

Wimbledon Film Club Chairman's report, 2017

We have had another great season, opening with the Deniz Gamze Ergüven terrifically engaging Mustang. We had several excellent speaker events since last year's AGM we have had including screenwriter Elizabeth Clegg for Love and Friendship, Andrew Kinsler (lead actor) Richard Mundy (director/writer/producer) Harry Kirby (composer) for Twenty Twenty-Four, Michael Howe (supporting actor) for A United Kingdom, author Gill Plain and Chris Park of Merton LGBT+ Forum for Victim, film historian Nick Smedley for The Conversation and, most recently, Josh Appignanesi and Devorah Baum (co-directors) for The New Man.

Following a member's suggestion we instigated post-film audience discussion for those films without a speaker Q&A. After a hesitant start, members seem increasingly willing to stay for these sessions and they have been generally well received and we feel should be continued.

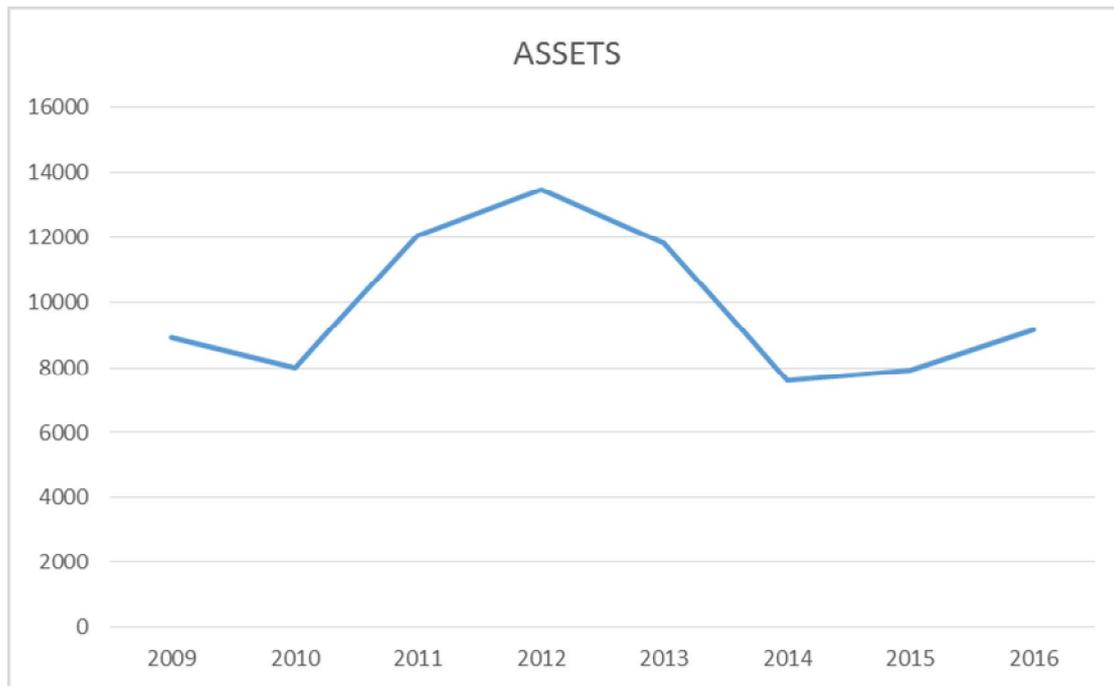
Attendance and audience scores are flagged up in the agenda. As you can see, although feedback is generally very positive, our audiences are lower than in previous years, averaging about 65. This is a concern.

We have 116 members at present compared to 134 for same period last year. This is a significant drop, continuing our general trend towards reducing numbers of members in recent years.



(note 2006 – 2011 were calculated on end-of-season numbers)

As a measure of our financial stability, our end-of-year assets appear to be stable at present



Nonetheless, declining membership and ticket sales is of course a threat to our long-term sustainability and something that needs to be urgently tackled.

Wimbledon International Short Film Festival

WFC's own short film festival (SHORTS), enjoyed a good year with 200 entries from all over the world. The 2016 Festival screened in collaboration with Bookfest once again. Attendance on the night was a healthy 150, a little down on last year but it was a rainy evening likely discouraging people from attending an event on the Common. The quality of the shortlisted films was, as usual, excellent, and drew many complimentary comments from our professional (honorary) judging panel.

Plans for 2017/2018

1. Ticket and membership rates
We propose to keep membership and ticket rates unchanged for 2017/18.
2. We propose to cut costs by, for example, reducing the costs of producing tickets. This will help to free resources for a new promotional drive.
3. Membership promotion
Eventbrite booking. In an effort to address our declining membership we propose to open Eventbrite Advance Booking to non-members, either 24 or 48 hours before screening. The aim is to encourage non-members to attend and, after hopefully enjoying a screening, join WFC. The availability of such non-member tickets will also allow the event to go public on the Eventbrite site so that it shows up to, for example, anyone performing a search on the Eventbrite site for cinema in Wimbledon.

Social media. On its own, this is probably insufficient to tackle our continuing membership decline. We therefore feel we have to take advantage of our sound financial base at present (which is unlikely to continue if membership continues to decline) and invest in further promotional measures. Our secretary and other committee members already do a good job at sending our Facebook and Twitter messages but they seldom go wider than our current members and friends so attendances and membership are either static or declining. Additional promotional mechanisms, such as Facebook post boost or Google ads, could be trialled but we would have to develop means to assess their impact.

We welcome member's inputs, suggestions and help for more effective promotion.

4. Wimbledon SHORTS

This year we plan to run SHORTS once again in collaboration with Bookfest with the festival scheduled for the evening of Saturday 7 October.

Johnjoe McFadden
Chair, Wimbledon Film Club