

## CHAIR'S REPORT AGM SEPTEMBER 2025

### Introduction

Welcome to the 11<sup>th</sup> AGM for the David Lean Cinema.

It's been an eventful and fast moving year – one of creativity, continued community connection and exceptional programming – and tonight's report will reflect just how much has been achieved.

This report covers the period April 2024 to March 2025, with some later updates included.

### Committee and Volunteers

Since January 2025 the committee has been led by myself as Chair, with Alan Shilabeer as Secretary, and Andy Howe as Treasurer (Slide 4). Heather has been acting as Vice-Chair since January 2025 and will be standing down as Vice-Chair at this meeting. I would like to thank Heather for her many, many years of dedicated service to the cinema in a variety of roles and the kindness and care she has extended to me as I have taken over the reins. Heather will continue as a Director but now concentrate on attending films as a patron and helping with the box office too.

Also, stepping down from the committee this year is Hollie Alexander in her role as Fundraising Officer. Thanks to Hollie for her sterling work in this role. We would like to encourage anyone who has an interest in this area to come forward either tonight or subsequently to be considered. Similarly, we still have an opportunity for someone to focus on environmental issues. If there is any interest in this role please do get in touch.

Everybody else, including our employees, is continuing in their current role.

The programming team has continued unchanged since the last AGM and we are proud of our diverse mixture of films being screened each month under the leadership of David Lavelli.

During the year we responded to feedback about a need for greater visibility to the team by producing some organisational slides to explain some of the key roles which included employees, Directors, other key volunteer roles and the programming team (Slide 5, 6, 7, 8). As well as these formal roles, I'd like to send a special thank you to the often unrecognised but essential people who carry out the myriad of tasks that often go unseen.

This year we welcomed some new faces and said goodbye to a few familiar ones.

- **Louise Gough** joined the programming team as a film bookings assistant, covering maternity leave for **Caroline Revell** who welcomed baby Dylan in April 2025. She's quickly become a valuable part of the team, attending exhibitor screenings, helping to write film synopsis's, and actively contributing to the programming activity.
- We held a heartfelt thank you event for volunteers in June 24 and again in June 25, the most recent included a screening of *Flow* and some delicious refreshments.

- Our **volunteer numbers now stand at 88**, and we've organised three outings and one celebration this year under the leadership of **Michael Hamilton** and **Sam Shelley**. They have also launched a new quarterly volunteer postcard with updates, events, and cinema news.
- **Cathy Burns, Gary Hartwell** and **Alison Chapman** all stood down from their volunteer roles after many, many years of combined service to the cinema. We would like to thank them all for their contributions and look forward to seeing them in the audience at future screenings.

We are very proud of our volunteer community - our volunteers are the lifeblood of our cinema - and we continue to look for ways to strengthen the team and make them feel valued under the leadership of **Harshida Amin**, our Volunteer Coordinator.

### **The year's events**

We continue to enjoy the support of **Joanna Scanlan** as our Patron. She was behind many of our most successful events, including the now famous Big Fundraising Christmas Quiz, where she and actor **Neil Pearson** were our hosts. They were able to procure us special access to the Premiere of their latest Bridget Jones film: Mad About The Boy. We experimented with Crowdfunder for the first time as a fund-raising approach and were delighted that we were able to raise £2000 in 20 days with donations from 151 supporters. The Premiere prize was won by Sarah Kimmelman who is a local resident, new mum and Babes in Arms film supporter.

Joanna and Neil reunited to form a Q&A panel at the screening in April of Mad About The Boy, which was a sell-out. Several premium Q&A screenings also took place around A Different Man and Waterloo Sunset. Croydon resident and actor **Adam Pearson** continues to be a strong supporter of our cinema and attended 3 sold out Q&A sessions to support the huge interest in A Different Man.

Celebrations of our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the David Lean Cinema centred around the screening of Blithe Spirit on 3 March 2025. Guests from the David Lean Foundation, including **Sally Beard**, and dignitaries from Croydon Council enjoyed the event which was introduced by **Adrian Winchester** on behalf of the cinema.

National Theatre Live screenings returned to the cinema in March 2025 for the first time since 2011 with a sold out screening of The Importance of Being Earnest. Subsequent screenings have been also been popular in terms of ticket sales and bar takings.

### **Strategy and Sustainability**

Volunteer **Steve Packer** continued to lead us on the development of our strategy during the year, and this culminated in our strategy document being distributed to our patrons, friends and partners in the local community in March 2025. We believe that this three year strategic framework will help us continue to build on our successes and our commitment to making cinema inclusive and accessible, diversifying our audience, becoming more environmentally sustainable, and ensuring we remain a keystone cultural institution in Croydon.

In future, reviews will be issued quarterly and an annual review conducted at the end of 2025 when the 2025-2027 Strategy will be re-appraised and an action plan for 2026 will be prepared.

### **Technology and Cinema Improvements**

The planning for the introduction of a new ticketing system was a significant challenge during the early part of the calendar year and this culminated in the successful introduction of Ticketsolve in April 2025. Thanks are due to **Andy Howe, Michael Snowden and Roger Dowling** for their work on managing this implementation.

We believe Ticketsolve has improved how we sell tickets, receive donations and manage customer relationships. In the time since implementation we have seen a 300%+ increase in donations, better financial reporting, improved accessibility and a more modern customer experience.

Another significant challenge we faced behind the scenes was the shock in January when our film playout server suffered a major failure. Loan server(s) were rapidly installed and a new server was purchased and installed in early March 2025. **Roger Dowling** should be congratulated for all of his sterling efforts to work through these unexpected challenges at the start of this calendar year. Remarkably, no screening time was lost.

More recently – and outside of the period of this review – we have installed a brand-new screen. We've also acquired a Dolby audio processor and mixer to deliver a new and improved audio for our patrons.

### **Programming**

A total of 153 films were selected for screening in this period and 297 screenings took place. Our films are predominantly current releases, but classic re-releases and notable older films are represented too. We aim to showcase the richness and diversity of British and World film. This continues to be our hallmark and our approach to programming has stood the test of time. But there is always room for improvement and we will continue to identify films with the potential to attract new audiences.

We maintained our distinctive programming strands; regular 35mm screenings; subtitled hard of hearing, dementia-friendly, Babes in Arms, commuters specials and relaxed screenings. Our monthly films in association with the BFI, called Escapes, continue to attract a mostly young audience who are often newcomers to independent cinema.

We held our first event to recognise Carers in Croydon in February around a screening of Wicked. The local Carers community appreciated this initiative very much and another screening is planned for them in the autumn.

We also screen a number of films and participate in initiatives in liaison with various local community organisations. For example, we showed films in association with Croydon Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Forum and the Croydon Pride community. In addition, our founder Adrian Winchester runs a very well-attended monthly post-film discussion group in association with the u3a.

Our Top 10 films of 24-25 for ticket sales were as follows: (slides 9, 10, 11).

### **Publicity and Outreach**

Our outreach work is growing, and our social media presence continues to grow across Instagram, Facebook, Bluesky, TikTok and LinkedIn. We made the decision to withdraw from X (**formerly Twitter**) due to a misalignment with our values.

A new series of “**Favourites**” videos — featuring volunteers and audience members sharing their 3 top films — has driven fantastic engagement and helped attract new followers.

Partnerships are also on the rise:

- Collaborations with **Croydon Family Hubs**, **Croydonites**, and **East Croydon Cool** are in development.
- We’ve reconnected with **Croydon Music and Arts** and the **BRIT School** for future collaboration with young people.

### **Finances**

Our treasurer will speak about the detail of our finances, but this year we celebrate the fact that our finances have continued to be in the black. This is particularly pleasing in a year when we have made significant capital investments.

Thanks to the entire team, about whom I can't say enough good things. We have had our fair share of change this year – some planned but some unexpected – and the team have managed to absorb all the challenges that they have faced in a collegiate way, and for that I am very grateful indeed (slide 12).

My top 3 films are Anora, Conclave and The Last Showgirl ( slide 13).

After the treasurer’s presentation you’ll have a chance to make comments or ask questions.

Finally, thank you all so much for your patronage of our cinema and for attending tonight. Without your support and generosity we would not exist. It is your continued loyalty and endorsement of our cinema in the community that accounts for our success. On behalf of our committee and directors I would like sincerely thank you for your ongoing support.