



**PRESS  
RELEASE**

## **BFI OFFERS £500K DISTRIBUTION SUPPORT FOR UK RELEASE OF NON-NATIONAL INDEPENDENT FILMS**

**Funding available as a result of hiatus of activities during pandemic**

**Open for distribution of international titles to UK audiences**

**LONDON – Friday 2 July 2021:** The BFI has today announced £500,000 of National Lottery funding to support the distribution of international independent titles in the UK, as the exhibition and distribution sectors rebuild following the Covid-19 pandemic. The one-year ring-fenced support, which is administered by the BFI Audience Fund, makes use of an underspend which has become available as a result of a slowdown in international travel and physical market attendance during the pandemic, and will support industry in bringing new and exciting international films to UK audiences. The move was developed in consultation with industry partners including the Film Distributors' Association (FDA) and the UK Cinema Association (UKCA).

The distribution support is specifically for independent international films not in the English language, and applicants must clearly demonstrate how they meet the objectives of the BFI Audience Fund to boost audience choice and diversity across the UK. The funding will help boost the pipeline of films for UK audiences now able to return to cinemas across the country, including independent venues in England supported by the Government's Culture Recovery Fund which has enabled cultural venues to survive and reopen.

The BFI Audience Fund has supported an average of six foreign language titles a year in the UK since its launch in 2017. Titles include *A Fantastic Woman*, *Minari*, *Parasite*, *Shoplifters*, *And Then We Danced*, and the forthcoming *Night of the Kings*.

**Ben Luxford, Head of UK Audiences at the BFI**, said: "We're pleased to repurpose this National Lottery funding to help support a larger number of independent international films reach UK audiences. This one-year measure recognises the especially challenging distribution and exhibition environment caused by the pandemic, and will support distributors looking to acquire titles for UK release, giving both audiences and venues an opportunity to engage with a broader range of films. In a year where international travel is limited, we're bringing the world to audiences."

**Andy Leyshon, Chief Executive of the FDA**, said: "This additional BFI support specifically for distribution comes at a welcome time, as we emerge from the last 16-months of market interruptions. UK distributors have a long-established tradition of successfully releasing foreign language films, indeed this was the only box office growth area for cinemas in 2020. Clearly UK audiences desire ever more on-screen diversity, and this funding should help satiate that demand in cinemas. Hopefully, this support will also be able to continue and increase in value beyond this year for the long-term sustainability of the independent distribution and exhibition sector."

**Phil Clapp, Chief Executive of the UK Cinema Association (UKCA)**, said: "Today's announcement will I know be hugely welcomed by the many cinema operators across the UK who want to present the widest possible range of films to their audiences. Many smaller foreign language titles understandably find it a challenge to 'cut through' given their limited marketing budgets and distribution support. This new funding will help address that issue, and ensure that such titles remain a key part of the programming mix as our sector continues to rebuild over the coming weeks and months and hopefully well into the future."



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**Maddy Probst, Film Hub South West & Cinema Managing Producer at Watershed**, said: “This is positive news for the UK exhibition sector in general and independent cinemas in particular. Our sector has done much work in the past in partnership with the BFI and the distribution sector to develop audiences for a broader range of international films. There was apprehension that all this work might disappear post-COVID. However, this fund will allow cinemas to continue to grow in this important area of audience access to films beyond the commercial mainstream.”

Applications for funding are open now at: [bfi.org.uk/audience-fund](https://bfi.org.uk/audience-fund)

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**ABOUT THE BFI:**

We are a cultural charity, a National Lottery distributor, and the UK’s lead organisation for film and the moving image. Our mission is:

- To support creativity and actively seek out the next generation of UK storytellers
- To grow and care for the BFI National Archive, the world’s largest film and television archive
- To offer the widest range of UK and international moving image culture through our programmes and festivals - delivered online and in venue
- To use our knowledge to educate and deepen public appreciation and understanding
- To work with Government and industry to ensure the continued growth of the UK’s screen industries

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter.

The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Tim Richards.

**The BFI Audience Fund** invests £5.6m of National Lottery funding each year to expand access and encourage greater enjoyment of cinema by connecting audiences with great films - in venues, at events and online. We do this by supporting:

- leading exhibition organisations, including film festivals, to deliver culturally rich and nationally significant programmes and events on a year round basis
- projects which help exhibitors and distributors bring the best of UK and international cinema to audiences across the UK through events, distribution releases, multiplatform distribution proposals, touring film programmes and more
- initiatives that address under-representation and are innovating audience development

[bfi.org.uk/audience-fund](https://bfi.org.uk/audience-fund)