



Developing New Ideas

The Dorking Film Festival

The idea for the Dorking Film Festival came up after informal discussions between the two eventual co-organisers, actually during a long car journey back from the Global Slag Conference in Aachen, Germany. Having a long opportunity for discussion was actually very useful in batting around ideas and when the Dorking Film Festival did come into being, it emerged nearly fully-formed. Over the Christmas holidays 2014, I decided that life is too short to delay, and that usually it's better to just crack on. Crucially, I decided to personally absorb the risk of staging the first Dorking Film Festival - and any financial losses too, seeing it a somewhat of a hobby.

Why did we decide to organise the Dorking Film Festival? I used to live in Dorking and still have strong links with the town (I still run with Dorking and Mole Valley Athletics Club, for example) and I like the place. Myself and my co-organiser both love films. He has been involved with film festivals before (notably the Cambridge Film Festival) and I am a professional event organiser. Only 150 years after film was invented, we felt that Dorking should finally have its own film festival.

We realised that the absolute first thing that such a venture needs is a web site - so we bought the domain name www.DorkingFilmFestival.com, and my co-organiser built a very good web site. He also started tweeting about the event using the hashtag #dorkfilmfest - which eventually became widely used. We came up with a logo that we have plastered on everything. The logo represents film and it represents Dorking - and it has the name of the festival on it and the web site - nothing more is needed.

After some thought, we decided to stage the event in October (giving ourselves just enough time to organise it) and happily becoming part of the Arts Alive Festival as well. This brings with it some welcome free publicity via the Arts Alive web page. Booking the venue is a major step and making sure that everyone knows the correct date for the event is vital (so when I told everyone the wrong date via an early newspaper article about the Dorking Film Festival, it was not a good moment).

Crucial to the success of the Dorking Film Festival was the programme - and the core of this was represented by competition entries - 950 of them - submitted online (via a web site called filmfreeway.com). Very many more submissions were received than had been expected (which was great!) but a lot of time was spent weeding out the over-900 entries that we couldn't show.

In retrospect, we needed to build a bigger mailing list of interested film-goers and to put out our programme much earlier. However, we got great support from local radio (BBC Surrey)

and from local newspapers - the Dorking Advertiser most notably. Another time we would also try to gain editorial space in some of the well-known local magazines. We did do some flyering on Dorking High Street - this was very enjoyable, but we weren't convinced that it made much difference in the end.

With a grant from Arts Alive, and ticket money (we attracted around 120 attendees) we made back about half of the outlay on the event - meaning a loss of a few hundred pounds. To get this multi-year project off the ground, this is not a huge amount.

Feedback from film-makers and audience members was very positive indeed, and the most-asked questions on the day were "Are you going to do this again?" and "When's the next one?" The answers are: 'Yes' and '2017'!



Rachel Bashford won the award for best UK Junior Short Film for her film 'Hollow'



Ewan Golder and Leah Thorn won the award for best UK Adult Short Film for their film 'Watch'