

Scalarama Scotland 2020 | Roundtable 19th July | Minutes

1. Welcome + Update on Scalarama 2020 plans

Megan Mitchell, Producer of Matchbox Cineclub and one of the Scalarama Scotland Coordinators, introduced the sessions, explaining Zoom etiquette and introducing guests Alison Smith, Andrew Miller and Charlotte Little.

Megan suggested that the next topic of Scalarama Scotland's session should be focused on the expectations and reality of independent exhibitors getting back to delivering live events in light of cinemas already opening, as indie exhibitors face a longer timeline to get back to 'normal'. Megan asks for anyone interested and maybe has a specific insight to get in touch. Megan also highlighted that [We Are Parable's research into audience confidence has been released](#) and the UKCA have launched their [Love Cinema campaign](#) to get audiences back to cinemas.

The ongoing situation with Tyneside Cinema was also mentioned, with Megan promoting anyone who is in agreement with the Tyneside Cinema staff, who have suffered sexual abuse and harassment at the hands of the cinema management, to [sign the staff's petition](#) and show vocal support publicly and in professional networks.

Megan invited Sean Welsh, Programmer of Matchbox Cineclub and one of the Scalarama Scotland Coordinators, speak on the collective project he is beginning which will produce a comprehensive guide to content warning for exhibitors. Sean will be sharing a rough document with interested exhibitors so the guide can be collectively shaped. The document can be viewed [here](#).

2. Alison Smith

Alison Smith, a Disability Arts Consultant who works across film festival in Scotland ensuring they are accessible and welcoming for all audiences, joined the sessions to give her insights into the considerations and practical measures to make events, both online and in venues, accessible for disabled audiences.

Alison highlighted that accessibility has to be baked in from an organisational level and from the beginning of planning an event. Thinking not just about the basic physical access provisions but issues around transport, finance and now health in-light of COVID. Ensuring you have adequate funding to deliver these and pay anyone involved properly too.

Alison also outlined that it is not only disabled audiences who have to be considered when it comes to access, that there is intersectionality when it comes to the disadvantages audiences can come up against. Alison also reported that Screen Scotland will be introducing the BFI Diversity Standard into their funding structure in September.

3. #WeShallNotBeRemoved

[Andrew Miller](#), UK Government Disability Champion Arts & Culture and Chair of BFI's Disability Screen Advisory Forum, joined to discuss the new Disability Alliance's #WeShallNotBeRemoved campaign and offered some insight into disabled audiences' confidence in returning to cinemas during COVID.

Andrew recounted that at the beginning of 2020 the UK was in a strong position when it came to disability visibility and representation within the creative sector, however, throughout the pandemic disabled people across society have felt diminished and ignored in vital conversations, not just within the arts.

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The Disability Alliance #WeShallNotBeRemoved campaign seeks to highlight the issues faced by disabled people, both audiences and professionals within the sector, throughout the pandemic and as the cultural sector begging to open again, aiming to have disabled voices heard.

Andrew cited a report by Indigo Consulting, [After The Interval & Act 2](#), which highlights that the majority of disabled audiences feel at risk from Coronavirus, a far greater percentage than non-disabled audiences. But the majority will consider returning to cinemas if proper measures are in place, for example, strict social distancing, hygiene measures and priority access for disabled customers in queues.

Andrew voiced concerns, personal and from across the sector, on the UK Cinema Association's guidelines disabled audiences for cinemas as they report. Andrew highlights that they are perpetrating discriminatory and possibly illegal, in reference to the Equality Act 2010, practices. BFI's Disability Screen Advisory Forum has raised serious concerns within the BFI and conversations with UKCA are taking place this week.

Andrew hopes that post-lockdown the UK can return to being a European leader of disability arts, but that will only come with disabled voices being placed at the heart of conversations.

The session takes a five-minute comfort break.

4. Charlotte Little

[Charlotte Little](#), an Aberdeen based film writers and disability activist joined the sessions to discuss her ongoing project to encourage film journalism publications to implement accessibility features.

Charlotte, as a hard of hearing person and with tunnel vision, wants to tackle inaccessibility of film journalism for disabled readers and writers, as a film writer herself. She has been working with smaller volunteer-run film journalism websites to implement easily doable access provisions, producing guide documents for them to refer to. Although Charlotte has been in touch with 30+ publications, including larger funded ones, the smaller websites have been the most responsive.

The use of captions on video content and trailers, alt text on images across social media platforms and capitalising hashtags for screen readers are just some of the provisions Charlotte has been advising these publications on.

Charlotte is keen for her intervention in access provisions for these publications to just be initial steps and hopes film publications will keep developing on access provisions from there. Although these small publications have been responsive Charlotte finds it draining that more film journalism publications don't take disabled audience and writers access seriously.

5. Open Discussion

Megan began the discussion by asking how organisations can know they're putting on access events or not. Alison suggested a checklist is the most straight forward way to ensure accessibility to is at the same high standard each time and [shared a document she has created for this purpose](#). Alison also suggested that sharing information about the event through the appropriate networks, for example D/deaf Facebook groups, is important.

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Megan asked Charlotte how she initially approaches film journalism publications to access their levels of access. Charlotte said that she begins with baby steps, especially for the smaller publications and begins the conversations making clear there are no stupid questions, that it's about a process of learning, even for her as she learns more about evolving online tech and social media provisions.

Megan asked Charlotte and Alison about mask-wearing and how disabled audiences might be affected by this when returning to venues. Alison says this a big question, with lots of issues to consider, from if D/deaf people should wear masks or masks with see-through fronts or if there will be no masks at D/deaf screenings with social distancing and other measures instead. Alison highlights again that consultation with D/deaf and disabled people will be key, and although there may be some trial and error, organisations should be listening to these voices first and foremost.

Charlotte is personally very apprehensive about what going to the cinema might be like for her now and doesn't see herself returning this year. There hasn't been communication or clear guidance from the local multiplexes

6. Next meeting date + outline

Megan thanks guests and attendees for today's sessions, and again asked for any feedback or input into the next sessions which will look forward to what independent exhibitors timeline for delivering events will look like over the coming months The next session and final sessions will be on the 9th of August to ensure these issues can be addressed in a timely manner as cinemas reopen.