

# A Short Guide to Using Archive Film

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The Young Film Network [South East]





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## Introduction

This short guide was produced by The Young Film Programmers' Network (South East). Established in 2018, the Network supports organisations and venues across the region to develop their film-based initiatives aimed at young people. It is managed by the Independent Cinema Office and funded by BFI Education through the Venue Education Fund.

In 2021, the Network received funding from Film Hub North to present a series of screenings featuring 'Lost Connections' - an archive-based short film created as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic and our recovery from the feelings of loss, loneliness and isolation collectively experienced during that time. Each group were tasked with curating a contemporary feature film to accompany this archive material, alongside additional activity, to generate discussion and debate and engage younger audiences.



These events took place at Cinema City (Norwich), The Picture House (Uckfield), The Landmark Centre (Deal), Depot Cinema (Lewes) and Eddie Izzard Theatre (Bexhill). Learning from these events informs this guide, providing ideas for using screen archive from the young film programmers who were directly involved with the programming, marketing and delivery of these events taking place during November 2021.

We hope that this short guide will provide inspiration for YFP groups to consider using screen archive in their film programming and introduce some simple ways to begin this journey.

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## Why Screen Archive?

### **Bring something unique to your programme**

Programming archive shorts or features can bring something unique to your screening strand and help to differentiate you and your venue from other mainstream cinemas. With archive you can create wrap-around events really easily and be seen as a place for audiences to experience something truly unique that they wouldn't get anywhere else.

### **Create community and discussion**

Archive films are great for linking the past with the present, generating debate and providing an extra social and community function that goes beyond being 'just a cinema', creating a space where your events encourage people to come together and feel part of a community. Curating a themed night around this material might be one way you can draw your audience off their sofas to enjoy the pleasures and power of a communal watching experience.

### **Celebrate film history**

Screen heritage is a great way to celebrate film history, helping your audience and local filmmakers realise that new archive is being produced all the time! Archive is just another word for a library for you as a programmer to draw upon and needn't be seen as 'old' or 'black and white' — but something interesting to everyone, especially when it taps into changing fashions and trends.

### **Get funded**

A very pragmatic reason to use archive film is the funding available for this activity, through Film Hub North and your regional Film Hub who also have funds for screen heritage programmes. Archive material itself has become increasingly accessible, with digitised collections available through regional and national archive websites, as well as BFI Player (see Chapter 6, Further Resources). Curated programmes of archive material are now more readily available, providing a plug-and-play option for your venue.

## **Develop your expertise**

Finally, and maybe most importantly, as curators it can be useful to think of film programming as 'archaeology'. If you follow the 'must be over 20 years old rule' for successful repertory programming, then looking beneath the surface of new releases and well-known film classics takes you deeper into the art of successful film programming and brings you closer to developing skills for a career in the industry.



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## Programming Screen Archive

### Work with a contemporary theme

Using a social, cultural or education initiative, or a celebratory anniversary occasion, can be a great way of introducing archive material to your regular audience. There is a broad and varied range of events to choose from—from Anti-Bullying Day to Mental Health Awareness Week, LGBTQI+ History Month to International Women’s Day. A contextualising theme can engage new audiences by drawing parallels between the past and present in new interesting ways.



### **Using Shorts**

Linking a short archive film with your main feature can bring something new and unexpected to your audience—they won't forget the experience and it'll introduce them to screen archive in a non-committal way. As an added bonus to their booking for the main feature, it adds something special to their experience.

### **Before They Were Famous**

You can go to the BFI National Archive to research their collections and put together a unique event pairing an actor or director's early work with a more contemporary release. Not all titles listed in their Collections will be available to book for public screenings, but you can view available footage, posters, scripts and TV appearances for ideas and leads.

### **Live Music Events**

Silent archive films are perfect for creating live performance events, with newly composed scores or local DJs. Performing a new soundtrack creates a truly unique live experience and introduces the element of creativity that can appeal to a wider range of different audiences—including local musicians as well as filmmakers.

### **Curated Programmes**

Curated programmes of archive material are now readily available from the archives in our region, with their catalogues of frequently updated material available for exhibitors to screen. Screen Archive South East has many programmes on specific areas of the region, while the East Anglian Film Archive has a wide portfolio of curated programmes on subjects ranging from the NHS and to music history. Organisations like the Independent Cinema Office also receive funds to curate bespoke, rights-cleared programmes from a wide range of sources making it easy for venues to book at an affordable cost.



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## Case Studies 1

### Kino Collective (Depot, Lewes)

<https://linktr.ee/KinoCollective>

*Based at Depot, an independent 3-screen cinema in the centre of Lewes, East Sussex, Kino Collective have previously engaged with Screen Heritage activity showing Britain on Film: Protest in November 2019. The group now comprises of new members programming archive material for the first time.*

*Young Film Programmer Leoni Yazdenmehr reflects on their experiences of screening 'Lost Connections' alongside feature 'But I'm A Cheerleader'.*

### Our 10 minute choice

We chose to have a Screen Archive short instead of trailers before the screening, as something a bit different for the audience.

Lost Connections is a 10 minute film about recovery, hope and renewal after the Covid 19 pandemic made up of 100s of archive clips from local film archives across the UK. It's a film about reconnecting with the world.

We chose to screen this short as part of Mental Health Awareness Week and thought this had a lot of similarities with struggling with an emotional battle.



As a group we didn't expect much, it was our first try using archive. Half the time we didn't know what was going to happen, and if people would come? We had also planned a little activity before the screening: guess the amount of sweets in a jar with proceeds going to a local mental health charity that specialise in LGBTQ+. We had no idea if the audience would engage in this but we hoped so!



We felt that people our age don't know much about Screen Archive and might feel daunted by the unknown quality of it, or even turned off by the prospect of something 'old'. So we decided to market the film mostly through our social media channels and especially our Instagram. However, to help the flow of selling the tickets we thought we could do more than just a repost on our story, and so we also designed and printed out our own posters scattering them everywhere possible in Lewes and Brighton to get the word out. In two days we had filled screen 3, so we were bumped up into a bigger screen, causing even more tickets to be sold out.

The cinema was packed when it was screening day. It felt quite an amazing moment, for us seeing our event happen in reality—people coming to see a film that we as a group put together. We were really pleased that we sold 84 tickets and we worked out we had 67% under 30 year olds in the audience. We think part of our success was friends supporting us with what we are doing but the other reason was our feature film programming choice with 'But I'm A Cheerleader' which was old enough to have been unseen by many when it came out and cult enough that people wanted to see it on the big screen.

Fortunately we had such a positive response to the films. We had comments from audience members they enjoyed the films and found the archive short really interesting, that it really "added something". The event was a great success. The event was a sell-out and really attracted a big youth audience and has made us definitely consider programming a screen archive short before a feature again to add value and something 'extra' to our monthly screenings.

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## Case Studies 2

### Bexhill Film Spotters (Eddie Izzard Theatre, Bexhill)

[https://www.instagram.com/bexhill\\_filmspotters/](https://www.instagram.com/bexhill_filmspotters/)

<https://instagram.com/izzardtheatre/?hl=en>

*Keen to explore mental health in a more positive, upbeat way, Bexhill Film Spotters chose to pair *Lost Connections* with 'Little Miss Sunshine'. Young Film Programmer Sana Tofiq explores their screening at Eddie Izzard Theatre.*



When we watched *Lost Connections* we were excited by the themes it raised and the complexity of the footage from so many different local film archives. Given its message of coming together in times of hardship and opening up, we decided the full-length film partnering it should also address these themes. We decided that we wanted to present mental health in a normalised, positive way rather than stigmatised and taboo—so we wanted a film that not only combatted this negative representation but also uplifted an audience, by being an enjoyable, carefree watch.

We had three original options: *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* and *Little Miss Sunshine*. As a group, we originally chose *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* but could not get the licensing easily, so instead we chose *Little Miss Sunshine* which we realised fit our theme even better as the film is all about connecting with your family and realising everyone experiences mental health issues at one time or another. Most importantly for us, the film was light-hearted and uplifting, and made a great pairing with *Lost Connections*.

We felt that the advantage of showing this archive short with the feature film was how it showed two differing stories of mental health, and therefore how the issue is universal and timeless. We often think of internal struggles as a modern thing, but *Lost Connections* use of archive footage challenged that and showed it has always been an important topic of discussion.

Also, we definitely wanted to appeal to young people at this screening so we were constantly updating the Instagram account with information and posters and creating a podcast where we discussed our own views of mental health. Also, posters designed by our graphics team were put up around the college and on digital screens, and our college Instagram account even posted to spread awareness of the event.

Our advice to other YFPs would be to add something more to the screening to make it unique and draw out your theme with discussion and celebration. Our events team arranged for free rainbow armbands (like those that the character Olive wore in *Little Miss Sunshine*) to give each member of our audience alongside a tiara and bouquet for one lucky raffle winner we randomly selected. Adding in extras like this differentiated our cinema experience from the mainstream, and along with screening a lesser known archive short film we gave our audience a sense of getting 'more' than a normal cinema experience. We also planned on hiring a guest speaker but in the end we found the perfect guest hard to find so decided instead that a few of the young programmers would perform their own talk. This turned out to be much better in the end because it was really relatable and reassuring to hear from people their own age discuss mental health.

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## Case Studies 3

### Film East (Cinema City, Norwich)

<https://www.film-east.com/>

*Film East is a young film programmers group based in Norwich. Founded at the beginning of 2020, their online blog regularly has brand new content, and their award-nominated podcast 'Film East Chats...' is played monthly on BBC Radio Norfolk. **Young Film Programmer Niamh Brooke** explains their experience of pairing *Lost Connections* with new release 'Spencer'.*



Film EAST hosted a screening at Norwich's independent cinema, Cinema City choosing to focus on the theme of mental health and isolation. We chose to screen 'Spencer' alongside 'Lost Connections' because both films tackled our chosen theme but did so in drastically opposing ways. The first, *Lost Connections*, is a short that utilises archival footage to ponder a question, "have we, as a society, lost connection in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic?".

*Spencer*, in contrast, was a new release, that centres its narrative around one of the most famously troubled women in history, Lady Diana Spencer. Beautifully constructed by Pablo Larraín, this dreamlike descent into Diana's mental state offers us an insight into a woman who had the world at her feet yet felt so utterly alone. Choosing to screen a new release on its opening weekend alongside an archive short not only helped to boost ticket sales but allowed us to introduce audiences to a film they typically wouldn't watch.

We decided to introduce the event and create programme notes. We felt it was important that each film had its own introduction and to give the audience some context to the films, posing the same question the film itself poses: "Have we as a nation lost connection?". So allowing the audience to ponder this thought while watching the films and give them the opportunity to bring their own thoughts and experiences to the film.

We also invited a local film lecturer, Anna Blagrove to speak about the films and host the Q and A and hired a British Sign Language interpreter to join us on stage making the presentations more accessible along audio descriptions and subtitles during the film screenings.

If I were to offer advice to other young film programmers who are interested in running an event with an on-stage speaker/ discussion I would suggest making sure you keep the event as engaging as possible by always thinking of a general audience. A general audience may not be as invested in the film as the members of your young film programmers group so it is vital any discussion is kept to a level where any cinema-goer is able to enjoy and engage.

Our event worked really well, we had a small audience of 14 but everyone who came was very engaged in the discussion and many preferred Lost Connections over Spencer. We had never programmed an archive film prior to this and we were surprised and encouraged by the audience's reaction.

Screening archive shorts alongside a brand new release has proven to be a really interesting way of allowing our audience to 'dip their toe' into screen archive while watching the latest big release.

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## Case Studies 4

### Deal Young Programmers (The Landmark Centre, Deal)

<https://www.instagram.com/dealfilmclub/>

<https://www.dealfilm.club/>

*Deal Young Film Programmers is a group formed during lockdown who only ever met over zoom! Here the group collectively feedback on their programming of 'Lost Connections' and 'Children of Men' at the Landmark Centre in Deal.*

This event provided us with an amazing opportunity to use the programming and marketing skills we learnt in lockdown for the first time and it attracted more younger members to a Deal Film Club event than had ever attended before!

We were really inspired by the suggestion of creating an event around issues of mental health and paired Lost Connections with Children of Men for many reasons. Both films showed how situations can strip us of our identity, to discover who we are, and to fight for how we want to represent ourselves when faced with difficult decisions ahead.

The refugee theme within Children Of Men also connected strongly with our local audience in Deal who were making headlines for the numbers of immigrants making the hazardous illegal journey in boats across the Channel from Calais. We wanted the event to reflect and explore that connection so we invited Dr Razia Shariff, the CEO of KRAN [Kent Refugee Action Network] to tell us about their work and lead a panel discussion after the film. Dr Shariff was very moved by Lost Connections and found many ways of linking it with her work with young refugees:

*"Some of the words and phrases that resonated from the film for me were things like 'human flow' which is going along in Europe now quite a lot with what's happening on the borders of Belarus and the English Channel and in Greece – those notions of loneliness, isolation, the disconnect, the lost connection— a lot of our young people feel very disconnected."*

Dr Razia Shariff, CEO of KRAN [Kent Refugee Action Network]

Once we had decided on film and venue we created a poster and shared it across our social media platforms using clips from the Lost Connections film. Film Hub North also helped us to promote this online (thank you!) and we went on Deal Radio (the local community station) to promote the event and cross-promoted with our guest speakers. We also reached out for sponsorship in our local community and got Penny Licks, a new local ice cream company to provide free ice cream and promote it on their social media platforms. We also offered free and subsidised tickets to the carers and members of Leaps And Bounds, a local creative group working with people with learning disabilities to reach different audiences that don't always access our screenings.

We had less than a month to turn this event around, so that was probably the biggest challenge! So getting people to actually come along on the night was harder than we thought. In the end we had 27 paying audience which was pretty good given so much COVID uncertainty at the time. Also we didn't realise we had programmed our screening on the same night that the Deal Christmas lights were being switched on outside on the high street! So it's good to check there are no clashing big local events!

Using an archive short was really interesting for us. We had not thought of doing that before and people really responded to the clips we showed on social media at the venue. We would certainly think of programming another archive short before a future screening.



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## Working with the Archives

If you're keen to create your own screen heritage programmes, a great way to do this is in partnership with your regional screen archive. The archives operating in our YFP Network region are:

### Screen Archive South East

SASE is part of the University of Brighton and based within its School of Media.

<https://screenarchive.brighton.ac.uk/>

### The East Anglian Film Archive

Eafa is both owned and operated by the University of East Anglia.

<https://eafa.org.uk/>

The archives can prove a valuable research partner, providing advice on curating a themed programme at reasonable cost. Material is available online, and sometimes you can visit to view material directly.

Fresh Perspectives, a YFP group based at Fabrica Art Gallery in Brighton, worked with Screen Archive South East to research, shortlist and select several archive shorts to feature alongside their exhibition 'The Forest Forked Path' by Oliafur Eliasson in May 2021.

*"Our YFP group had a small budget from Film Hub North to work on the theme of climate change and the changing environment as part of a wider project called 'Shifting Ground'. We learned the process of working with an archive, what is held at Screen Archive South East, and were introduced to their site and collection within the University of Brighton. It was a great project for us to collaborate on all aspects of the process, from watching and reviewing films, to shortlisting and curation, and then finally getting the showcase on screen. The film was screened on a loop throughout the exhibition and was really well received.*

*We had 11237 visitors during the course of the exhibition who were able to view the film as part of their visit. Fabrica's large team of volunteers who invigilated on the exhibition [c50 volunteers of all ages] really enjoyed the addition of the film piece to the work, making reference to it to visitors whilst on shift. It was great to work with Screen Archive South East on this project - they were supportive and flexible and it's really made us see how we might be able to work together in the future as part of the film programme, which is exciting."*

Ella Alemayehu-Lambert, Fresh Perspectives (Fabrica, Brighton).



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## Further Resources and Links

### Further Resources

Screen Heritage: Best Practice Guide  
[Film Hub North]

Programming Guide: Archive  
[Independent Cinema Office]

Bringing Young Audiences  
to Screen Heritage  
[Laura Kloss, Lightbox Cinema]

BFI Film Academy Lab: Programming  
Archive Film with Simon McCallum  
and Alessia Mavakala  
[ICO YouTube Channel]

Using Archive Films: YFP Training Session  
with Film Hub North  
and the East Anglia Film Archive  
[ICO YouTube Channel]

Film Archives UK

BFI Player

### Links

<https://eafa.org.uk/portfolio/>

<https://screenarchive.brighton.ac.uk/access/dvds/>

[https://www.independentcinemaoffice.org.uk/tours/  
britain-on-film-on-tour/](https://www.independentcinemaoffice.org.uk/tours/britain-on-film-on-tour/)

[https://collections-search.bfi.org.uk/web/  
search/simple](https://collections-search.bfi.org.uk/web/search/simple)

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### **YFP Groups and Contributors**

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Bexhill Film Spotters  
[Eddie Izzard Theatre]  
Ella Alemayehu-Lambert YFP  
Fresh Perspectives  
[Fabrica, Brighton]  
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Evyor Fogarty [Deal Film Club]  
Sally Connellan  
Clare Hankinson and Georgia Newman  
[Fabrica Art Gallery]  
Nicolette Howard  
[The Picturehouse, Uckfield]

### **Film Hub North**

Film Hub North lead a UK-wide screen heritage programme on behalf of the BFI Film Audience Network, providing support for archive film events to connect the past with the present.

### **BFI Venue Education Fund**

The BFI Venue Education Fund aims to provide a vital link between existing BFI Film Academy programmes, and BFI Southbank venue-based events, BFI Network opportunities, and BFI FAN network.

