmers. The following section examines the types of content selected by GFF programmers and proposes a system for understanding the various forms of value arbitrated to content by programmers.

### **A film typology**

Consideration of the types of films programmed at film festivals is a less problematic task when examining specialist events such as genre-based festivals (horror, fantasy etc), type festivals (documentary, animation, silent) or identity-

based festivals (LGBT/queer, Jewish etc) because programming strategies are based on an explicit correlation between the festival's identity and the content it exhibits. For instance, LGBT/queer festivals are in the prime business of programming films that represent the LGBT community, according to Skadi Loist (2012: 157). On the other hand, horror festivals like FrightFest solely programme films that fall within the horror genre. However, when correlation between narrative image and festival image does not exist - as is the case with many audience festivals with diverse programmes - the process of understanding what 'types' of films are selected is challenging. Yet, understanding of the 'types' of films selected is important for understanding the perceptions and experiences of audiences. Certainly, it would be infeasible to establish aesthetic distinctions throughout the GFF programme given its diversity and scope. However, it is possible to look at patterns of film selection based on questions of value beyond the characteristics of film texts: what makes the screening of this particular film distinctive within this particular geographic and temporal context?

Participant observation of GFF indicates that programmers do not solely consider the aesthetics and narrative when they programme films. Rather, fieldwork suggests that a major consideration is the value and distinctiveness of the film's exhibition conditions. In this respect, while I agree that a film's appearance on a festival programme is connected to its narrative, aesthetic and production values, I argue that 'exhibition value' is a dominant aspect of programming decisions (Chapter 6 will go on to discuss the relationship between 'exhibition value' and audience choice). I define exhibition value as the combined features and conditions of film/event presentation at film festivals: the film's availability within its territorial context, its prospective paratextual elements, the meanings of its exhibition venue outside of festival time, its ability to be localised, and the various rhetorical categories relatable to its exhibition ('scarcity', 'discovery', 'limitedness', 'hand-picked' and 'first-timeness').

Thus, I argue that programmers process a series of exhibition-specific questions when programming films: will it be at another festival within the UK before GFF? (If so, it cannot be screened as a première); does it have a distributor?

(if so, it will offer audiences the chance to see it before main release. If not, it will be a unique opportunity for audiences to see it); is there any way of localising the event or making its screening more impressive (can it be screened in a non-cinematic space, what paratextual content could supplement it)?; and what is the likelihood of accompanying visiting talent? Such questions sit alongside questions of aesthetic, cinematic style and narrative quality in the minds of festival programmers. Given that there are a number of non-textual conditions that drive programming decisions at GFF, marking the types of films programmed at GFF by the BFI's 'specialised content' framework - which privileges aesthetics, narrative and educational value - is not an effective means of understanding the overall programme and the audience taste patterns it implies.

Looking at each of the films that have appeared in the GFF programmes for 2011, 2012 and 2013, I have developed a film typology based on non-textual conditions - the presentation of films and the particularities of their exhibition in the GFF context. Films were classified according to specific questions concerning the film/event's exhibition extraordinariness (programming and presentation) as opposed to its particular aesthetic characteristics: Would audiences have the opportunity to experience this film/event again outside the festival in a public space? In other words, does the film have UK distribution?<sup>41</sup> I was able to answer this question by crosschecking three online database sources for UK release dates; [www.imbd.com](http://www.imbd.com), [www.launchingfilms.com](http://www.launchingfilms.com) and [www.filmdates.co.uk](http://www.filmdates.co.uk). In some instances, the question of distribution was not relevant, for example, with cross-arts events where film was not the prime format or with older content that had been distributed at time of release, but was now only available on DVD, television or cable TV. In these instances, a secondary question emerged; what makes this exhibition particularly distinct? In the end these questions allowed me to form a classificatory framework of film/events types programmed at GFF: unique to festival in its locality film (UF), returning to local cinema films (RLC), festival-ised films (FF), interactive event (IE), and live performance event (LPE) (see Figure 5.8).

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<sup>41</sup> While some films have DVD distribution - for example, *Agnosia* (Mira, 2010, Spain), which screened at GFF11 was distributed by Momentum Pictures Home Entertainment - this typology relates to public exhibition only.

I will now discuss each typology in detail, discuss the contribution of each in the overall programme at GFF and their popularity in terms of sales (see Figure 5.9)

**Table for GFF film typology**

1. Unique to festival (UF)	2. Returning to local cinema (RLC)	3. Festival-ised film (FF)	4. Interactive event (IE)	5. Live performance event (LPE)
<p>The premium value is 'Seeing It At All'</p> <p>No UK distributor</p> <p>New releases</p> <p>FL, indies, films, with 'serious' subject matter</p> <p>Will often have one screening</p> <p>Will secure a prime spot on the schedule IF it has visiting talent</p> <p>Hard-sell, popularised through festival rhetoric</p> <p><i>Examples: Chinese Takeaway, Banaz: A Love Story</i></p>	<p>The premium value is 'Seeing It First'</p> <p>Scheduled UK cinematic release</p> <p>Tent-pole films, 'specialised' but lean toward mainstream. Will likely have a well-known director or cast member/s.</p> <p>Mainly English-language but also includes FL titles (mostly French/Italian)</p> <p>Attracts cinephiles and highlight seekers</p> <p>Reserved for 'Gala' strands and peak slots in the schedule. Will usually have two screenings.</p> <p><i>Examples: Arbitrage, Stoker, Bel Ami</i></p>	<p>The premium value is 'Seeing It Again Or In A New Context'</p> <p>Already released on film or TV, or newly restored work</p> <p>Repertory films from the canon, and cult films/TV</p> <p>Taps into fan culture</p> <p>Spatio-textual programming.</p> <p>Relies on paratext.</p> <p><i>Examples: Jaws at The Tall Ship, The Passion of Joan of Arc at the Cathedral.</i></p>	<p>The premium value is 'Participating With It?'</p> <p>Audience are a crucial part of the event itinerary</p> <p>Not always a screening. Film and non-film events</p> <p>Content often taps into film education/history. Commonly genre-based events (comic and games strands)</p> <p>Often used in other media strands (comics, games)</p> <p>Element of 'game-play' (treasure hunts)</p> <p>Taps into fan culture</p> <p><i>Examples: Rab's Video Empty, Game of Thrones</i></p>	<p>The premium value is 'Seeing it Live'</p> <p>Music, theatre element with a film connection</p> <p>Rely on partnership with local spaces</p> <p>Orchestrated in relation to film</p> <p><i>Jane Birkin event, Calamity Jane Barn Dance</i></p>

Figure 5.8. Typology of five film types programmed at GFF over the research period (2011-2013). Details from the table are explored in-depth throughout the chapter.

**Programmed titles by film type (by %) over the collective research period (2011-13)**

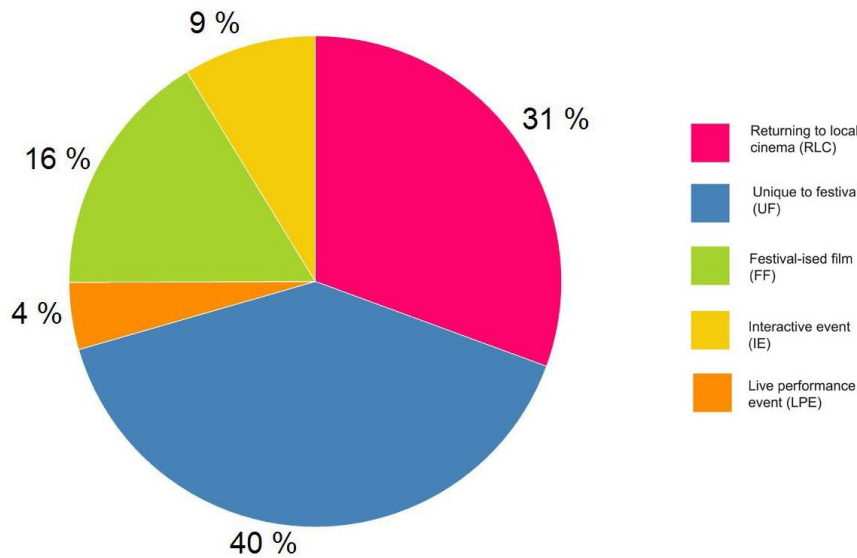


Figure 5.9. As shown, UF films are the dominant type of programmed film.

*Unique to festival in its locality film (UF)*<sup>42</sup>

The first category I propose is *unique to festival in its locality film* (UF). This category relates to films that have failed to secure a UK distributor and will not return to local cinemas following the festival. Given that GFF is not an industry event, by the time films arrive at the festival their cinematic future in the UK is usually already determined. When programming at GFF begins in October/November (5-6 months before the event), programmers are aware of the titles that have done particularly well at Cannes, Berlin, Venice, London and Toronto. Certainly at times a certain mystery surrounds potential GFF titles, for instance, if a film has not yet been ‘picked up’ by a distributor then sales agents often hold out before committing to smaller festivals or in some cases a title enters a state of limbo when protracted negotiations between distributors and sales agents take place (Interview Allan Hunter, April 2013). Nevertheless, in most cases programmers at GFF are aware of a film’s distribution status, which determines whether or not it will be accessible to the local Glasgow audience outside of

<sup>42</sup> Shortened to unique to festival films (UF).



festival time (bearing in mind very few distribution deals take place at GFF). As such, the lifespan of the film is a consideration of GFF programmers and functions as a key factor in the decision-making process. UF titles are particularly attractive to programmers because they enable programmers to offer audiences films that they will never again have the opportunity to view in a cinema. In fact, statistics show that over the research period UF titles were the most dominant type of film programmed at GFF and that this category of programming has increased alongside the overall number of films programmed at the event: UF films accounted for 36% of the programme in 2011 and increased to 43% in 2013 (see Figure 5.10). Although these figures potentially indicate a more volatile and uncertain distribution sector, they also show that GFF consistently nurtures marginal content and new talent by supporting non-distributed titles.

#### Programmed titles by film type (by %) 2011, 2012 & 2013

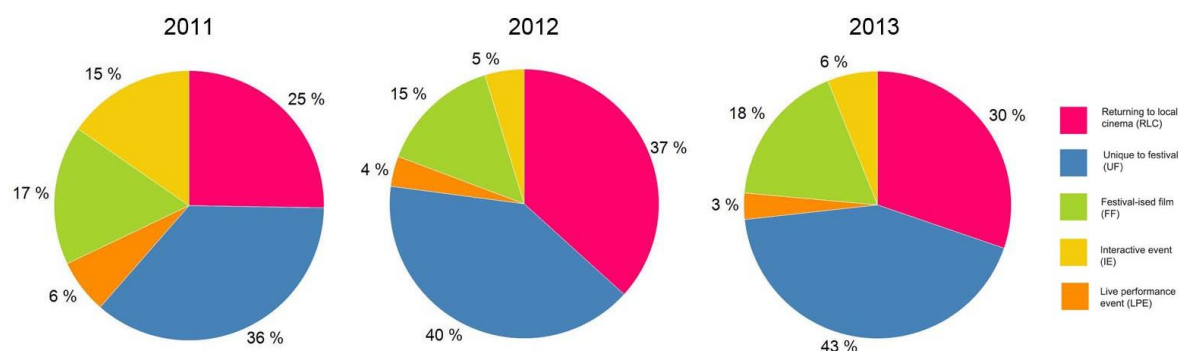


Figure 5.10. As the pie charts show, UF films were consistent as the dominant programmed film category with RLC films representing the second highest category. As shown, these categories consistently represent the majority of the GFF programme.

The UF category is a destabilised classification as the prospect of discoverability and distribution continuously looms. However, over the course of the research period only two films have secured distribution following GFF: *In the Family* (Wang, 2011, USA) and *The Artist and The Model* (Trueba, 2012, Spain), as well as a TV-series *Hellfjord* (Syversen et al, 2012, Norway) at GFF13.<sup>43</sup> Of course, it

<sup>43</sup> Information provided by Allison Gardner. There is a possibility that more films went on to secure distribution following the festival, however, to GFF's knowledge these were the only titles.

is difficult to say whether or not these titles secured distribution as a result of their exposure at GFF or if distribution discussions were already underway due to appearances at other festivals with industry marketplaces. It is also interesting that GFF practitioners had little knowledge of distribution deals made during the festival. Nevertheless, the UF film category is one that is always in flux from festival to festival. Films such *Love is All You Need* (Bier, 2012, Denmark/Sweden/Italy/France) and *Wadjda* (Al-Mansour, 2012, Saudi Arabia/Germany) screened at LFF as UF films and secured UK distribution on the back of their exposure in London. Thus, by the time they arrived at GFF they no longer fell within that category.

Moreover, classification of the UF film is geographically specific. For example, *Almanya - Welcome to Germany* (Samdereli, 2011, Germany) was one of Germany's biggest box office successes and won Best Film and Best Screenplay at Deutscher Filmpreis (German Film Awards). When the film screened at Berlin International Film Festival (BIFF) in 2011 it would not have been positioned as a UF film given its expected lifespan outside Berlinale (audiences outside of festival time would have had wide-spread access to the film) yet, in the GFF context it remained a UF film failing to secure UK distribution pre-GFF and post-GFF. It is notable that this example relates to a German production in a German context, however, films can escape the parameters of festival life outside their home nation. For example, *Chinese Take-Out* (Borensztein, 2011, Argentina) was a massive success not only in Argentina where it won fourteen Argentine Film Critics Association Awards (Argentinean equivalent to the Oscars), but it was also a huge success in a particular European territory, Italy. The film took top prizes at the International Rome Film Festival (IRFF), winning the international Jury Award for best film as well as the Audience Award for best feature film and was picked up by Archibald Enterprise Film for distribution in Italy where it was released on 23 March 2012 (see Figure 5.11). Therefore, in the Italian context, the film escaped what Julian Stringer (2003) terms 'festival limbo', however, it failed to do so in the UK where it remained a UF film. Thus, the meaning of the UF film is a contingent one, depending on contextual factors and the success of the film in particular territories.



Figure 5.11. [Left] Sebastián Borensztein on the red carpet at IRFF [image from zimbio.com] [Right] An Italian movie poster for the film, which is promoted with IRFF branding (festival logo, award and set against a backdrop of Roman iconography). Source: photobucket.com

### *Returning to local cinema films (RLC)*

While GFT relies on middle-of-the-road titles year-round, GFF also relies on titles that will have a mainstream cinematic release, which I term '*returning to local cinema films*'. These titles appear across various strands from World Cinema to Best of British, but most often appear within the Gala strand. For these films, exhibition at GFF is one point in their festival itinerary. They will likely have screened at other festivals before GFF and will move onto more afterwards before having their cinematic release. For instance, *A Hijacking* (Lindholm, 2012, Denmark), which screened at GFF13, toured numerous festivals prior to GFF including Venice, Toronto and Tokyo (to name a few) and the film then moved onto Portland following two screenings at GFF. Other examples are *Jo Nesbo's Headhunters* (Tydlum, 2011, Norway), *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* (Hallström, 2011, UK) and *The Kid with a Bike* (Dardenne, 2011, Belgium/France/Italy) all of which appeared at one or more mega festivals prior to GFF (Cannes, Toronto, Berlin, Venice, London) and appeared on cinema programmes at both GFT and CRS upon UK release in the months following the festival. Each of these titles screened at film festivals but had a guaranteed or anticipated cinematic life within the geographical context of their festival exhibition, as such, audiences had the opportunity to see these films after GFF. Sitting closely behind UF films, RLC films represent a substantial

portion of titles screened at GFF, representing around 31% of the overall programme (see Figures 5.9 and 5.10).<sup>44</sup>

In many ways, RLC films could be labeled *premières*. As they will soon be screening in multiplexes and/or art house cinemas, their value and appeal within the festival context is that they are accessible prior to general release. Janet Harbord argues that the film *première* is the ‘premium value of a film festival’ because its temporal dimension creates a sense of liveness and being in a ‘unique moment’ (2002: 68). However, the term *première* is problematic, particularly with reference to UF films. Many of the films at GFF are not only screening for the first time in the UK, they are screening for the only time. Therefore, how can something be celebrated as a first instance when there will not in fact be a second instance? However, while there is potential to describe RLC films as *première* content, yet, there seems to be a general reluctance to label them as such in the GFF brochure. Indeed, the only consistent use of *première* status is for the FrightFest strand, which is programmed externally.<sup>45</sup> In the view of GFF, *premières* are not important markers of value for audiences, as outlined by GFF Co-Director, Allan Hunter:

I'm not entirely convinced audiences are bothered one way or the other whether it is a UK *première*, European *première*, World *première* [...] They either want to see the film or they don't. A number of festivals like Edinburgh and London insist on anything they show being a UK *première* but it seems to be something that matters much more to festivals than it does to audiences.

(Interview, Allan Hunter, April 2013)

Nevertheless, all GFF press releases over the research period draw attention to the number of *premières* screening, which suggests that it is considered an essential component in attracting reviewers. It is equally important for festival preview in which *premières* are held in high regard, often noted in headlines or sub-headlines. For instance, BBC online ran with the following headline for a GFF13 preview ‘2013 Glasgow Film Festival to show 57 UK *premières*’, while the *Daily Record* noted that ‘Glasgow’s ninth annual film festival will include 368 film

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<sup>44</sup> As noted on the previous page, these figures relate to titles not screenings, and exclude short films.

<sup>45</sup> Film4 FrightFest is a London-based horror festival. An off-shoot two-day FrightFest event is held during Glasgow Film Festival each year, however the event is programmed and run independently by the original FrightFest programming team. All FrightFest films (festival films and RLC films alike) are marked as *premières* whether it is the Scottish, UK, European or world *première*.

screenings, 57 UK premières and nine world premières, most of which will be held at the city's Film Theatre', and *The Independent* highlighted that 'In total, there will be 368 film screenings, 57 UK premières and nine world premières during the 10-day event' (McLean 2013; Anon 2013; Lavelle 2013). Interestingly, despite RLC films bringing in the most revenue for the festival, there was a slight drop in the number of these films programmed at GFF13 and an increased number of UF films (see Figure 5.8 for a bar graph of film types programmed over the research period). Nevertheless, in the main the number of films with secured distribution programmed was fairly consistent over the research period suggesting that the festival is keen to sustain its more populist programming practice.

### *Festivalised films*

The third category I propose is festivalised films, which refers to titles - old and new - that are transformed through particular methods (novel screening environments, tribute retrospectives or surprise format) to become festival content. Though the pattern is somewhat inconsistent (there was a dip in festivalised films programmed in 2012), they have increased in numbers over the research period and represent just over 16% of the films programmed at GFF between 2011 and 2013 (refer to Figure 5.10).

A main form of the festivalised film is repertory content; films that have had their cinematic release and have since gained cult or classic status. These films are then re-presented as part of the festival in interesting or novel ways and are promoted as an opportunity to 're-discover' historical content in contemporary contexts. For example, screenings of *Jaws* (Spielberg, 1975, USA), *Peter Pan* (Geronimi, et al, 1954, USA), *The Maggie* (Mackendrick, 1954, UK) and *Dead Calm* (Noye, 1989, Australia) on a 19th Century docked ship on the River Clyde were all instances of festivalised films. For screenings at The Tall Ship, Glasgow Cathedral (*The Passion of Joan of Arc*, Dreyer, 1928, France), St Enoch's Subway Station (*The Warriors*, Hill, 1979, USA) and Brazilian nightclub Boteco de Brasil (Carnival with *Black Orpheus*, Camus, 1959, France/Italy/Brazil), the strategy is a connection between space and text, wherein old content is presented in spaces with which its narrative possesses some synergy (explored in more depth in Chapter 7).

The perceived taste of the GFF audience is that it is willing to experiment with cinema contexts, although as Chapter 8 discusses, allegiance to particular cinematic spaces emerges within my focus groups. Nevertheless, there is an appetite for contextual experimentation, which is reflected in GFF programming and articulated through its programme. Take for example the synopsis for the Secret Subway event: 'Are you hungry for a different kind of film experience? Feeling adventurous? Step away from the cinema [...]' (GFF, 2013b: 54). This appetite for adventure, experimentation with unorthodox venues and re-discovery of old films in new environments is legitimated by box office figures. For example, festivalised films that have some correlation with their exhibition space are often the first to sell-out. This may be partly to do with an element of exclusivity as some of these venues only have a limited number of seats (for example, The Tall Ship has a 50 seat capacity), but it is also partly to do with the pleasures of discovery, adventure and spacio-textual allegiance (being in the same setting as the story world), which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8. The broader point that can be taken from this form of festivalising content is that cinematic consumption is in a process of evolution wherein cinema-goers are becoming more inclined to experiment with unorthodox environments: they are consuming film textually, and spatially.

However, in the most part, older feature films are screened in traditional cinema spaces with new interpretative frameworks provided. An example of this type of festivalised film is the Retrospective strand, which celebrates the careers of eminent stars. A single subject, often from the Star System, is selected and over the course of the festival a repertoire of his/her work is screened alongside lengthy biographies from GFF Co-Director Allan Hunter who programmes the strand. With the exception of 2011 when the festival dedicated its retrospective to working actress Meryl Streep, the format has tended to feature a deceased star from the Golden Age of Hollywood; John Wayne (2007), Bette Davis (2008), Audrey Hepburn (2009), Cary Grant (2010), Gene Kelly (2012) and James Cagney (2013). Much like the spacio-textual festivalised films, retrospectives must possess some synergy between the text (or in this case, selection of texts) and context. This does not always go to plan. The year Meryl Streep featured as the subject of the

retrospective strand was a particularly poor year for attendance figures. In many ways this was because the choice of Meryl Streep as a retrospective subject was questionable. In 2011 she was one of the most successful working actresses in Hollywood: a screen performer 'in the moment' as opposed to a revered historical figure. During the 2011 retrospective, she had just won a Golden Globe and BAFTA for her role in *The Iron Lady* (Lloyd, 2011, UK/France) and was nominated for Best Actress in a Leading Role at the Academy Awards, her 17th nomination to date, which she went on to win on Sunday 27 February 2011 (the final day of the festival). Moreover, having observed the audience for the retrospective strand from 2011 to 2013 it is very clear that it is a mature audience, an observation substantiated by the accompanying paratextual content, which often includes some form of war narrative framed by tales of production from Classical Hollywood. Thus, a figure like Meryl Streep, whose career began in the early seventies, does not fit the profile of golden age star that retrospective audiences have come to expect.

Another rendition of the festivalised film is films screened as surprise content. Surprise screenings involve 'unknown texts' which are promoted to risk-taking audiences via mystery, discovery and suspense narratives. The concept has become popular at many festivals, first appearing in the UK as part of London Film Festival (LFF) in 1985. Programming of surprise screenings has increased over the research period. In 2011 and 2012 the programme included two surprise events: a screening for adults and a screening for children. However, in 2013 there were five events that included the surprise concept: Geek Night with Alex Salmond (Kapow!@GFF strand), GFF13 Surprise Film (Event strand), Secret Subway (Event strand), Surprise Anime Film & Cosplay Parade (joint strands; Game Cats Go Miaow! and GYFF) and Take 2: GYFF Surprise Movie! (GYFF strand).

Stringer (2003) notes in relation to LFF that the 'festival's image' becomes a key component in the use of the mystery screenings.<sup>46</sup> Certainly in looking at the festival programmes over the research period and back to its advent year in 2005, the festival itself is deliberately referred to in relation to the surprise film ('The

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<sup>46</sup> Stringer notes that for LFF the branding of the mystery film as 'film surprise' suggests that the LFF is astute in film history yet with a playful sense of humour. Nevertheless, Stringer is keen to point out that LFF attempts - through the use of French phraseology - to 'borrow some cultural capital'.

annual treat of the Surprise Film remains one of the Festival's best-kept secrets,' 'We are not about to reveal one of the festival's most precious secrets') and is often framed by narratives of 'trust' in the festival programming ('Trust us, we're Festival programmers!') (GFF, 2013b: 36). Surprise screenings are 'festivalised' via a sense of playfulness, which is rolled out in the festival brochure and through social media in the run up to screenings. For instance, at the surprise screening at the 2013 festival, audience members - who correctly suspected the film would be *Spring Breakers* (Korine, 2012, USA) - brought along inflatable beach balls, which were bounced around the auditorium in the lead-up to the announcement of the film (see Figure 5.12).



Figure 5.12. Surprise Film audience at GFF13. As they await the announcement of the film, beach balls bounce around the cinema, indicating that some people had guessed the film was *Spring Breakers* (Korine, 2012, USA). Photo: SC. Source: [www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival](http://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival)

However, over the research period GFF has always screened surprise films that, had they not been 'surprises', would have been positioned as RLC films: *13 Assassins* (Miike, 2010, Japan/UK); *Jeff Who Lives at Home* (Duplass & Duplass, 2012, USA) and *Spring Breakers* (Korine, 2012, USA). Given that each of these films had nationwide cinematic releases, it is worth considering the extent to which audiences expect a more mainstream film despite the mystery narratives surrounding surprise content ('It could be an amazing foreign-language delight that



you can help to discover. It could be a must-see blockbuster that you will catch before all your friends') (GFF, 2013b: 36). Also, this notion of 'help[ing] to discover' a 'foreign-language delight' is idealistic in many ways as it suggests that titles have yet to secure distribution and need the help of audiences establish its popularity, however, the only foreign-language film screened as a surprise text over the research period was *13 Assassins* (Miike, 2010, Japan), a Japanese/British production distributed by Artificial Eye (UK), screened at GFF three months before general UK release on 6 May 2011. As such, surprise screenings at GFF often play safe by screening English-language content. Thus, on one hand events are promoted to the audience by suggesting that the audience is risk-taking, while on the other, this audience is in fact, perceived as fairly populist by programmers.

### *Interactive events*

Interactive events are themed around film, cinema or some other art medium (video games, design etc) but their distinct characteristic is that they require audience participation. Predicated and programmed on account of their interactive nature, examples include: Cinema City Walking Tour, a guided tour of historic picture palaces throughout Glasgow; Cinema City Treasure Hunt, a smart-phone led game throughout Glasgow; *Rab's Video Game Empty*, a gaming event that enabled the audience to challenge one another on a cinema screen (see Figure 5.13). The festival brochure for the event read: 'Expect the unexpected in this unprecedented live comedy/chat/gaming show that will see members of the audience facing some challenges from some very special guests! Don't miss the party!' (GFF, 2013b: 52).

Another rendering of interactive events is the screening of fan content in the cinema. In 2013 the festival screened an episode of popular HBO series *Game of Thrones* in Cinema 1 at GFT. The event was free, however, tickets were only released the morning (10am) of the event to a queue of fans - some of whom had been waiting since 6am (Fieldwork Journal, February 2013). The event was highly interactive from the point the tickets went on sale (announced via social media) and continued into the auditorium with a rather relaxed and informal Q&A with one of the stars of the show, Glasgow-born Rory McCann. There were also numerous members of the audience in medieval fancy dress, which further exemplifies the

participatory nature of the event (see Figure 5.14). Interactive events rely heavily on fan culture, as Henry Jenkins notes: ‘the ability to transform personal reaction into social reaction, spectatorial culture into participatory culture, is one of the central characteristics of fandom (2006: 41).

Interactive events contribute 9% of the overall programme and while programming of such events has decreased over the research period (as Figure 5.10 shows), there is a suggestion that these events are growing significantly in popularity moving from around 7% median sales (2011) to 41% (2013) (see Appendix I). What this means is that in 2011 the most occurring sales percentage of interactive events was 7% of capacity, however, in 2013 they mostly sold 41% of capacity, which suggests a considerable rise in popularity.



Figure 5.13. *Rab's Video Game Empty*. The host, Robert Florence, interacts with audience members some of whom later took to the stage to take part in live video game-play. Photos: SC. Source: [www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival](http://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival)



Figure 5.14. Before the screening of ‘Blackwater’ (Season 2/Episode 9), Rory McCann who plays ‘The Hound’ in the hit HBO series *Game of Thrones* [second from left] posed with fans dressed in medieval costumes. Photo: ER. Source: [www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival](http://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival)

### *Live performance events*

The fourth category I propose is live performance events, which represents the smallest portion of the GFF programme (around 4%) (Figure 5.9). Recent years have seen a rise in the number of live cinematic events at film festivals in Scotland. For instance, Southside Film Festival in Glasgow and the Hippodrome Festival of Silent Cinema in Bo'ness have each screened various titles with live accompaniment over the research period.<sup>47</sup> In his research on theatrical streaming, Martin Barker draws attention to 'the dominant emphases of thinking about liveness within theatre and performance studies' noting that 'physical co-presence is the key component and technologies are only permissible to the extent that they do not inhibit, even might enhance, that sense of shared physical space' (Barker, 2013: 43). Thus, the live performance event is preconditioned on the physical 'presence' of a performer or performers. In this respect, the premium value of these events is their liveness/performativity and the presence of performers (actor, musician, poet, comedian).

In the context of the film festival, the performance aspect of these events must have some connection with moving image. Indeed music and film is the most common cross-art form programmed at GFF with a mini festival dedicated to film-music relations, Glasgow Music Film Festival (GMFF). For instance, *Serafina and Sam Steer: A Focus Left Special*, programmed as part of GMFF in 2013, involved a live score from harpist, Serafina Steer, alongside 'fairy-tale animations' from her filmmaker brother, an event promoted in the festival brochure as 'a magical and enthralling live experience' (GFF, 2012a: 52). Another example was a GMFF event in 2013, entitled *Souvenirs of Serge/Jane Birkin's Songs of Serge*, which involved a screening of a documentary about the life of French musician and director Serge Gainsbourg and a live musical performance by his long-term partner and muse, Jane Birkin (GFF, 2013b: 55).

Nevertheless, live theatre also features in this programming category. GFF's experimental strand dedicated to crossover between cinema, theatre and visual

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<sup>47</sup> See the following websites for more information on these festivals: <http://www.southsidefilmfestival.net/> and <http://www.falkirkcommunitytrust.org/venues/hippodrome/silent-cinema/>

art, *Crossing the Line*, often includes high-concept theatrical presentation. As example, an event entitled *85A presents: Jan Svankmajer* celebrated the experimental work of the Czech filmmaker with short film, installations and theatrical staging and acting (see Figure 5.15). For this event, the premium exhibition value was its performative exhibition which ‘[coaxes] Svankmajer’s surreal imagery off the screen into life in front of you [with] tailor-made installations, costumed performers’ (GFF 2012a: 15). Moreover, the event also departs from conventional cinematic experiences, as the brochure notes: ‘a night at the multiplex it is not!’ (see Figure 5.15).

Arguably, live performance events require a higher degree of curation given that they often have various components that make up the overall event. In fact, live performance events often include various stages of the evening and thereby include other film types. For example, the Calamity Jane Barn Dance at GFF13 involved a live band (live performance) but it also included a screening of *Calamity Jane* (Butler, 1953, USA) (festivalised film) and dance lessons, which required participation from the audience, which connects with an earlier category in this typology, interactive events (see Figure 5.16).



Figure 5.15. *85A presents: Jan Svankmajer* was held at The Glue Factory - a cross-arts exhibition space in Glasgow. Photo: SC. Source: [www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival](http://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival)



Figure 5.16. Calamity Jane Barn Dance at Glasgow's Grand Ole Opry during GFF13. The event included a screening of *Calamity Jane*, a live band, and barn dancing for audiences. Photo: SC. Source: [www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival](http://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival)

### Popularity of film types

In terms of the popularity of each film type, Figure 5.17 shows a box chart representing median values for each film category. Unlike averages, median figures highlight the overall popularity, and probable popularity, of films by indicating the middle point in sales (by %). The coloured boxes on the chart show the regular pattern of sales - for instance, most RLC films sell between 20% and 72% of available tickets. The lines emerging above and below the boxes represent the small number of films that are exceptions to the trend - for instance, there were instances where RLC films sold below 20% or above 72% but these were more irregular. While all film types had some sell-out performances (indicated by the lines above each box), RLC films had a median sales point of 41%, UF films 33%, festivalised films 26%, live performance 33% and interactive events 18%. The higher the median, the more successful the film/event type, thus, it appears that over the course of the research period RLC films were the most popular category, indicating that GFF audiences collectively favour films that will appear back in the cinemas outside of festival time. In fact, RLC films increased significantly in popularity over the research period moving from a median level of 30% in 2011 to 53% in 2013, as

did festivalised films, interactive events, and live performance events, which signals the growing popularity of the festival. UF films on the other hand increased in 2012 and then dipped slightly in 2013 (see Appendix I for individual median results for 2011, 2012 and 2013). In fact, statistics show that UF films very seldom sell over 50% of available tickets, yet account for the highest proportion of programmed titles.

### Median sales value for each film type (by sales percentage)

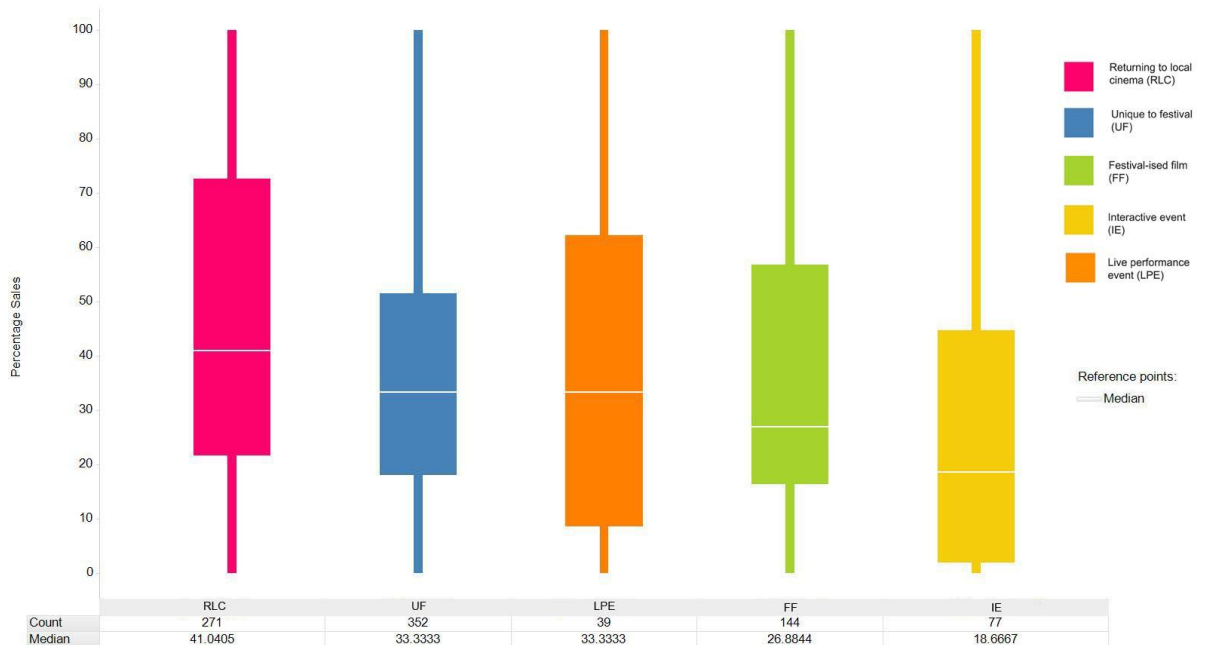


Figure 5.17. Box chart shows the number of events (count) and median attendance (by %) over the research period (2011-13). Figures take into account available sales (seating capacity) and actual tickets sold for each screening. As shown, RLC films were the most popular category (41%) with interactive events representing the least sales (18%).

### Discursive practices, relational modes

This section now moves on to look at the ways in which these various types of films are presented to audiences at GFF. In his investigation of *Shots in the Dark* film festival in Nottingham, Stringer explores the festival programmes and media coverage of the event to consider how different audiences are addressed through printed materials, noting that:



It is through means such as these that this film festival announces itself as existing for the delectation of a generalized mass audience as well as for a minority throng of genre aficionados.

(2008: 59)

Drawing on Celeste Michelle Condit, Stringer ‘takes film festivals as a kind of performative text akin to “epideictic oration”’ to argue that festival brochures - which ‘speak’ to audiences - serve a threefold purpose between festivals and their patronage: ‘understanding and definition, the offering of entertainment and display, and the creation and sharing of community’ (2008: 52). In the context of *Shots in the Dark*, he notes that genre fans and the general audience come in and out of rhetorical focus at different times and in different ways across festival catalogues and local newspaper reports (2008: 59).

In a similar vein, de Valck points out that festival audiences require ‘critical mediation’ in order to negotiate festival programmes, experimenting with, consolidating and refining their own cinephilic tastes; ‘in order for the audience to refine their tastes, they need lots of exposure and critical mediation’ (2007: 13). Festivals, thus, provide a process for refining and consolidating existing tastes while simultaneously maintaining the authority to submit ‘quality’ suggestions (2007: 213). Here de Valck and Stringer suggest that a festival’s rhetorical devices and critical mediation - used to provide understanding and promote content - can aid understanding of audience positioning (who the festival thinks it is speaking to) and its self-positioning (who it thinks it is).

Each of the five film types proposed in this chapter undergoes a process of discursive positioning in order to be presented as valuable content to potential audiences. Some films contain niche content (often UF films, interactive events and live performance content) while others have textual characteristics that appeal to a wider audience (RLC films and festivalised films), however, each film is framed using one or more relational categories, what I refer to as ‘relational modes’. This process involves linking films to categories that help position them as quality programming choices, which then creates a broader sense of cultural worthiness around the festival and its programme. Relational modes also create expectation in

audiences about the subject matter, tone and general story the film or event will convey. Using festival programmes from 2011, 2012 and 2013 as source material, I have identified three relational modes that are commonly used as markers of worth. The rhetoric used to connect GFF films to relational modes very much aligns with the knowledgeable and trustworthy voice of the film critic. Of course, in many ways the film critic and festival programmer have much in common; they also watch, assess and critique titles with audiences in mind. It is also worth noting that Allan Hunter - who writes for *Screen Daily* outside of his role at GFF - is the main author of the brochure synopses.

Relational modes do not vary according to space/venue and are coherent in their presentation of films across various venues - for instance, a film screening at CRS and GFT will have one entry in the brochure and neither venue will be privileged in the text. Where we find spatial distinction is in paratextual content (introductions to the films during the festival), which will be discussed further in Chapter 7. However, relational modes do vary depending on strand and film type. For instance, documentaries from the Stranger than Fiction strand have a particular discursive positioning in the programme, in which the documentary filmmaker's methodologies are used to promote the films highlighting what makes this particular inquiry, perspective and/or subject matter unique. I would argue that documentaries are positioned in this way because outlining the methods used in the work suggest accuracy, balance and rigour, which are crucial components of fact-based content, although not necessarily the only ones. Therefore, in the GFF brochure, the narrative accompanying documentaries does not engage with other directors, awards/festivals or films and remains focused on the virtues of the actual film. Similarly in the case of GYFF titles, these films - which can be any of the five film typologies - are presented through descriptive synopses and remain fixed within the storyworld, omitting any non-diegetic information such as revered content, awards etc. In many ways this approach is more accessible to younger audiences who may have less cultural capital, and therefore, would place less value on external factors such as awards at other festivals or relational links with auteurs. Nevertheless, all other strands follow a patterned discursive position wherein they employ a relational mode to frame GFF films as exceptional programming choices.



The following ‘relational modes’ - ordered according to popular usage - will now be discussed in turn: Other directors, revered content, and awards and other festivals.<sup>48</sup>

### *Other directors*

Narratives of discovery run throughout GFF. Whether it be festival practitioners chronicles of successful UF films that have ‘made it’ out of festival limbo or tales of having ‘discovered’, ‘championed’ and ‘nurtured’ the early works of thriving filmmakers, the discovery discourse is embedded within the GFF and GFT’s language. In an interview with former GFF Producer, Seonaid Daly, she explained how GFF championed Lena Dunham’s film *Tiny Furniture* (Dunham, 2010, USA), a UF film that screened at GFF12, and that Dunham then went on to write and direct HBO television series *Girls* (HBO, 2012, USA) (Interview with Seonaid Daly, April 2013).

However, GFF is not alone in celebrating breakthrough. Narratives of discovery are embedded in festival rhetoric. In Scotland, EIFF has long-since adopted a rhetoric of discovery in its brand identity and labeled itself ‘a festival of discovery’, while Dundee Contemporary Arts (DCA) has a youth film festival entitled ‘Discovery; International Film for Young Audiences’.<sup>49</sup> This notion of unearthing great new subjects and content is touched on by Jeffrey Ruoff who notes that ‘programmers’ identification of and support for new trends, new waves, new directors and new films provide the first cut for critics and academics who will later write about them’ (2012: 10).

Indeed, GFF’s festival brochures are filled with narratives of discovery: a chance or opportunity to discover something new, a secret film, a brilliant debut or a star-making performance. The discovery motif is often applied to debut filmmakers who are positioned as ‘ones to watch’ and ‘brilliant new talent’ on the film circuit. Their promising flair and craft, however, is promoted through relating the subject (them) and the object (their work) to established subjects (well-known

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<sup>48</sup> The industry section of GFF, Glasgow Short Film Festival (GSFF), is not included in this analysis.

<sup>49</sup> The city of Dundee frequently uses ‘Discovery’ as a brand for the city. *Discovery* was the ship that took Scott and Shackleton to the Antarctic on their landmark expedition, and is now moored in Dundee where she was built. This forms a strong narrative for the city.

directors). Of the 206 films analysed in the 2013 brochure, 65 films possessed relational links to other directors (31%), in 2012 the figure was 55 of 192 titles (29%) and 12 of 221 titles (5%) in 2011, which demonstrates an increasing use of this particular mode as a means of promoting new content and filmmakers. In browsing the list of directors used relationally in the brochures (2011-13) we can see that they all have credence as crafted filmmakers and some are regarded as auteurs, cult icons and/or GFT favourites and most of them boast nominations/accolades from either film awards (Academy Award mostly) or mega-festivals (Cannes, Venice, Berlin). As such, most of the directors mentioned, particularly those working in English-language film, are well known in the popular domain, and thus, speak to a wider spectatorship that would not require cinephilic knowledge to grasp the relational connections proposed.

In particular, Academy Award nominated directors are mostly used, for instance, Martin Scorsese, Quentin Tarantino, Roman Polanski and Michael Haneke were all used as points of reference for new filmmakers whose work was screening at GFF. Other well-known directors used were Alfred Hitchcock, Francis Ford Coppola, Woody Allen, Ken Loach, Steven Soderbergh, David Cronenberg and the Coen Brothers. Although most subjects were English-language filmmakers, some foreign-language filmmakers were used, however, they were mostly transnational auteurs whose work had achieved acclaim globally (Pedro Almodovar and Michel Haneke) or international filmmakers who had made both foreign-language and English-language films (Guillermo Del Toro and Roman Polanski). Interestingly there were only two female filmmakers mentioned, Miranda July and Johanna Hogg, which reveals a distinct gender imbalance with a leaning toward male auteurs as figures of esteem. The gender imbalance in terms of programming at GFF13 was also discussed in an article in *The Skinny*, which highlighted that the gender ratio was 170 male/29 female directors programmed at the festival that year (Wright 2013). While some festivals have attempted to counter gender disparity - in 2012 Sundance Film Festival launched the Women Filmmakers Initiative to address barriers for women in film - the majority of festivals still have a disproportionate number of female directors in their programmes. In fact, in 2013 Cannes Film Festival was also criticised for its failure to recognise female filmmakers when it

was announced that of the 21 films screening ‘in competition’ only one was directed by a woman (Sjaastad 2014). Although the constraints of this project do not allow for further investigation of the ways in which patriarchal branding and programming is at large within festival organisations it remains a significant concern and demands more scholarly attention.

The method of linking these established filmmakers with new talent is through patterned phrasing; ‘echoes of...’ ‘reminiscent of...’ or ‘influenced by...’ Take for instance, the following positioning of RLC film *Citadel* (Foy, 2012, Ireland/Scotland). Screening at GFF13, the psychological thriller is the debut feature from Irish filmmaker Ciaran Foy:

*Citadel* offers a fresh take on urban paranoia. The influence of Roman Polanski’s *Repulsion* (Polanski, 1965, USA) hangs over the tale of Tommy (Aneurin Barnard), a young man traumatised by a vicious assault on his pregnant wife by the feral hoodies who inhabit an abandoned tower block.

(GFF, 2013b: 24)

By connecting *Citadel* to *Repulsion* - a critically successful film considered a classic psychological thriller - the film is positioned as a quality item and its legitimacy on the festival programme is established through a direct link between Foy and an Academy Award winning director, Polanski. Perhaps reviews of the film influenced this connection with Polanski, however, the relational link to this auteur acts as critical mediation, whereby the authorial ‘programmer’s voice’ stamps the film with knowing approval.<sup>50</sup>

A UF film example would be *Nobody Else But You* (Hustache, France, 2012) in which a hypothetical instance is used to position the film alongside the work of the Coen Brothers. The synopsis opens with ‘If the Coen Brothers ever make a film in Europe, it might look like *Nobody Else But You*, an ingenious, wintry murder mystery set in a no man’s land between France and Switzerland’ (GFF, 2012a: 48). Another example would be UF film *The Fifth Season* (Brosens, 2012, Belgium/Netherlands/France), which is linked to contemporary and historical

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<sup>50</sup> Noel Murray published a review of *Citadel* on AV Club on 15 November 2012 in which he likens the film to *Repulsion*. See <http://www.avclub.com/articles/citadel,88758/>

auteurs: 'earning comparisons with the cinema of Michael Haneke and Andrei Tarkovsky' (GFF, 2013b: 31).

In the same way that film criticism uses relational modes to liken new content to old, the GFF programme adopts a similar approach. The authoritative tone within the brochure (the omniscient voice of the knowledgeable programmer) frames the programme and its curators as distinct arbiters of legitimacy and quality - critically mediating between audience and decision maker (de Valck, 2007: 13).

### *Revered content*

As mentioned, like most film festivals, GFF programmes what can be referred to as mainstream content; films that boast large production spend as well as a large marketing budget and are scheduled for nationwide cinematic release. However, GFF is not a commercial undertaking, it is a cultural one. As such, too much alignment with 'mainstream' may have a detrimental effect on the festival's image. This problem is in part rectified through another type of relational mode - 'revered content' - that enables the festival to distinguish itself from commercial titles. Such distinction can be seen in the discursive positioning of films in the festival programme. Take for instance, *Bel Ami* (Donnellan & Omerod, 2011, UK/Italy), which was screened as part of the Best of British strand at the GFF in 2012:

Robert Pattinson gives his best screen performance to date as notorious scoundrel Georges Duroy in this handsome adaptation of the classic Guy de Maupassant novel. There is a hint of *American Psycho's* Patrick Bateman in Pattinson's chilling portrayal of the creepy charmer.

(GFF, 2012a: 18)

British actor Robert Pattinson is best known for his performance in the popular *Twilight* franchise that has close associations with Hollywood, teen fandom and celebrity culture, which arguably sits in contrast to the image of GFF. Although directors Declan Donnellan and Nick Omerod made a personal appearance at the screening of the film, when asked if Pattinson was invited to attend the festival, Allison Gardner stated that 'he was not a GFF-type of guest', although it is questionable whether the festival would in fact fail to welcome such a big name

should he agree to attend under the right circumstances (Fieldwork Journal, August 2011). Similarly, the festival brochure is quick to distance *Bel Ami*, and indeed the festival more generally, from the Hollywood hype of the *Twilight* series by suggesting that Pattinson's performance in this film is his most credible yet ('best screen performance to date'). Moreover, it employs other 'relational categories' as markers of quality, for instance, literary adaptation ('classic Guy de Maupassant novel') and the link to Brett Easton Ellis' controversial novel, *American Psycho* and the filmic adaptation of the same title (Mary Harron, 2000, USA), which ensures that the film is positioned as mature content in contrast to *Twilight's* 'teen' status. On one hand, it connects with commercial content within the film industry, while on the other it distances itself by positioning GFF films as something 'more' cultural.

Revered content is also used to recontextualise foreign-language films that need an extra push to attract audiences (UF films) by aligning them with English-language content. For instance, *Udaan* (Motwane, 2010, India), which featured in the Beyond Bollywood strand in 2011, is described as a 'Billy Elliot-style situation in which [an] impossible dream goes against the grain of everything [a] father believes' (GFF, 2011a: 59). On the other hand, *I Saw the Devil* (J-Woon, 2010, South Korea), which screened in 2011 as part of Fright Fest is described as a 'hypnotic serial-killer thriller [...] one of the best since *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Se7en*' (GFF, 2011a: 37). While this South Korean production, which actually had a limited UK release, has little to do with these US productions, it is elevated to a place of quality and credibility through a relational link with two celebrated and well-known thriller films. However, it is not just quality that is being articulated here, familiarity is also at stake in this discursive practice and a notion of shared cultural competence that, whilst relatively narrow, is nevertheless used by the programming team as a marker of distinction.

These connections are more often than not made to high-grossing, high profile blockbuster films. Another example is *As Melhores Coisas do Mundo* (*The Best Things in the World*, Bodanzky, 2012, Brazil) - a Brazilian production featuring in the country focus strand entitled Buena Onda: New Brazilian Cinema in 2013 -

which is said to possess a ‘...welcome[d] flavour of *Gregory’s Girl*’ about it, providing a relational link to a revered piece of Scottish filmmaking (GFF, 2013b: 18). The assumption here is that GFF is trying to draw a wider audience to foreign-language films by adding relational links to well-known texts.

With the exception of *A Separation* (Farhadi, 2011, Iran), *Knife in the Water* (Polanski, 1962, Poland), *The Orphanage* (Bayona, 2007, Spain) and *Pan’s Labyrinth* (del Toro, 2007, Spain/Mexico/USA) all of the titles used as points of relation over the research period were English-language films which had a UK cinematic release and were either produced or co-produced by the UK, USA or both. This populist approach - the use of familiar films and household names - suggest that GFF is speaking to a wide spectatorship, and thereby assumes that a relatively wide appetite for film exists within the GFF patronage. Moreover, these discursive practices of content uphold the festival’s ideological position as socially inclusive and accessible to all and suggests that this ethos is deeply embedded within the event’s ‘verbal architectures’ and ‘written festival’ (Dayan 2000).

#### *Awards & other festivals*

While ‘revered content’ tends to be more mainstream, the preceding relation mode (‘other directors’) employs lesser-known subjects, for instance, international auteurs or historical filmmakers that may be known to film critics, scholars, fans and cinephiles but not to the regular cinema-goer. This incites notions of Bourdieu’s *habitus*, whereby some members of groups - in this case film festivals - possess particular knowledges, dispositions and attitudes, which enable them to be fully embodied and engaged within a particular social configuration (Grenfell, 2012: 106). In this case, those with particular filmic knowledge (foreign language directors etc) could navigate the programme more comprehensively. This presents an interesting parallel that seems to suggest that there is a perception that audiences will accept unknown subjects for director/auteur comparatives on the basis that GFF programmers have a wealth of knowledge, but when relating content to other specific films a degree of familiarity on the part of the audience is required.

The very premise of an award is to recognise notable achievement and most industries have some form of award ceremony that marks distinction in particular fields. Nevertheless while many ceremonies may only be known by and valued by those working in the respective sectors, the film industry boasts some of the most high profile industry awards in the world; none more globally prominent than the Academy Awards. However, there are many other illustrious industry awards such as the BAFTAs, Golden Globes or César Awards, as well as coveted prizes at film festivals such as the Palme d'Or (Cannes Film Festival), Golden Lion (Venice Film Festival) and the Golden Bear (Berlin International Film Festival), all of which recognise and celebrate cinematic excellence. While GFF does not currently operate its own awards (although there is a possibility that it may introduce an audience award in the future) it does employ other awards as a marker of value, which leads me to the third 'relational mode' of awards and other festivals. This is when a film screening at GFF is positioned in the programme by some link to an accolade or other festival with mega-festival status.

Of the 206 films screened in 2013, 51 were related to some other festival or an award (25%). In 2012, 63 of the 192 titles (33%) were linked, and of the 221 titles programmed in 2011, 60 titles were linked to an award or another film festival (27%). Of these instances, the Academy Awards was the most prominently used award ceremony used to present new and old titles. Take for example, the following synopses taken from the 2013 programme:

Oscar-winning director Fernando Trueba has collaborated with legendary screenwriter Jean-Claude Carrière for an exquisitely crafted reflection on life, death and art shot in sumptuous black and white.<sup>51</sup> (*The Artist and the Model*, Trueba, 2012, Spain)

Trust Oscar-winning director Barry Levinson to embrace the found-footage genre and give us the scariest spin EVER!<sup>52</sup> (*The Bay*, Levinson, 2012, USA)

Nominated for eight Oscars, including Best Picture, *Yankee Doodle Dandy* is a rousing, toe-tapping biography of Broadway legend George M Cohan with a bravura performance from James Cagney that earned

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<sup>51</sup> Unique to festival film

<sup>52</sup> Returning to local cinema film

him his only Best Actor Oscar.<sup>53</sup> (*Yankee Doodle Dandy*, Curtiz, 1942, USA)

(GFF, 2013b: 17, 18 & 62)

Each of these discursive accounts uses the Academy Awards to ascribe cultural value to the films, and thereby promote them to audiences. While *The Artist and the Model* (Trueba, 2012, Spain) and *The Bay* (Levinson, 2012, USA) use each director's award credentials as a marker of distinction, the positioning of *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (Curtiz, 1942, USA) is focused on the coveted Best Picture Academy Award. In the main, all relational links to awards focused on Best Picture, Best Director or Best Actor/Actress, which speaks to a wider audience which, unlike a cinephile spectatorship, is less likely to be interested in technical awards such as cinematography, sound or production design.

Similarly, in competition films that have been successful at Cannes have a high probability of featuring in the GFT programme because they satisfy both the cultural esteem and mass popularity of Cannes. Indeed Palme d'Or, Caméra d'Or and Jury Prize winners at Cannes over the research period have all featured on the GFT outside of the festival: *The Tree of Life* (Malick, 2011, USA), *Amour* (Haneke, 2012, France, Germany, Austria) and *Blue is the Warmest Colour* (Kechiche, 2013, France) (2011, 2012 and 2013 Palme d'Or winners); *Las Acacias* (Giorgelli, 2011, Argentina), *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (Zietlin, 2012, USA) and *Ilo Ilo* (Chen, 2013, Singapore) (2011, 2012 and 2013 Caméra d'Or winners); *Polisse* (Maïwenn, 2011, France), *The Angels' Share* (Loach, 2012, UK/France/Belgium/Italy) and *Like Father, Like Son* (Koreeda, 2013, Japan) (2011, 2012 and 2013 Jury Prize winners). In practical terms, given Cannes' annual position in May, winning titles usually appear in the GFT programme as opposed to the GFF programme because they often have their cinematic release before the festival in January/February so that they are positioned close to the Academy Awards. Nevertheless, the link to Cannes is often exploited in both the GFT and GFF brochures, which often highlight films as being Cannes hits or discoveries:

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<sup>53</sup> Festival-ised film



*The Four Times* is one of the greatest discoveries of the last Cannes Film Festival.<sup>54</sup> (*The Four Times*, Frammartino, 2010, Italy)

Another hit for Dolan at Cannes, *Heartbeats* is an amusing and tender portrayal of young people adapting to the constant shifting rules of modern love.<sup>55</sup> (*Heartbeats*, Dolan, 2010, Canada/France)

(GFF, 2011a: 33 & 36)

Again there is a suggestion that GFF speaks to a wide audience with varying taste formations, which incites notions of omnivorous taste culture. Petersen and Simkus note that the 'cultural omnivore' shifts between high, middle and popular cultural participation (Peterson and Simkus 1992). Thus, the discursive inclusion of other festivals and awards serves to stamp GFF titles with a seal of popular approval using dominant discourses around the Academy Awards, yet, on the other hand connects with Cannes to support its position as a festival which 'discovers' new content, which may appeal to more cinephilic audience formations.

## Conclusion

The chapter argues that programming practices at GFF are not solely based on the aesthetic values of films, but also on a particular set of exhibition values that make the screenings of particular films within the geographic context of GFF special in some way. In this respect, it complicates notions that film festival programmers should have a worthy curatorial vision that sees them principally present niche content, art and experimental film. However, it suggests that while programming practices at GFF are structured by less prescriptive filmic categories (art, experimental, niche), the content screened is still positioned as 'specialised' and, therefore, in some way distinct. In this respect, the festival still retains an ideological position of providing culturally worthy content. However, the typology outlined in this chapter has provided a system for understanding - in quantitative terms - what types of films are programmed at GFF beyond aesthetic markers. The five-film typology shows that GFF programmes mostly rare content (UF films, interactive content, festivalised content, live performance) - films that will not make a cinematic appearance post-festival. In this respect, there is an argument

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<sup>54</sup> Returning to local cinema film

<sup>55</sup> Returning to local cinema film

for saying that the curatorial vision at GFF is to present the ‘voices that have been excluded’ (Haslam, 2004: 51).

However, on average 31% of all films programmed over the research period had a cinematic release following the event (many of them screened in festival venues post-GFF) (see Figure 5.9). Therefore, it could be argued that the extensive programming of films that will appear in festival venues after the event is driven by audience appetite for these types of films. This chapter provides evidence for this. As median sales illustrate (see Figure 5.17 and/or Appendix I), the most successful film group - in terms of box office number of sales - are RLC films. RLC films have consistently sold more % of available tickets (capacity) over the research period. As such, GFF is both ‘filling the gap’ and ‘reproducing the gap’, and is in a constant process of finding programme equilibrium in order to cater for a wide and diverse appetite for films and filmic experiences (Haslam, 2004: 51). Like GFT, while it continues to programme middle-of-the-road titles to sustain itself, it is equally committed to the autonomy of providing marginal and rare content to its local audience. In this respect, GFF’s programming practices attempt to balance the cultural-commercial tensions that de Valck (2014) discusses. The festival must be both ‘autonomous’ in its ‘commitment to cinema’ (providing rare content and one-off experiences) and ‘heteronomous’ by facilitating industry needs (programming more mainstream titles).

Moreover, the ways in which films are discursively presented suggest that GFF continually balances its ideological position as an adventuresome, different and risk-taking festival, as well as its position as a populist, unassuming event that caters for all tastes. The ‘written festival’ discursively positions mainstream content as culturally distinct through narratives of exception (an extraordinary performance by a popular celebrity) and discursively popularises obscure content through links with mainstream culture (a debut feature director with a similar style to an eminent filmmaker). In this respect, the festival is able to speak to different types of audiences (cinephiles as well as highlight seekers) and to a collective, culturally omnivorous spectatorship with a penchant for both mainstream and non-mainstream content.

## Chapter 6: Festival Audiences, Practices, Programmes & Pleasures

As a starting point this chapter adopts the view that film festivals are ‘social constructions’ (Dayan, 2000: 43). As social constructs, they need people to function. In the context of larger exclusive events such as Cannes and Berlin, festival people constitute filmmakers, press and organisers.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, these groups have been the focus of recent scholarship. For instance, Marijke de Valck’s historical study of International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR) explores the changing roles of festival directors and programmers (2008) and her later empirical study looks at festival organisers’ positions on programming art film (2014). Skadi Loist has also given attention to festival staff by considering the position of volunteers at LGBT events (2011). On the other hand, Daniel Dayan’s Sundance account looks at various ‘festival actors’ including journalists, filmmakers, distributors and to some extent the festival audience (2000).<sup>57</sup> However, in the context of open-access audience events, the festival populace is mostly made up of the general public (what we might term the ‘festival public’), yet, this crucial division of the festival community has been largely underexplored from a critical perspective.

As noted in Chapter 2, most scholarship on festival audiences is situated within debates around cinephilia (Kim 2005; Koehler 2009; de Valck 2005; Czach 2010; Kishore 2013). In particular, Marijke de Valck’s (2005) typology of festival audiences at International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR) is useful in its approach. De Valck categorises audiences not only in terms of their taste patterns, but also with reference to cinematic practices, engagement with festival programmes, attendance modes and pleasure orientations, and argues that the sociality and ‘eventfulness’ of film festivals has bred new modes of cinephilia (2005: 103-5). Likewise, in a broader cinematic context, the former UK Film Council’s 2007 report on avid cinema-goers also considers cinema audiences not only in terms of texts but

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<sup>56</sup> The general public are unable to attend these mega-festivals.

<sup>57</sup> While Daniel Dayan offers a short account of festival audiences’ experience, the chapter is predominantly focused on the practices of industry people (distributors, filmmakers, press) (see Dayan, 2000: 51).

in terms of viewing contexts and practices. Using empirical research, the report sought to ‘build a detailed picture’ of avid cinema-goers and their experiences. Complicating perceptions of the cinema aficionado, it broke down the ‘avid cinema-goer’ category into three sub-divisions: summit avids (‘widely knowledgeable [...] often work in the film industry, or are film academics/educators or journalists’), specialist avids (‘more careful about what they see and can be dismissive of films they believe are not worthy of their attention’) and scattergun avids (‘enjoy film as one [...] component of their varied cultural diet’) (Stimulating World Research, 2007: 3, 16-8).

The UK Film Council’s report and de Valck’s typology serve as foundations for this chapter, which, drawing on focus group research and participant observation, considers festival audiences’ profiles, practices and pleasures. Instructed by the view that cinema-goers are never simply film viewers, it pays particular attention to the ‘non-media conditions and decisions’ that shape festival practice and experience (why, when and how to attend) as well as text-based decisions and choices (what to see) (Austin, 2002: 63). The chapter is structured around four phases of festival-going practice, which could plausibly be applied to other leisure practices such as cinema-going: motivation (why people choose to see films at film festivals), organisation (how they plan and decide what to attend and what non-media aspects are considered, work commitments, travel etc), selection (what films/events they choose to attend and why) and experience (what they find gratifying about screenings/events in a festival context).

### **Types of cinema-goers: avid, keen, occasional and rare**

As noted in Chapter 3, when it came to the cinematic identities of focus group participants in this study, individuals were asked to self-identify as either an avid, occasional, keen or rare cinema-goer. They also indicated what cinema they most frequently attended outside festival time and how often they attended. Of the 40 participants, 14 were avid cinema-goers, 16 were keen and 8 were occasional (see

Figures 3.4).<sup>58</sup> There were no rare cinema attendees. The most dominant attendance category was 1-2 times per month (41%), however, 50% of the sample attended the cinema once per week or more (see Figure 3.3).<sup>59</sup> In terms of cinema affiliation, 21 participants (52.5%) were regular Glasgow Film Theatre (GFT) patrons, while 14 (35%) were regular Cineworld Renfrew Street (CRS) attendees. Only two out of 21 (9.5%) GFT-goers noted that they had a loyalty card for GFT, which works on a points system (participants redeem points on purchases for free tickets).<sup>60</sup> GFT's loyalty scheme differs from Cineworld's Unlimited Card, which offers patrons who are 'mad about movies' unlimited access to screenings every month for a set price of £15.90 per month (Cineworld, 2014: online). Of the 14 CRS-goers, 10 (75%) had an Unlimited Card (UC).

Self-identification served to illustrate each participant's engagement with cinema more broadly. It also provided a sense of how invested the collective sample was in cinema outside festival time. However, the data also flagged up an immediate finding. For most participants, the film festival was a supplementary way of consuming films publically as opposed to an alternative one. They considered themselves both festival-goers and cinema-goers; one did not forgo the other. Accordingly, this raised questions about the differences and synergies between cinematic practices and pleasure and festival practices and pleasures. To what extent was the festival experience distinct from year-round cinema experiences, if at all?

### **Motivations & 'narratives of chance'**

In focus groups, each theme (motivation, organisation, selection, experience) was explored in a series of semi-structured questions (see Appendix D). One of the first questions that focus group participants were asked concerned their motivations for attending GFF - the reasons why they made time to attend the event.

For some participants, the locality and convenience of the event was a key motivator. The following participants - who identified as avid cinema-goers year

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<sup>58</sup> One participant identified as occasional but attended the cinema more than once per week. All other participants who attended this often (4 out of 40) self-identified as avids.

<sup>59</sup> Combining the 'once per week' category (25%) and the 'more than once per week' category (25%).

<sup>60</sup> Patrons earn five points per pound spent on GFT tickets. Points can be redeemed for GFT standard tickets and other special promotions.

round - articulated their motivations with reference to place, the proximity between the festival and their homes:

**Rachel:** It's on our *doorstep* for a start. You don't have to go too far.

(FG5: Rachel, Female, 42, Ward Clerk, Avid)

**Brenda:** When it's right on your *doorstep*, it would be dreadful not to.

(FG4: Brenda, Female, 40, Nurse, Avid)

There is a sense here that participants step outside of the home and into the film festival, however, Brenda's postcode indicated that she lived 5.9 miles away from the festival hub, while Rachel lived 13.4 miles away. Nevertheless, for them, the festival seemed like it was on their 'doorsteps' because they visited the city on a weekly basis to attend the cinema (CRS) - both participants were UC holders.

However, 'doorstep' responses were not only typical with the most enthusiastic cinema-goers. Indeed, other participants' accounts were characterised by place and the home, as well as the temporality of the event. Indeed, GFF's timeliness in February and its location in Glasgow were reasons to attend. For the following occasional and keen cinema-goers, both of whom noted that they were single and lived alone, GFF was something leisurely and social to do outside of the home at a rather gloomy and cold time of year:<sup>61</sup>

**Researcher:** Why do you come to GFF?

**Nancy:** Well, from a psychological point of view, it's a great *time* to have a film festival cause what else are you going to do in the evening in February in Scotland?

**Sean:** It's somewhere warm to go!

**Nancy:** I just think it's a great thing to have this *time* of year. You know Christmas is gone and it's *dull*. You know you really need something to get you outside the house, because otherwise we would be sitting at home. So it gives you the motivation to get out of the house.

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<sup>61</sup> In the focus group questionnaire, participants were not asked their relationship status, however, Nadine and Sean both volunteered this information during the session.

**Sean:** I know I said that in a jokey way, but it is actually the *place*. The low air, the *weather* is manky, have a festival with all these wonderful films on our *doorstep*, so it's excellent.<sup>62</sup>

(FG5: Nancy, Female, 60, Charity Shop Manager, Keen; Sean, Male, 63, Retired, Occasional)

For these participants the festival itself, not the films, operated as a form of escape. Indeed it was the non-media conditions (time of year, weather) that drove them to take part in this particular leisure practice. The festival presented a 'psychological' escape from a post-festivity slump following Christmas and, while there was no direct reference to seasonal affective disorder, the festival functioned as an antidote for winter blues in a 'manky' and 'dull' Scottish February.<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, GFF provided a 'physical' escape from the domestic space providing an opportunity to 'get out of the house' to take part in an event in the city space. Indeed, this notion of engaging with the city in winter was a key attraction shared by another participant who used GFF as a 'social outlet'. Living outside Glasgow, she and her friends came into the city to 'get a wee bit of buzz' in the 'winter nights':

**Louise:** I use the festival for *socialising*. My friends and I use it as another social outlet, for something to do in Glasgow. I'm very fond of Glasgow. I live outside it now so it's a nice opportunity to come into the city and get a wee bit of buzz and something different. We usually go for a pre-theatre [meal] and often go for a coffee after it and make a night of it so it feels that wee bit special - especially in the winter nights.

(FG4: Louise, Female, 56, Homemaker, Keen)

In the above accounts, GFF offered individuals an opportunity to escape the gloomy weather and in some cases the home, however, other accounts of escape were articulated, particularly with reference to the ordinariness of everyday life. For the following participant, a scientific researcher, the festival was a means of escape from his occupation:

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<sup>62</sup> Manky describes something that is dirty, grubby or bad.

<sup>63</sup> Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a form depression that is influenced by seasons. Depression is patterned according to seasons and can often be termed 'winter blues' or 'winter depression' (NHS2013).

**Ramiro:** You know I'm not really into film as part of my work or anything in my day-to-day. I really like that about Glasgow. That I come here and it's a small city and even though I work in sciences and have written in sciences, I get the *chance* to be involved with people who are doing things that are way less boring than what I do! [Group laughs]. Like this [GFF].

(FG2: Ramiro, Male, 40, Research Scientist, Keen)

For Ramiro, the festival provided escape and respite from his professional life by enabling him to join a creative setting and to connect with cultural people in Glasgow whom he considered to be interesting. There was also a suggestion here, that for immigrants - Ramiro confirmed he was from Colombia - Glasgow had an aptitude for cross-culture and cross-industry integration due to its size ('small city'). Most interesting here, however, is the use of the word 'chance'. In this sense, Ramiro suggests that the festival is a fleeting opportunity. In fact, all participants saw the festival as an event that offered them some kind of unique experience in a particular moment in time that was atypical to their normal lives. The word 'chance' emerged in all focus group sessions. With the exception of 'film', 'film festival' and 'cinema', the most commonly used word by participants was in fact 'chance,' which suggested a collective notion of GFF as a favourable and fleeting opportunity (48 usages of 'chance' across seven sessions).

The nature of what I term 'narratives of chance' varied. For some participants, chance related to opportunities to see rare content - UF films. GFF offered them the chance to see content they considered to be atypical and limited:

**Iris:** It's the *chance* to see films that are a bit different; films that aren't in the mainstream. I saw in the programme that there were some films that were also showing in some mainstream cinemas and I tend to avoid those because I'll get the *chance* to see them at some point - they'll probably come out on DVD. It's things that you'll never get the *chance* to see elsewhere.

(FG2: Iris, Female, 24, Postgraduate Student, Keen)

**Nadine:** You sometimes know you're not going to get the *chance* to see some of these films ever again, you know, and that's quite a remarkable thing - getting a *chance* to see them at the cinema.

(FG4: Nadine, Female, 43, Physiotherapist, Keen)



**Rafee:** So it's just a *chance* to see films that you wouldn't ever expect to see at the cinema.

(FG2: Rafee, Male, 32, Software Developer, Avid)

For these audience members, festival content was considered valuable - 'remarkable' as Nadine puts it - because of a perception of film festival titles as limited edition content that would not enter the popular domain through cinematic or DVD release. Thus, GFF presented a fleeting moment for Iris, Nadine and Rafee to view films that they would not otherwise have access to. As the following participant notes, this is partly to do with the organisation of festival time:

**Irene:** I think also when its just one or two showings of a film people are likely to rush there so you get a large audience because there are all these people that want to see that one film that's only showing on one occasion, it kind of feels like more of a special occasion.

(FG2: Irene, Female, 34, Postgraduate Student, Occasional)

For other participants, narratives of chance were bound up in 'first- time-ness', the opportunity to see films *before* other people. This was interesting given that GFF does not promote what films are and are not *premières* within the festival brochure. Nevertheless there seemed to be a perception, by audiences, that most films at the festival were indeed *premières*. Take for instance, the following discussion:

**Gordon:** There are new things that you might not get the *chance* to see as it might not get a general release or it might come out here *first* and not come out in the cinema for like another two or three months and I think a lot of people who are keen on seeing it *first* will go to GFF.

(FG1: Gordon, Male, 27, Filmmaker, Avid)

**Richard:** Yes, its the *chance* to see something that you might not otherwise get to see because it won't come out in the cinemas... but also that you get to see it *before other people*.

(FG1: Richard, Male, 50, Policy Advisor, Keen)

In the previous chapter, I note that the term *première* is only meaningful for RLC films because in order for a first screening to be extraordinary it must be followed by limited or mainstream release. Here, I argue that the marker of *première* is null

and void in the context of the UF film. However, during GFF12, Richard attended two UF films - one English-language feature (*David*, Fendelman & Daly, 2010, USA) and a Japanese anime film (*Children Who Chase Lost Voices from Deep Below*, Shinkai, 2011, Japan). Neither of these films had a UK cinematic release, however, he perceived them as premières ('get to see it before other people') even though this was not the *first*, but the *only* public screening in his geographic location. Richard's assumption signals a broader perception that all new films at festivals are premières when in fact this is not the case. It is also suggestive that, for some festival-goers, première status is a valuable asset even for films in which its meaning is somewhat invalid.

Another attraction was the chance to engage with film talent. While GFF does not attract many A-list celebrities, it does invite directors, cast and crew to attend film screenings, which is now taken for granted by its audience. Thus, for some participants, seeing a film with extras - usually in the form of a Q&A with cast or crew - was added value, particularly for avid cinema-goers. As the following cinema-goer - who self-identified as a 'real movie-goer' and therefore assumed a position of the *authentic* cinema aficionado - noted the festival satisfied his curiosities about filmmaking practice by allowing direct engagement with the people behind the work:

**Brodie:** You get the *chance* to interact with the film directors and the people involved in the film because if you're a *real movie-goer* sometimes you wonder 'what was that about?' and 'how did they do that?' and so you get the *chance* to ask these questions and get a response, rather than a form online.

(FG5: Brodie, Male, 30, Self-Employed, Avid)

For others it was the chance to engage with 'seen before' content in a cinematic space, to see it again in a new context. As one participant noted; 'It's nice to get the opportunity to see these ancient, ancient films on the big screen! (FG4: Nadine, Female, 43, Physiotherapist, Keen). Another participant noted how satisfying it was to have the chance to bring her 12-year-old daughter to see *Singin' in the Rain* (Donen, 1958, USA) on the big screen at GFT. Despite the fact that this participant's daughter was born some 48 years after the film's release, she was

able to experience the film in a cinema space (FG5: Rachel, Female, 42, Ward Clerk, Avid). Moreover, Rachel would not have seen the film during its release in 1958 (she is too young), so she also got the chance to experience the film in the cinema, and share the moment with her daughter.

As noted, Harbord argues that the film première is the ‘premium value’ of film festivals (2002: 68). Likewise, Jeffrey Ruoff notes that ‘a fundamental distinction for festival programming is the first-timeness of a film (2012: 4). In many ways the findings from my audience research supports these claims, with ‘getting to see films first’ emerging as an important motivation for attending GFF. However, my findings also complicate Harbord and Ruoff’s privileging of the première (2002: 68). Indeed, my audience research reveals that there are various motivational forces and values that drive festival-going, which can be broken down into five main narratives of chance. Firstly, the chance to separate from the ‘everyday’ is a key motivation for festival-goers, which chimes with Daniel Dayan’s notion that ‘going to [a] festival represents a voluntary act of separation from the everyday life’ and reiterates the festival’s position as an event or ‘special occasion’, as a participant calls it (2000: 51).<sup>64</sup> Also important is the chance to ‘see a film first’ (RLC films, premières), which chimes with Harbord’s position. The chance to ‘see a film at all’ (UF films) also emerged as a key motivation, which offers, albeit modest, counter-evidence to Liz Czach’s point that festival-goers now adopt ‘non-cinephillic dispositions’ privileging galas and première over rare content (2010: 142). Another key motivator was the chance to ‘see old films in new contexts’ (festivalised content, ‘ancient films on the big screen’). Lastly, the chance to ‘see films with added extras’ (any type of film with an extra frame of reference, Q&A with the director etc) emerged as an important feature of the film festival. This notion of added value connects with Julian Stringer’s (2003) point that ‘part of the job of a film festival is to provide observers with frames of reference for the titles being exhibited’ (2003: 136) (refer to Figure 5.8 for premium values within the film typology).

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64 FG2: Irene, Female, 34, Postgraduate Student, Occasional

In the next section I will look at how audiences organize and plan their festival visits and consider what this might say about their identity as cinema-goers and festival-goers.

### **Organisation: festival time and active audiences**

For some participants, the rise of cinema loyalty card schemes and the vast output at multiplexes had seemed to give rise to a ‘drop-in’ ‘catch a movie’ culture whereby individuals could turn up at the box office at most multiplexes at almost any time of day and a film will be about to play. As the following participant notes, this often meant that cinema-goers at CRS would move in and out of screenings:

**Mandy:** I have to say at Cineworld, although I don’t go there very often, you usually get people getting up and down. I think because they have that Unlimited Ticket they just go into something and if they don’t like it they just get up and go to something else.

(FG7: Mandy, 49, Area Sales Manager, Avid)

As her disclaimer (‘I don’t go there very often’) suggests, Mandy was a self-identified GFT-patron who refused to sign up to CRS’s loyalty scheme on the basis that she wanted to ‘support GFT’. However, her observations signal a perception of year-round cinema - in the multiplex context - as something casual and unlimited is interesting. Indeed, the festival and GFT’s avoidance of an ‘unlimited’ scheme arguably enables retention of a sense of distinction and limitedness. The unlimited model also becomes problematic because it devalues the cinematic experience, with many UC-holders referring to cinema-going as a free activity because they do not have to pay on attendance. While this was not the experience for all cinema-goers, there was an opinion that CRS-going was an off-the-cuff leisure activity and in this respect, time had become somewhat inconsequential for year-round cinema practice - there would always be something to see at the multiplex.

This presents an interesting contrast with film festival practice. At film festivals, time is a crucial factor for audiences because ‘time manufactures the event’ (Harbord, 2009: 40). As Harbord notes, film festivals ‘bind[s] films into a limited structure where the giving of our time is unquestioned’ (2009: 40). At film festivals, there is a start and end point that cannot be altered. Thus, if individuals

are not able or willing to give their time during the 11 days in which GFF takes place, they will simply miss it. As a consequence of the rigid parameters of festival time, different modes of attendance practice emerge, which are arguably more active and committed and require audience members to be dynamic and pragmatic about the ways in which they plan and organise their festival activity.

Mark Peranson notes that film festivals have the advantage over cinema because they ‘provide an opportunity for bingeing’ (2009: 24). Indeed, several seasoned festival-goers noted that they took time off from work so that they could commit wholly to the festival with several participants articulating ‘bingeing practices’ by overindulging on films at the festival. For example, one participant tied the festival in with his birthday celebrations each year:

**Rafee:** I’m lucky that it coincides with my birthday and I’ve always got holidays left to take. I get a week off work and I get to go see a tonne of films within that window of time.

(FG2: Rafee, Male, 32, Software Developer, Avid)

For others, GFF was a key event in their ‘cultural calendar’, a time in which they could focus exclusively on film viewing. One participant, a postgraduate student who admitted to having limited surplus income, noted that the festival was an indulgence that allowed her to focus specifically on the film. As an occasional year-round cinema-goer, she appreciated that the film festival’s condensed structure enabled her to get her ‘cultural hit in a big way!’:

**Irene:** I know a lot of people in Glasgow actually that take the week off because the festival is on. Yeah, I tell people; ‘Oh its February, I will be at the film festival don’t book me for anything!’ [...] I can’t really afford it this year but I really love it so I’m going to do it! It’s a definite splurge [...] I really like getting my cultural hit in a big way. I like festivals because it’s a chance to be like; ‘ok this week, I’m going to see loads of this’ and it feels condensed and then you can then leave it for a while cause I’m then out of money for a few weeks.

(FG2: Irene, Female, 34, Postgraduate Student, Occasional)

As Mark Jancovich (2011) points out in his empirical study of cinema-going, for some individuals, going to the cinema is a ritualised act that coincides with particular temporalities and key moments in their lives. For example, Jancovich discusses

patterns of family outings on the Fourth of July or trips to see *It's a Wonderful Life* during the festive period as an example of a calendarised event that shapes when people choose to consume film (2011: 92). Indeed, my research also revealed rare instances whereby cinema-going was a ritualised, calendarised activity:

**Charlie:** Well we've been coming to here [GFT] for the past few years for *It's a Wonderful Life* on Christmas Eve. We do that every year, that's part of a thing that we do. [...] It's like a personal thing for our family. It's one of my favourite films. It's actually on my dad's gravestone: 'Every time a bell rings an angel gets its wings!' When he died the bells all started ringing in the church next door. So it's a real personal thing. So every Christmas Eve, me, the Mrs., and my mother all come here to see it.

(FG3: Charlie, Male, 48, Retail Manager, Avid)

Charlie's testimony was bound up with family custom and legacy, and tied to a particular mode of 'event' cinema.<sup>65</sup> However, aside from this distinctive family tradition, he identified as an avid cinema-goer and attended the cinema 1-2 times per week. Nevertheless, Charlie found that the festival was comparable to his once-a-year experience of attending *It's a Wonderful Life* (Capra, 1946, USA). Like Rafee and Irene, GFF had become a ritualistic annual activity for him.

Of course, not all participants were quite so committed to the festival that they took time off work, however, most individuals alluded to the temporal parameters of the festival, which forced them to be strategic in their festival planning. In fact, despite the increased variety of films and numerous screenings across venues, none of the focus group participants taking part in this study just haphazardly turned up to the festival in the off chance of catching a film. Rather, general responses across all seven sessions suggest that these festival audiences are extremely strategic about their festival visits and use the festival grid (a visual layout of the schedule by date, time, strand, venue) as a key resource for pre-festival planning (see Appendix J). One participant likened this process to planning festive television viewing; 'It's like going through the Christmas/New Year edition of the *Radio Times* with a highlighter!' (FG1: Richard, Male, 50, Policy Advisor, Keen).

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<sup>65</sup> Each December GFT screens *It's a Wonderful Life* twice a day for 20 days (7-27 December). Known as the cinema's 'Christmas pantomime' by staff, the screenings are immediate sell-outs and many other cinemas in the area have attempted to emulate GFT's success with the film ((Interview, Angela Freeman, April 2013).

Some even considered the pre-event period in which they strategise and plan their festival schedule to form part of the overall festival experience. This suggests that for some GFF-goers, festival time extends beyond the opening and closing festival galas and connects with Martin Barker's notion that audiences 'gather knowledge and build expectations' before engaging in cultural activities (2006: 124):

**Olivia:** For the past few years, I've - this is going to sound really tragic - but I've actively waited for when they announced the programme because I like the whole thing of sitting down and deciding out what I want to go see. The first couple of years I went it was kind of more by chance it was just 'let's see what's on' but now it is more of an active thing. I know when it's out and I sit down and enjoy looking through it and seeing what's there and what I can go see and what I can fit in. It's quite geeky, sorting out my schedule [laughs] but I quite like that. [...] I go to the festival with my boyfriend and, this is going to sound really tragic, but we both firstly go through the programme separately and then we each make our own shortlist, then we see how they match up.

(FG1: Olivia, Female, 32, Data Assistant, Keen)

For Olivia the festival experience began prior to the event in the period in which she painstakingly planned her festival schedule, cross-referencing it with her partner's schedule. In this respect, she fits best within de Valck's audience category of the 'lone list-maker' who 'thoroughly prepares for his/her festival visit' by meticulously perusing the festival brochures. This category also represents the most dedicated and engaged type of festival-goer. Interestingly, while Olivia comes across as self-deprecating in the way she presents her strategy ('tragic' and 'geeky'), in the session there was a distinct tone that suggested that she was in fact rather proud of her intense scheduling strategy and her move from a haphazard attendee to an active festival-goer. In many ways Olivia's committed approach gave her status within the research setting as a loyal, and seasoned festival-goer. This was also apparent with another two festival-goers, husband and wife, Nancy and Nigel, who noted their growing dedication to the festival and the process of cross-referencing their schedules:

**Nigel:** I mean we're now getting quite obsessive about the film festival. For the second year running we've bought the £90 ticket deal

between the two of us.<sup>66</sup> This usually means that we see the same number of films and we go through the programme and we choose what we individually like, and it usually turns out that we like the same. But I'm retired now, so I have a lot more free time so I get 11 films and she gets 9 [Nancy, his wife].

(FG5: Nigel, Male, 62, Retired, Keen)

Across all sessions there was a general agreement that individuals had to be organised when scheduling their festival visit. Part of the reason most felt this way was due to a fear of missing out on films that were likely to sell out. Given that most films only had one or two screenings, participants felt that the likelihood of sell-outs was high, despite the fact that on average most shows only sold between 18-41% of capacity (refer to Figure 5.8). Nevertheless, several participants provided anecdotes about times in which they had missed out on a film that had sold out. In 2012 a one-off screening of *Singin' in the Rain* (Stanley Donen, Gene Kelly, 1952, USA) was programmed as part of the Gene Kelly Retrospective. An early sell-out, the film was the most successful film in the strand meaning audiences had to book the film early:

**Carolina:** I wanted to see *Singin' in the Rain* on Saturday but I obviously left it too late, so rather than going to see *Singin' in the Rain*, I got caught in the rain with my mum. [...] It was a shame because I went into GFT a week before to inquire about it but I wasn't sure if my mum was going to be in town, so I hesitated to buy the tickets. I really wish I hadn't. I arrived at the box office on the day, the foyer was packed... and of course, it was sold out!

(FG3: Carolina, Female, 31, Barista, Avid)

Indeed there was a perceived level of urgency and proactivity required during festival time, which was a key distinction between cinema-going and festival-going. Festival-goers also showed definite signs of prioritising film consumption more during festival time than they did year-round, take for example, the following conversation between two participants in session two:

**Irene:** I think you have to be quite organised. I personally have to be organised because I know things sell out. And the films are often only on once so you can't say I'll go at some point in the next two weeks,

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66 A £90 early bird pass gives festival-goers access to 20 films.



you have to make sure when you're available and that you can get a ticket!

**Ramiro:** See that's where I'm failing. I'm very disorganised and because of that I missed *Butcher Boy*.

**Irene:** Well actually that's why I miss a lot of films year-round, because I think, 'oh it's at the cinema, I'll get round to it eventually' and then it's gone. And I think just because I know it's coming, and really want to see stuff and stuff will sell out, then I go get myself organised and book everything and it's kind of a thing! And then I go see them. But the rest of the year I always miss stuff.

(FG2: Irene, Female, 34, Postgraduate Student; Ramiro, Male, 40, Research Scientist)

Other participants noted that they prioritised the festival above cinema, again on account of its limited timeframe:

**Marion:** I mean I put other things on hold if I want to go see something [...] Quite often I'll think of going to see a film at the cinema but I'll miss it because it's on all week and then the week's gone and I've not made the effort to go see it. Whereas with the film festival because it's limited you plan more and are more likely to make the effort to go see something.

(FG1: Marion, Female, 58, Retired, Keen)

Some of the stuff they [GFF] show is always going to be on very limited art-house release after the festival. So if you do miss it at the festival because you think 'damn there's a clash so I can only see this and not that' you hope that it will come back to the GFT later on. But then there's no guarantee that you'll be in town or free to go when it does come.

(FG1: Richard, Male, 50, Policy Advisor, Keen)

De Valck notes that the festival 'highlight seeker' will 'look out for the hottest hits that [come] via other festivals and find pleasure in having seen them before the the (art house) theatres' (2005: 103). Marion falls into this category having attended three RLC films at GFF12 (*Red Dog*, Stenders, 2011, Australia/USA; *All in Good Time*, Cole, 2012, UK; *Your Sister's Sister*, Lynn, 2011, USA) each of which returned to GFT and/or CRS following the festival. For her, it was not the limitedness or scarcity of festival content that made her prioritise the festival above year-round cinema but the limitedness of festival exhibition. In her case, festival

time triggered a more active mode of attendance than her year-round cinema habits, which by Marion's own admission, were rather listless.

Along similar lines, Richard's response suggests that films at the festival are given priority over year-round cinema releases. He considered limited art house release to be problematic in terms of his other life commitments which often prevent him from seeing films that he missed at the festival due to a 'clash'. Of course, films screened at festival are more fleeting than cinema screenings because most films only have one or two screenings maximum. What this suggests then, is that it is not the limited number of screenings that sets Richard's festival-going practice aside from year-round cinema-going, rather, it is his willingness to 'make time' for films in the context of GFF. On the contrary, films screened outside of the festival, even those he desired to see during GFF but could not, are not given the same priority outside of festival time ('there's no guarantee that you'll be in town or free').

Nevertheless, not all seasoned patrons were so methodical. In fact, one participant, a cinephile who noted that she attends GFT more than once a week year-round, discussed her disorganisation in the lead up to GFF12, which resulted in a hurried online Gala purchase in the early hours of the morning:

**Mandy:** I wouldn't say I was particularly organised. I'd booked the Opening Gala in the middle of the night. I woke up in the middle of the night and went and booked it because sometimes it's quite hard to get tickets.

(FG7: Mandy, Female, 49, Area Sales Manager, Avid)

Mandy then went on to note how she had haphazardly selected the rest of her GFF schedule, but then had to go back to schedule more films:

**Mandy:** Then the next day I just went online and booked ten tickets and I wasn't very systematic at all. I was really hungover and I just looked at ones that had good reviews or award-winners or directors, or personal appearances or ones that were set in foreign countries. I just kind of zapped around and sort of randomly picked ten films at times I could go. And then I got the programme and I actually booked another five once I'd a bit more time.

As a result of unsystematically planning her schedule, Mandy found that she had selected films that she would not necessarily have chosen had she dedicated more time to planning:

**Mandy:** Once I got the programme, I actually thought: ‘Do you know what? I’ve actually booked some films when I actually would have preferred to have gone to that other one, but I’ve enjoyed pretty much everything that I’ve been to see. I’ve probably gone to a couple of the Gala things, which are going to come back and I’ve maybe made a mistake in doing that.

Although there is a definite appeal for RLC films - on average they sell the most % of available tickets and given that most of the films are programmed at GFT or CRS have the highest capacity - Mandy still considered herself to have ‘made a mistake’ by booking Gala films, which again links back to Czach’s (2010) points about audiences’ non-cinephillic decisions and the rise in highlight-driven festival attendance.

In fact, several seasoned festival-goers, who were more often than not loyal GFT-patrons, tended to strategically avoid films that would later make an appearance at GFT or another local cinema. Instead they selected films that they knew were bound within festival time. Although, for audiences, it is difficult to tell which films - outside of the *Gala* strands - will have a mainstream release in the UK, some seasoned festival-goers used various methods to deduct films that might have a chance of coming back to a local cinema. For the following participant, the programme synopsis was a key resource that allowed her to prioritise certain films over others:

**Sylvia:** Yesterday afternoon there was an Argentinean film that has apparently done really well in Argentina called *Chinese Takeaway* but it clashed with a locally made film called *Electric Man*, which may or may not see the light of day on a big screen again. So I thought I’d go to the local one which I thought might not get a shot again whereas if the other one has done well in its own country it might make it to GFT anyways. So it’s a guessing game, but I do try to find a few films, which are only here because of the film festival.

(FG7: Sylvia, Female, 42, Lawyer, Keen)

Although *Chinese Takeaway* (Borensztein, 2011, Argentina) screened at GFF12 as part of the It's a Wonderful World strand, failed to secure UK distribution and would therefore fall into the UF film category, Sylvia presupposed that because the film had been a success in its home-nation it would likely attract a UK distributor. Although she acknowledged that it was 'a guessing game,' she privileged a locally-made film.

On the other hand, some seasoned festival-goers used non-GFF resources to programme their festival schedules. Wise to the programming practices of GFT, they found that they could rule out RLC films because they were due to appear in the GFT programme post-GFF. The following exchange highlights the ways in which audience members compared festival and cinema programming in order to schedule their festival activity, and also highlights an exchange whereby an avid cinema-goer provides scheduling advice to a keen cinema-goer:

**Lillian:** The trick is to also have the March GFT programme because some of them are coming back so you can exclude them.

**Nadine:** That's a really good point!

**Lillian:** It is my experience, because in the past I've tried to see everything during GFF and for the next three weeks afterwards found that there was nothing for me to see!

(FG4: Nadine, Female, 43, Physiotherapist, Keen; Lillian, Female, 73, Retired, Avid)

To illustrate Lillian's point, in the two months following GFF13 (March & April), sixteen GFF RLC films reappeared in the GFT programme, several of which were also released at CRS.<sup>67</sup> Most of the films were from the Gala strand and screened in Cinema 1 as lead titles at GFT, for instance, *Lore* (Shortland, 2012, Australia/UK/Germany) and *The Place Beyond the Pines* (Cianfrance, 2012, USA) appeared on the brochure covers for March and April respectively (see Figure 6.1).

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<sup>67</sup> *Arbitrage*, *Lore*, *The Place Beyond the Pines*, *Broken*, *I Wish*, *Shell*, *Caesar Must Die*, *In the House*, *Good Vibrations*, *Stoker*, *Neighbouring Sounds*, *Beyond Hills*, *Love is All You Need*, *Robot and Frank*, *We Are Northern Lights* and *A Late Quartet* all screened at GFT between Monday 25 February 2013 (the day after GFF13 closed) and Thursday 23 April 2013.



Figure 6.1. GFF films *Lore* and *The Place Beyond the Pines* re-programmed for GFT in March and April 2013.

The privileging of UF films also extended beyond cinematic exhibition with some participants accepting that some films would be accessible in the future for home viewing. As the following individual, who only attended one short film competition and one UF film (*Two Years at Sea, Rivers*, 2011, UK), explains:

**Leena:** I saw in the programme that there were some films that were also showing in some mainstream cinemas and I tend to avoid those because I'll get the *chance* to see them at some point - they'll probably come out on DVD. It's things that you'll never get the *chance* to see elsewhere.

(FG2: Leena, Female, 28, Postgraduate Student, Occasional)

A similar mode of privileging also occurred between UF films and festivalised films, in particular older content that had been released on DVD. Take for instance, the following response from Thomas, a self-identified Miyazaki fan, who decided to miss a festivalised film, a retrospective screening of *Princess Mononoke* (Miyazaki, 1997, Japan), in favour of a new UF film, *David* (Fendelman & Daly, 2010, USA), that would not otherwise be available on the 'big screen' following the festival;

**Thomas:** We wanted to see *Princess Mono* up on the big screen but it clashed with *David*, but I have *Princess Mononoke* on DVD so we decided to see the new film.

(FG1: Thomas, Male, 18, Undergraduate Student, Occasional)

Thus, despite the fact that only a limited number of films sell out at GFF, there was an overarching assumption that because of the temporal parameters of festival time and the popularity of the event, festival-going practice requires a heightened level of activity and preparation compared to that of year-round cinema-going. Moreover, these findings suggest that the festival experience begins way before the event itself. Indeed, the planning period is an important process - a rite of passage - that festival-goers undertook prior to the event and the planning period forms part of the overall pleasures of the event. The next section considers what choices audience make in terms of the programme, how they make those choices, and why.

### **Choice: selection, non-media conditions and taste**

Moving on from the ways in which audiences plan and organise their festival schedules, here I consider the films/events they choose to attend and the reasons they do so. Firstly, individuals' tastes varied significantly across the sample. There was no dominant taste structure, which in many ways supports GFF's 'something for everyone' approach. Indeed, participants' choices and tastes were served in some way by GFF's diverse programme, leading one audience member to describe it as 'a box of chocolate of films' (FG6: Georgia, Female, 24, Teacher, Keen). Some individuals were most interested in particular national cinemas (French, Italian, Scottish) with French emerging as one of the most mentioned. Others were interested in particular genres (anime, horror) or cultures (Shinto), while others formed taste around subject matters or languages, which often related to their personal identity or skill-set (occupation, religion, language skills). As such, patterns emerged not necessarily around specific taste formations, which were so diverse, but around the ways in which audiences made choices about what they wanted to attend based on non-filmic circumstances.

In fact, in several instances, choice of film had little connection with participants' own tastes and more to do with 'non-media conditions' (Austin 2002). In particular, friendship was a key factor in the selection process. For instance, in the following example, it was this participant's attendance arrangements - who she attended the festival with - which drove her film selection:

**Lillian:** I go with a friend who is French and deaf, so she will only go to subtitled films and it doesn't matter what ones. So we go to Japanese, European, whatever, just so she can follow. As long as it has subtitles!

(FG4: Lillian, Female, 73, Retired, Avid)

Lillian privileged European and World Cinema above English-language films, not on the basis of taste, but because subtitled films would enable her to share the festival experience with her friend. As noted, the films themselves were of little importance to her ('it doesn't matter what ones') because it was the sociality of the experience that was important to this individual. In this respect, Lillian is most closely aligned with what de Valck terms a 'social tourist' for whom the 'social element' of the festival as an outing with friends or family is central (2005: 104).

For others, taste was again put aside as choices were made around personal connections, this time, not with fellow attendees, but with cast or crew. For example, when the following participants were asked what films they chose to attend, they noted that decisions were based on friendships with film personnel:

**Peter:** For me, one of my friends directed one of the films, so it started with that. Then a few other ones I'd heard about and had followed their progress. Then I just went through the catalogue and selected more, but most things were films that I'd been invited to by friends in the industry.

(FG2: Peter, Male, 23, Filmmaker, Avid)

**Leena:** One of my friends came over from America for just three days for the festival. She had a film showing, so I went to see that.

(FG1: Leena, Female, 28, Postgraduate Student, Occasional)

These participants candidly noted their connection with filmmaking in focus group sessions, both on a personal level (friends in the industry) and their own

professional/educational affiliation (Leena noted that she was studying screenwriting early on in the session and Peter declared himself as a filmmaker at the outset). Another participant also pointed out that she chose to attend two films on the basis that she knew a member of the cast and crew, describing the festival as a ‘friends and family experience’:

**Kat:** Last Friday we had a friend who had a film in the short festival competition. I did her website so that’s one of the reasons I went along to that. And it was really, really good. [...] In fact, this year’s film festival has been a bit of a friends and family experience. My friend’s little brother was in *The Somnambulists* on Tuesday, a Richard Jobson film, so I went along to that too because he was in it.

(FG6: Kat, Female, 31, Web Designer, Occasional)

As the above extracts demonstrate, film choice can relate to the particular needs of fellow attendees (Lillian’s friend) or as a means of supporting local friends, family or colleagues within the film industry. With the latter extracts (Peter and Kat), there is suggestion that nepotism does exist within the GFF patronage. While this does not nullify the festival’s ethos of inclusivity and openness, it does suggest that - bearing in mind that both participants are professionals in the cultural sector in Glasgow and have direct connections to the film industry - there is a very local and social dimension to the festival.

In the most part, however, film choice came down to three methods: selection by nation, selection by narrative and avoidance by genre.

#### *Selection based on nation*

Film choices were often based on connections to particular national cinemas. For instance, various participants demonstrated a commitment to Scottish filmmaking and home-grown talent, as one explained: ‘If it’s a Scottish director, I’ll make an effort to go see them’ (FG1: Marion, Female, 58, Retired, Keen). Other times, the Scottish connection was less about new talent and more about celebrating or supporting famous Scots. For instance, the following participant attended *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen* (Hallström, 2011, UK) because a famous Scottish actor featured: ‘Ewan McGregor’s in it, he’s Scottish, so I went’ (FG6: Tammy, Female,



31, Graphic Designer, Occasional). For the following participant, however, his decision to support Scottish film was linked to his profession as a filmmaker working in Scotland. He connected his choices with a moral dedication to supporting new Scottish cinema, by ensuring that he helped ‘get the numbers up’ at festival screenings:

**Gordon:** I like looking at Scottish film, I’ve been to see *The Decoy Bride* and *Irvine Welsh’s Ecstasy* and I’m going to go see *Up There* as well. I’m all for Scottish film. I just want it to keep going so I’ll pretty much just go see any Scottish film to get the numbers up.

(FG1: Gordon, Male, 27, Filmmaker, Avid)

Although Gordon noted that a prime motivation was to see films that he may not otherwise get the chance to (see Gordon’s earlier extract), he attended three English-language RLC films, all of which had mainstream releases at local cinemas following the festival. Therefore, Gordon’s earlier notion of ‘seeing something different’ at GFF did not align with his actual film choices, in particular, his decision to see Scottish romantic comedy, *The Decoy Bride*, which was described by *Screen Daily* as ‘completely formulaic’ (Adams 2012). In practice, Gordon’s tastes were shaped by a dedication not to aesthetics - nuanced filmmaking styles or obscure undiscovered content - but to a particular national cinema.

Participant observation over the research period suggests that the film festival attracts some members of the immigrant population, allowing them a chance to see new content that represents their own culture and, where applicable, their own language.<sup>68</sup> For the following participant, part of the pleasure of watching *Red Dog* (Stenders, 2011, Australia/USA) was that the film was set in a mining town very similar to her hometown in Australia. Pamela later noted that her father had died recently and that she had found it difficult being so far away from home and her widowed mother. *Red Dog* allowed her to connect with home on a very personal level:

**Pamela:** I can’t obviously speak for the entire immigrant population but I’d say there is quite a few people that went to see films from

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<sup>68</sup> However, as Chapter 4 notes, current research suggests that GFF is failing to attract large numbers of audiences from the immigrant population in Scotland.

their home countries, solely to get a piece of home. It's winter, you miss family, this and that is happening, or something's going on at home, and you just want a piece of home.

(FG7: Pamela, Female, 31, Postgraduate Student, Keen)

Other participants formed allegiance with national cinemas based on aesthetics and associated specific visual or narrative traditions with particular national cinemas. For instance, the following participants had developed a fondness for 'scenic', 'light-hearted', 'lovely' entertaining films, which they associated with French and Italian cinema. Their perception was that French and Italian films were less likely to be 'violent', 'extreme' or grungy or fit within the 'horror' genre:

**Louise:** I like the Italian and French; I like the scenery, it's nice. I don't like violence, I like to be entertained, and so I don't like violent films or too extreme films.

(FG4: Louise, Female, 56, Homemaker, Keen)

**Tammy:** Throughout the year, my boyfriend will go to the cinema with his friends because he likes kind of grungy and horror films, and I don't like horror films at all. The kind of films I like tend to be quite light-hearted and nice. I like French films for that reason.

(FG6: Tammy, Female, 31, Graphic Designer, Occasional)

**Elina:** I have seen only one film in the European Film strand. It was called *Elles* at Cineworld. I quite liked it. I usually like French films because they are lovely to watch.

(FG5: Elina, Female, 19, Undergraduate Student, Occasional)

In fact, this Francophile appetite is mirrored in the privileging of French cinema in prime programming slots at GFF, alongside US and UK cinema. Opening and closing galas follow a specific format of one English-language film and one foreign-language title, and since 2010 the foreign-language film has been a French production or co-production: *Potiche* (Ozon, 2010, France) at GFF11, *Le Havre* (Kaurismäki, 2011, France/Finland/Germany) at GFF12; and *Populaire* (Roinsard, 2012, France) at GFF13.

In other instances, audiences chose particular national contexts that consolidated their own identity as a cosmopolitan person. Writing about Iranian

cinema, Bill Nichols (1994) notes that there is a balance between experiencing other cultures and nations as both familiar and mysterious:

A delicate balance between submergence in the experience of the new and the discovery of pattern confers an aura of familiarity that resonates as pleasure. This is a distinctive pleasure: it accompanies the discovery that the unknown is not entirely unknowable. As festival-goers we experience a precarious, ephemeral moment in which an imaginary coherence renders Iranian cinema no longer mysterious but still less than fully known. Like the tourist, we depart with the satisfaction of a partial knowledge, pleased that is of our own making.

(1994: 27)

As such, some festival-goers made choices based on an ‘aura of familiarity.’ For instance, some participants went to see films from countries they had visited on holiday, while others consolidated their own knowledge and skill-sets with their UF film choices. For instance, the following participants chose films based on travel experience, language skills and general notions of cosmopolitanism:

**Richard:** I mean I look out for Indian films or Turkish films, places I’ve been, and I also speak a little bit of Hindi so I naturally gravitate to that because I have an interest there.

(FG1: Richard, Male, 50, Policy Advisor, Keen)

**Lillian:** I go to any French films or Italian films, but I would anyway [...] I speak French and I go and get very irritated by the subtitles and I’m studying Italian, so I’ll be going to the Italian film festival in April.

(FG4, Lillian, Female, 73, Retired, Avid)

**Marion:** I just go to things I might particularly like. The only exceptions to that are Spanish and Latin American films, but that’s because of the language interest.

(FG1: Marion, Female, 58, Retired, Keen)

Furthermore, GFF presented a chance to identify the narrative and aesthetic trends of different national cinemas - to in some way test and consolidate their own filmic knowledge. A key source of pleasure for the following participant was identifying aesthetic traditions of different national cinemas and she referred to the festival as an opportunity for ‘cultural study’:

**Leena:** The festival is kind of a cultural study of film. I can recognise any Scandinavian film. I'm from Denmark and there's just a certain feel to it. Any film. Like there was a film by an Icelandic guy and it was all in English, but I was like: 'This is such a Scandinavian film!' And you can recognise when it's a central European film too. So it's interesting to see what kind of trends cinema goes through.

(FG2: Leena, 28, Postgraduate Student)

Each year the festival has a country focus in which the entire strand is shaped around new features from that particular country. Over the research period country focuses have been India (Beyond Bollywood in 2011), Germany (Welcome to Germany in 2012) and Brazil (Buena Onda: Brazilian Cinema in 2013). The country strand is about the opportunity to 'discover' and is presented as such via narratives of chance, opportunity and rarity in the festival brochures:

Join us for a magical journey into a world of cinema *rarely* seen on our screens.

(GFF 2011a: 12)

A snapshot of the best German films of the past year and a *chance* to savour what we have all been missing.

(GFF 2012a: 12)

*A unique opportunity* to watch some of the best new Brazilian films [...] a *rare* showcase [...] exciting new voices.

(GFF 2013b: 12)

Referring to a period in the 1970s, which saw many festivals adopt a national strand that celebrated unfamiliar cultures and different approaches to filmmaking, de Valck notes that these films 'were claimed as "discoveries" and "national cinemas"' by festival programmers (competing with other festivals on the circuit) and artistic choice could mistakenly be interpreted as 'national' by festival audiences looking for 'intimate encounters with unfamiliar cultures' (2007: 71). It is this classification and presentation of films via nation, as opposed to filmmaking merit, that Manthia Diawara (1993) notes as problematic. She argues that the fleeting platform granted by film festivals for smaller national cinemas has many benefits to the festival audience, raises questions of ghettoisation of national

cinemas in an attempt to make audiences feel cosmopolitan. With reference specific to African cinema:

‘[...] European and American festivals [...] contribute to the ghettoization of African films, since they use them only for the purpose of promoting the degree of multiculturalism sanctioned by their own citizens.’

(Diawara, 1993: 24)

Nevertheless at GFF, national cinema is not a misinterpretation on the part of the audience, it is explicitly presented that way through the strand categorisation of individual nations (Best of British, Great Scots, State of the Independents or the country focuses aforementioned) or a collection of nations (It’s a Wonderful World and Eurovisions). Indeed, for GFF audiences, nation is a device through which contemporary audiences continue to make their filmic choices.

#### *Selection based on narrative/topic*

Other participants did not form particular national preferences but instead focussed on film narratives and the general story synopses provided in the festival brochures. For instance, one participant chose to see *Red Dog* because she had read the book and had enjoyed the story, while others chose to see *Irvine Welsh’s Ecstasy* because they had enjoyed *Trainspotting* (Boyle, 1996, UK) or had read Irvine Welsh’s other novels. However, where specific films were not the focus, subject matter and narrative came to the fore as a dominant mode of selection. The brochure and film synopses were key resources when deciding what films participants wanted to see. Standing in opposition to other participants with distinct preferences for national cinemas, the following participant explained how the story and its subject matter was most important:

**Thomas:** I don’t think; ‘so if it’s from this country, I’ll take it!’ So if you’re from a country and you think in a certain way because you’re brought up to think in a certain way through the culture of that country and the media in that country, but it doesn’t matter if you’re French or Japanese, if the film is rubbish and boring, it’s rubbish and boring. Let’s just say a film is made by a Scottish person, I won’t just go to see it because it is Scottish, you know, I want the subject to be something that would matter to me.

(FG1: Thomas, Male, 18, Undergraduate Student, Occasional)

There were only a few instances where specific topics were mentioned. For Thomas and his father Richard (also in FG Session 1) religion was a prominent interest. In particular they mentioned Catholicism several times in relation to films at the festival and year-round films at GFT, which suggested an interest in the faith. For Thomas, his interest included spirituality and religious cultures more broadly, while for another participant, Patricia, it was different cultures that continually attracted her to World Cinema and the topic of social justice:

**Thomas:** I'm very interested in Shinto culture. So that's why I go to anime to engage with it that way. With *David*, it was about religious adversity and similarities, which is what I'm into.

(FG1: Thomas, Male, 18, Undergraduate Student, Occasional)

**Patricia:** I like World Cinema broadly, no particular countries. I like to get insight into lots of different cultures. I also really like things about social justice. I'm quite happy to be challenged. So perhaps I might have preconceived ideas or prejudices, I like to have those attitudes challenged, to have another way of thinking or a chance to reflect on something.

(FG4: Patricia, Female, 48, Charity Worker, Avid)

For other participants their motivation and film choice went hand-in-hand. As such, the chance to see obscure content drove the particular choices they made. Many selected films that dealt with challenging subject matter. Some focus group participants also went on to clarify what this type of atypical festival content might look like by drawing comparisons with different types of year-round cinemas. For the following individual, films at festivals were similar to art house cinema films (films at GFT in particular) only he considered the GFF programme 'dig[s] a little deeper':

**Nigel:** It's the variety. It is like the GFT. It's a similar reason to why you come to GFT. It's because there aren't just the blockbusters that you get at Cineworld. There's much more variety. The festival digs a little deeper than the average GFT programme and I think it's worthwhile to come. If GFT is just slightly off the blockbuster track then the festival goes a little bit further screening serious, well-made films that are a little off central track.

(FG5: Nigel, Male, 62, Retired, Keen)

On the other hand, the following festival-goer noted that films at the festival were ‘unique’ and ‘subversive’ and seemed to suggest that they did not have a formulaic narrative like the films at Cineworld where she would often ‘know the ending’:

**Georgia:** I come for the obscurity of the films [at GFF]. And you just get more interesting films. Like a lot of the ones you see at Cineworld, as soon as you see it you’re like ‘I know the ending’, which can get quite tedious. But I feel like often when you come to a film festival you get surprised, and it’s unique and quite subversive.

(FG6: Georgia, Female, 24, Teacher, Keen)

This notion of festival content as something that does not follow a formula was shared by several participants. For instance, the following individual - a fervent cinema-goer and Cineworld Unlimited Cardholder - also connected blockbuster films with formulaic narratives, and in addition to supporting earlier notions of blockbusters as ‘boring’ (Georgia called them ‘tedious’), she also considered them to be ‘patronising’ to spectators;

**Carolina:** What’s great about the festival is that you know you’re going to get some films that are just... cause that’s the problem with a lot of these blockbuster films, they are just so formulaic now. You know that when, in the thirtieth minute you see this character, you know exactly what’s going to happen with them and that they are going to be the real love interest or whatever. It’s subjective obviously, but that kinda bores me, when I know what’s going to happen. I mean I know that it is still storytelling but it’s a bit kind of patronising. You know at the festival, especially if you pick things at random, you might get a bit of that, but generally not.

(FG3: Carolina, Female, 31, Barista, Avid)

These responses chime with Barbara Wilinsky’s historical argument that ‘art cinema can be seen as an alternative that allowed art film-goers to distinguish themselves from “ordinary” filmgoers’ (2001: 3). Certainly for Nigel, a loyal GFT patron who attends the cinema one to two times per month, GFF films were broadly characterised by high-quality production value (‘well made’), sober tone (‘serious’), an original narrative (non-formulaic) and a distinct oppositional position

to mainstream content ('obscure' and a 'little off central track'), which again aligns with Wilinsky's notion of the art house cinema experience as one which is perceived, by its patrons, as a more 'intellectual filmgoing experience' (ibid).

#### *Avoidance based on genre*

There was a general pattern of dislike for formulaic content across all focus group sessions. Generally, there was very little allegiance with genres. In fact, in instances where genre was discussed, it was used to explain what types of films participants did not like as opposed to ones that they did, which may speak to the performative nature of taste culture within a festival setting. In particular, several participants disliked horror and action films, although two avid Fright Fest (horror) fans took part in the study and defended it vigorously. Some felt that horror films were too exposing in a public space because they triggered visible emotions of fear; 'I tend to keep horrors for the house. Your guard's too down at the pictures! I'll wait until it comes out on DVD' (FG3: Charlie, Male, 48, Retail Manager, Avid). However, others avoided the genre on the grounds of taste:

**Nadine:** I don't know if this counts but I wouldn't go to Fright Fest. I live on my own and I won't go to see scary horror films then have to go home alone! *Candy Man* traumatized me when I was younger! [Group laughs]

**Peter:** I'm the same. I avoid FrightFest but more for taste rather than fear. The movies are so bad.

(FG4: Nadine, Female, 43, Physiotherapist, Keen; Peter, Male, 23, Filmmaker, Avid)

Some participants inferred that these particular genres lacked insight and were often formulaic. The following participant explained, in relation to her avoidance of action and horror, that as she had gotten older she had become more interested in films that provide 'insight', thus, inferring that these genres failed to provide her with 'something new':

**Petya:** I tend to avoid horror. I'm so sorry [Nods to Mark, avid Fright Fest-goer. Group laughs]. And I avoid action movies too. As I'm getting older I think I'm picking from a wider range of films, so probably, I pick quite different things now. [...] I think generally I tend to pick films that can provide me with some new insight - perhaps into



a different culture or some aspect of life. So I try not to repeat the same movie or the same type of movie, rather I try to find something new.

(FG3: Petya, Female, 30, Postgraduate Student, Keen)

Nevertheless in one case, an individual joined his fellow focus group participants in distancing himself from the horror genre, only to talk himself round to the fact that one of his favourite films was in fact a horror movie:

**Rafee:** I avoid the Fright Fest stuff because it's just not my personal taste. I'm just not that into horror, although I've nothing against it. In fact some of my favourite movies are horrors, like *28 Days Later*, which I hold in high regard. Actually, come to think of it, I'm going to see a film called *The Day* on Friday, which is part of Fright Fest.

(FG2: Rafee, Male, 31, Software Developer, Avid)

This was a particularly interesting response as it suggested that this participant became entangled in discussions about dislike of the horror genre only to realise that in fact he had a fondness for the genre, or at least quality films from the genre (those he holds in 'high regard'). This instance reveals, albeit modestly, the significance of group dynamics and the ways in which festival-goers presented themselves when situated in a room with fellow film lovers, which is explored in depth in Chapter 8.

### **Experience: textual and paratextual pleasures and displeasures**

In the introduction to *Dekalog3: On Film Festivals*, Richard Porton notes that when 'all is said and done, the search for pleasure, however, fleeting or futile, is at the heart of the festival experience' (2009: 8). Engaging Porton's (2009) assertion, I now move on from choice and selection to experience. This section looks at the aspects of the festival experience that research participants found most gratifying. In many instances, they spoke of the pleasure of watching film more generally, which of course corresponds with home or cinematic viewing as well as watching films at film festivals. As noted, the sample was mostly made up of participants who considered GFT to be their year-round cinema of choice and in discussions around texts, it was these participants who demonstrated a reverence of film, and

positioned it as a sacred and immersive media form, which connects with notions of film as a catalyst for immersion. As one regular GFT and GFF-goer explained, a key pleasure of film viewing was that it allowed him to enter another world:

**Richard:** We watch films to escape, to go through another world, to go through a portal [...] I mean the release, the escape into another world [...] that complete suspension of disbelief, through the wardrobe into Narnia.

(FG1: Richard, Male, 50, Policy Advisor, Keen)

Capturing notions linked to classical spectatorship theory and the immersive level of the visual gaze, this response offers a rather whimsical account of audience relationship with text. However, this level of immersion and respect for the text emerged in several focus groups, in various ways. For some participants, film was less to do with escape and more to do with enlightenment and discovery:

**Carolina:** I find it interesting when a lot of people say; ‘oh you just go to the cinema to escape.’ Well, I go to the cinema to discover. There is an element of escapism but you know you’re in a space and you’re away from your day-to-day but I always learn something. So I don’t see it really as escaping from my own life, I see it as enriching my own life because I’m actually coming away with another feeling, or another thought, or another conclusion about something. And I say this to my friends a lot, and, sorry to get into religion or whatever but I find a lot of films are kind of modern-day parables really. There’s usually a moral of some sort.

(FG3: Carolina, Female, 31, Barista, Avid)

This offers a particular contrast to earlier discussion of the festival as a means of escaping the everyday. Rather for Carolina, film was a way of enriching her day-to-day life.

This notion of enlightenment was also articulated by other individuals who found that the festival offered them an opportunity to engage with more challenging content or taboo topics, for instance, a controversial film like *Michael* (Schleinzer, 2012, Austria), which explores the theme of pedophilia from the perpetrator’s point of view. The film was a contentious choice for GFF, leading two people to send in letters of complaint regarding its programming. In general complaints to GFT and GFF relate to problems with booking tickets online or over

the phone and do not often relate to programming decisions, therefore, this film was a particularly provocative choice. However, for the following participant *Michael*'s serious topic and unique exploration of the issue drew him to the festival:

**Sean:** The reason why I joined GFT was to find and experience other peoples' attitudes and experiences on serious, difficult issues, which you don't get on the big screen blockbusters. That's what drew me to *Michael*, because it was difficult and it went for a new approach.

(FG5: Sean, Male, 63, Retired, Occasional)

Another example of difficult content was documentary *How to Die in Oregon* (Richardson, 2011, USA), which explored the issue of assisted suicide in America:

**Tim:** I mean I saw the film *How to Die in Oregon* and it was not at all an enjoyable experience. It was gut-wrenching, real stories about real people facing death. That's not exploding robots and summer blockbusters so it was a completely different type of film experience. And even though I came out of it feeling a bit down, it was an impressive film, even though it wasn't a laugh a minute. I don't mind that at all, because it taught me about something real and has given me a perspective on something that I might not have ordinarily had.

(FG7: Tim, Male, 49, GFF Volunteer, Avid)

For Tim, what was gratifying about this particular film experience was being 'taught' something and given a new 'perspective' and it was these new perspectives and insights that '[made] the festival'. Thus, the festival, for some, was viewed as a place in which more serious issues could be addressed and discovered. There is also a suggestion here, that coming out of a 'gut-wrenching' film 'feeling a bit down' was not a displeasing ending to a screening and that this type of experience was acceptable during a film festival as long as the film was well-made.

In contrast to this, some patrons found that the festival offered an opportunity for joviality and light-hearted fun. As a BBC report during GFF13 notes, GFF 'is a festival which takes film seriously but does not take itself too seriously, which is why you will also find opportunities to dress up and dance...' (McLean 2013). For example, the appeal of the surprise film is based on mystery and discoverability of the 'unknown text'. The unidentified text and the surrounding

buzz around its revelation was a key pleasure of The Surprise Film, as this FG participant demonstrates:

**Charlie:** Then we've got the Surprise Film; I'm looking forward to that. I thought that was really good last year. I really like that idea, it's really good, you don't know what you're going to get, you know! Last year it was the Kiera Knightley, Carey Mulligan and it was filmed in Scotland. I can't remember the name of it but it was brilliant. It was maybe not one that I'd have picked to see but I really enjoyed it. It's the whole thing about how the projectionist isn't meant to know until half an hour before. It gives it a buzz. And everyone tries to guess what it is.

(FG3: Charlie, Male, 48, Retail Manager, Avid)

Irrelevant of the textual characteristics of the actual film, the event took on an element of gameplay: cat and mouse. Audiences were positioned as a curious collective that sought to uncover or discover an unfolding mystery and secret ('everyone tries to guess what it is'), which only the festival director knows. The existence of gameplay was also maintained by the direct address to any pre-event rumours, wherein programmers ostensibly quash audience guesses. This occurs through social media (Twitter and Facebook) but also in the actual programme. Take for example, the 2011 programme copy, which noted that not even WikiLeaks' Julian Assange could leak the film... 'The only way to find out is to buy a ticket. Sorry Julian!' (GFF, 2011a: 42).<sup>69</sup> Similarly, the 2012 programme contained informality and good-humour; 'Even the projectionists will not know until the night, so don't even think of appealing to their better natures [...] Surely you could offer us a clue? No we can't and please don't call me Shirley' (GFF, 2011a: 42). The inclusion of the famous line - 'Don't call me Shirley' - from *Airplane!* (Abrahams, 1980, USA) again creates a comedic and playful tone. This also speaks to a knowing audience whose film knowledge is popular, cult and eclectic. As such, it is the unknowingness and risk ('maybe not one that I'd have picked to see') that is the appeal of this version of festivalised film, so much so that the event itself is more memorable than the actual texts screened ('I can't remember the name of it, but it was brilliant').

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<sup>69</sup>WikiLeaks is an international, online, non-profit organisation, which publishes secret information, news leaks, and classified media from anonymous sources. It was founded by Julian Assange and officially launched in 2007.

Indeed, narratives surrounding films were also considered a key pleasure. Modes of paratext take the forms of programme notes, introductions from festival programmers, live special guests, question and answer sessions, panel discussions, workshops/master classes or prerecorded introductions with cast or/and crew. Julian Stringer notes that paratextual material provides audiences with a ‘frame of reference’ for the film and that this provokes interest in the film and imparts knowledge about its creation, as well as playing a vital role in promoting the festival’s own image (Stringer, 2003: 136). Certainly, at GFF, an introduction from the festival director on why she/he programmed the film that audiences are about to watch generates increased interest in, and knowledge about, the film, but also locates it within the context of GFF itself, thereby promoting the festival’s profile and programming values. For instance, during the GYFF 2011 screening of *Paul* (Mottola, 2011, USA/UK) a video introduction was used as paratext. The video featured lead actor Simon Pegg who addressed GYFF specifically and noted his delight at the film being used to open the festival. The specific mention of GYFF in the VT reinforced the festival as a credible event, which is able to attract and communicate with big names. While the recorded video was not live, it still generated a sense of liveness, creating a particularly special moment within the auditorium.

Festival practitioners’ perception of paratext as a value-adding strategy in the main was supported by audience responses regarding their festival experiences. Some referred to paratext with cast and crew as ‘DVD extras’ while another participant referred to the festival as a ‘multi-layered’ experience:

**Charlie:** It’s like getting the DVD extras with the director or someone else there, which is really good. I really enjoy that side of it, you know!

(FG3: Charlie, Male, 48, Retail Manager, Avid)

**Carolina:** It’s the experience of it and the fact that you get a sort of multi-layered experience with it. So it’s not just film watching [...] it’s the *chance* to watch films with other elements such as directors who give Q&As. It’s just a whole different experience.

(FG3: Carolina, Female, 31, Barista, Avid)

These ‘other elements’ came to the fore as intrinsic features of the festival and ranged from quirky content in the festival brochures and on social media outlets (surprise films), to in-conversation events with filmmakers to introductions by festival workers. In fact, participants often articulated pleasure with reference to more straightforward forms of paratext, which did not involve talent from the film itself - in particular, introductions from festival programmers. For example, the following participant found Allan Hunter’s introductions for films in the Retrospective strand to be hugely gratifying and engaging:

**Irene:** There’s much more of a buzz at the festival than the cinema. I mean I love that they have people introducing films. I mean its usually just someone reading off all the sponsors, but the guy that does all the intros to the older films, for instance, the Gene Kelly one this morning. He’s so knowledgeable, he’s got all these stories and he’s just lovely and I wish we could have that at all films, it’s just lovely.

(FG2: Irene, Female, 34, Postgraduate Student, Occasional)

What we find here is that the personality and status of the programmer re-emerges during the festival, which arguably reconnects with Cosmo’s heritage and the Mr Cosmo tradition of programmer as figurehead and authorial voice of cinematic programming.

Nevertheless, there were also numerous instances wherein paratext was felt to be superfluous. In the main this was related to special guests and panel discussions. In some cases it was felt that special guests or panellists diluted the experience of the film text:

**Nadine:** I went to something last year or the year before and Aidan Gillen was in it and he was absolutely monosyllabic and it just spoiled the whole buzz. [...] It was *Treacle Jnr.* [...] It was kind of like ‘what’s the point of you being here?’ It was like; ‘Get a grip! This is your audience!’

(FG4: Nadine, Female, 43, Physiotherapist, Keen)

As Nadine’s response demonstrated, dilution of the festival buzz was frowned upon even if it was a celebrity who failed to add value to the experience of the screening. There were other questions raised about the quality of paratextual

content on panel discussions, as the following participants (father and son) explained:

**Thomas:** Talking about Q&As. The ones where you have the likes of Jonathan Clements who is always very professional. He realises that the point of a Q&A is the people that you've invited along. Whereas we were at the screening of *David* recently...

**Richard:** ...Oh God!

**Thomas:** ... and there were two girls from the GYFF group and whenever you'd ask the person who had come along a question, you'd get her answer which would last about 20 seconds, then you'd get a good 3 minutes from a girl from GYFF who had no authority on the subject of what we'd just seen but she goes on and on and on and on and just wasted so much time.

**Richard:** Yes. If you're going to do a Q&A do it for the right reasons not for the sake of having a Q&A. Or for some type of democratisation reason. Do it because the speakers will add value to the viewers' experience and if they won't or you're not certain that they will, I just wouldn't go there. [...] Just don't go there, unless you've got someone like Jonathan Clements, the absolute polar opposite, somebody who knows his anime back to front, has tonnes to say but cherry-picks what he is going to say [...] because its relevant to the audience and the film. Quality over quantity, every time!

(FG1: Thomas, Male, 18, Undergraduate Student, Occasional; Richard, Male, 50, Policy Advisor, Keen)

Another focus group participant noted how he had found the paratext during *Irvine Welsh's Ecstasy* to be displeasing:

For *Irvine Welsh's Ecstasy* the Q&A was just a waste of time. People were asking stupid questions and I really wanted to know what cameras they shot on and there was no way I was going to get the chance to figure that out. It was just a rabble at the end. A particular side of the audience were whooping and cheering at a funeral scene, which I thought was a bit weird. I still actually enjoyed the movie; well I kind of enjoyed it. The audience didn't ruin it for me, but it was interesting. I think a lot of people went to see that film for the wrong reasons, but it didn't seem like it was a very good Q&A and it seemed like they were being pushed out anyway for the next screening.

(FG1: Gordon, Male, 27, Filmmaker, Avid)

Gordon is a cinephile and filmmaker and felt that the dominant themes of the film text (drug culture) and Irvine Welsh's reputation attracted the 'wrong' kind of audience to the festival. This decreased the value of paratextual content as the questions being asked were from a non-serious, non-cinephile audience, which hindered his opportunity to ask a serious production question. As such, paratextual content is considered to be an added value when it is programmed discerningly. Moments of ineffectual paratextual programming highlight how discriminating and discerning the festival audience is, and the ways in which they reject particular programming practices. Moreover, it also illustrates the ways in which audiences position themselves as discerning. Gordon clearly felt that he was the normal 'cinephile' audience member and that this particular film - which was explored drug culture - had attracted the 'wrong' kind of audience to the festival. This notion of being part of the 'right kind of audience' is explored further in Chapter 8.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has considered the profiles, practices and pleasures of audiences at GFF, exploring their motivations for attending the event, the ways in which they make choices about what to attend, and dominant accounts of pleasure and displeasure emerging from focus groups sessions. In the course of the chapter various overarching points have come to light.

Firstly, the festival audience with which this research project has engaged is motivated by various modes of chance and opportunity granted under the temporal parameters of the film festival. Audiences situate their motivations within varying narratives of chance, which reinforce the status of film festivals as unique events and fleeting experiences (Dayan 2000; Harbord; 2002). In one sense, individuals use the festival as a leisure activity that offers a mode of escapism from everyday - not escape in a textual capacity (escape into the story world) but in an embodied capacity (escape into the festival world) that allows them to separate from their daily routines and engage in an activity within the city with fellow lovers of film. Also, the social value of the festival comes to light in audience accounts. For many, the sociality of the festival was a key motivation and pleasure - being able to share



the experience with friends and collaboratively selecting what films to see and when.

On the other hand, a prime motivation is the festival programmes itself and the vast array of film choices on offer. The programme offers individuals the chance to access exclusive content: non-mainstream which is deemed valuable on account of its limitedness (UF films which will never be screened in a cinema in their area again); first-timeness (première films which give audiences), the chance to see films before anyone else, their rediscovery or recontextualisation (the chance to see classic or cult films in a cinematic or novel context), or their extra value (the chance to see films with added material and frames of reference such as introductions or Q&As with directors). Thus, what we find here is that the dual characteristics of GFF - the notion of exclusive content in an inclusive environment - is decoded fittingly by audience members who consider most films at GFF, with the exception of the Gala strand, to be an exclusive handpicked selection of limited editions, but ones that are accessible to all. A tension, however, emerges when looking at the films that sell most tickets - RLC films that will make an appearance back in local cinemas post-festival. This in many ways corroborates de Valck's notion that new modes of cinephilia exist within the festival setting (2005: 103-5). This also indicates that to some extent discursive positioning of personal taste, by participants, was at odds with practice. That is to say that there was a tendency to articulate choices based on alternative content, yet in practice, some participants selected RLC films.

In terms of organisation and planning, the festival audience is an active audience. For research participants, the festival begins when the programme is announced, which is often around three weeks before the event begins. For many, festival-going is distinguished from cinema-going in its requirement for strategy and careful planning. Here we see de Valck's 'lone list-maker' come to light as audience schedule, cross-check and privilege films (2005: 103-5). In this respect, the festival triggers an alternative mode of attendance wherein spectators think actively and in advance about the choices they make and base those decisions around opportunities to either explore new tastes or consolidate existing taste formations.

With reference to orientations of pleasure, the opinion that the festival was a heightened cinematic experience with multiple layers of meaning was widely shared by the group. Paratextual content came to the fore when groups were asked about the pleasures and displeasures of the festival-going experience. In many cases, paratext offered an extra layer of meaning to the event placing a sense of liveness on the experience. Yet, festival audiences were also highly discriminating about what makes a positive paratextual experience, which offers some input to film festival programming where there may be an assumption that any paratext is effective. My findings, however, suggest that this is quite the contrary.

For all participants, a common ground was that they all experienced the festival as a particularly special moment in time that was atypical to their year-round cinema-going practice and experience, which for most meant regularly attending standard cinematic screenings once per week or more. In contrast, the festival was a one-off chance to experience films differently.

This proceeding chapter now moves from a textual and paratextual focus to discuss the spatial characteristics of GFF.

## Chapter 7: Defining, Programming and Transforming Festival Space

This chapter joins a small but important body of work on contemporary cinema-going that moves away from preoccupation with visual gaze and immersion to consider the significance of space and place in public film exhibition and consumption (Boyle 2010; Hubbard 2001; Hollinshead 2011; Evans 2011a, 2011b). Moreover, it joins a small pool of scholarship that looks at spatial structures at film festivals (Dayan 2000; Harbord 2002, 2009; Stringer 2003). Thus, in a similar vein to these scholars, this chapter moves beyond examination of *what* films are programmed and *why* (questions explored in Chapter 5) to reflect on *where* and *how* films are presented. The chapter is supported by Harbord's claim that space and place are crucial components of film festival culture and that 'when attempting to think of a film festival, its meaning is inseparable from its particular location' (2009: 40). Thus, the chapter serves to better understand the significance of space at Glasgow Film Festival where it has become a key component in programming practice and where increasing numbers and diversity of festival venues have become distinctive features of the event, as well as a marker of its success and expansion.

Consideration of festival space extends across two chapters and is split into exhibition (Chapter 7) and reception (Chapter 8). This chapter explores GFF's spatial characteristics, its location in Glasgow and the venues it plays out, while the next chapter moves on to look at the ways in which audiences experience different spaces during festival time. Drawing on interviews with festival practitioners and participant observation of the festival, this chapter serves to better understand the current meanings and concepts of 'festival space'. To do so, it considers the ways in which festival practitioners not only programme texts but curate events according to spatial considerations such as the technical capabilities of each site, relationships between space and films, and inherited spatial hierarchies (the privileging of certain sites for particular events). Moreover, it questions the ways in which spaces - that perform other functions year-round - become festival spaces.

To address this, I explore the various modes of spatial transformation that venues undergo - both inside and outside the auditorium - to be reconfigured as sites of festivity. Thus, shedding light on the ways in which film festival spectacle and allure is produced within the many environments in which the events play out, it contributes to broader debates about film culture by looking at the physical materialisation of this particular exhibition and consumption mode.

### **Defining ‘festival space’**

Harbord has suggested that film culture is ‘institutionally and spatially located’ and that ‘the context of exhibition contributes to the social value of film cultures’ (2002: 39). She notes that the three principle ‘types’ of cinematic space used for public film exhibition and consumption are the art house cinema, the multiplex and the art gallery, which very much chimes with GFF’s spatial structure at inception (Harbord, 2002: 39). As Chapter 4 notes, GFF began life as a multi-venue event involving three very different institutionally and spatially located exhibition spaces, each one home to very different film cultures: an independent cinema and former art house (GFT), a multiplex (UGC/Cineworld), and a cross-arts venue (CCA). In the initial proposal for the festival, CEO of Glasgow Film Jaki MacDougall suggests that the event presented an opportunity to harness the different film cultures ingrained in these venues (mainstream cinema, independent/world cinema and art/experimental film) and encourage cross-pollination during festival time (GFF 2004b).

It is often necessary for film festivals to spill out to more venues or even move to larger sites because of exponential growth. As de Valck points out, International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR) began renting the Pathé Multiplex in 1997 because its core venues - performance art spaces and old cinema/theatres - were literally bursting at the seams (2007: 188). However, in contrast to the IFFR narrative, GFF began life as a spatially diverse institution and despite its links with art film culture - through its hub venue GFT - it functioned in harmony with the postmodern multiplex from the outset. Indeed GFT and UGC (now CRS) would ‘work together to create a vibrant area dedicated to film watching’ (GFT, 2004a: 1).

Nevertheless, despite a dissimilar spatial history, GFF and IFFR have much in common in terms of cultivating diverse film cultures.

As de Valck observes in relation to IFFR, the partnering of festivals with multiplexes 'reveals itself as a hopeful metaphor for the event that nurtures cinephilia in its multiple forms' (de Valck, 2005: 108). For IFFR the move to the multiplex saw the image of 'people gather[ed] in run-down establishments with character to catch one special screening' be replaced with 'state-of-the-art cinemas' showing 'more than 800 screenings in 12 days' (de Valck, 2005: 107). Certainly GFF's conception chimes with this notion of diverse cinephilia in its attempt to bring together multiplex-goers, art house patrons and those with a liking for experimental art film, and to nurture a new diverse and inclusive mode of festival-going practice. As such, I argue that the choice to reach out to all cinema lovers in different cinema spaces demonstrates an embedded ethos of cinematic democracy at GFF.

Nevertheless, such a democratic approach to spatiality meant that from the outset the notion of what constituted 'festival space' at GFF was problematic. Festival space was a nebulous term that meant UGC, GFT and CCA, multiplex, art house and art centre alike. Likewise, the all-encompassing approach to spatial programming included an inclusive and diverse strategy that saw mainstream films sit side-by-side with low-budget foreign-language titles and experimental works. Definition of festival space was further complicated as the event progressed and expanded. As the event grew in terms of attendances figures and the number and variety of films screened, it began to expand its venue list, giving it a distinctly cross-site citywide character. At GFF, anywhere could feasibly become a festival space. Now, each year festival programmers vigorously increase the number of festival spaces - referred to as 'venue partners' by the organisation - in the programme. In part this is done to accommodate more titles but it also enables the festival to expand its reach throughout the city, create collaborations with venue partners and include curated, novel events. Moreover, space offers festival programmers a new level of creativity and enables them to take on a more

curatorial role that moves beyond the booking and scheduling of films into a programme.

In fact the spatial assortment at GFF has become one of its unique selling points and an indicator of its success. Over the years the festival has begun to use the rising number of venues as an indicator of achievement to both press and its funders. For instance, the number of venues - and the expanse across the city - is outlined in the Economic Impact Assessment Report (the 'EKOS report') each year, which is submitted to one of GFF's core funders, Creative Scotland. The EKOS reports shows that, with the exception of a small dip in 2011, the festival has continued to grow its venue numbers with a significant increase occurring between 2012 and 2013 (see Figure 7.1).

#### Number of GFF venues 2005-13

Year	Number of venues
2005	3
2006	6
2007	6
2008	6
2009	11
2010	17
2011	15
2012	18
2013	26

Figure 7.1. The number of venues increased each year, with the exception of 2011.

As shown, the number of festival spaces reached its peak in 2013 when the event took place across 26 venues throughout the city centre and outer city areas. While most of the venues were located north of the River Clyde in the city centre, and East and West Ends, screenings/events also took place in the Southside of the city (The Glad Café and Pollockshaws Burgh Hall) and stretched seven miles outside Glasgow to West Dunbartonshire (Clydebank College and the Empire Cinema, not shown on map) (see Figure 7.2). Events took place in cafes, office spaces, a subway station, cinemas, old theatres, universities and so forth. The diversity of 'types' of

spaces ranged from municipal buildings to private hospitality spaces, which meant that festival spaces became mobilized spilling out into non-exhibition sites. For instance, during GFF12 Dance Glasgow performed a *Singin' in the Rain* flash-mob at Glasgow Airport to celebrate the Gene Kelly Retrospective strand (GFF 2012d).<sup>70</sup> An attempt to let visitors to the city know about the festival, this performance took place in a space where no films were to be screened. The following year, Glasgow-based Samba band, Samba Ya Bamba, conducted a pop-up drumming event at Glasgow Airport to celebrate Buena Onda: New Brazilian Cinema strand on the day the festival opened (GFF 2013f). A few days later, following a screening of *Black Orpheus* (Marcel Camus, 1959, Brazil/France/Italy) at CCA, the band also led the audience out into a busy main street in the city (Sauchiehall Street) and onto a Samba Bus which transported them to the after party at a Brazilian restaurant. During GFF13 the inclusion of mobile space was again used with the inclusion of a Cinema City Treasure Hunt and Walking Tour that took audiences outside exhibition spaces into the city to explore Glasgow's rich cinema history on foot. What these examples suggest is that festival space can be mobilised and disconnected from film exhibition entirely: film culture can be created, and located, in non-cinematic spaces. Also interesting is the connection to transportation sites such as city streets, an airport, subway station, train station, bus and a ship (albeit a berthed one), which acts as a metaphor for the mobility of the festival as it travels around the city.<sup>71</sup>

In considering the kind of venues that GFF programmes and partners with, I have devised a preliminary typology for venues used, and reconfigured, as festival spaces: Cinema Space, Hospitality Space, Municipal Space, Learning Space, Art Space and Historic Space (see Figure 7.3). In her work on film festivals, Cindy Wong (2011) has noted that festivals often create a 'a filmic public sphere' by using familiar places around the city - she names museums, galleries, arts centres and universities amongst others - for screenings, panels and events (2011: 13). Indeed, through its use of different types of spaces throughout the city GFF constructs an

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<sup>70</sup> Dance Glasgow is a dance company based in Glasgow's West End. For more information see, [www.danceglasgow.com](http://www.danceglasgow.com)

<sup>71</sup> While no events took place in a train station, one of the festival venues, The Arches is strongly connected to Central Station. Indeed the venue is embedded within the infrastructure of the train station and the arches that support the station are visible from inside the auditorium where a regular rumble indicates that a train is overhead.

ephemeral city-festival space, or as Wong terms it a ‘filmic public sphere’, that sprawls across the city’s many cultural, commercial and municipal spaces.

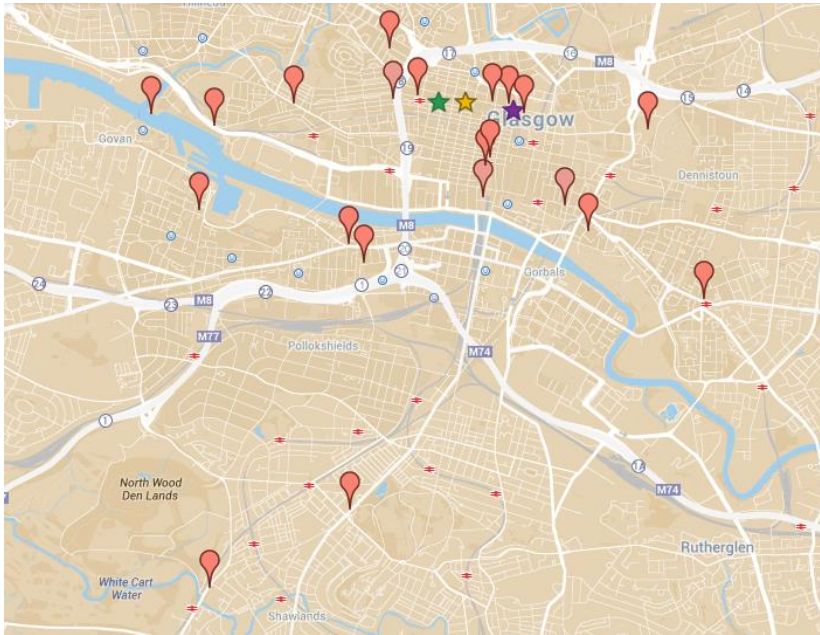


Figure 7.2. Map shows the spread of festival venues during GFF13. Stars represent GFF’s three core venues - CCA in green, CRS in purple and the ‘hub’ venue GFT in yellow - while pink icons represent all other venues (excluding two venues in West Dunbartonshire, which are not shown on map). Source: Google Maps.

### GFF Venue Typology

Spatial Category	Venues
Cinema Space	Glasgow Film Theatre, Cineworld, Empire Cinema
Hospitality Space	Grand Central Hotel, LA Group, The Glad Café, The Flying Duck, The Berkley Suite, Boteco de Brasil
Mobile Space	Cinema City Treasure Hunt, Cinema City Walking Tour, St Enoch’s Subway Station, Glasgow Airport
Municipal Space	Glasgow Cathedral, St Andrews in the Square, Pollockshaws Burgh Hall
Learning Space	Clydebank College, The Royal Conservatoire, The Art School Union, BFI Mediatheque, The Albany Learning Centre
Art Space	Centre for Contemporary Arts, GMAC, Veneer Gallery, Film City, SWG3, The Old Hairdressers, Old Fruitmarket, The Arches
Historic Space	The Tall Ship, Grand Ole Opry

Figure 7.3. A preliminary classification of ‘festival space’ using venue partners at GFF13.



Funded in part by Glasgow City Marketing Bureau, GFF forms part of a wider and ongoing strategy that seeks to strengthen and develop Glasgow's image as a cultural location. Indeed, art and culture have been crucial in refashioning the city's image since the 1980s. For almost four decades, cultural events have aided the transformation of the city from its former image as a grimy, decayed and impoverished location to a 'vibrant, post-industrial, fashionable city' (Mooney, 2004: 329). The city has also undergone numerous branding campaigns that attempted to rejuvenate its profile. For instance, the 1983 'Glasgow Miles Better' campaign aimed to reinvigorate Glasgow's image following deindustrialisation and attract inward investment (Alderson, 2009: online). However, the city's 1990 reign as European City of Culture (ECOC) is arguably one the most significant periods in the city's re-imaging. Although Glasgow's role as ECOC has been criticized for failing to resolve many of the city's social problems (Mooney and Danson 1997; Spring, 1990), Beatriz García's longitudinal study of the event suggests that ECOC 1990 has had a lasting cultural legacy for the city (García, 2005: 841). Accompanied with the slogan 'there's a lot Glasgowing on', Glasgow ECOC involved 700 cultural organisations and around 3,500 events and was critical in transforming the city into a cultural space and promoting cultural tourism (Myerscough 1991). Since ECOC, the city has undergone other culture-led rebranding initiatives including the 2004 'Glasgow: Scotland with Style' campaign which promoted Glasgow as a 'vibrant, dynamic and world-class city in which to live, work, study, invest and visit' (Brown, Gaudin & Moran, 2013: 242). As such, GFF exists within a narrative of culture-led regeneration of Glasgow's local and international image as a cultural space.

This notion of international and local image is particularly relevant in a film festival context. Indeed many film festivals walk a very fine line between internationalism and localism in terms of festival image. For GFF, up until 2012 the festival very much embraced its localism, and the image of Glasgow was intrinsic to the festival's identity. For instance, from 2005 to 2012 the festival brochures featured iconography of spaces and places in and around the city (see Appendix K for images of the brochure since 2005). The 2011 programme featured an aerial image of Glasgow with coloured graphics representing some of the festival spaces of that year - Cineworld Renfrew Street (CRS) in teal, Glasgow Film Theatre (GFT) in

yellow, Glasgow School of Art (GSA) in pink, O2 Academy in blue, Centre for Contemporary Arts (CCA) in orange, and The Arches in purple (see Figure 7.4). In 2012 the cover included an illustrated cityscape with featured iconic landmarks in Glasgow including The Clyde Auditorium, Clyde Arc, Glasgow Tower and The Tron Church (see Figure 7.4). Interestingly none of the landmarks in the 2012 programme were festival spaces, however, the city as a historical and contemporary space was considered significant to the festival's identity by the marketing team (Fieldwork Journal, August 2013).



Figure 7.4. Programme covers for GFF11 [left] and GFF12 [right]. Source: GFF marketing department.

However, the branding of the 2013 festival saw a move away from the city-space to more abstract imagery (see Figure 7.5). While the accompanying trailer still focused on mobility and movement through space, the tagline encouraged audiences to ‘see the world differently,’ which seemed to indicate an attempt to be less spatially specific, less localized, less Glasgow-specific (GFF 2013h). Time will tell if the conception of festival space as city-space will hold up for the festival as it continues on its journey of expansion and whether or not its localised character will dissipate in an attempt to wholly internationalise the event.

Nevertheless, this current framing of festival space as a city-wide amorphous space challenges the notion that film cultures are inherently attached to specific spaces and illustrate the ways in which film festivals can harness different film cultures - mobilising art film audiences into the multiplex, multiplex audiences into the art gallery and film audiences into churches, subway stations, museums and so forth - through their utilization of the metropolis as its collective festival space.



Figure 7.5. The brochure cover for GFF13. The trailer for 2013 can be accessed at <http://youtu.be/f3q6KqhefL8>. Source: GFF marketing department.

### Spatial programming

In his work on film festival operations Alex Fischer notes that programming texts is ‘only a single aspect of the larger and infinitely complex system of exhibition’ (Fischer, 2009: 154). Alongside print acquisition, film scheduling, writing reviews and coordinating media events, Fischer notes that ‘securing appropriate venues’ is a key component of the system of exhibition (ibid). Relating this to GFF, I argue that programmers think in both textual and spatial terms and that venue consideration ranges from the practical to the preferential, which connects with

Harbord's claim that 'the film festival is a particular manifestation of the way that space is produced as practice (as opposed to inert materiality)' (2002: 60-61). One of the core considerations is the technical capability of each space. Films arrive at GFF in multiple formats: HDCAM, Blue Ray, Digital Betacam, 35mm print, 70mm print, and - most commonly - DVD and Digital Cinema Package (DCP). In many cases the format informs the location in which the film is screened. For instance, the only space that has the technological capability to screen 35mm prints is GFT as CRS and other cinematic spaces have converted wholly to digital projection. This then impacts on the types of films that GFT is able to show, given that the space is reserved for 35mm titles, which are often festivalised films, in particular, retrospectives. On the other hand, CCA does not have digital projection to cinematic standard and therefore it is not allocated any of the DCP prints, which tend to be RLC films (galas, premières, foreign-language film with confirmed UK distribution) and UF films (foreign language titles with scheduled UK distribution). Other spaces do not have cinematic technology at all, which has led to concerns over some venues' ability to provide 'cinema standard exhibition' (Fieldwork Journal, March 2013). As a result, it was suggested during a debrief meeting following GFF13 that programmers should become more discerning about what partnership venues they accept on the programme in the future (ibid).

The bulk of films are screened at either CRS or GFT because they operate year-round as cinemas, and, therefore, have the technology for high quality screening. However, technological changes have altered the original spatial programming strategy at GFF. In the early days of the festival, films were dedicated to festival venues according to the year-round programmes of each cinema. During the festival's advent year in 2005, for example, UGC screened all English-language Gala films such as *It's all gone Pete Tong* (Dowse, 2005, UK/Canada) and *Criminal* (Jacobs, 2004, USA), retrospective US hits such as *Titanic* (Cameron, 1997, USA) and *Schindler's List* (Spielberg, 1993, USA) and was also home to the opening and closing Galas, *Melinda and Melinda* (Allen, 2005, USA) and *The Life Aquatic* (Wes Anderson, 2004, USA).<sup>72</sup> On the other hand, GFT screened American independent

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<sup>72</sup> While the *The Life Aquatic* is an American independent film it was framed as a gala film at the festival and was not included in the strand dedicated to American independent filmmaking.

titles such as *Down to the Bone* (Granik, 2004, USA), *The Yes Men* (Ollman et al, 2003, USA) and *Palindromes* (Solondz, 2004, USA), titles for the Canadian country focus, and the majority of the new foreign-language European and World cinema titles. Therefore, despite the aim of the Cinezone project to shake up ghettoized film cultures in Glasgow, conventional spatial programming ensured that content and space existed in harmony very much as it did outside of festival time. In this respect, seekers of foreign-language and independent remained in GFT during the festival, while blockbuster seekers remained in the multiplex. However, with changes in technology, foreign-language titles (European film in particular) now often arrive at GFF in digital format and are programmed at CRS while 35mm prints (often art film or World Cinema) are programmed at GFT. Thus, what we find is that while art film and World Cinema remain within the independent exhibition space, other films that may conventionally suit GFT as a screening venue - in particular, films from the European Cinema strand - end up at CRS because of the technological specification of the film format.

In addition to technological programming, GFF festival directors also programme spaces in terms of preference and the inherited spatial hierarchy of the festival's business structure, which in some ways counters an earlier argument for GFF as a spatially democratic institution. GFT is unquestionably a priority venue for GFF and screens the majority of the high profile, spectacular red-carpet events and premières with visiting talent. This is partly because the venue can be more materialised as a festival space (as will be discussed later in this chapter) but also because it is the festival's 'hub' and becomes wholly focused on the event during festival time (its cinema programme ceases during the festival). This means that festival programmers have full control of the building and face no gate keeping from external agents. Given that most festival practitioners work at GFT year-round, it is also home to the key resources that organisers need for the day-to-day running of a festival such as office space, press room, tea and coffee, VIP bar, printing facilities as well as immediate access to all GFF materials and data. GFT also has its own projection team who manually control the screen technologies, microphones and lighting so it is in full control of the presentation of non-film events. For instance, each year the festival hosts one or two 'in conversation'

career showcases wherein a particularly well-known talent, often Scottish, is invited along for a discussion-based event which includes a Q&A with the festival director alongside clips from the guest's body of work (see Figure 7.6) These events tend to be programmed at GFT, or sometimes CCA, because CRS has automatic projection meaning that there is no manual control of the auditoria lighting and sound, which is required for spoken events.



Figure 7.6. GFF Co-Director Allan Hunter conducts a Q&A with Scottish actor James Cosmo in Cinema 2 at GFT during GFF13. Photo: SC. Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival/8484328194/>

Nevertheless, in spite of the limitations on how much CRS can be transformed into a festival site for paratextual events, it remains a secondary venue screening slightly less films than GFT. This is in part because the screening times begin at midday at CRS with the last screening taking place at 9.15pm. By comparison, screenings commence at GFT at 10.30am and are programmed as late as 11.30pm. However, it is important to note that over the research period CRS has increased its number of screenings moving from 27% of all films/event in 2011 to 38% of films/event in 2013 and is becoming more critical to the festival's expansion each year.<sup>73</sup> As such, GFT has seen a slight dip in its proportion of films; in 2011 the venue covered 47% of all films/events rising to 50% in 2012, however, in 2013 that

<sup>73</sup>These figures are based on the number of ticketed screenings on The Patron Age (excluding short film), which differ from the published figures GFF releases for the festival. According to The Patron Age there were 293 films/events in 2011, 275 in 2012 and 314 in 2013. In 2012 34% of films/events were screened at CRS (figure again excludes short film).

figure dropped to 43% as CRS's inventory increased and more festival spaces joined the programme.

In terms of the types of films allocated to each space, CRS has a fairly even split between RLC films and UF films. In 2013 45% of titles screened at CRS were RLC films and 45% were UF films.<sup>74</sup> As such, the venue shows many films that will never be screened in a local cinema again. While the space was used for the retrospective strand in 2011 for the Meryl Streep showcase, it has since decreased the number of festival-ised films shown and hosts no interactive events or live performance events - the space functions mostly as a venue for new titles. Over the research period CRS has mainly been used for the European Cinema, Wonderful World and the Stranger than Fiction strands, which is interesting given that foreign-language and non-fiction titles are relatively scarce on the cinema's year-round programme. The allocation of Gala films has been relatively inconsistent over the research period. In 2011 more Galas appeared at GFT (8 of 11 titles) while in 2012 GFT hosted only 4 of 16 Gala titles with the remaining 12 appearing at CRS. In 2013 the picture changed once more with 14 of 23 Gala titles screening at GFT, and the remaining nine films screened at CRS.<sup>75</sup> Interestingly, none of the Gala titles screened at the multiplex that year had any visiting talent and I would argue that had there been confirmed special guests, the films would have appeared at GFT. For instance, had GFT favourite Derek Cianfrance attended the festival for the screening of *The Place Beyond the Pines*, the event would most certainly have taken priority on GFT's inventory.

What we therefore find is that Gala films and premières will often screen twice during the festival; once as a special event with visiting talent and again as a straightforward screening. The established format seems to be that special events will take place at GFT usually on an evening as part of a 'première' event and then again at CRS as a basic screening (often the following day in an afternoon screening). With high profile Gala films such as *Lore* (Shortland, 2012, Australia/UK/Germany) and *Stoker* (Chan-Wook, 2013, USA/UK) screenings of the

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<sup>74</sup> In 2013 the remaining 10% were festival-ised films.

<sup>75</sup> *The Place Beyond the Pines* (Derek Cianfrance, 2012, USA), *A Late Quartet* (Yaron Zilberman, 2012, USA) and *The Look of Love* (Michael Winterbottom, 2013, UK/USA) amongst others.

films, alongside special guests, first took place at GFT on an evening at the weekend; *Lore* screened on a Friday night while *Stoker* screened on a Saturday night. Both films then played again at CRS the following day in the late afternoon/early evening. Indeed while *Stoker* was premièring at GFT on Saturday 16 February 2013, over at CRS the second, non-première, screening of *Lore* took place with no visiting talent.<sup>76</sup> Thus, in many ways it seems that GFT is a right of passage for high profile films and that the venue is reserved for those prime-time slots - evening, weekends. Therefore, while GFF encompasses a democratic approach toward different cinema cultures, the logistical requirements of the space alongside an embedded heritage at GFT, means that spatial hierarchies do emerge on the front line. However, to what extent is this the case with other venues?

As the festival co-director was keen to point out during an interview, non-cinema venues offer quality and value in other ways (Interview, Allison Gardner, August 2012). For instance, while CCA only has the capability to screen home-viewing formats (DVD, Blue-Ray etc) it is a valuable venue for short film and art film. This is because year-round CCA is an art space known for nurturing experimental work and, therefore, encapsulates the relaxed open-minded environment that serves this particular type of content, as well as an established patronage whom enjoys creative, high concept art. Thus, an experimental environment is the perfect place to screen experimental content, as the space complements the text. This particular mode of curation I term spatio-textual programming, wherein the programmer matches spaces with texts according to the aesthetic characteristics of content and environments. This makes for a more creative mode of programming that moves beyond designation based on the technological specifications of site.

Gardner maintains that 'audience love to see films in unique settings' (STV, 2013: online). Thus, a more blatant example of spatio-textual programming is the screening of *The Maggie* (1954) at The Tall Ship, a maritime museum on the River Clyde (see Figures 7.7 and 7.8). The sell-out performance was so successful that the following year The Tall Ship was used for a screening of *Jaws* (1975), *Dead Calm*

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<sup>76</sup> *Lore* director Cate Shortland attended the screening at GFT on Friday 15 February 2013 at GFT.



(1989) and *Peter Pan* (1953). Indeed in these instances, the space was the principal stimulus for programmers and a film with a maritime theme was sourced to complement the space, rather than the other way around. While the screening of *The Maggie* involved a heated cargo hold filled with chairs and a DVD screened on a 16mm projector - making the technical standard no better than home-viewing - it was the coalition of space and text that was a key factor in programming this event. Indeed it was the fact that the 'aesthetics of site create[ed] a homology with the content of the film' that was a core attraction for the programming team, and, given its sell-out status, for audiences too (Harbord, 2002: 67).



Figure 7.7. The room set-up for the screening of *Jaws* in the hull of The Tall Ship. Photo: DMH. Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival/8498518328/>



Figure 7.8. Projectionist at The Tall Ship. Photo: IM. Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival/6934008989/>

There are three main modes of spatial programming: technical, spatio-textual, and spatial hierarchy wherein notable films are programmed at particular venues at prime time slots. Festival programmers, unlike cinema programmers, have a wealth of spaces at their disposal and creative licence to explore the extra experiential layer that spaces can provide when programmed appropriately. However, programmers must not only connect multiple films with multiple spaces, they must also ensure that the festival's brand and identity is visible and coherent across sites. Next I move on to consider the ways in which festival venues - which year-round are cinemas, museums, arts centres, places of worship and so on - are transformed into festival spaces.

### **Festivalising spaces**

De Valck notes that the importance of 'experience' in contemporary culture is one explanation for the boom in film festivals, noting that 'it is not simply the artwork itself [film], but more specifically its spectacular exhibition that has become a commodified product in the cultural economy' (2007: 19). In this respect, festival-goers not only decide to see a specific film, but also to see a film as part of a particular experiential context (film festival) and in specific spatial context (festival venue). As argued in Chapter 6, what they seek is an experience that is something different from a regular cinematic outing. Thus, a valid question might consider how the 'festival experience' is actually created? Chapter 5 has addressed this in relation to the ways in which programming choices form a unique festival experience by offering audiences different types of content (UF films, festivalised films, RLC films and interactive/live content). This section now moves beyond textual distinction to consider spatial distinction, entering the many spaces in which GFF plays out.

#### *Outside the auditorium*

A key part of the methodological approach used in this project is participant observation of the event during GFF11, GFF12 and GFF13. It was during participant observation time - walking around the various venues, watching films and generally frequenting the spaces as a 'festival-goer' - that I was able to digest the various

transformations that venues undergo during the festival. Having also conducted ongoing participant observation at GFT year round, and as a regular CRS-goer and CCA-attendee in an informal capacity, I was able to get a sense of the comparative atmosphere inside and outside of festival time. My observations suggest that most venues used for the festival over the research period undergo some level of 'festivalisation,' however, that the degree to which they are transformed differs significantly.

Beginning with GFT, the first marker of distinction between festival and non-festival time was the presence of the festival brand throughout the entire cinema space. During the festival the GFT programme ceases and is replaced with the festival programme. GFT front of house staff shed their uniforms in favour of GFF t-shirts, behind-the-scenes staff (programmers and marketers) emerge from their offices and are found mixing with audiences in the cinema, foyer posters are replaced with GFF film posters and a GFF programme grid, which is updated daily with sell-out notifications, cancellation or changes. Indeed GFT is colonized by all things GFF just before the festival begins and throughout the eleven days it takes place. In terms of programming, the GFT programme ceases when the main festival begins and resumes the day after it closes. GFT staff offices (situated around the corner from GFT on Renfrew Street) are transformed from quiet subdued workplaces into a bustling space filled with resident journalists and digital staff.

The most apparent material transformation at GFT occurs on opening and closing nights when the venue becomes a site of spectacular exhibition using well-known markers of eventfulness and glamour. A red carpet runs from Rose Street into the GFT building, a small cordoned off area is reserved for press, and when there is a particularly popular guest attending there is a cordoned off area where fans await autographs - as was the case when Joss Whedon attended the festival in 2013. There are also lighting displays inside and outside the building, which connect the event to cultural policy (Year of Creative Scotland) and municipal branding (Glasgow: Scotland with Style) (see Figure 7.9). The vibrancy of colour and lighting creates a sense of eventfulness and attention is deliberately drawn to the facade of the GFT building. Indeed external material transformation is a key component in

reconfiguring spaces as festival spaces, and should be visible to passersby as well as visiting patrons. In this respect, the event is inextricably linked to the make-up of the city. It is the transformation not only of the buildings but of the street, paving, external façade of the buildings that alters the make-up of the city and declares that something ‘unique’ and ‘distinct’ is happening in that very moment in Glasgow.



Figure 7.9. Glasgow Film Festival on the opening night of GFF12. Photo: SC. Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival/>

Bright lighting, city branding and the red carpet extend into the foyer of GFT (see Figure 7.10). While the Modernist space has a rather subdued ambience year-round, during festival time it is transformed into a site of noise, hustle and bustle, and reduced proximity with up to 500 patrons squeezed into a rather small foyer.<sup>77</sup> On opening night, the bar area often has live music and there is a real presence of festival practitioners - including its co-directors - who meet and greet audience members. There is also often a photo booth, which enables patrons to take fun photographs of themselves, which are then used in the promotion of the festival as an ‘entertaining experience’ through social media channels. Depending on the chosen films there may be some extra feature that connects the activities in the space to the film’s narrative. For instance, at the Opening Gala in 2013, the poster

<sup>77</sup> On opening night there are two screenings of the gala film, one in GFT1 (404 people) and one in GFT2 (142). Both films have sold out each year of the research period.

for the gala film, *Populaire* (Roinsard, 2012, France), featured a rather vivid image of multi-coloured fingernails, as such, there was a beauty station at the event where audience members could have their nails painted like the film's protagonist.

These material transformations are further enhanced by the presence of celebrities, photojournalists and a foyer filled with well-dressed and polished patrons, which collectively creates a sense of the extraordinary cinema visit. It is important to note that although opening Gala tickets go on general sale (selling out very quickly) the festival is still made to appear like a glamorous and glitzy affair on account of the free alcohol, goodie bags, celebrity attendees and media presence, all of which creates a sense of limitedness and exclusivity, which are fundamental components of the larger more prestigious festivals such as Cannes and Venice. Indeed, GFF replicates the exclusivity and spectacle of these ostentatious events through its materialisation of space, while maintaining its dedication to inclusivity.



Figure 7.10. GFT foyer on the opening night of GFF12 (prior to audiences' arrival). Photo: SC.  
Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival/>

The situation, however, is much different at another cinematic site some five minutes away. Cineworld Renfrew Street (CRS) is an 18-screen multiplex and is one of only two year-round digital cinemas in Glasgow city centre (the other being GFT). Part of the UK-wide cinema chain, Cineworld Group Plc, CRS is located in the northeast of Glasgow across from the city bus station and is reported to be the

tallest cinema building in the world, reaching 203 feet tall with nine floors. Architecturally, the building has been criticised for being ill-keeping with Glasgow's architectural style. It was thought to be 'too big to fit comfortably within the city' and voted Scotland's 'ugliest' building in an online poll in 2000 (BBC 2000). Nevertheless, the building has real prominence within Glasgow's cityscape and is a well-known space for locals (see Figure 7.11). Its glass and beige panel cladding make it is easy to identify from distances in and around the outskirts of the city centre, particularly at night when the light from inside the building projects out through the glass façade, which makes the building appear quite spectacular in comparison to other Cineworld venues.

What is particularly interesting about CRS it that despite its multiplex status, in many ways it does not conform to the popular profile of the multiplex cinema? Take for instance, Edinburgh Cineworld located in Fountain Park Entertainment Centre, which sits alongside a kids' soft play park and a casino amongst other entertainment attractions (see Figure 7.12). In many ways the Edinburgh example is typical of the postmodern multiplex, which is 'characterised by a form of spatial remove from the hub of the city' (Harbord, 2002: 55). On the contrary, CRS lacks many of the key characteristics associated with multiplex cinemas; free parking, neighbouring attractions such as bowling alleys, amusements arcades and popular fast food restaurants. While it is close to Glasgow's main shopping centre (Buchanan Galleries) it is not situated *within* a shopping centre or entertainment centre. Rather, it is positioned in the heart of the city in a key position just off a busy shopping street (Sauchiehall Street). Inside the building, the glass design gives an unrestricted panoramic view of the north west of the city and with 4300 seating capacity and only three elevators, most patrons access screens via escalators, which can involve up to 10 minutes (depending on screen and footfall) of ascension. As such, most patrons conduct mandatory spectatorship of the city before entering their screening room. Similarly, one of the three elevators is glass fronted and has become an attraction within the building and again encourages audience members to take in views of the city *en route* to their film. As such, the building's internal design - the flow of traffic and transportation options - encourages engagement with the cityscape.





Figure 7.11. Cineworld Renfrew Street. Source: [www.scottishcinemas.org.uk/glasgow/cineworld\\_06\\_1.jpg](http://www.scottishcinemas.org.uk/glasgow/cineworld_06_1.jpg)



Figure 7.12. Cineworld Edinburgh. Source: <http://www.edinburghguide.com/files/images/cineworld.preview.jpg>

As festival-goers arrive at CRS the event is not visible from the exterior of the building. Given that CRS continues to function as a cinema during the festival, when festival-goers arrive in the main foyer they are in the presence of regular cinema-goers queuing for tickets. Depending on the day and time, the foyer can be quiet (midweek mornings and afternoons) or very crowded (Wednesday evenings

and weekends) and generally has a younger demographic of cinema-goers than the hub venue. The monitors listing films and times do not show festival titles, thus, it is unlikely that drop-in cinema-goers would buy a ticket for a festival screening. CRS only has one or two GFF volunteers present in the foyer who check tickets as audience members make for the escalators or lifts. There is little festival livery in the main foyer, only a roller banner at the foot of the escalators, which notes that the festival is taking place on floor nine, and some programmes alongside the Cineworld magazine.<sup>78</sup> There is a distinct sense of anonymity in the sense that festival-goers are not identified as forming part of a festival. Indeed, Hubbard (2001) speaks of the pleasures of anonymity in his work on multiplex-going. However, as de Valck notes, there is a new type of festival-goer ‘for whom the context of the “festival” is at least as important as the films themselves, if not somewhat more so’ (de Valck, 2007: 194). This raises an interesting question over the anonymity granted at the multiplex and whether or not this is a gratifying feature for the festival-goer.

As will be discussed in the following chapter, audiences are very susceptible to the festival’s ambience, or lack of ambience, which they often term ‘festival buzz’. Indeed feeling part of, and being seen to be part of, a festival is crucial in the creation of festival buzz. Therefore, when no distinction is made between festival-going and cinema-going, festival-goers and cinema-goers, the festival runs the risk of dissipating into an unremarkable cinema experience. During GFF11 cinema screenings and festival screenings were positioned in neighbouring auditoriums at CRS, therefore, cinema-goers and festival-goers waited, entered and exited side-by-side. While this presented a rather interesting fusion of film consumption practices and located different types of film audiences in one space, it diluted the sense of festivity, as the following audience members note in an informal discussion in 2011:

The films up there felt like a bit of an afterthought really. No buzz.

(Fieldwork Journal, February 2011)

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<sup>78</sup> The roller banner was introduced in 2012. Prior to that CRS had virtually no festival livery other than some posters on the top floor.



There wasn't much buzz. It didn't yell 'festival' to me at all. Then you come down to Rose Street [GFT] and suddenly you're back in the thick of it.

(Fieldwork Journal, February 2011)

The creation of a festival environment at CRS was a key concern for GFF practitioners. Thus, since 2012 the top floor has been a dedicated festival space, which creates a more focused festival environment through its separation and distinction from the other cinema floors. GFF12 also introduced a temporary festival box office - a small table, chairs and computer system linked up to GFT's box office system The Patron Edge - where tickets for festival titles screening at CRS could be issued. In previous years all tickets were issued at GFT's box office meaning that every festival-goer had to pass through GFT even if they were seeing films at CRS or other venues. In this respect, GFF12 saw CRS become independent from GFT and fully operational as a festival space in its own right (see Figure 7.13). GFF volunteers and box office staff now run the top floor and there is generally only one CRS staff member at the kiosk. This is in part because festival audiences do not buy snacks, in fact, during GFF13 only two coffees were sold on the ninth floor kiosk over the 11 days the festival took place, which suggests that the space is inhabited by a very different audience during festival time (Interview, Seonaid Daly, August 2013). In 2013 the space was transformed again with the presence of a more professional looking LED box office station and seating area for waiting audiences (see Figure 7.14).

With reference to IFFR, de Valck notes that 'despite the somewhat soulless atmosphere in the multiplex, the festival is able to avoid its regular impersonal anonymity by creating a sense of community among the different types of film lovers' (2007: 197). Prior to GFF12, CRS was merely a place of flow wherein audiences entered and exited screenings very quickly, which left very little time for the community building to which de Valck refers.



Figure 7.13. GFF marketing materials and box office on the ninth floor of CRS during GFF11. Photo: SC. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival/>



Figure 7.14. GFF marketing materials, LED box office and waiting area on the ninth floor of CRS during GFF13. Photo: SC. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival/>

Another of the festival's core venues is cross-arts space, Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA), which has a year-round programme of 'cutting-edge exhibitions, film, music, literature, spoken word, festivals, Gaelic and much more' (CCA 2013). The venue is located on Sauchiehall Street just 0.2m from GFT, and features an art gallery, a theatre, a cinema and creative labs which can be hired by practitioners (see Figure 7.15). Outside GFF time, CCA has a very close connection with GFT and collaborates on many other events, such as Africa in Motion Film Festival (AIM), which takes place at both CCA and GFT in October each year. During GFF, CCA is home to Glasgow Short Film Festival (GSFF), which takes place the weekend before the main festival.

While CCA has a rather eclectic audience, it does have a strong presence of art people and during the main festival it is partially transformed and continues to operate as an arts venue. While the busy cafe operates as normal, many customers

are festival-goers given CCA's proximity to the festival hub and a lack of eating/drinking space at GFT. Nevertheless, GFF has its own box office at CCA which is operated by GFF staff and is decorated extensively with festival livery. The box office is located on a hot desk at CCA, which can be easily branded to the specifications of the visiting event (GFF uses screen-printed graphics which stick to the desk and walls surrounding the box office) (see Figure 7.16). Indeed CCA in many ways operates as a container in which different events and organisations enter. GFF is only one of several festival events that descend on the CCA space - others include AIM and Document Human Rights Festival - and while the space is set up to allow for specific branding and signage for visiting events it is never entirely transformed so that it retains its neutrality as cross-arts centre and a non-commercial venue.



Figure 7.15. External view of CCA on Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow. Source: <http://www.cca-glasgow.com/about-cca/what-we-do>



Figure 7.16. GFF box office at CCA. Photo: SC. Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival/6969421431/>

The repetition of festival livery - posters, brochures, notice boards etc - throughout the various festival sites connects each of the venues to the overarching brand of the festival and attempts to give the event a coherent omnipresent image, voice and personality. It is this repeated materialisation and omnipresence that I term the enveloping address of the festival. Nevertheless, as this section has demonstrated, not all venues are truly transformed and many still conduct their non-festival activities during festival time. Looking at CRS in particular, the venue is only partially reconfigured as a festival venue. Likewise, other venues such as hospitality spaces and municipal spaces, while temporally transformed for a one-off event, revert back to their former operations following the event. In these instances, the festival cannot entirely occupy the spaces and there is a level of dilution of the festival ambience and enveloping address. The next section now moves inside the auditoriums.

### *Inside the auditorium*

As one may expect, there is very little material presence in terms of festival livery inside the festival auditoriums, given that festival branding would function as a distraction during the film. Nevertheless at CCA, GFT and CRS, a roller banner for the film festival was positioned at the side of the screens. Also, from GFF13 onward, a static message appears on the screen before films begin which outlined

some of the behaviours encouraged at GFF; switching off mobile phones, avoiding noise during the film and no recording of any content. This is a direct message from the film festival as opposed to the standard piracy and mobile phone adverts at cinemas, and given its candour and festival authorship, serves to set up the behavioural expectations and etiquette of the festival audience.

The next element of the festival's enveloping address is the festival trailer, which many audiences will be very familiar with given it is screened at GFT before every film for four months before the festival begins. At the festival itself, this is the only trailer that audiences see as there are no commercial adverts during the event at any of the festival venues, including CRS. The lack of 'other' trailers further aids the potency of festival presentation by avoiding the conflation of titles and events outside and inside of the festival. Festival trailers embody the overall design of the festival's livery that year and link closely with the visual style of the brochure. They also tend to include images of Glasgow, although they do not always relate to specific festival spaces. For instance, the trailer for GFF12 features key landmarks from around the city, each of which have an illustrated scene from an iconic film overlaid (*Clockwork Orange* and *Godzilla* amongst others). These iconic film scenes capture landmarks throughout the city; Glasgow City Chambers, Cowcaddens Subway Station, Clyde Arc at Clydeside and the Glasgow cityscape (see Figures 7.17 to 7.20). Although some audience members noted a disconnection between the trailer and the festival (some felt that it did not resonate with the festival because it featured 'four very big pictures') others recognised the semantic intentions of the trailer - to bond together film, the festival and Glasgow (Fieldwork Journal, February 2012). It was also felt that the trailer was an in-joke for locals given that the Glasgow subway is sometimes nicknamed *The Clockwork Orange* ('I quite liked that sort of nod to those of us who live here' one participant noted) (ibid).





Figure 7.17. GFF12 trailer still of Glasgow City Chambers on George Square [left] and image of the building from [www.glasgow.gov.uk](http://www.glasgow.gov.uk) [right]



Figure 7.18. GFF12 trailer still of a scene from *Clockwork Orange* at Cowcaddens Subway Station [left] and an image of the tunnel taken by the researcher.



Figure 7.19. GFF12 trailer still of the Clyde Arc [left] and an image of the bridge from [www.clydewaterfront.com](http://www.clydewaterfront.com) [right].



Figure 7.20. GFF12 trailer still. Glasgow cityscape featuring Godzilla.

With the exception of some festival livery, the behavioural message and the festival trailer, there are no other physical markers of the festival within the auditorium. As mentioned this is to ensure that the space does not become a distraction when the film is screening. That said some distractions are acceptable in more unconventional spaces, which are purposefully distracting because their interior is a key attraction of the event. Take for instance, the 2013 screening of the *Passion of Joan of Arc* (Dreyer, 1928, France) in Glasgow Cathedral whereby audiences were led inside the cathedral by church ushers (as opposed to GFF volunteers) and directed to their seats in the pews. The breathtaking backdrop of the cathedral remained an inescapable key feature throughout the film's entirety (see Figure 7.21). Another example is the screening of *The Warriors* (Hill, 1979, USA) in St Enoch's Subway Station whereby the glowing signs that direct commuters to exits and toilets remained alit throughout the film, ensuring that viewers would not, could not, forget that they were in a subway station (see Figure 7.22).<sup>79</sup>

<sup>79</sup> *The Warriors* was programmed in the subway station as the storyline involves the New York subway.



**Figure 7.21.** Screening of *The Passion of Joan of Arc* in Glasgow Cathedral during GFF13. Audience members sat in pews and were welcomed and directed to their seats by church ushers. Photo: Eoin Carey. Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival/8503246289/>



**Figure 7.22.** Screening of *The Warriors* in St Enoch's Subway station. The space remained partially lit by transport signage throughout the film. Photo: Eoin Carey. Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/glasgowfilmfestival/8503246289/>



Nevertheless in most cases auditorium transformation relates less with the materialisation of the space and more with the live action that takes place within it. One of the major differences between a standard cinema visit and a festival visit is the extra content on offer at film festivals - what I refer to as paratextual content. Emerging from literary theory, paratext means text that alludes and adds something above or beyond the primary text.

One of the modes of paratext that operates at GFF is that a festival practitioner introduces almost every film.<sup>80</sup> This is a feature that sets the festival aside from its Scottish counterpart Edinburgh International Film Festival (EIFF) where only special screenings are introduced. Indeed the visibility of festival practitioners in screenings is a paratextual feature and added value, particularly when introductions are delivered by one of the festival's programmers team or co-directors who have personally chosen the films, which ties in with the festival's overall image of unpretentiousness and locality reminiscent of the personality of the Cosmo days. While there is no specific format to introductions, they usually include a thank you to the audience for supporting the event, reassurance that the festival is for them ('this is your festival. The audience is king at GFF'), an update on the growing number of ticket sales that year (usually met with applause) and a succinct narrative about why the particular film they are about to watch was chosen for them (Fieldwork Journal, February 2013). Allan Hunter and Allison Gardner's introductions are professional, well versed and poised, and they confidently connect with the audience. Moreover, they are both presented professionally (Allan wears a suit throughout the festival) and there is a distinct degree of formality and ceremony during these introductions.

Aside from the nicety of having a film introduced, these introductions also serve to internationalise the Glasgow audience as the co-directors often reveal the source of the film ('I saw this film in Cannes last year and loved it'), which repositions the local GFF audience as part of an international festival audience (Fieldwork Journal, February 2012). There is no doubt that introductions delivered by non-specialists (volunteers, students, GFT entry-level staff) are substandard in

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<sup>80</sup> During the research period I have attended 68 screenings/events at GFF (2011-2013) and only one event was not introduced - *Jaws* in 2013,

comparison to the co-directors. In 2013 some volunteers introduced screenings at CRS with a very generic address. With little or no knowledge of the film or its journey to GFF (what other festivals it had been to, where it was spotted), these introductions were reductive and superfluous and really added nothing to the screenings. Therefore, while introductions are a key feature of GFF there is no protocol on who introduces what and how. To avoid flat introductions and underwhelmed audiences, it is recommended that the festival develop a protocol for introduction and possibly introduces scripted introductions for volunteer staff.

### **The experiential arc**

Introductions set the scene for the audience and contribute to a sense of liveness and being in the moment. More importantly they are an important part of the total experience. Indeed, participant observation of GFF over three years suggests that festivals have several experiential components, which begin at home (planning the festival visit), then reach the foyer and surrounding areas of the event, and then enter the auditorium. Film consumption at festivals differs from year round cinema-going because the experience extends beyond the 'story arc' of film (begin, middle, end) to include factors outside the diegesis of the films being screened. At festivals there is a higher expectation of a total experience, what I term the experiential arc.

In a focus group session a participant likened GFF to a music concert (a 'gig'). His allusion relates to the sense of liveness at the festival and is a helpful comparative when we consider that a gig is not just about the songs performed but their introductions (dialogue, contextual framing 'It's great to be in Glasgow'), performance (visual, audio), reception (sing-a-long, dance, clapping) and conclusion (encore, thanks etc). There is an experiential arc that includes and extends beyond the main event (the music or film). In the festival context, this comprises of three or four core performances; the introduction by a festival practitioner, the film itself, the performed reception by audiences (clapping etc) and paratextual content if applicable (Q&A). Fieldwork suggests that when all of these components come together there is a strong sense of dénouement as people exit the theatre. A

particularly memorable event whereby each element of the experiential arc was present was a screening of *Route Irish* (Loach, 2010, UK) I attended on Wednesday 23 February 2011, which I describe in my fieldwork journal:

Cinema 1 is [...] packed and there are only odd empty seats here and there. It was announced earlier in the week that Ken Loach would attend the screening and I can see him at the side of the screen where Allison Gardner introduces the film [...] audience members at the front [whisper] and [point] at him. Allison announces that 21,000 tickets have been sold so far (its Day 6 of the 11 day festival) and the audience cheers loudly and there's applause. The auditorium feels very electric and the applause suggests there's a lot of support for the festival [...] After the film, Ken Loach returns to the stage with Eddie Harrison from the List Magazine (he is facilitating the Q&A) [...] He notes that the Glasgow audience are one of the 'first to see the film' [...] Following the Q&A there is a huge applause and whistles, and we slowly leave the packed auditorium as lots of people are talking and lurking.

(See Appendix L for full journal entry)

The *Route Irish* account illustrates the optimum festival experience. However, not all screenings were as effective. At times only one or two of the stages were achieved, which meant that the experience was not as heightened as it could have been. For instance, a screening of *Jaws* (Spielberg, 1975, USA) at The Tall Ship on Friday 22 February 2013 had the potential for a total festival experience. It had an eager audience of fans and took place in a meaningful space (a maritime themed film on a boat). However, the film was not introduced offering no contextualisation or articulation of the spatio-textual significance or collective address to the GFF audience. As such, the experience was somewhat diluted, which is evident in my observations:

There is no introduction before the film (there doesn't seem to be any GFF staff present) and the film just starts, which feels a bit like the scene hasn't been set. Nevertheless, the theme-tune is met by giggles; curiously it reminds me of the excited anxiety one collectively feels before a rollercoaster takes off. It is clear that this is an audience of *Jaws* fans. This is made clear when a famous line from the film - 'you're gonna need a bigger boat!' - is recited in synchrony with the delivery onscreen by a guy in front of me. It triggers laughter. [...] When the film finishes there is no applause and it all feels a little awkward. The audience no longer seems connected as fans, a bit like

waking up after a party with strangers. I can't help feeling a little disappointed that there wasn't more of a display of appreciation at the end of the film. It was a bit of an anticlimax.

(See Appendix M for full journal entry)

Generally speaking, in instances where there was a very brief or generic introduction which offered little or no reference to the specifics of the film or the audience (often the case at CRS), there would be no applause after the film and the experiential arc felt somewhat incomplete (like a musician walking offstage without giving thanks or encore). As my journal suggest, I felt like I had been on a journey and shared an experience with my fellow audience members, but by the end of the event our unity was somewhat shattered by the lack of mutual appreciation and closure (applause).<sup>81</sup>

Interestingly, there were differences in the level of paratext provided at film screenings according to festival spaces. For instance, during GFF11, I attended a screening of *Kramer vs. Kramer* (Benton, 1979, USA) - part of the Meryl Streep retrospective strand - at both GFT and CRS. At the GFT screening, the introduction comprised of a lengthy biography of Meryl Streep's career and the significance of this particular film in shaping her success, presented by GFF Co-Director Allan Hunter who specialises in the retrospectives programme. However, at CRS there was no biographical detail given and the audience was instead given a disclaimer about the quality of the print and advised that if they were dissatisfied then they could request for a refund (two people left the cinema 10 minutes into the film).<sup>82</sup> This is suggestive of GFF practitioners' ideas about the audiences attending different festival sites. It suggests that GFT retains its cinephilic audience during festival time. On the other hand, it also implies that art house/independent cinema patrons are not attuned to technological standards and would endure a low-quality print without complaint because it is a limited artifact ('this is the only print in existence' noted Allison Gardner) (Fieldwork Journal, February 2011).

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<sup>81</sup> It is acknowledged that certain venues have practical limitations that affect what paratextual content can be presented, in particular Cineworld has automatic projection which means the films often begin in the middle of an introduction which looks rather unprofessional.

<sup>82</sup> The audience was told that this was the only print in existence and that it had a pinkish quality (Fieldwork Journal, February 2011).

## Conclusion

Understanding what makes film festival practice - spatially, textually, experientially or otherwise - distinct from other modes of film consumption contributes to our understanding of the popularity of these events, particularly open-access inclusive models like GFF which allow the general public to enter that 'festival world' that seems all too exclusive, distant and inaccessible under the media gaze and glitz of Cannes and the like. This chapter has placed various festival spaces under the microscope at GFF - an event that has embraced a policy of spatial democracy by welcoming a plethora of venues on its programme, including direct competitors outside festival time (GFT and CRS often screen similar titles year-round). Indeed since inception, GFF has continued to expand its reach out across the metropolis claiming the city as its overarching festival space. Glasgow has become the festival's habitat from which programmers - who take on a more curatorial role - select different environments for film exhibition, from the conventional to the quirky. While the event maintains what Harbord (2002) suggests are the core trio of film exhibition (art house, multiplex and arts gallery), festival practitioners choose to place the spotlight on the quantity of spaces on its inventory and quirkier sites, such as municipal spaces (cathedral, subway station). Likewise spatial imagery of the city is used in its livery and brand identity, which suggests that in contrast to the notion of cinema space as a subordinate backdrop to film, festival space is a dominant component of the overall apparatus of film festival operation.

I argue that while cinematic exhibition is not traditionally in the business of promoting spaces (focusing more on the promotion of individual film titles), film festival exhibition purposefully draws attention to space because it is within the physical environments that the film festival's enveloping address is communicated to its audience. Of course, festival practitioners must manufacture this address by transforming spaces into sites that encapsulate the festival's identity, in terms of its materialisation and content. I argue that material transformation includes tangible objects (signage, red carpets, lighting, trailers) and human subjects (festival directors, film talent, panellists, and volunteers). All of these objects and

agents are crucial in the transformation of spaces into sites of spectacular exhibition and contribute to the total festival experience, the experiential arc.

The next chapter moves onto consider the significance of environment in the festival experience by engaging with audiences through focus groups. While it maintains its focus on space it moves on to consider the individuals and communities who occupy festival spaces.

## Chapter 8: Festival Audiences, Spatial and Embodied Pleasure and Practice

The preceding chapter has discussed the significance of space in relation to exhibition (programming spaces and transforming non-festival sites into festive environments). While this chapter maintains its focus on space, and place, its focus turns toward the audiences who inhabit these festival spaces. The chapter joins a small collection of UK studies that have engaged with cinema audiences to consider the ways in which they occupy, use and experience public spaces. Of particular use is Barker and Egan's work on audience reception (1998), Elizabeth Evans work on communities in independent cinemas in the East Midlands (2011a, 2011b) and Phil Hubbard's study of multiplex cinema-going in Leicester (2001). Indeed, a central argument that is embedded throughout this chapter is Hubbard's notion that 'cinema-going is about the consumption of place (e.g., the cinema) as much as it is about the consumption of film (2001: 259).

The motivation for a chapter dedicated to spatial experience was driven by findings from audience data. Indeed 'space' emerged as a primary discursive theme in all focus group sessions, which forced me to position the physical and material environment as a fundamental facet of the overall festival experience. Drawing on audience data gathered through two main channels - participant observation of festival audiences (2011-2013) and focus groups with festival patrons during GFF12 - the chapter considers space as a means through which festival audiences construct expectations, perceptions, behavioral rules and experiences of film festivals. Throughout the chapter I demonstrate how audiences articulate their experiences of film festivals in spatial terms, and propose a set of pleasure modes relating to place (the festival's location in Glasgow) and space (the sites where the festival plays out), which are shaped by spatial narratives emerging directly from the very mouths of festival-goers.

## Classifying pleasure

While focus group participants continually related their festival-going practice to spatial aspects of the event, the nature of their experiences differed somewhat. Some found it gratifying to be physically close to visiting talent, while others enjoyed being in crowded auditoriums and close to other festival-goers including strangers. For others it was the materiality of unconventional spaces that was particularly gratifying. Thus, while their experiences had a common denominator - space and place - they differed in terms of what audiences found pleasing, or in some cases, displeasing.

Instructed by Egan and Barker's (1998) work on audience pleasures in which they present a list of 'vocabularies of involvement and pleasure' the chapter breaks spatial pleasures down into several types of gratification (1998: 143).<sup>83</sup> While they refer to a specific film (*Lord of the Rings*) their pleasure model (which they term 'a box of tools for thinking about practices of pleasure'), it is pertinent to this film festival inquiry because they give due attention to the ways in which viewing contexts affect film reception (1998: 143). Thus, as starting point I have adopted two categories from their model:

Joining a crowd: mass events, with a vocabulary of *community, participation, losing oneself* and a pattern imposed by the external situation, whatever it is. [...] Examples could include demonstrations and being in the crowd at big events. [original emphasis]

Joining a spectacle: a firework display, for instance, with languages of *enthusiasm, excitement and readiness, and participating in the spectacular*, which tends to be punctuated by moments of intensity and relaxation. Closely related to the last, examples could include firework displays, or events like public ceremonies. [original emphasis]

(Egan & Barker, 1998: 143-144)

In both these instances, the audience is positioned as corporeally active. They opt to join a group, take part in an event and act in particular ways according to the 'external situation', which I take to include the physical environment.

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<sup>83</sup> For a full list the 16 pleasure categories proposed by Egan and Barker, see (Egan & Barker 1998, 143-145).



As noted, focus group participants continually delivered vocabularies of pleasure and practice that were connected to the spatial aspects of the event and their physical emplacement within festival spaces. I now propose eight dominant ‘vocabularies of spatial and embodied pleasure’: sense of Glasgow-ness; feelings of safety and comfort; consolidating taste via space; space-text-body-pleasures; pleasures of watching; reduced social distance; spatial freedom; and waiting spaces and delayed gratification.

### **Sense of Glasgow-ness**

The prominence of Glasgow as a filmic city, and indeed Glaswegians as film lovers, in the festival’s brand could be said to create a hyper-local representation of the festival, despite the scope of its international programming (see Chapter 4). However, focus group data suggests that the message of locality is received and understood by audiences. More importantly, locality becomes important to the audiences’ sense of involvement and identity in the festival. Indeed, audiences perpetuate the rhetoric of localness and GFF as distinctly Glasgow-centric event. In fact, some participants were surprised to find that people traveled to Glasgow for the festival: ‘I thought it was just us folk from Glasgow who went’ (FG1: Irene, 34, Postgraduate Student, Occasional). Indeed, when told by other festival-goers that the event did attract visitors from around the UK, Irene seemed to find it gratifying that people would travel to come to *her* local festival.

Discussion of the festival’s emplacement in Glasgow was often articulated through narratives of pride over the city as a place of vibrant film culture. Discourses of civic pride often emerged during discussions between a participant who was new to the city and a participant who was from Glasgow (or had resided in Glasgow for a long time), often with the latter imparting knowledge to the rest of the group. Indeed, Ross Derret notes that ‘a community’s appreciation of place validates the substantial interest in such events shared by residents and visitors’ (2003: 35). As example of visitor-resident exchange, the following discussion took place between a participant from North America who was on a one-year study visa and a resident of Glasgow’s West End:

**Chris:** It's a great place to get a condensed world cinema view. I mean I come from the Midwest where I'm already not getting a lot of the independent films - they stick to the coast. So this has been a festival where I've been trying to see as much as possible because these films will never make it to Iowa!

**Lillian:** Yes, *but* you're in Cinema City now!

(FG4: Chris, 23, Postgraduate Student, Avid; Lillian, 73, Retired, Avid)

While intonation and gesture cannot be illustrated from an extract, this comment surfaced as an important moment in the session because Lillian's response was delivered with a markedly conclusive and self-assured tone that seemed to assert Glasgow as superior to Chris' hometown of Iowa, at least in terms of film culture. By referring to Glasgow as a 'Cinema City' she elevates the city to a position of status and prestige. Instructed by Dayan's (2000) notion of the performative nature of film festival practice, I would also argue that Lillian's response is part of a performance in which she presents her knowledge of film culture and initiatives in Glasgow. For instance, Lillian's use of the term 'Cinema City' refers to GFT's Cinema City Project, which celebrates the city's cinematic heritage along with partners, Scottish Television (STV), Scottish Cinemas and Scottish Screen Archive. As a dominant speaker within the group and a self-identified 'avid' cinema-goer, her response can also be read as an intention to strengthen the connection of the group by drawing attention to, and celebrating, Glasgow's identity as a vibrant cinematic setting which they all have immediate access to.

### **Feelings of safety and comfort**

As a cinematic city, Glasgow has several cinemas to choose from, each different in terms of location, brand, programme and audience. Attached to these spaces, in particular the multiplex and cultural cinema, are perceptions and ideas about what type of space it is and what type of audience it attracts. These perceptions vary from person to person which means that the meanings of places are not fixed, as Jancovich writes:

While the local arts cinema is perceived as a pleasant and relaxing to some, others feel deeply anxious within it. Nor are these different responses merely individual in character: they are tied to a whole series of social and cultural factors.

(2011: 88)

Certainly within the focus groups it became clear that participants felt more comfortable in certain cinematic spaces. This often related to anxieties around security and safety and was, in the main, articulated by female participants. When asked what cinemas they attended year-round, the following individuals noted that they preferred to go to GFT when attending on their own because they were less likely to be judged:

**Iris:** And another thing. I find that when I'm coming to the GFT, I come on my own a lot more than I do when I go to Cineworld. Whereas with the more mainstream cinemas I feel that if you go on your own, people think you're weird! Whereas here [GFT] it is quite accepted. And it's *safer* here.

**Leena:** Yeah I love going to the cinema on my own but I would only do it at a *specific kind of cinema*, like GFT.

(FG2: Iris, Female, 24, Postgraduate Student, Keen; Leena, Female, 28, Postgraduate Student, Occasional)

When asked to expand on her notion of GFT as a 'safer' space, Iris recounted the following incident at Cineworld Renfrew Street (CRS) in which she had been 'intimated' by other audience members:

**Iris:** I suppose I'm referring to one particular incident when I went to Cineworld and there were people throwing M&M's all the way through the film and they had just targeted our little group, I don't know why.<sup>84</sup> And it was very *intimidating* and I've never felt like that here, and I often come on my own. I don't know if it's just the *different type of people* that come here or because you come here for a different reason, like people definitely want to see the film so you focus on that. Yeah, I don't know if it's *different type of people*. I don't want to sound like a snob or anything.

(FG2: Iris, Female, 24, Postgraduate Student, Keen)

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<sup>84</sup> M&M's are popular coloured chocolate candy often sold in large bags at multiplexes in the UK.

As Iris' response suggests, she felt very exposed in the multiplex space ('targeted') and had a rather unpleasant experience that has stayed with her since. Moreover, while she was keen to avoid presenting herself as a 'snob' - a tendency that Evans (2011a, 2011b) also found in her study of cultural cinema audiences - the repetition of 'different types of people' suggests that she connects this incident with multiplex cinema audiences. Thus, Iris' response contrasts Hubbard's (2001) claims that multiplex going offers ontological security because the space provides audiences with a degree of anonymity.

Interestingly in the festival context, CRS also emerged as a talking point in terms of its position as a festival space. When asked what their experiences of different festival spaces were, several participants noted that they enjoyed spending time in CRS during the festival because the top floor, which has been dedicated to the film festival since 2012, felt sheltered from the rest of CRS:

**Rafee:** For me personally, in non-film festival time, if a film is on at GFT and another cinema, I'll tend to pick GFT. However, during the film festival, the top floor of Cineworld is for the film festival and it's really good because once you get up there it *feels totally different from the rest of Cineworld*.

(FG2: Rafee, Male, 32, Software Developer, Avid)

Similarly, the following participant noted the way in which CRS is transformed during festival time, describing the arrival of the festival as an 'occupation';

**Ramiro:** I remember the first movie I went to go see at the film festival in 2010. It was in Cineworld and I was used to the regular Cineworld experience and I went there and it was like the way they were getting the tickets and everything was different because it was a matter of the film festival and not Cineworld so that started different. Then I got in and it looked like it was an *occupation*! It was something *totally different to what I was used to in Cineworld* and then I watched a different kind of movie, it was a Danish movie. It felt good. As I say it was like an *occupation*!

(FG2: Ramiro, Male, 40, Research Scientist, Keen)

For Rafee and Ramiro the CRS space was gratifying because of its disconnection from the rest of the multiplex. Particularly interesting is Ramiro's description of the

spaces being invaded or possessed by the festival, which seems to posit the festival in a position of power.

For the following female participants, the top tier was felt to be more of a welcoming and safe space, sheltered from the rest of CRS:

**Lillian:** I think having the dedicated top tier at Cineworld works well. You know where you're going and the GFT staff are there so there's a *familiarity* and ease about it.

**Patricia:** I think so too. I found it was quite a nice welcome space, but it felt a bit like a *protected space*. I know that sounds a bit odd, but it didn't feel like I was in the multiplex.

(FG5: Lillian, Female, 73, Retired, Avid; Patricia, Female, 48, Charity Worker, Keen)

Of particular interest here is Patricia's description of the top floor of CRS as a 'protected space'. Her choice of words is suggestive that the rest of the space is in some way threatening or unsafe, which chimes with earlier points made by Iris and Leena around safety and security. However, in connecting these comments with Rafee and Ramiro's accounts of CRS, we begin to see a pattern whereby audiences rationalize their attendance at GFF within festival time because of spatial segregation, which is partly to do with the fact that CRS-goers are not present in - or are excluded from - the protected, occupied 'festival space'.

### Consolidating taste via space

Debates about multiplex versus art-house were recurrent in all sessions, which is interesting given film scholarship's enthusiasm to move beyond debates over the multiplex-art-house dichotomy.<sup>85</sup> In most cases, discussion around taste emerged from questions about what cinema/s participants attended outside of festival time. In general, audiences articulated their preferred taste via their distaste of particular spaces and the audiences that tended to inhabit these spaces, which resonate with Harbord's Bourdieu-inspired notion that identities are built around cinematic spaces:

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<sup>85</sup> A common theme running through the New Forms of Cinema Exhibition Symposium held at University of East Anglia in November 2011, which many key academics working in cinema studies in the UK attended, was the need to move on from debates about the multiplex and art house, particularly in relation to high/low-brow culture. Interestingly, over the course of the two-day conference, only one speaker, Phillippe Meers of the University of Antwerp, discussed class and taste culture.

Our tastes for film is suggestive of our relationship to these spatial sites and whilst we may not inhabit each of these sites exclusively, foregoing all others, patterns of consumption fall into familiar routines rooted in the social comfort of environments, the ease and familiarity of the habitus as a spatial framework.

(Harbord, 2002: 3)

As discussed GFF has its historical roots in art-film culture, emerging from a former art house that sought to provide films for discerning audiences. Thus, the festival's hub inevitably has perceptions of distinction and cultural capital attached to the space, as one blogger writes:

The GFT is pretty much the perfect arts cinema, with a calm, cultural vibe and the kind of cafe that makes you feel proportionately more intellectual for every moment spent in it.

(Grant 2012)

In Ailsa Hollinshead's study of art house cinema in Edinburgh she also found that narratives of distinction and taste emerged, as one of her participants noted in response to their visit to the Cameo to see a Woody Allen classic: 'I thought, like I'm not posh or anything like that, but I thought that was quite educational! [laughter] And I felt quite posh! (2011: 393). Indeed in my focus group session narratives of distinction emerged in one way or another. Points of distinction frequently related to a dislike for the vastness of output at multiplexes (made possible by its spatial magnitude) or behaviour and etiquette within different spaces. When asked about what cinema he attended year-round, the following festival-goer suggested that multiplexes were all about volume and lack quality:

**Thomas:** *Quality not quantity* is how I see it. At GFT the rooms are physically smaller but the films they have can be premières, previews, so it's sometimes a film that you may not get to see anywhere else in Scotland. There's quality there. Whereas, in let's say in Cineworld down the road [CRS], well, you've seen the size of their cinemas. And there are a huge number of seats. They don't really care about quality. They only care about quantity.

(FG1: Thomas, Male, 18, Undergraduate Student, Occasional)

Indeed a dislike for the commercialism of the multiplex is something that Elizabeth Evans found in her empirical study of cultural cinema audiences in

Nottingham, in which one of her participants suggested that non-cultural cinemas (multiplexes) were full of ‘human detritus’ and ‘crap popcorn’ (2011b: 11). As the following extracts demonstrate, the multiplex (CRS in particular) was described as ‘a bus’, ‘a machine’, ‘a cheap suit’, ‘a guilty pleasure’, ‘junk food’ and the ‘McDonalds of cinema’:

**Thomas:** So it’s kind of like having a tailor-made suit as opposed to just buying a cheap suit from Marks and Spencers.

(FG1: Thomas, Male, 18, Undergraduate Student, Occasional)

**Rafee:** Going to Cineworld is very much like getting on a bus. It’s very utilitarian in a sense, like we’re here because we’re here almost and there’s no real community as it were.

(FG2: Rafee, Male, 32, Software Developer, Avid)

The following conversation took place between three females in a session:

**Irene:** I feel much more sort of *ownership* towards the GFT and much more cosy feeling with it like I belong and I’m welcome here, I don’t feel so welcome at Cineworld put it that way! It just feels much more like a *machine* where you are stuck in at one end [...] It’s like a *guilty pleasure* kind of thing [the multiplex]. If I’m going to see a really shit action film where cars are going to explode I’ll go there.

**Iris:** Yeah, it’s like *junk food*.

**Irene:** Yeah, it’s the *McDonalds of cinema*.

(FG2: Irene, Female, 34, Postgraduate Student, Occasional; Iris, Female, 24, Postgraduate Student, Avid; Leena, Female, 28, Postgraduate Student, Occasional)

Interestingly, derision of multiplexes was often met with defensive language in which multiplex-goers sought to support these cinemas as legitimate spaces of cinephile activity, and discussion often played out as very polite game of offence and defence with some participants criticising Cineworld while others defended it. In particular, Unlimited Cardholders actively defended the cinema and indeed themselves, legitimating their identity as avid cinema-goers and film lovers despite their ‘multiplex’ affiliation (‘just because I go to the big screen doesn’t mean I’m

not a serious cinema-goer’).<sup>86</sup> Moreover, there was a tendency for Cineworld patrons to make distinctions between ‘their multiplex’ and ‘other multiplexes’. For instance, CRS was considered to be a more cultural space than ‘other multiplexes’:

**Gordon:** Cineworld is for everybody. Of course it is more associated with the blockbuster, but they also show a lot of art-house films as well. And the Glasgow Cineworld [Renfrew Street] is really good. They get a lot of things that a lot of other Cineworlds won’t get.

**Olivia:** Yeah and they have a really good Bollywood programme, which caters to a lot of people.

**Gordon:** Cineworld helped a friend of mine. He had a film coming out and they put it in Cineworld for a week. And who else would do that? And he got a hell of a lot of coverage. His trailer got put in front of every film no matter what the film was. So they really promoted him and I felt that was really good.

(FG1: Gordon, Male, 27, Filmmaker, Avid; Olivia, Female, 32, Data Assistant, Keen)

Particularly interesting here is Gordon’s point about Cineworld having nurtured an up-and-coming filmmaker, the sort of activity more consistent with cultural cinema. It would therefore be fair to say that there were mixed feelings toward CRS in the focus group sessions. In general, the groups tended to be a mix of GFT’s loyal patrons, Cineworld Unlimited Cardholders, and people who dipped in and out of these cinemas as well as others on the outskirts of the city centre (Odeon at Pacific Quay, Cineworld Parkhead, Showcase in Coatbridge and The Grosvenor in the west end). Nevertheless, there were some strong views at play, which suggested the resilience of discourse about cultural versus commercial cinema and what exactly makes a pleasurable, or unpleasant, cinematic experience.

In between these two divides were people who had shifted between GFT and CRS. The following participants arguably articulate their preference for cultural cinema but attendance at a multiplex through narratives of guilt about having transferred to CRS because of the Unlimited Card (UC):

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<sup>86</sup> Cineworld operate the Unlimited Card. In 2012 the Unlimited Card was £14.99 per month by direct debit which gave cardholders unlimited access to screenings at any Cineworld (except London and West End). A supplementary fee of £2 was applicable to 3D movies. Standard ticket prices were £7.20 per visit.



**Carolina:** I mean I'm always excited if there is something on at the GFT, but I'm always like: 'oh well I get it for free at Cineworld! But I do *feel bad*.

(FG3: Carolina, Female, 31, Barista, Avid)

**Pamela:** Sometimes there's a film on at both and, as I say I don't go to the cinema lots, but like once a month. However, because it feels free I go to Cineworld and I do feel that sort of *guilt* because I think 'I should be going to the GFT'. Because you know it's never really jam-packed so it's a weird feeling like 'I should be there' 'I should be there'.

**Ross:** I've got an Unlimited Card, which makes me go to Cineworld quite a lot. And I feel *guilty*.

(FG7: Pamela, Female, 31, Postgraduate Student, Keen; Ross, Male, 33, Postgraduate Student, Avid)

As discussed in Chapter 6, the UC does trigger notions of cinema as a free event, but most interesting here is that it also incites notions of guilt in keen and avid cinema-goers who have a moral consciousness about the importance of supporting their local, non-profit cinema.

### **Space-text-body-pleasures**

In Chapter 7 it was noted that spatio-textual programming is a method of curation at GFF, particularly for festivalised films (old titles in new contexts). Recent examples of this mode of programming are: the use of a subway station for a screening of Walter Hill's *The Warriors* (1979) and the use of the city's very own Cathedral for a screening of *The Passion of Joan of Arc* with live musical accompaniment. As outlined, the qualifiers of this type of programming are space-text relations in which (usually repertory) content is presented in particular spaces with which its narrative possesses some synergy. Thus, with this mode of programming, festival practitioners are deliberately drawing attention to the physical characteristics of space. But how do audiences articulate their pleasures of these spaces?

In 2012 GFF introduced a 19th Century Ship as a festival space. Berthed on the River Clyde, The Glenlee was used for screenings of various films with maritime

themes or settings. During GFF12 there was a screening of *The Maggie* (Mackendrick, 1954, UK) on the boat. As chapter 7 notes, the screening involved a heated cargo hold, filled with chairs and a DVD screened on a projector, therefore, technologically it was not cinematic standard. However, the spatial characteristics of the site - as well as the homology between space and narrative image came to the fore as both a motivation for attendance and an experiential pleasure, as one participant attending a screening of *The Maggie* notes:

**Brian:** For me, this year it's the special things, like I went to *The Maggie* the other night on the boat. It was great. You're looking at a guy on the screen and he's surrounded by rivets and you look around and there are rivets all about you! And the boat is creaking.

(FG6: Brian, 48, Self-Employed, Keen)

In Brian's account of *The Maggie* he chooses not to focus on the film itself. Instead he focused on the spatial qualities of the venue and the experiential aspect of the space. His account indicates that gratification came from the historical and thematic allegiance between the text and space. Indeed, novelty event spaces at the film festival do re-imagine the spatial paradigms of conventional cinematic viewing creating spatio-textual allegiance that connects reality with the diegesis of the text. Interestingly these spatio-textual events like the *The Maggie*, *Peter Pan* (Geronimi, et al 1954, USA), and *Jaws* (Spielberg, 1975, USA), have a similar appeal to that of premières, selling out as soon as the programme is released.

### **Voyeuristic practices, pleasures of watching**

However, there is much more at stake in this participant's response. The spatial characteristics of the maritime venue provoked another pleasurable mode. The physical dimensions of the cargo hold facilitated reduced social distance, placing bodies within close proximity of 'other bodies'. This produced an alternative form of gaze wherein viewers not only observed the film text as object, but also fellow audience members as subjects, as Brian continues:

**Brian:** There was actually a gentlemen there watching the film. My friend overheard him talking. He had sailed the Glenlee back from Canada. He looked about a hundred. And they've got an area for

children where they can hit a wee button and it recreates the noise of the engines and you can go into a wee gantry. You want to have seen this old fella's face! They opened it up so that he could hit the button... aw it was beautiful!

(FG6: Brian, 48, Self-Employed, Keen)

In Brian's view the spatiality of the event provoked a strong sense of nostalgia for his fellow audience member. However, this very personal experience, had a second hand effect in that, for Brian, observing a pleasurable moment experienced by another audience member really compounded the overall experience as something special - a unique moment that made his experience more than just a trip to the cinema. Moreover, his articulation of the experience in spatial terms - both in relation to space-text homology and being close enough to this participant to observe his emotions - indicates that for this participant the spatial characteristics, as opposed to the purely textual, are what made his festival experience a meaningful one.

I would like to pause for a moment on this notion of audiences watching other audiences. Indeed, several participants recounted experience of observing other people in the auditoriums, and found their shared appreciation of the film highly gratifying:

**Researcher:** What have you found enjoyable about the festival so far?

**Mandy:** I mean I had this guy come to sit beside me the other night and it was just the two-seaters and he laughed at all the same bits that I laughed at, and by the end of it I felt as if I knew him. Never said a single word to him but I felt as if he was my festival pal because we found all the same bits funny and I felt we'd had a shared experience... and it really augmented the film for me.

(FG7: Mandy, 49, Area Sales Manager)

Drawing on Zygmunt Bauman's work, *Liquid Modernity* (2000), which researches consumerist attitudes and patterns, Hubbard considers the multiplex cinema visit 'an ultimately individualized form of consumption' (Hubbard, 2001: 264). With this Hubbard notes that multiplex patrons do not enjoy being visible or judged, instead they prefer to become anonymous within the cinema space. However, the accounts of festival-goers show a very different picture. In fact,

audiences seeing, watching and judging other audiences emerged as a dominant practice for festival-goers in focus groups - they voluntarily abandon their anonymity. In one sense they are under the gaze of the text, but on the other hand they are acutely aware of other bodies in the busy auditorium, and the sense of collectiveness and communality provokes in them voyeuristic practices. There has been a tendency to think of cinema as a quiet, dark immersive space where audiences experience individualistic moments, however, these accounts problematise traditional notions of 'the gaze and immersion' by introducing an alternative mode of gazing, wherein viewers not only observed film text as object, but also fellow audience members as subjects.

A further contrast to Hubbard's findings, is that these accounts suggest that in the festival context, audiences are both individual and collective. Collectiveness is found in the physical closeness between audience members, however, it is also augmented in the scripts circulating festival spaces. For example, festival practitioner rhetoric continually reinforces this notion of unity by referring to audiences ideologically as a unitary being ('it's all about you, the audience') and also via physical instruction to reduce the spatial parameters between them ('move closer to your neighbour and make a 'festival friend' 'this is a sellout screening' - Fieldwork Journal, February 2013). Festival patrons then live this out, and the collective experience becomes self-fulfilling. Moreover, Mandy's account suggest pleasure is found in the synchronised behaviours of festival audiences, which chimes with Egan and Barker's notion of 'joining a crowd' wherein vocabularies of 'community' and 'participation' occur and where behavioural patterns, which are 'imposed by the external situation', emerge between strangers (1998: 143-144).

### **Reduced social distance**

What should be clear by now is that festival audiences are acutely aware of their physical emplacement, and the emplacement of other bodies, within the festival environment. As geography scholars Nast and Pile note 'since we have bodies, we must be some place' (1998: 1). In other words, to be physically present we must be located in a particular place and time, thus we are temporally and corporeally

present. In looking at the spatial aspect of the film festival, we must also look at what role the body plays in creating socio-cultural spaces.

During festival time, spaces become crowded and chaotic as staff and audience members navigate cinemas and other sites and are herded by front of house staff in and out of screenings and into foyers. In Daniel Dayan's work on Sundance he notes that film festivals involve the 'engagement of distinctive groups with diverse interests', all of whom conduct 'divergent performances' (2000: 52). While Dayan focuses his attention on the spoken performance of festival-goers (which he refers to as 'verbal architectures') less attention is paid to the physiological performance of patrons. Yet I would argue that the embodiment of people (audience members, journalists, film professionals, festival staff) at GFF is key to understanding the ways in which spaces become transformed and the ways in which audiences experience and use festivals. As sociological scholars Nettleton and Watson note:

Everything we do we do with our bodies - when we think, speak, listen, eat, sleep, walk, relax, work and play - we 'use' our bodies. Every aspect of our lives is therefore embodied.

(Nettleton and Watson, 1998:1)

As festival-goer and participant observer, one of the most noticeable physical changes I observed was how physically close I was to other audience members and how much I was using my own body - squeezing past people in the foyer, waiting in line at restrooms and bars, holding doors open, directing people to screening rooms. Ultimately, there was a significant reduction in social distance between audience members and more instances of actual physical contact with strangers (brushing past people, tightly formed queues, packed screening rooms). This is quite a contrast from GFT year-round when it is best described as a place of dwelling, a place people go to have coffee or lunch (in Café Cosmo),<sup>87</sup> to nip in to pick up and browse the brochure or ask box office staff about a forthcoming film, or indeed casually stroll into a screening.<sup>88</sup> Yet in the festival context the tranquility at GFT is disrupted, as one participant explains: 'every screening I've been to here

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<sup>87</sup> Café Cosmo is no longer present in GFT as the space has been used to build Cinema 3 in summer 2013.

<sup>88</sup> On Wednesday nights (Orange Wednesdays) and Weekends, GFT has more of busy environment.

[GFF at GFT] has been queued out of the door onto the street. Whereas when you come here [GFT year-round] it's quiet and you just kind of saunter in and drift into the screening' (FG4: Peter, 24, Filmmaker, Avid).

Indeed in focus groups participants offered highly physiological accounts of their festival experiences. There was suggestion that they are very aware of their physical closeness to not just other people, but also the 'right kind of other people':

**Nigel:** I mean it's the fact that you're sitting so close to people during the festival. I mean GFT does good business but it always around 50% and you can leave your coat on the seat beside you, you're not rubbing up against people. However, at the festival there's an understanding that we're all here because we like films, so getting close isn't an issue.

(FG5: Nigel, Male, 62, Retired, Keen)

Taking this a step further, some participants took pleasure in the reduced proximity between them and other audience members because it gave them the opportunity to observe other audience members' behaviours:

**Mark:** Obviously film is quite a passive medium but it [film festival] is the closest you can get to a gig because everyone there everybody is up for it. I go to the cinema all the time and you've got bams<sup>89</sup> talking, throwing popcorn at each other and you *distance* yourself. And then at the festival you've got people actually involved in it, talking about the film. It adds extra to it. And when you've got 300 likeminded people in a room, laughing and clapping at the same time it's brilliant!

(FG3: Mark, 29, Party-Planner, Keen)

**Richard:** It [the festival] gives a bit of counter evidence to the 'Ah other bodies! I just want to watch it on my own because other people make noises and stuff', but actually there is something rather exciting about the sheer anticipatory buzz of a whole audience that are there to see the brand new Miyazaki film being released for the first time [...] the sheer buzz of the main auditorium being packed out with fellow Miyazaki devotees, that is one of the attractions of the festival, definitely.

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<sup>89</sup> Bam is a derogatory slang word, meaning idiot. It seems to have originated in Glasgow and may be a shortened version of the term bam-pot, also meaning idiot.

As these responses indicate, audiences are acutely aware of being in a space alongside other people and are quite comfortable with the reduced distance that sell-out festival screenings permit. Of course not all screenings at GFF sell out -as noted in Chapter 5, median sales indicate that films only sell between 18 and 41% (refer to figure 5.17 or Appendix I for median sales figures). However, what is significant here is that when asked to recount an experience of the festival, audiences draw on busy events they have attended whereby they are close to other audience members. More significant is that their accounts focus on being in a space with likeminded people, with fellow 'devotees' who 'laugh at the same bits' and who are equally 'up for it.' This is interesting when we look at Hubbard's (2001) work on embodiment at the multiplex, in which he finds that increased social distance and anonymity emerge as key pleasure for multiplex-goers. In the festival context, reduced social distance and being visibly identified as 'a festival-goer', 'film lover', 'a devotee' or 'not a bam' emerge as key pleasures. Also interesting here is the idea that the film festival is similar to a 'gig' (music concert), which ordinarily will involve one live act and a congregation of fans who are united by their adoration of the act in question. While Mark and Richard attended very different events - one is a Fright Fest fan, the other is an anime aficionado - for them, the live, real-time aspects of the event enabled a mode of collective viewing and shared experience - and the other 'right kind of people' in the room were crucial experiential components.

### **Spatial freedom**

Beyond being close to other audience members, festival-goers also took pleasure in the fact that GFF does not operate a policy of spatial segregation. Larger festivals such as Cannes or Berlin operate a strict spatial regime whereby only certain, often credited, people can access certain spaces. However, at GFF, audience are given spatial freedom, which means that they often find themselves to be physically close to visiting talent:

**Ross:** I guess for me cinema-going can be quite a solitary experience and you don't often have any communication with other people there. But there can be something quite magical about that (communicating with other people?). I went to see *All Divided Selves* a documentary about R.D. Laing and I was actually thinking about him before I went into see the film because I'd seen other footage of him. Then I went to the gents before the film and his son, who was doing a Q&A at the film, was coming out of the gents. And he really looks like him so it was kind of like I'd come to see the film with the image of him and his son just passed me on the way to the loo, and there's something about that. And that's part of the reason why I just like being around the place when it's [the festival] happening.

(FG7: Ross, Male, 33, Postgraduate Student, Avid)

**Brodie:** Yeah, I mean you can sit next door [participant refers to GFT] and it's like; oh great there's Peter Mullan. There's just another person who is into film. It's not really that pretentious, which is Glasgow in a nutshell anyways. That's British culture, right? Tall Poppy Syndrome?

(FG4: Brodie, 28, Self-Employed, Avid)

**Mark:** I'm a smoker for my sins and outside everybody is talking and having a laugh speaking about the films and sometimes you see directors outside. I got a few autographs which was good and it just adds something extra to the experience that you don't get when you go to the cinema.

(FG3: Mark, Male, 29, Party Planner, Keen)

The liberal use of space at GFF enabled Ross, Brodie and Mark to be close to visiting talent in and around the festival venue at GFT and in all cases this enhanced their festival experience. Also, for Brodie, who established himself as an avid festival-goer in the session by drawing comparisons between festivals such as Cannes, Tribeca and Toronto, GFF was one of the most 'modest' festivals (he later described it as an 'everyman kinda festival'). Interestingly, he linked these characteristics directly to his perception of the city, which aligns with the earlier pleasure mode of being rooted in Glasgow.



## Waiting spaces and delayed gratification

The final pleasure mode may appear unconventional, but many festival audiences noted that they enjoyed waiting and the delayed gratification that the festival allowed. This chimes with Egan and Barker's notion of 'joining the spectacle', which requires a readiness for punctuated moments of 'intensity and relaxation' (1998: 143-144). In particular, there seemed to be an increased tolerance of delays or suspended gratification at high profile events wherein 'buzz' took on a heightened sense of accumulation in the 'waiting spaces.' As the following festival-goer, attending the European première of *Irvine Welsh's Ecstasy*, explains:

We were all outside waiting in the freezing cold and the staff were saying 'we're really sorry we'll get you in as soon as possible,' but we were like 'we don't care, we're going in when we're going in' because everyone was happy to be there and everyone was talking to everyone else.

(FG1: Gordon, 27, Filmmaker, Avid)

Interesting here is the notion of building anticipation and delayed gratification. Of course, the film festival is a fertile agent for 'waiting' due to the temporal parameters of its schedule that make it subject to continual moments of chaos and unexpected circumstances (delays, technical faults, confirmation or cancellation of guests, ticketing errors, and queues at box office, bars, toilets and outside the auditoriums. Yet festival goers, unlike cinema goers who found trailers, queues and general delays frustrating, made allowances for the unpredictability and erratic temporality of film festivals and in many ways its erratic nature had its own appeal.

In this instance, time delay was not regarded as something that devalued experience. On the contrary, participants found that time 'waiting' in the spaces in and around the auditorium enriched the experience because it offered a moment to interact with other audience members, even though in many cases it involved some type of discomfort (in this case being cold in the chilly February weather). Also the attempts by festival practitioners walking the queues, constantly articulating distraction narratives to audiences - 'a film overran' 'we're waiting on our special guest' 'the projectionist is stuck in the lift' which is a true story - contributes to

this sense of pandemonium in an around patrolled festival spaces, albeit what Thomas Elsaesser refers to as ‘organised chaos’ (2005: 102).<sup>90</sup>

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have proposed that in order to understand the popularity of audience festivals we must look further at the ways in which spatial pleasure comes to the fore and how physical presence in space with ‘other bodies’ is one of the most gratifying aspects of festival culture, which sets it aside from cinema-going year-round particularly in the multiplex space (as suggested by Hubbard 2001). Indeed audiences take pleasure in being close to other audience members and observing their experiences, actively locating commonalities with strangers through modes of appreciation (laughing at the same parts, synchronised clapping). I argue that festival-goers voluntarily surrender the anonymity that Hubbard (2001) discusses in his multiplex study, and adopt voyeuristic practices of watching and being watched. This is particularly interesting given that classical spectatorship theory is centred on a notion of negation of the body wherein cinema-goers leave the body behind and become immersed in the text. Indeed, festival-goers experience the event corporeally and spatially and are acutely aware of themselves as part of a collective audience. This notion of the collective self is reinforced by the cultural rhetoric circulated by practitioners through the enveloping address of the festival, as discussed in Chapter 7.

Such findings may offer, albeit modest, counter evidence to the popular notion that to sway viewers away from domestic or digital consumption, out into auditoriums requires technological innovation. Rather, I argue that the resilience of cinema in a festival context is the sharing of experience within a physical space and that this particular mode of film consumption constructs a distinctly embodied mode of cinematic practice.

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<sup>90</sup> During the 2013 festival one of the projectionists did get trapped in the access lift at GFT.

## Chapter 9: Contribution, Reflection & Conclusion

Film festivals are considered ‘ubiquitous phenomenon’ owing to the extraordinary rate in which they have multiplied worldwide (de Valck & Loist, 2013a: online). Although exact figures are indefinite, it is suggested that ‘somewhere in the world a film festival opens every thirty-six hours’ (quoted in Archibald & Miller, 2011: 249).<sup>91</sup> Indeed, during Sundance Film Festival 2013, the festival’s founder Robert Redford noted that there was now a ‘festival in every neighborhood’ and that there may in fact be ‘too many film festivals’ (Kohn, 2013: online).

On a national level, since Glasgow Film Festival’s advent in 2005, 19 new film festivals have launched in Scotland, 11 of those within this PhD research period alone (2010-13) (The List, 2014: 26-84).<sup>92</sup> These new festivals consist of thematic, niche events: Scotland’s first and only silent film festival; a horror festival in Dundee; a festival celebrating connections between food and film; a short film festival; and an event dedicated to animation.<sup>93</sup> Others are best described as local or regional festivals - rooted in sense of place, catering for local communities rather than specific taste cultures.<sup>94</sup> Others celebrate particular national and/or continental cinemas, targeting diasporic audiences and those with a penchant for world cinema. Then there is the growing pool of political and environmental festivals.<sup>95</sup> More broadly, there are now 411 festivals in Scotland alone with between 5 and 60 festivals taking place each month (ibid).<sup>96</sup> Thus, to say that Scotland is a country of festivity is fair comment.

Returning to film festivals specifically, each of these new events arguably has its own value and distinct identity, ‘festival image’ to use Stringer’s (2003) terminology, however, as much as they are distinct from one another, they are also

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<sup>91</sup> Report commissioned by former Artistic Director of Edinburgh International Film Festival: ‘Standing out from the herd’ was produced in November 2006 by Split Screen Data Ltd.

<sup>92</sup> This figure includes GFF, Glasgow Youth Film Festival and Glasgow Short Film Festival. The 19 festivals were researched using the List Magazine’s 2014 Scottish festival guide. All film festivals’ inception dates were researched.

<sup>93</sup> Hippodrome Festival of Silent Cinema launched in 2011 in Bo’ness, West Lothian. Dundee horror festival was launched in 2011 in Dundee. The Edinburgh Short Film Festival became independent from the Leith Festival in 2009. Scotland Loves Animation was launched in 2010 in Glasgow and Edinburgh. Food on Film launched in 2007.

<sup>94</sup> Screenplay in Shetland and Aberfeldy Film Festival both launched in 2007. Both Alchemy Film and Moving Image Festival (Hawick) and Loch Ness Film Festival launched in 2010. Southside Film Festival in Glasgow was launched in 2011. Dunoon Film Festival launched and Kirkcaldy Film Festival both launched in 2013.

<sup>95</sup> Africa in Motion launched in 2006. Middle Eastern Film Festival was launched in 2009 in Edinburgh. Middle Eastern Film Festival was launched in 2009 in Edinburgh. Take One Action Film Festival launched in 2008. UK Green Film Festival launched in 2012.

<sup>96</sup> 60 festivals take place in May alone. These figures include ‘all’ festivals and include visual art, science, music and literature amongst others.

similar. The aspect that connects these festivals is their shared reliance on the general public. That is to say that each of these events is an audience festival - an open-access event that is produced *for* the general public - and arguably the most popular type of film festival, certainly within the UK context. Indeed, increasing quantities of audience film festivals indicate the growing popularity of these events and rapidly increasing attendance figures - as noted GFF has grown by 551% in just nine years - suggest a rising appetite for calendarised forms of film consumption. Thus, this is a timely moment for further understanding the appeal of film festivals and their position within film culture more broadly.

This chapter brings to a close this study of exhibition and reception at Glasgow Film Festival, which - despite its youthfulness on the festival circuit - is now the UK's third largest film festival. The chapter presents the original contribution of the work in terms of its methodological and theoretical intervention, and makes recommendations for further academic expansion and development.

### **Original contribution**

Film Festival Studies is a burgeoning academic field and, within this field, there has been considerable interest *in* the audience (de Valck 2007; Stringer 2008; Koelher 2009; Czach 2010; Lloyd 2010). Much of the work has been primarily concerned with what audience members can be presumed to share (their politics, taste, preferred modes of viewing, cinephillic dispositions) and has less often considered more general festivals like GFF, which do not seek to segment and specify the audience in such a clear way. While Marijke de Valck (2007) has considered the identities of the festival audience more broadly, there remains a dearth in studies that engage directly with the general festival audience itself. Of the small pool of audience research in Film Festival Studies, much of the cases are quantitative in nature and emerge from business and/or tourism studies (Lee et al 2004; Lee et al 2008; Caillé 2010). With the exception of Elinor Unwin et al's (2007) study of festival audiences from a marketing perspective, this research is the first qualitative investigation of festival audiences to emerge from Film Studies.

### *Methodological intervention*

One of the core strengths of this thesis is that it avoids a single-method approach, which potentially would have ‘yield[ed] biased and limited results’ (Greene et al, 1989: 256). A mixed-method research design has provided a rich and comprehensive picture of the presentation and experience of a particular cultural event, enabling triangulation of results from fieldwork (participant observation, focus groups, interviews), desk research (literature review, archival research) and quantitative methods (statistical analysis, database building). This approach has also allowed me to situate a contemporary account of film festival culture within historical and contemporary narratives of cinema culture more broadly.

However, it is important to note that the context of my position as a Collaborative Doctoral Award-holder (CDA) has made possible the scope of my research design. Within Film Festival Studies there is arguably an unwritten supposition that research projects that do not go ‘behind the velvet rope’ - gaining access to insider information and materials - are likely to lack rigour, conviction and comprehension (SCMS 2013). In one of the earliest pieces of festival scholarship, Julian Stringer calls for more ethnographic ‘hands on’ approaches to film festivals, noting that the ‘key to success of this kind of work is the researcher’s access to the festivals themselves’ (2003: 242). Indeed, ‘access’ is the operative word here. As outlined in Chapter 3, access can aid the researcher in ‘bridging the broad spaces between questions that [they] want to answer, and the pragmatics and possibilities of their research’ (Egan & Barker, 2006: online). Indeed, this project took place within an optimum arrangement, with no gate-keeping and full access, which brought about its own challenges and possibilities.

In a UK context, the focus on the creative economy has seen mounting numbers of AHRC-funded industry/academic collaborations and a rhetorical shift from ‘knowledge transfer’ to ‘knowledge exchange’.<sup>97</sup> In light of this, my methods chapter is deliberately lengthy. This is because the research context and methods are inextricably linked and thus become fundamentally important to the finished

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<sup>97</sup> Examples of AHRC collaborative projects are: CDA, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP) and Creative Economy Knowledge Exchange (CE KE). AHRC has committed £16M (period 2011/12 - 2015/16) to support four Knowledge Exchange Hubs for the Creative Economy.

work; that is to say that I was able to conduct the research in a particular way because of the contextual framework of the PhD. It is my hope that Chapter 3 will be a useful resource for researchers working within collaborative research frameworks across disciplines. For instance, I consider my exploration of the challenges of co-dependence between researcher and researched, relationship and expectation management, issues of immersion and distance, and experiences of balancing covert (*unknown* to audiences as observer) and overt (*known* to festival practitioners as observer) positions, to be transferable to researchers/scholars conducting ethnographic studies of any organisation, company or social group. Given the myriad complexities, challenges and opportunities of working with a non-academic partner, the chapter also makes the case that industry-partnered projects are best served by reflexive and constructivist methodological frameworks, which enable the researcher to continually problematise the research context, root themselves within their ethnographic narratives, and to continually 'question the nature of collaboration and compliance' (Scheeres & Solomon, 2000: 130).

As one of only two festival audience research studies to use focus group methods, this thesis may also serve as an example of the ways in which qualitative audience accounts - gathered in a social setting which mirrors the sociality of the researched event - can enrich understanding of the film festivals as a facet of cinema-going culture more broadly. On a more practical level, the detail offered in Chapter 3 about the thornier practicalities of conducting audience research during festival time, may serve as a guide for researchers considering this approach.

### *Conceptual intervention*

Beyond methodological value, this thesis also contributes to knowledge in the field of Film Festival Studies in its conceptualisation of the festival audience, therefore, building on recent scholarship which has attempted to identify, profile and understand the festival audience as a multifarious segment of the collective cinema audience (de Valck 2007). Furthermore, it also offers a useful intervention into more general debates about the audience in Film Studies. Studies of contemporary cinema audiences - at least in an Anglo-American context - can usually be more accurately understood as studies of film audiences, centering on how the audience

(or a specific segment of the audience) understand, make sense of, or respond to, specific texts (Austin 2002; Barker 1998, 2009). This is in contrast to historical accounts of cinema-going, which do, in various ways, emphasise cinema and the complexity of the experiences on offer within it (Jones 2001; Kuhn 2002; Jacovich et al 2003). Thus, this study offers a contemporary account of cinema culture which focuses on the contexts of viewing and the viewers themselves, joining a small body of work on contemporary cinema and its audiences (Hubbard 2001; Boyle 2009, 2010; Hollinshead 2011; Evans 2011a, 2001b).

In order to draw out the specific conceptual offerings of this work and the general applicability of my findings, I will now address each of the research questions presented in Chapter 2.

1. What types of films and venues are programmed at GFF and what key agendas, or factors, drive programming decisions?

In order to meet funders' expectations and its own aspirations of expansion on the festival circuit, GFF attempts to be both niche and for all and, therefore, presents a special case for looking at the ways in which populist events consistently negotiate the tension of being for 'some' and 'for everyone'. Julian Stringer notes that it is vital that film festivals continually promote the 'perceived uniqueness of an event's own festival image' arguing that 'the way in which festival titles are selected, presented to a public, and talked about says as much about the status and purpose of a specific event as it does the individual films chosen to make up that event's screening schedule' (2003: 136-37). Exploration of festival programming and presentation of programmes is, therefore, crucial to understanding film festivals. Following a period of neglect, there has been a recent rise in studies on film festival programming and this thesis joins this small but growing area of work (Gann 2012; Ruoff 2013).

A conceptual contribution of Chapter 5 is its move away from a fixation with the aesthetics and textual value of festival content (Frodon 2010; Wong 2011), to consider titles in relation to their contextual value - their distinctiveness within their exhibition environment. That is their territorial context and paratextual possibilities within that context, and the various rhetorical categories relatable to

exhibition ('scarcity', 'discovery', 'limitedness', 'hand-picked' and 'first-timeness'). In this respect, while I agree that a film's appearance on a festival programme is connected to its narrative, aesthetic and production values, I argue that 'exhibition value' is a dominant aspect of programming practice. In considering the exhibition value of each film programmed at GFF over the research period (GFF11-13), I have devised a film typology based on non-textual conditions of programming. This typology has enabled me to consider the legitimacy of the festival's 'cinema for all', 'something for everyone' axioms, and the audience taste patterns that GFF programming implies.

Jeffrey Ruoff notes that 'the best programming has an inner logic, or narrative structure, that finds audiences for films and films for audiences' (Ruoff, 2012: 17). Effective festival programmers are in a constant state of innovation, searching for new ideas, new films and dynamic and novel ways of presenting those films. Thus, this typology proves useful at a time when - in an attempt to make their festival stand out from other events - film festival programmers are adopting more creative practices, screening films in non-conventional spaces and programming events that rely on audience participation and interactivity. While there is no doubt that the types of films programmed at film festivals may differ significantly, it is hoped that my typology may be applicable for future studies on film festival programming practices.

## 2. What do programmed films - their presentation and exhibition in different spaces - tell us about perceptions and constructions of the festival audience?

Systematic consideration of festival brochures and the narratives embedded within them, also connects this work with scholarship which looks at the way in which discursive practices - 'verbal architectures' (Dayan 2000) - aid understanding of cinema and festival culture (Nichols 1994; Klinger 1995; Stringer 2008). I argue that the ways in which GFF titles are discursively presented to audiences suggests the festival's reluctance to appear 'too mainstream' or 'too specialist'. Indeed, articulations of 'cultural worthiness' emerged during textual analysis of the programme whereby more mainstream films were 'de-popularised' and niche films were 'popularised' by the relational modes proposed in this thesis. Thus, I argue



that while the festival maintains neutrality and avoids taking a position as high cultural event, it is inclined to hold onto the esteemed heritage of cultural cinema by offering audiences handpicked specialised films and disconnecting them from the mainstream. Moreover, the festival has now adopted a new mode of programming practice (spatio-textual programming), experimenting with non-tradition cinematic venues, ships, cathedrals, subway stations etc, which offers its audiences a more unique and unorthodox cinematic experience. In this respect, the festival speaks to different types of audiences with varying tastes and motivations for attendance.

I argue that perceptions of the GFF audiences as a collective, culturally omnivorous spectatorship with a penchant for both mainstream and non-mainstream content exists within the organisation, and that this perception is channeled through the films selected for the programme, spatial programming, and the narratives used to present those films. In this respect, GFF is actively responding to the diverse modes of cinephilia that exist within film festival culture (de Valck 2005).

### 3. How does GFF define its current and future identity (ethos, image and values) and how is this transmitted to, and understood by, its audience?

GFF is in a constant state of negotiation between mainstream and niche, local and international. This means that its identity sits precariously within what Dayan (2000) refers to as a 'fragile equilibrium'. Added to these dichotomies, is the exclusive versus inclusive pole. In an attempt to be for all, I argue that GFF encompasses elements of various types of festivals from the exclusive A-list events to experimental grassroots festivals - that is to say that it functions effectively as a 'festival of festivals'. In one sense it filters its inclusive identity through the enveloping address and programmes all events as 'open to the general public' - even the opening and closing galas. However, through its material transformation of cinematic spaces (red carpets, lighting, live music) it bestows a level of spectacle and prestige on the event giving festival-goers the illusion of an exclusive Cannes-like encounter. Thus, it provides an inclusive event that may appear exclusive. In this respect, I propose that GFF is a chameleonic event which undergoes various levels of transformation throughout festival time, embodying different festival

images, speaking to different audiences, and bringing its status as local, international, mainstream, specialised, exclusive and inclusive intermittently in and out of focus.

For audiences, however, the event offers a distinctively local experience. The festival is considered to be modest, inclusive with lots of personality and Glasgow flavour. However, the festival's desire for expansion could problematise its local and modest disposition. For festivals, expansion only comes with increased funding, and to secure funding the festival in question must build bigger audiences, gain reputation on an international level, attract visitors to the city, book A-list visiting talent, and gain widespread media coverage. The festival therefore finds itself in challenging circumstances as it negotiates aspirations of 'bigger, international and prestigious' with 'small, local and humble'. The festival must ensure that it does not sacrifice what is distinct about the event in its journey to expansion.

4. What are audience members' prime motivations for attending GFF and in what ways do their choices and festival experiences differ from, or synergise with, year-round cinema-going choices and experiences?

One of the key findings of this research is that festival-going is best understood as a supplementary activity to cinema-going. One does not forsake the other. Certainly there are individuals who use the festival as a singular moment to binge on film and rarely visit the cinema year-round, however, in the most part, festival-goers are cinema-goers who attend the event for something 'a bit different' from the standard cinema visit.

Another important difference between cinema-going practice and festival-going practice is that the film festival context triggers a more active mode of film consumption. The scale of choice and diversity of films alongside the temporal confines of the event itself forces audiences into a dynamic state. Festival-goers not only decide to see a specific film, they consciously decide to see a film as part of a specific experiential context (film festival) and in a specific spatial context (festival venue). The temporal enclave of festival times presents them with a fleeting opportunity for something different. As Chapter 6 has unearthed, narratives of chance and opportunity were dominant across all audience research

groups. Shaped by articulations of escapism from their everyday routines, GFF offered audiences the chance to break with the norm and engage in a temporal encounter with fellow appreciators of film. In this respect, the value of the film festival cannot be measured solely on the paucity of content (giving audiences films they might not otherwise see) as some scholars may suggest (Koehler 2009; Czach 2010). Indeed, many aspects of the film festival and its programme motivate audiences to attend, and motivation stems from both textual (attracted to a particular narrative, national cinema) and non-textual circumstances (the social value of the event).

5. What taste patterns emerge in terms of content and space and to what extent do GFF audiences segment in terms of year-round patterns of engagement with specific cinemas?

A central aim of this thesis was to consider how the film festival experience and practices compare with cinema experiences and practices. While narratives of chance emerged as key pleasure with reference to UF films (getting to see a film that they may not otherwise get the chance to see), the most common type of films attended were RLC films, most of which made a return to GFT or CRS or both following the event. This illustrates a tension between the presented identities of festival-goers (as seekers of rare content and discoveries) and their actual festival practices (choosing films that were highlights and scheduled for mainstream release). In terms of specific taste patterns, they varied from festival-goer to festival-goer. However, there were three main choice patterns: selection based on nation, narrative and avoidance by genre.

In fact, taste was based more on cinemas as opposed to film texts. Participants articulated existing taste and identity through narratives of space and affiliations with particular types of cinemas outside festival time. While the majority of festival-goers taking part in my study viewed themselves as keen or avid cinema-goers and attended the cinema once or more per week, they brought with them their own cultural distinctions and values, which were shaped by pre-established ideas about particular film types and exhibition spaces based on their year-round cinematic practices. Thus, while I propose that GFF provokes a more mobilised mode of cinema practice as festival-goers move across sites, I also

suggest that this means that film festivals like GFF trigger broader discussions about cinema culture. Thus, I suggest that while there is a desire to move beyond art house-multiplex debates, audiences still form identities, and articulate those identities, in spatial terms, forming perceptions of cultural identity around cinematic spaces.

6. What are the main pleasures and experiences of festival-going and how might this compare to year-round pleasures of attending the cinema?

A core argument of this thesis is that the sociality of the film festival is its most commanding charm. Audience accounts testify that being around other people during the festival is a dominant pleasure, which contrasts that of year-round cinema-going pleasures. Important here, however, is that, for audiences, the festival attracts the ‘right kind of people’. There is a presupposition that the people attending film festivals are people who enjoy film and know how to behave themselves. Indeed, the presence and actions of other audience members triggers modes of voyeuristic practices that see audiences intently watch other audiences and observe their behaviours, taking pleasures in synchronised modes of appreciation. Chapter 8 argues that audiences are acutely aware of their own embodiment and proposes a pleasure framework of ‘vocabularies of spatial and embodied pleasure’, which connects with existing work on filmic pleasures (Egan and Barker 2006) and work on embodied pleasures or displeasures within cinematic culture (Kuhn 2004; Hubbard 2001; Boyle 2009, 2010).

### **Future developments and expansion**

Presently, this thesis has some probable avenues for output. Nevertheless, when considering potential developments, the research could be expanded for a larger, international audience study of audience festivals. For example, studies of audiences at Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) and International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR) or any other ‘audience-focused’ festival could broaden the work’s scope and worth, offering the field its first book-length work on the relationships between film festivals and their publics.

Another potential avenue would be zooming in on the various ‘festival actors’ Dayan outlines in his anthropological study (filmmakers, audiences, festival workers, distributors, press), engaging with these actors directly using audience research methods. This could also potentially involve interviews/focus groups with volunteers, which would connect with Skadi Loist’s recent work on festivals and free labour (2012). The study might also engage with youth audiences. Glasgow Youth Film Festival (GYFF) is one of the fastest growing areas of the festival and with little or no work on youth film festivals it would make for an original piece and timely piece of work, given the BFI’s long-term strategy to ‘invest in the film lovers of tomorrow’ by boosting film choice for youth audience (BFI, 2012: 13).

Lastly, another potential area for development would be a reception study with the absent audience, which would connect and develop Ailsa Hollinshead’s work on absent art house audiences in Edinburgh (2011). Given the low number of immigrant attendees at GFF and GFT, as suggested by *Vision 2020* and EKOS reports, a study of cinema culture (habits and practices) of Glasgow’s ethnic communities might shed light on the ways in which film is used, or not used, to connect to home (as briefly mentioned in Chapter 6), and consider the ways in which visiting festivals at GFT, like African in Motion (AIM) and Play Poland, are serving, or failing to serve, diasporic communities living in multicultural Glasgow.

### **Final thoughts**

As noted elsewhere, Film Festival Studies is still in the early stages of establishing itself as a vitally important area of Film Studies. However, I believe that early acknowledgement of the problematic lack of empirical audience research is critical. If we are to fully understand the allure of film festivals, then more ‘hands on’ audience studies - which present the ‘real voices of real audiences’ - are required if Film Festival Studies is to avoid the same problematic traditions as its Film Studies counterpart, which took a very long time to shake off the fear of ‘dirtying [its] hands with empirical material’ (Stacey, 1994: 29). Thus far, Film Festival Studies has proved itself to be a prolific and dynamic new subject area, increasing its output and profile rapidly since early 2000, and so it is time that the subject’s

outpouring includes more voluminous engagement with the festival public. I hope that recent quantitative work on audiences (Lee et al 2004; Lee et al 2008; Caillé 2010), this thesis and any subsequent publication of the work, may draw attention to the value of audience research within film festival scholarship, and highlight the urgent need for more research on the people who make festivals come to life.

# Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Sample

## Allison Gardner Interview

### Your Role

1. Let's start with a little bit about you. Can you tell me about your role here at GFT and your role at GFF?
2. How did you come to be in this role? (Background)
3. What's it like to work at GFT and GFF?

### Inside GFT

1. Can you tell me a little bit about GFT? (history, funding, staff, organisational structure etc)
2. What are GFT's main objectives?
3. How would you describe GFT to someone who didn't know the cinema? (looking for its profile and its physical characteristics).
4. What challenges does an independent cinema like GFT face?
5. And how are these being challenged?

### Inside GFF

1. Can you tell me a little bit about GFF? (history, funding etc)
2. What are GFF's main objectives?
3. How would you describe the festival to someone who didn't know the cinema? (looking for its profile - does she talk about physical characteristics?).
4. How do you decide what films to programme for GFT, how do you know the audience will like it?
5. What challenges does a festival like GFF face?
6. And how are these being challenged?

## **'Festival Space'**

1. Can you tell me a little bit about each of the venues that the festival takes place at?
2. What is the role of GFT in the festival, in terms of the building, profile?
3. How does the programming work, in terms of venues? Who gets what?
4. How does the space here at GFT change when the festival is on?
5. How does the space at Cineworld change when the festival is on?
6. In what ways is the value of a festival experience more or less or indeed the same as a cinema experience?
7. How does seeing a film at a GFF differ from seeing a film at any of the venues year-round?

## **Festival Audiences**

1. Who is the GFT audience? How might it compare to say, a multiplex audience?
2. Who is the GFF audience? (strands, mini-festivals, identity)
3. How do these two audiences compare? (behaviours, etiquette, ritual)
4. How well do you think you know your audience?
5. One of the central questions of this thesis is; what is the relationship between GFF audiences and the GFT. What do you think that it?
6. Is there an absent GFT audience?
7. Is there an absent GFF audience?

## **The Future**

1. What makes a successful festival?
2. We've talked a little about the past and the present, but what about the future? What does the next five years and beyond hold for GFT?
3. And for GFF?

[END]



## Appendix B: Focus Group Flyer

Sign up for a short focus group and receive...  
**Two FREE festival tickets!**

Every day a film festival takes place somewhere in the world. In fact the rate at which film festivals have spread globally has intrigued industry professionals and academics alike. Yet, there has been little research attention paid to the people who form the heart of most film festivals – you, the audience.

As part of a 3-year project, Lesley Dickson - PhD researcher at University of Glasgow - will carry out focus groups with audiences at this year's Glasgow Film Festival, now the third largest film festival in the UK. A central concern here is; Why are film festivals important to audiences?

*Are you interested in taking part & having your say?*

Focus Groups	Date	Time
Session One	Sunday 19 Feb	13:30-14:30
Session Two	Sunday 19 Feb	18.30-19.30
Session Three	Monday 20 Feb	20:00-21:00
Session Four	Tuesday 21 Feb	16:00-17:00
Session Five	Thursday 23 Feb	17:30-18:30
Session Six	Thursday 23 Feb	19:45-20:45
Session Seven	Friday 24 Feb	17:15-18:15
Session Eight	Friday 24 Feb	19:00-20:00



Sign up for a session with Focus Group Staff after the film.  
Or alternatively email:

**cinemafocusgroups@gmail.com**

*Nibbles, wine & soft drinks provided*

Focus Groups take place at GFT on Rose Street, G3 6RB

**ATTENDANCE MUST BE CONFIRMED. STRICTLY NO DROP-INS.**

Standard restrictions apply.

## Appendix C: Focus Group Participants

FG Session	Name	Times Spoken	Age	Occupation	Gender	Know about research?	No. Films GFF12	How many years	Cinema
1	Richard	22	50	Policy Advisor	M	GFF Newsletter	3	3	Showcase
1	Gordon	28	27	Filmmaker	M	Twitter	5	1	Cineworld RS
1	Marion	19	58	Retired	F	GFF Newsletter	9	4	GFT
1	Olivia	24	32	Data Assistant	F	Twitter	10	7	Cineworld
1	Thomas	16	18	Student - UGR	M	GFF Newsletter	3	3	Cineworld
2	Ramiro	33	40	Researcher - Science	M	WOM	2	2	GFT
2	Rafee	26	32	Software Developer	M	Flyer	7	4	GFT
2	Leena	27	28	Student - PGR	F	Facebook	5	1	GFT
2	Iris	25	24	Student - PGR	F	Facebook	7	1	GFT
2	Irene	43	34	Student - PGR	F	Flyer	15	6	GFT
3	Petya	26	30	Student - PGR	F	Flyer	5	2	GFT
3	Mark	36	29	Party Planner	M	38 Minutes	11	2	Cineworld RS
3	Charlie	45	48	Retail Manager	M	GFF Newsletter	12	3	GFT
3	Carolina	34	31	Barista	F	Flyer	7	4	Cineworld RS
4	Nadine	26	43	Physiotherapist	F	Flyer	30	5	GFT
4	Peter	12	23	Filmmaker	M	WOM	6	2	Cineworld RS
4	Lillian	32	73	Retired	F	Flyer	20	7	Cineworld RS
4	Chris	16	23	Student - PGR	M	Intro at film	10	1	Cineworld RS
4	Brenda	17	40	Nurse	F	Flyer	5	8	Cineworld RS
4	Louise	6	56	Home-maker	F	Flyer	6	4	GFT
4	Patricia	11	48	Charity Worker	F	Flyer	9	3	GFT
5	Sean	18	63	Retired	M	Flyer	30	1	GFT
5	Nancy	31	60	Charity Shop Manager	F	Facebook	9	7	GFT
5	Brodie	28	30	Self-Employed	M	Facebook	3	1	GFT
5	Jing	10	23	Student - PGR	F	GFF Newsletter	2	2	GFT
5	Elina	17	19	Student - UGR	F	Facebook	3	1	Cineworld RS
5	Rachel	12	42	Ward Clerk	F	Flyer	4	2	Cineworld RS
5	Nigel	35	62	Retired	M	WOM	11	7	GFT
6	Brian	24	48	Self-Employed	M	WOM	4	4	GFT
6	Kat	29	31	Designer	F	38 Minutes	3	2	GFT
6	Georgia	20	24	Teacher	F	Poster at GFT	3	2	Cineworld RS
6	Valerie	20	32	Administrator	F	GFF Newsletter	4	2	GFT
6	Tammy	19	31	Graphic Designer	F	38 Minutes	3	2	GFT
7	Blair	12	31	IT Technician	M	WOM	5	3	GFT
7	Ross	18	33	Student - PGR	M	Flyer	6	2	Cineworld RS

7	Mandy	21	49	Area Sales Manager	F	GFF Newsletter	16	8	GFT
7	Sylvia	29	42	Lawyer	F	Flyer	21	6	GFT
7	Julia	6	33	Young Carer Development Worker	F	Flyer	3	3	Cineworld RS
7	Katie	21	32	Left blank	F	WOM	2	4	GFT
7	Pamela	14	31	Student - PGR	F	Flyer	1	1	GFT
7	Tim	14	39	Volunteer GFF	M	GFF Newsletter	10	7	Perth Playhouse

# Appendix D: Focus Group Semi-Structured Format

## Introduction

---

- Welcome, summary of research topic, explain how the material will be used.
- Sign consent forms.
- Distribute questionnaire and ask participants to state their names for the tape.

## Icebreaker

---

- How are you enjoying the festival so far / or how has the festival been for you so far?

## PART TWO: Film festivals; experiences, motivations and choice

---

- What motivates you to go to Glasgow Film Festival?
  - Cultural consumption
  - Films (marketing, recommendations, press)
  - Social aspect (with family, friends?)
  - The spectacle/The event (guests, vips, awards)
- How do you select what events/films you attend?
  - Friends pick
  - Programme synopses
  - Press
  - What role does venue play?
- What's your most been your highs and lows of Glasgow Film Festival (past or present)?
  - Anecdotes.
- In what ways has the festival changed for those of you who have been coming for several years?

## PART THREE: Film festival identities, perceptions, and behaviours

---

- In your experience, who goes to Glasgow Film Festival?
- Who doesn't go to Glasgow Film Festival?

- How would you describe the festival audience in comparison to your experience of cinema audiences?
  - More engaged?
  - Behavioural patterns - self policing, noise in cinema
  - Community?
- How would you describe experience of a Glasgow Film Festival to a friend who hadn't been to one?
  - Profile of the festival
  - Its image/brand

### PART THREE: Film festivals and cinema spaces

---

- What cinemas do you all attend most regularly year-round?
- Why do go to this particular cinema?
  - How 'types' of cinema differ.
  - Programme - film 'tastes'
  - Facilities; staff, food/drink, location, programme notes, comfort
  - Price, Cinecard.
  - Fellow audience members
  - Space/Architecture. How would you describe the space of each of these venues?
- In what ways does seeing films in these venues during the film festival differ from regular cinema visits, if at all?
  - Audience more diverse?
  - Buzz, sense of the event
  - Special guests
  - Staff visibility

[END]

## Appendix E: Ethics Consent Form for Interview Participants



University  
of Glasgow

### CONSENT TO THE USE OF DATA

I understand that Lesley-Ann Dickson is collecting data in the form of taped interview for use in an academic research project at the University of Glasgow.

This project looks at contemporary film culture in Glasgow. It investigates the importance of film festivals in local audiences' cultural lives. Engaging directly with audiences, it attempts to gain a better understanding of why audiences choose to go to film festivals, what makes a 'festival experience' and what perceptions and identities are attached to festival culture.

I give my consent to the use of data for this purpose on the understanding that:

- The material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.
- The material will be retained in secure storage for use in future academic research
- The material may be used in future publications, both print and online.

Signed by the contributor: \_\_\_\_\_ date:

Researcher's name: Lesley-Ann Dickson

Supervisor's name: Professor Raymond Boyle

Department address: Theatre, Film and Television Studies, Gilmorehill Halls,  
University of Glasgow, G12 8QQ

[Updated September 2011 MAB]

## Appendix F: Ethics Consent Form for Focus Group Participants



### CONSENT TO THE USE OF DATA

I understand that Lesley-Ann Dickson is collecting data in the form of taped focus group discussion and completed questionnaires for use in an academic research project at the University of Glasgow.

This project looks at contemporary film culture in Glasgow. It investigates the importance of film festivals in local audiences' cultural lives. Engaging directly with audiences, it attempts to gain a better understanding of why audiences choose to go to film festivals, what makes a 'festival experience' and what perceptions and identities are attached to festival culture.

I give my consent to the use of data for this purpose on the understanding that:

- All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.
- The material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.
- The material will be retained in secure storage for use in future academic research
- The material may be used in future publications, both print and online.

Signed by the contributor: \_\_\_\_\_ date:

Researcher's name: Lesley-Ann Dickson

Supervisor's name: Professor Raymond Boyle

Department address: Theatre, Film and Television Studies, Gilmorehill Halls,  
University of Glasgow, G12 8QQ

[Updated September 2011 MAB]

## Appendix G: GFT and GFF Timeline Overview

### 1930s-1940s

1939 George Singleton opens the Cosmo  
1946 UK cinema attendance reaches an all-time high (1,635m admissions)

### 1960s

French New Wave and New Hollywood offer a wealth of content for the Cosmo  
1965 most of the independent cinemas in Glasgow have closed (Scottish Cinemas, undated: online).

### 1970s

By 1970 UK attendance figures had dropped to 193m  
1973 George Singleton sells the Cosmo to the Scottish Film Council  
1974 Glasgow Film Theatre opens  
New programming focus on retrospectives and auteur seasons

### 1980s

Widespread television ownership  
Deindustrialisation hits Glasgow and UK unemployment reaches a high  
GFT introduces student and unemployed concessionary rates  
GFT becomes a registered charity

### 1990s

1990 Cinema Two opens at GFT  
1990 GFT introduces its slogan 'Cinema for All'  
1990 Glasgow is European City of Culture  
GFT partners with Europa Cinemas  
By 1991 there are 551 multiplex screens in the UK  
GFT begins to *festivalise* its programme welcoming visiting festivals such as EIFF

### 2000s

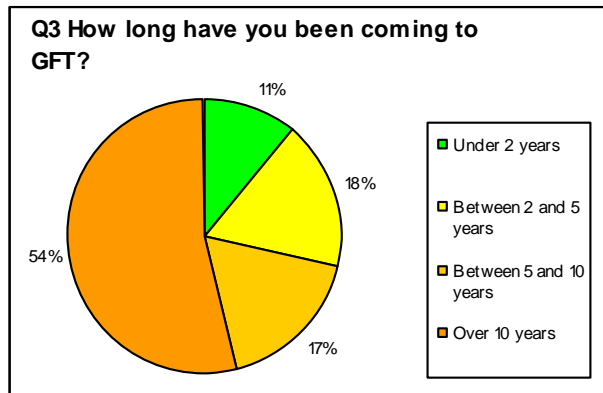
2005 Glasgow World Film Festival is launched by Nick Varley  
2006 the festival moves from nine days to eleven days  
2006 Glasgow World Film Festival is renamed Glasgow Film Festival  
2006 *Vision 2020* is published (see GFT 2006)  
2007 Allison Gardner and Allan Hunter take over the festival

### 2010s

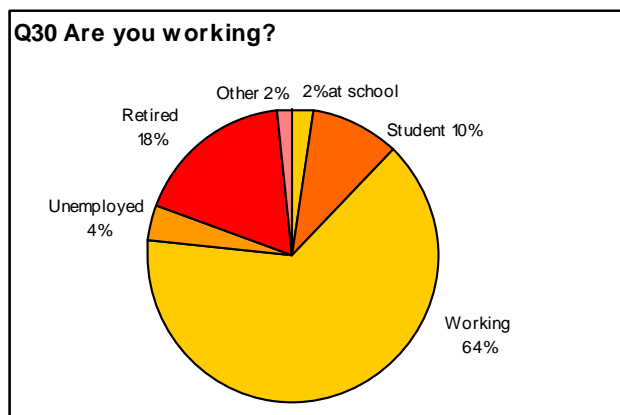
Scottish Screen and Scottish Arts Council Merger - Creative Scotland  
2013 GFT Player is launched  
2013 Cinema Three opens at GFT  
2014 GFF turns ten years old



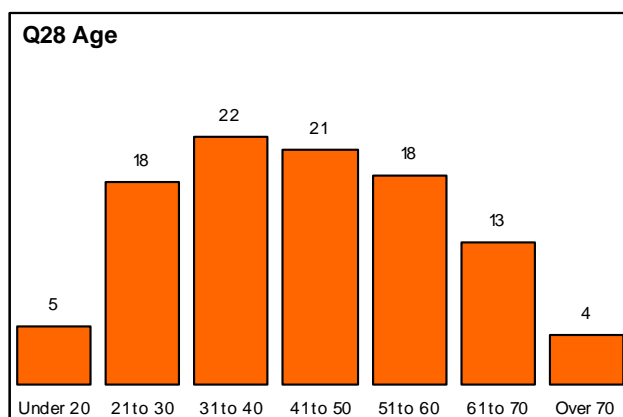
## Appendix H: Audience data from the *Vision 2020* report



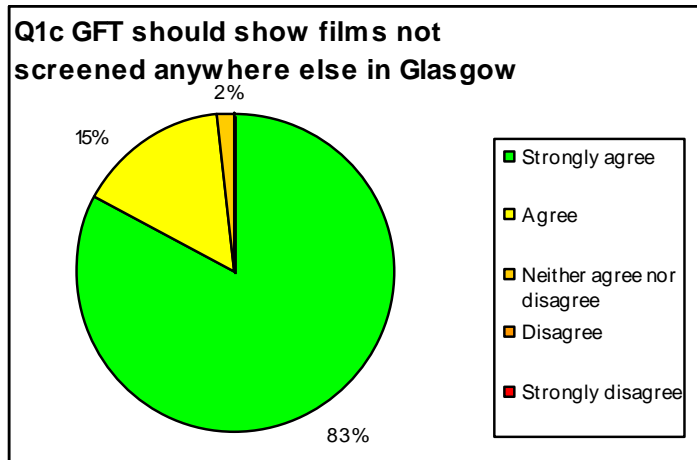
GFT loyalty of survey participants, *Vision 2020*: 54% of the research sample had been coming to GFT for over 10 years. Source: Vision 2020 Report (GFT 2006)



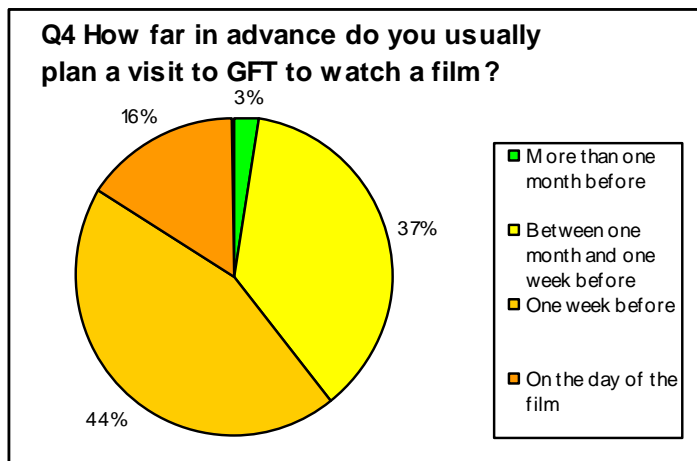
Occupation of survey participants, *Vision 2020*: Data from the Vision 2020 survey on occupational status of survey participants. Source: Vision 2020 Report (GFT 2006).



Age of survey participants, *Vision 2020*: Age data for survey sample. The most dominant age groups were 31-40 and 41-50 years old. Source: Vision 2020 Report (GFT 2006).



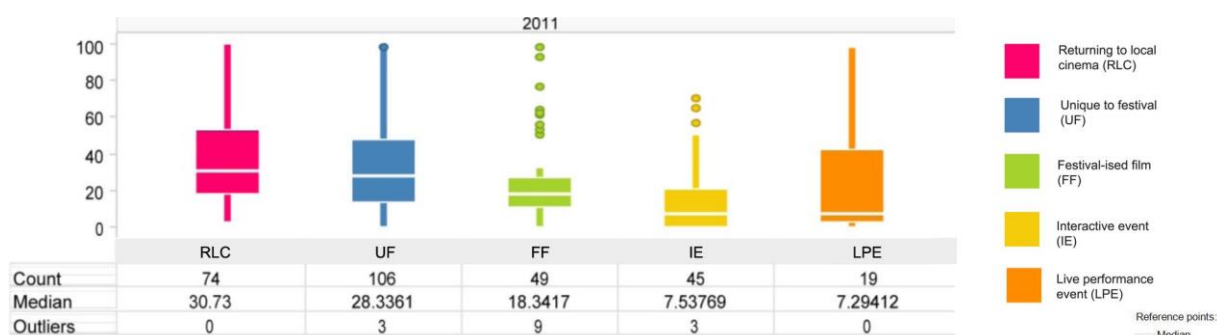
Programming opinion, *Vision 2020*: Data for programming opinions. Source: Vision 2020 Report (GFT 2006).



Attendance patterns, *Vision 2020*: Attendance data, which shows that most people plan a trip to GFT one week before attending. Source: Vision 2020 Report (GFT 2006).

[END]

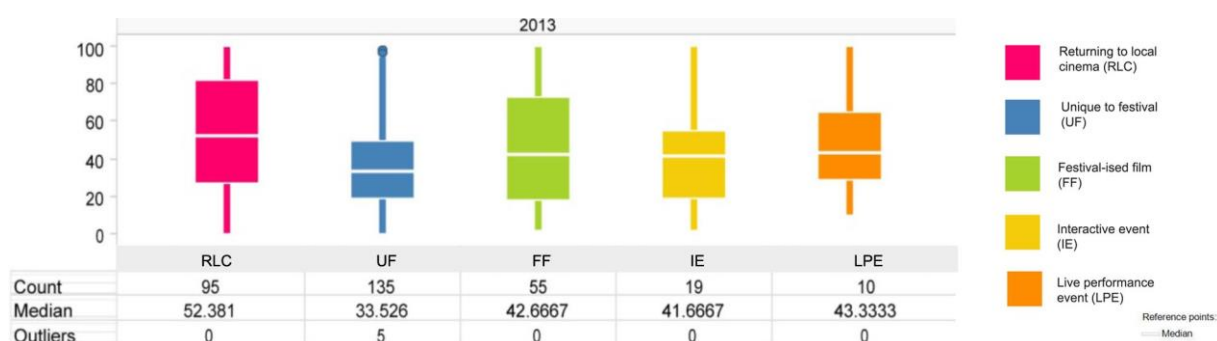
## Appendix I: Median sales (by %) for 2011, 2012 and 2013



**2011:** Median figures show sales (by %) taking into account the capacity of each screening. RLC films (30%), UF films (28%), FF (18%), IE (7%) and LPE (7%).



**2012:** Median figures show sales (by %) taking into account the capacity of each screening. RLC films (39%), UF films (35%), FF (34%), IE (36%) and LPE (40%).

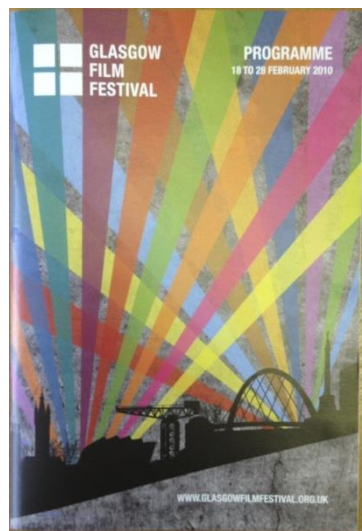
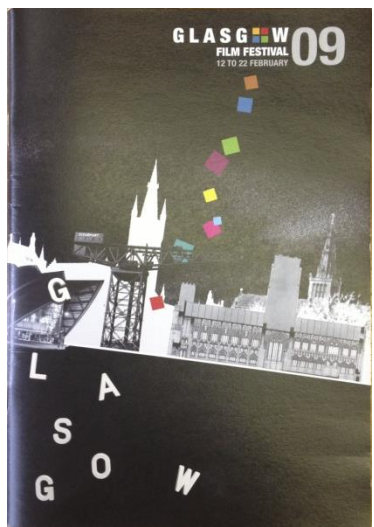
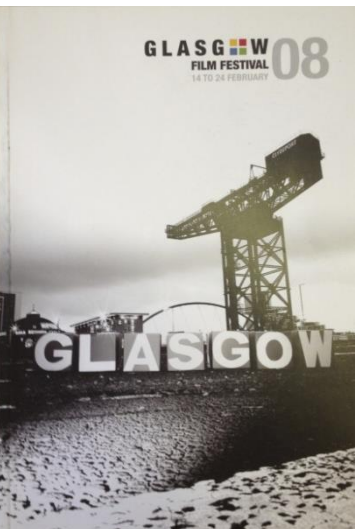
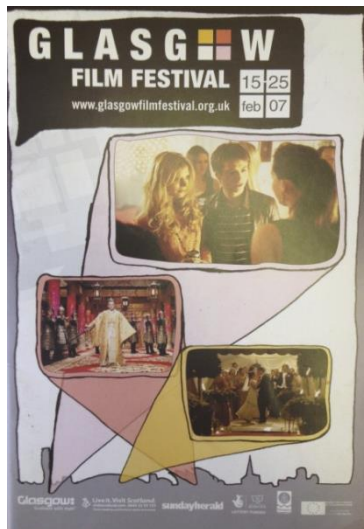


**2013:** Median figures show sales (by %) taking into account the capacity of each screening. RLC films (52%), UF films (33%), FF (42%), IE (41%) and LPE (43%).

# Appendix J: GFF Festival Grid

SUNDAY 12 FEBRUARY												
	10.00	11.00	12.00	13.00	14.00	15.00	16.00	17.00	18.00	19.00	20.00	21.00
GFT 1												
GFT 2												
THE ARCHIES												
CCA CINEMA												
CCA THEATRE												
CCA CLUBROOM												
CCA COURTYARD												
THE SHED												
MONDAY 13 FEBRUARY												
	10.00	11.00	12.00	13.00	14.00	15.00	16.00	17.00	18.00	19.00	20.00	21.00
GFT 2												
TUESDAY 14 FEBRUARY												
	10.00	11.00	12.00	13.00	14.00	15.00	16.00	17.00	18.00	19.00	20.00	21.00
GFT 2												
WEDNESDAY 15 FEBRUARY												
	10.00	11.00	12.00	13.00	14.00	15.00	16.00	17.00	18.00	19.00	20.00	21.00
GFT 2												
THURSDAY 16 FEBRUARY												
	10.00	11.00	12.00	13.00	14.00	15.00	16.00	17.00	18.00	19.00	20.00	21.00
GFT 1												
GFT 2												
THE ARCHIES												
FRIDAY 17 FEBRUARY												
	10.00	11.00	12.00	13.00	14.00	15.00	16.00	17.00	18.00	19.00	20.00	21.00
GFT 1												
GFT 2												
CINEMAFIELD 16												
CINEMAFIELD 17												
CINEMAFIELD 18												
CCA THEATRE												

Appendix K: GFF brochures 2005-2010



## Appendix L: Fieldwork Journal Extract - *Route Irish*

GFF11, 6pm screening of *Route Irish* (Ken Loach, 2010, UK)

Wednesday 23 February 2011 at GFT

I arrive at 5.30pm (the film starts at 6pm). The foyer is extremely crowded and noisy. Lots of people look smartly dressed and there are a lot of groups. Many people have drinks from the bar and Cafe Cosmo has a long queue so I choose not to wait for a drink and head straight to the auditorium. Cinema one is busy already so I take a seat and people filter in until the auditorium is absolutely packed and there are only odd empty seats here and there. It was announced earlier in the week that Ken Loach would attend the screening and I can see him at the side of the screen where Allison Gardner introduces the film. I can see some audience members at the front whispering and pointing at him. Allison announces that 21,000 tickets have been sold so far (its Day 6 of the 11 day festival) and the audience cheers loudly and there's applause. The auditorium feels very electric and the applause suggests there's a lot of support for the festival. Alison invites Ken Loach to the microphone and he notes that 'it's great to be back at Glasgow Film Festival' and briefly introduces the film, noting that he'll be around for a Q&A afterwards. The audience applaud again, and the lights go out.

After the film, Ken Loach returns to the stage with Eddie Harrison from the List Magazine (he is facilitating the Q&A). There are lots of political questions (the film was about the war in Iraq) and people seem really moved by the film, some describe it as 'honest' and one audience member labels it as 'one of only a handful of truthful anti-war movies.' Loach notes that the filmmaking team 'want you [the audience] to feel anger and outrage,' which seems to connect himself and the 'collective audience.' He also notes that the Glasgow audience are one of the 'first to see the film' and that it would be on Sky Movies at the same time as its UK cinema release so that it 'reaches as large an audience as possible.' Toward the end, an audience member notes that he's written Loach a poem and stands up and reads it aloud. At first it is welcomed by Harrison, Loach and the audience but it goes on a while and the audience seems to be becoming a little irritated, some subtle heckling. He is then closed down by Harrison who reminds the audience that 'we've got Ken Loach here in the room, let's ask him a question!' Following the Q&A there is a huge applause and whistles, and we slowly leave the packed auditorium as lots of people are talking and lurking. The man with the poem delivers it to Loach. He looks very chuffed with himself.

## Appendix M: Fieldwork Journal Extract - *Jaws*

GFF13, 8.20pm screening of *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975, USA)

Friday 22 February 2013 at The Tall Ship

I arrive at Riverside by car around 7.40pm. It is dry outside but already very dark, and it is deathly quiet. I park in the transport museum car park; the museum is closed but is brightly lit and I can see all the vintage cars through the glass-fronted building. Across from the museum is the Glenlee, berthed and also alit. I walk along the port side of the vessel and enter a small tourist room - a glass box - where I give my name to a person whom I think works for The Tall Ship as opposed to the film festival. I can see a brochure on a desk but there is very little festival livery on display. I walk further along the port side and board via the plank. It's extremely quiet onboard and there are no other people on deck but me and my friend. I see a sign that reads 'This way for the show,' which leads me downstairs via a very narrow steep stairwell (I'm not sure if and where there is disabled access). Downstairs there is a bar and people are casually wandering around examining the interior of the space, there are some pictures and art on the walls. We wait around for a bit, it is all very subdued.

Eventually we are led down to another level by a narrow, although less steep, stairwell. Here there is a small screen with chiavari chairs set out in rows of around five. I take a seat and moments later a man sits down beside me. He is part of a group of around six or seven people and is dressed from head-to-toe in a shark costume. His face emerges from the jaws of the shark suit as if he has just been swallowed whole. He and his friends are chatting away before the film begins; this is clearly a fun Friday night out for them. A female member of the party, sat behind me, has brought home-made cakes and passes them along her row and forward to friends in my row. All seats are occupied, holding around 50 people (I noticed earlier at GFT that the film had sold out). GFF projectionist, Malcolm, is sat high above us on some bulk at the back of the room. The hazy light from the projector is visible in the darkness but beams out above our heads.

There is no introduction before the film (there doesn't seem to be any GFF staff present) and the film just starts, which feels a bit like the scene hasn't been set. Nevertheless, the theme-tune is met by giggles; curiously it reminds me of the excited anxiety one collectively feels before a rollercoaster takes off. It is clear that this is an audience of *Jaws* fans. This is made clear when a famous line from the film - 'you're gonna need a bigger boat!' - is recited in synchrony with the delivery onscreen by a guy in front of me. It triggers laughter. Most people are with a friend or friends. There are two middle-aged ladies behind me who seemed to have brought an entire picnic with them from Sainsbury's and continue to rustle and crunch throughout the film. The film isn't very loud and we're all really close to one another, so it is very noisy, however, no one seems to bother.

When the film finishes there is no applause and it all feels a little awkward. The audience no longer seems connected as fans, a bit like waking up after a party with strangers. I can't help feeling a little disappointed that there wasn't more of a display of appreciation at the end of the film. It was a bit of an anticlimax.

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