

Chair's Report 2023-24

Presented to the WFC Annual General Meeting, 2 July 2024

Summary

The period since the last WFC AGM (20 June

2023) has been one of steady progress in most areas:

- Seasonal membership (excluding lifetime and committee members) increased by 15% from 150 to 173 (paid memberships increased from 104 to 120). This was encouraged by the reduction in membership fees.
- Participation in the Members' Choice votes has continued to increase. The autumn 2023 turnout was 70 while the spring 2024 turnout was the highest ever at 87. For comparison, the turnouts last season were 54 and 67.
- Audience satisfaction as measured after screenings has increased from an average of 78% (4.1) last season to 83% (4.3) this season (for 19 films to date).
- We were recognised once again in the Cinema for All Film Society of the Year award, including winning the very competitive Best Programme category.
- We expect to break even, ending the financial year with only a very small (under £100) deficit.
- Our total audience across all screenings is down from 1,516 (20 films) to 1,413 (at 19 films). On a like-for-like basis (19 films - 1,454 last season), this is a drop of 41 (just under 3%).
- Average audience size fell slightly, from 75.8 to 74.4.
- We are now mainly limited to the 80-capacity blue room at the Curzon Wimbledon. Whereas in the 2022-23 season we had only 4 sellouts, this season we have had 11, suggesting that with more seat capacity we could have sold more tickets.

Further details on membership, programme and finance are set out in the report below.

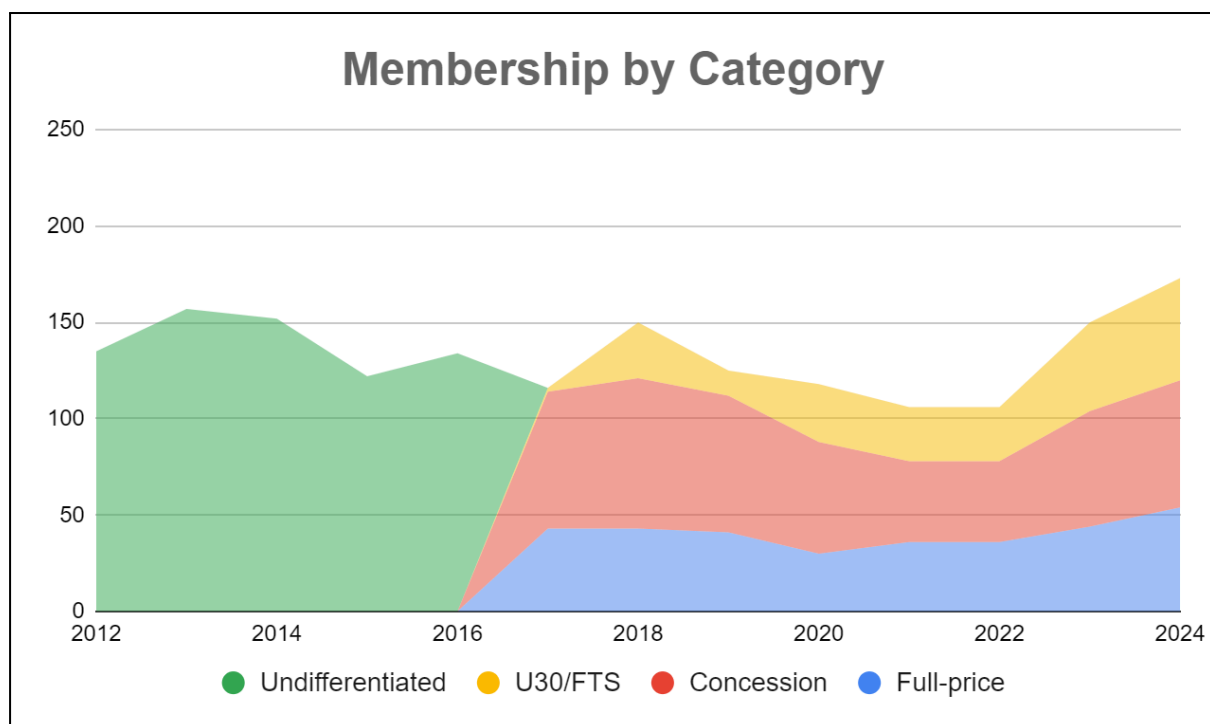
Recommendation to AGM: Ticket price rise by £1

There will be a programme of refurbishment at the Curzon during the autumn, with each screening room being refurbished in turn. (Curzon have committed to moving us to the red room should the blue room be closed for refurbishment on any dates that we have booked in September-November.)

The Curzon private hire team has already indicated that while they will freeze our venue hire price during the autumn, they will increase it for January 2025 screenings onwards. The refurbishment is also likely to lead to a reduction in overall seat capacity, as we have been told that tables for food/drink are to be installed in the screening rooms.

In anticipation of these changes, the WFC Trustees recommend the WFC AGM vote to increase our screening ticket prices by £1. See [Appendix A](#) for the full details. We recommend however that membership fees remain unchanged.

Membership



Below is the breakdown of membership by category and time (whether bought for the full-year from September or the part-year from January) with a comparison against last season:

Category	2024 Total	Full Year	Part Year	2023 Total	Full Year	Part Year
Full-price	54	48	6	44	25	19
Concession	66	63	3	60	49	11
Under-30 / FTS	53	43	10	46	28	18
Total	173	154	19	150	102	48

Note that there has been a change in the membership preference with many more being full-year, rather than January-July. This is probably because full-year membership has become more attractive owing to the reduction in fees.

We estimated a renewal rate between 2021-22 and 2022-23 of 49%, however that may not be reliable as the earlier season's data was sketchy. Now that we have two complete seasons of accurate membership data, we can confirm that the renewal rate between 2022-23 and 2023-24 was 54%.

Going forward, we should also be able to calculate rejoiners - i.e. members with non-continuous memberships.

Programme

Members have continued to play a significant part in the programming process. 7 of the 20 films screened over the season were members' choices. Participation in the Members' Choice votes has continued to increase. The autumn 2023 turnout was 70 while the spring 2024 turnout was the highest ever at 87. For comparison, the turnouts last season were 54 in autumn and 67 in spring.

Our total audience across all screenings is slightly down from 1,516 (20 films) to 1,413 (at 19 films). On a like-for-like basis (19 films - 1,454 last season), a drop of 41 (just under 3%). Average audience size (including complimentary) fell slightly, from 75.8 to 74.4.

Last season we had only 1 screening with fewer than 60 paid tickets; this season we have had 4 (to date). A table of the attendance for each film since the last AGM is provided in [Appendix B](#).

We have continued to invite audience members to score the film out of 5 when leaving the screening room. Audience satisfaction has increased from 4.1 (78%) last season to 4.3 (83%) this season (for 19 films to date). Only 3 films received an average score below 4.0. The audience scores are shown in [Appendix C](#).

Guest speakers continue to be an important part of our programme – half (10 / 20) of the screenings since the last AGM included guest speakers. These included the directors of Raging Grace, Name Me Lawand, Typist Artist Pirate King and Pamfir. A list of the speakers we have hosted is in [Appendix D](#).

We partnered with local community groups on two screenings: the Ukrainian Institute London (Pamfir) and the Merton Centre for Independent Living (Name Me Lawand).

The quality of our film and guest speaker programme has been recognised by Cinema for All: we won one of the most competitive categories in the 2024 Film Society of the Year Awards, Best Film Programme. We also received a Distinction in the Green Award, and a Commendation in the Marketing and Publicity Award (for our website and social media). Our film booker Elena Repole was shortlisted for the Peter Cargin award which recognises the Outstanding Contribution made by an individual (another very competitive category).

Financial Summary

Based on our anticipated income and expenses, we expect to finish the financial year (01-Sep-23 to 31-Aug-24) with a small deficit. Our current position is as follows:

Income		YTD	Forecast YE
	Ticket sales	8,890	9,589
	Membership fees	2,867	2,867
	Bank interest	99	99
	Sub-total	11,856	12,555
Expenses			
	Screening costs	10,470	10,898
	WFC running costs	1,514	1,712
	Sub-total	11,984	12,610
Surplus / Deficit		128	55

As can be seen from this summary, screening income (ticket sales) is short of costs by around £1,300. This is largely offset by a surplus on membership fees relative to club running costs of £1,250 (including bank interest).

This pattern, of membership income cross-subsidising screening costs, is consistent with previous seasons and we would expect it to continue in future.

While the marginal reduction in audience size has helped increase the deficit, the major cause of the increase is the changing composition of tickets sold, which is a result of the decision to reduce membership fees.

Last season, members accounted for 59% of all tickets sold while guests and non-members, who pay a higher price, accounted for 28%. This season, the relative shares are 64% and 24%. The result is that our per-seat income has dropped from £7.47 to £6.98.¹

Though income is down as a consequence, this has largely been offset by further reductions in costs, particularly the running costs of the club.

¹ This is after deducting Eventbrite fees. Our net income on a member ticket of £7 is £5.70.

In terms of reserves, the club is still in a healthy position.

Season	Income	Expenses	Reserves
2019-20	12,217	9,472	11,395
2020-21	2,838	4,082	10,149
2021-22	7,480	9,254	8,375
2022-23	13,877	13,682	9,411
2023-24 ²	12,555	12,610	9,283

Dr Clare Collins

WFC Chair

June 2024

² The 2022-23 figures are provisional at this stage. Reserves will be calculated at financial year-end as part of the statutory accounts.

Appendix A – Ticket Pricing Proposal

Context

We last increased ticket prices two years ago at the start of the 2022-23 season: members from £6 to £7, guests from £10 to £11, and non-members from £13 to £14.79 (by no longer absorbing the Eventbrite booking fee).

For comparison, the Curzon's standard weekend price is £15.50 (including a £1.00 booking fee). At £14, a non-member ticket would cost the buyer £15.87.

Cost Base

We anticipate an increase in the Curzon hire charge during the season with the blue room fee rising from £360 per screening to (probably) £420. We have confirmed the first 6 screenings up to December at the old price, so we need to budget for 14 screenings at the new price in 2025.

Some film hire charges are calculated as a percentage (usually 35%) of sales, so an increase in ticket price will automatically produce a proportionate increase in these charges. Hire fees not calculated in this way, plus any other screening costs, are likely to rise in line with general inflation. We have conservatively estimated this as 3%.

Screening Costs	2023-24 Forecast	2024-25 Estimate
Curzon	£7,380.00	£8,040.00
Film hire	£3,022.00	£3,112.66
Other	£496.00	£510.88
Total	£10,898.00	£11,663.54

Pricing Model

Category	Members	Guests	Non-Mem.	<30/FTS	Partners	Total
Avg tickets	48.0	10.9	7.3	3.4	0.8	70.4
Old price	£7.00	£11.00	£13.00	£7.00	£7.00	
Net income	£5.70	£9.37	£13.00	£5.70	£5.70	
Total income	£5,472	£2,043	£1,898	£388	£91	£9,891
New price	£8.00	£12.00	£14.00	£8.00	£8.00	
Net income	£6.62	£10.29	£14.00	£6.62	£6.62	
Total income	£6,355	£2,243	£2,044	£450	£106	£11,199

The difference between the modelled total annual income and the estimated costs, at roughly £500, should be covered by the surplus of membership fees versus club running costs.

Appendix B – Attendance

The chart below is ranked by attendance and then score. The attendees figure is for all ticket types, including complimentary tickets. MC = members' choice.

Film	Date	Attendees	Score	%	MC?
Pamfir	26-Sep-23	103	4.2	80%	
Cairo Conspiracy	23-Jan-24	86	4.2	80%	
Typist Artist Pirate King	6-Feb-24	85	4.5	88%	
Name Me Lawand	9-Jan-24	83	4.6	90%	
Theatre of Blood	31-Oct-23	83	4.5	88%	
Riffi	21-May-24	83	4.4	85%	Y
American Fiction	16-Apr-24	82	4.6	90%	
Raging Grace	30-Apr-24	82	4.4	85%	
The Lady Eve	5-Dec-23	81	4.6	90%	
Nostalgia	17-Oct-23	81	4.3	83%	
Seaside Special	19-Mar-24	76	4.6	90%	Y
Holy Spider	21-Nov-23	74	4.5	88%	Y
Beau Travail	5-Mar-24	70	3.5	63%	
All That Breathes	14-Nov-23	68	4.2	80%	Y
Pretty Red Dress	3-Oct-23	67	3.9	73%	
River	7-May-24	62	4.0	75%	
Joyland	18-Jun-24	55	4.3	83%	Y
Blue Jean	20-Feb-24	46	4.2	80%	Y
How To Have Sex	28-May-24	46	3.5	63%	

Appendix C – Audience Scores

The chart below is ranked by audience score and then attendance. MC = members' choice.

Film	Date	Attendees	Score	%	MC?
Name Me Lawand	9-Jan-24	83	4.6	90%	
American Fiction	16-Apr-24	82	4.6	90%	
The Lady Eve	5-Dec-23	81	4.6	90%	
Seaside Special	19-Mar-24	76	4.6	90%	Y
Typist Artist Pirate King	6-Feb-24	85	4.5	88%	
Theatre of Blood	31-Oct-23	83	4.5	88%	
Holy Spider	21-Nov-23	74	4.5	88%	Y
Rififi	21-May-24	83	4.4	85%	Y
Raging Grace	30-Apr-24	82	4.4	85%	
Nostalgia	17-Oct-23	81	4.3	83%	
Joyland	18-Jun-24	55	4.3	83%	Y
Pamfir	26-Sep-23	103	4.2	80%	
Cairo Conspiracy	23-Jan-24	86	4.2	80%	
All That Breathes	14-Nov-23	68	4.2	80%	Y
Blue Jean	20-Feb-24	46	4.2	80%	Y
River	7-May-24	62	4.0	75%	
Pretty Red Dress	3-Oct-23	67	3.9	73%	
Beau Travail	5-Mar-24	70	3.5	63%	
How To Have Sex	28-May-24	46	3.5	63%	

Appendix D – Speakers

We had 2 introductions (one by video, one in-person) and 9 in-person Q&As, plus a short performance of traditional Filipino songs by the Haraya Choir.

Film	Date	Speaker
Pamfir	26-Sep-23	Intro by writer-director Dmytro Sukholytkyy-Sobchuk (video) & Q&A with film Ukrainian Institute London Film Fellow Olga Sydorushkina (in-person)
Theatre of Blood	31-Oct-23	Q&A with Vincent Price expert Peter Fuller & cast member Madeline Smith
The Lady Eve	5-Dec-23	Q&A with film historian Nick Smedley
Name Me Lawand	9-Jan-24	Q&A with producer Sam Arnold & director Edward Lovelace
Typist Artist Pirate King	6-Feb-24	Q&A with writer/director Carol Morley & cast member Monica Dolan
Blue Jean	20-Feb-24	Intro by local LGBT+ historian Chris Park
Beau Travail	5-Mar-24	Q&A with film scholar Dr Mary Harrod
Raging Grace	30-Apr-24	Q&A with writer/director Paris Zarcilla + performance by the Haraya Choir
River	7-May-24	Q&A with author Jennifer Upton
Rififi	21-May-24	Q&A with film critic Prof Ginette Vincendeau