



**FAN**

BFI FILM AUDIENCE NETWORK



THE  
NATIONAL  
LOTTERY®

# ART OF ACTION

Creative brief for BFI Film Audience Network

# CONTENTS

Art of Action	3
Overview	4
Project Aims	5
Period of activity	5
Meeting the Creative Brief	7
Thrills and Spills: Exploring action through the ages	9
Woman Kings: Celebrating the women of action	10
Justice and Vengeance: The influence of action from around the World	11
Potential Partners, Guest Speakers and Season Champions	12
Additional guidance for bespoke and/or Cross FAN programmes	14
Audience Priorities	16
Get Involved!	18
Timeline	21



*The General*

# ART OF ACTION



## Overview

This UK-wide season offers an action-packed journey through cinema from the jaw dropping stunts of silent cinema pioneers via the daredevil ethos of Hong Kong filmmaking to today's intricate dynamic visual choreography.

After the recent successes of *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, *John Wick 4* and the heavily promoted 'he motorcycled-off-a-mountain' for the latest *Mission: Impossible*, it is clear that the thrill of watching action done for real still captivates audiences.

The overarching focus is on the physicality of actors and stunt performers whose extraordinary on-screen exploits built on the boundary-pushing legacy of their pioneering predecessors.

This season looks at the cinematic artistry, skill and craft involved in creating iconic sequences and films as well as engaging with the historic roots and cross-cultural influences of action cinema.

Art of Action is broken down into three strands, which provide the creative framework for all activity supported by FAN:

- Thrills & Spills: Exploring action through the ages
- Woman Kings: Celebrating the women of action
- Justice and Vengeance: The influence of action from around the world

Pots of up to £15,000 will enable FAN member organisations to organise events, whether that's screening films from the core film menu below, developing bespoke local activity or even activity beyond your region such as a touring programme.

As part of the season, you can expect an extensive UK wide PR and marketing campaign that will showcase to audiences how nothing beats the thrill of watching action done for real.

## Project aims

- Present an action-packed journey through cinema history from the early silent film era to today's intricate dynamic visual choreography.
- Celebrate the artistry involved in creating some of cinema's most exciting action sequences, with behind-the-scenes insights from the action film community.
- Reframe perceptions of what action is and its cultural relevance; for example, busting the myth that action is just by and for men and shedding a light on under-represented voices.
- Explore how action films became a global phenomenon and the impact of cross-cultural influences on cinema today.
- Leave audiences feeling that nothing beats the thrill of watching real action on a big screen; whether they're seasoned fans or newbies.
- Engage new – especially younger and underserved – audiences across the UK; regardless of geography or circumstance.
- Open up opportunities for the next generation of creatives through BFI backed initiatives such as BFI Academy and Into Film Festival and other partnerships.

## Period of activity

The bulk of the season takes place this Autumn (October – December 2024) at BFI Southbank and across FAN with some potential launch events in September. For non-theatrical venues, some of the core menu titles will be available to book until the end of Jan 2025.

## Be part of a UK-wide Press & Marketing campaign

This FAN-wide ‘moment’ is an opportunity for audiences across the nations and regions to immerse themselves in a connected programme backed by a UK-wide Press & Marketing campaign.

Action cinema is hugely popular across the world. With visual artistry at its heart, it’s also very accessible, so there’s huge potential in line with the BFI’s Screen Culture 2033 priorities and tackling under-representation: be that on our screens, in the workforce or among audiences. Backed by a UK-wide Press & Marketing campaign and a central listing platform, the season will have a broad audience appeal with numerous entry points into their work for diverse audiences.

In addition to the activity being supported via BFI FAN, the BFI will also be delivering a range of activities in person at BFI Southbank, BFI IMAX and online (BFI Player, Sight & Sound) which will raise the profile of this UK-wide season.

All participating FAN exhibitors will be invited to provide top-line information about their events to feed into a national marketing and PR campaign including a central listing platform.

# MEETING THE CREATIVE BRIEF



*Run Lola Run* © 1998 Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

All activity supported by FAN should fit into one of the three strands detailed below.

FAN members can either programme from the menu titles or come up with bespoke seasons, using the menu titles below as a jumping off point. You can refer to the longer list of titles of titles provided including some new theatrical restorations and non-theatrical offerings.

The core menu titles reflect how action has changed over the past 100 years. They include classic silent era antics, Golden Age swashbuckling, ground-breaking Japanese samurai epics, kinetic Hong Kong martial art extravaganzas and actors that have become renowned for doing a lot of their own stunts on screen such as Jackie Chan, Michelle Yeoh and Keanu Reeves.

We are looking for distinctive programme/ audience development initiatives with clear marketing/PR hooks taking one or more of the menu title(s) as a jumping off point. You need to highlight the added value that your approach will bring to the UK-wide season. We welcome local and regional connections that might help generate local press and interest as outlined below.

We are interested in bespoke projects that put the spotlight on under-represented voices. These may include titles that are not featured in the menu or longer list of indicative titles but have the potential to reframe perceptions of what action is and its cultural relevance; and/or resonate and connect with new, underserved, and underrepresented audiences.

To find out more about the menu titles (as well as a longer list of indicative titles for each strand), please refer to the [Title Listing Document](#)

If you come up with a title that fits the parameters of strands and is available to screen here in the UK but is not listed, get in touch with season lead Timon Singh: [\*\*ti.s@watershed.co.uk\*\*](mailto:ti.s@watershed.co.uk) so it can be considered and potentially added to this list.

There is plenty of scope for behind-the-scenes insights from the action film community; whichever strand(s) you choose to work with. This could include getting a special guest to give behind-the-scenes insights into one of the menu titles or a bespoke project involving guests from the film action community. The season also lends itself to collaborating with young programmers or creatives to create programmes that have the potential to resonate with their peers.

There are also plenty of opportunities to collaborate with your local BFI Film Academy (for example a stunt workshop and connected screening.)



## Thrills & Spills: Exploring action through the ages

Take an action-packed journey through cinema from today's intricate dynamic choreography all the way back to the early visual gags of silent cinema pioneers and reflect on what's changed and what's endured through time.

Thrills & Spills menu titles:

- *The General* (1926)
- *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938)
- *The Train* (1964)
- *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000)

In this strand, you are invited to explore both the heritage and innovation of action cinema drawing a line between how each generation's action films inspire the next, whether it's the swashbuckling stars of the silver screen to the martial arts stars putting their decades of training into practice, as well as celebrating the action classics in-between that innovated upon what had come before. For bespoke programming, you could for example take your cue from *Robin Hood* and explore cinema's greatest swordfights; or expand the menu with some more contemporary titles such as *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022.)

You could also explore the new generation of talent, such as Brian and Andy Le who went from YouTube as martial arts tricksters 'Martial Club' to choreographing *Everything Everywhere All At Once* or the connection between choreography and action (with many action stars also being dancers, such as Michelle Yeoh and Bruce Lee, etc...) providing audiences with new insights and reaching out to dance fans as well as film fans.

Another section is the on-going debate about the need for more recognition for stunt work and action design in Awards.

## 'A ground-breaking practical action film decades ahead of its time'

**Christopher McQuarrie**

*Mission: Impossible – Fallout* director on *The Train*

## Woman Kings: Celebrating the women of action

The menu also celebrate women of action, both in front of and behind the camera with European indie *Run Lola Run* starring Franka Potente, the award-winning *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* that saw Michelle Yeoh and Zhang Ziyi woo audiences with their wire-fu balletic moves, Kathryn Bigelow's *Point Break* which has been described as "the greatest female-gaze action movie ever" by Rolling Stone and will be getting a UK-wide re-release for a new 4K restoration; and Nida Manzoor's high-octane action comedy *Polite Society* which kicks down South Asian and Muslim women stereotypes here in the UK.

Woman Kings menu titles:

- *Yes Madam* (1985)
- *Point Break* (1991)
- *Run, Lola, Run* (1998)
- *Polite Society* (2023)

The ambition with this strand is for women and people of marginalised genders to feel this is a season for them. We invite projects that celebrate films by women directors and/or female stars and stunt women, from *The Perils of Pauline* (1914) to contemporary titles such as *Polite Society* (2023) which pays homage to former Gladiator champion Eunice Huthart (*GoldenEye*, *The Fifth Element*, *Titanic*, *The Avengers*, *The Wolfman* and the *Tomb Raider* series.)

Need some more inspiration? Take a look at 2020 documentary, *Stuntwomen: The Untold Hollywood Story* which features the likes of Michelle Rodriguez, Amy Johnston, Alyma Dorsey, and Heidi and Renae Moneymaker.)

## Justice and Vengeance: The influence of action from around the world

Discover how action films became a global phenomenon as both Eastern and Western filmmakers became inspired by each other and the impact of such cross-cultural influences on cinema today.

Justice & Vengeance menu titles:

- *Seven Samurai* (1954)
- *The Wild Bunch* (1969)
- *Police Story Trilogy* (1985-1992)

As part of this strand, you could also develop bespoke programmes featuring lesser-known action gems from across the globe such as StudioCanal's new 4K restoration of *Red Sun* (1971) starring Charles Bronson and Toshiro Mifune.

You could also explore the pioneers of Hong Kong action cinema who exploded in the wake of Bruce Lee such as Sammo Hung, Yuen Biao and Jackie Chan and the action stars that they have inspired around the world such as Jean-Claude Van Damme, Cynthia Rothrock, black action stars like Jim Kelly, Steve James and Michael Jai White, Japan's Toshiro Mifune, Thailand's Tony Jaa, JeeJa Yanin and Veronica Ngo, Indonesia's Iko Uwais, India's Ashkay Kumar, Hrithik Roshan and Tiger Shroff, France's David Belle, Cyril Raffaelli and Alban Lenoir.

## Potential Partners, Guest Speakers and Season Champions

You may well already have local guests/ influencers in mind for your activity but here are a few prompts of potential UK based guest speakers that might be available for talks – for contact details, please contact season lead Ti Singh ([ti.s@watershed.co.uk](mailto:ti.s@watershed.co.uk))

- **British Stunt Register** – The [British Stunt Register](#) is the longest established and largest association of stunt professionals working in the Film and Television industry both in the UK and internationally and have a host of veteran and current stunt people available for panels, talks, workshops and more inc. Rocky Taylor, Vic Armstrong and Eunice Huthart. See also: [Hollywood Bulldogs: The Rise and Falls of the Great British Stuntman](#)
- **Christina Newland (film journalist)** – lead film critic at the i Newspaper and contributing editor at Empire, is an expert on the history and evolution of action cinema from the silent era all the way through to *John Wick*.
- **Mike Fury (film journalist, stuntman)** – a film journalist, author and action choreographer. He wrote the book “Life of Action” featuring extensive interviews with prolific names from the action genres including Scott Adkins, Dolph Lundgren and Donnie Yen. He has previously hosted panels as part of the London Action Film Festival, MCM Comic Con and more.
- **Soo Cole (Founder of Fighting Spirit Film Festival)** – co-founded and directs Fighting Spirit Film Festival which aims to promote , inspire, connect, recognize and support martial arts and action in film. Soo has also worked with stunt teams for *Now You See Me 2* (uncredited), *Doctor Strange* and its sequel (uncredited) and *Curfew* (2019) as Thaddea Graham’s stunt double.
- **Weng Yu (assistant director, Fighting Spirit Film Festival)** – a Fight Choreographer in his spare time. He has a wealth of experience in action cinema ranging from martial arts classics to modern indie fare.
- **Nick de Semlyen (film journalist)** – editor of Empire, the world’s biggest movie magazine, and author of *The Last Action Heroes: The Triumphs, Flops and Feuds of Hollywood’s Kings of Carnage*. His specialities including the films of Jackie Chan and John Woo as well as the evolution of action cinema from the 1980s into the 1990s.
- **Juice Aleem (writer)** – Co-director of B-Side Hip Hop Festival and head of the Afroflux cultural group, Juice’s work has him interacting at the junction of all of his passions: action, film and martial arts. Juice is ready to bring this knowledge and passion to events around the country.

- **Helen O'Hara (film journalist and writer)** – Empire's editor-at-large and co-host of the Empire Podcast, among several other podcasts. She has written three books, on 80s movies, superhero movies and *Women Vs Hollywood: The Fall And Rise Of Women In Film*, a history of women working in the film industry, and has an upcoming fourth book on Quentin Tarantino. Helen is a lifelong fan of action cinema and blockbuster filmmaking
- **Action Xtreme** – As well as directing several action feature films, Chee Keong Cheung (CEO of Action Xtreme) has been supporting filmmakers and audiences to learn more about action cinema and action filmmaking by [delivering partnership events](#) with festivals and venues across the UK and further afield including BFI Film Academy, Encounters and Glasgow Youth Film Festival

Other potential high-profile guests and industry figures that we hope to involve in the season as season champions include Nida Manzoor (*Polite Society*) and action star Scott Adkins.



*Robin Hood*

### Additional guidance for bespoke and/or Cross FAN programmes:

For those of you developing more bespoke and/or Cross FAN programmes, remember that your application must fit within our Creative Brief overview and clearly within one of the three strands.

Do not: simply programme 'big' action films like *Die Hard*, *Mission Impossible*, *James Bond* or *Predator* without a very clear connection to the brief and strands.

If you would like to showcase much more mainstream action films as part of a wider bespoke offer, such as a *John Wick* all-nighter, you are welcome to do so but such events cannot be supported financially. You will however be able to add such events to the central listing platform providing these are part of a wider bespoke offer that clearly connects with the brief.

For bespoke programmes, stay clear of blockbuster titles like *Die Hard* and *Predator* and more VFX-orientated blockbuster titles. Instead, consider more global or heritage titles or programmes that might focus on the wire-fu choreography of Yuen Woo-Ping (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, *The Matrix*, *Charlie's Angels*) or the influence of Asian directors like John Woo and Akira Kurosawa on Western cinema which would be considered within the scope of the Justice and Vengeance strand.

It's also important that you highlight the added value that your approach will bring to the UK-wide season (and for CrossFAN projects to FAN membership); for example, in terms of generating press interest and/or reframing perceptions of what action is, and/or resonating with new, underserved, and underrepresented audiences.

**'The fight is similar to the work of legendary choreographer Yuen Woo Ping – I wanted to make the actors fly!'**

**Nida Manzoor** *Polite Society* director

We also welcome region / nation specific programmes to ensure that the Art of Action season reflects the geographic spread of the UK stunt community, action pioneers and film locations. For example:

- **Scotland:** Celebrating action stars like Ray Park and Gerard Butler or celebrate the action films that have been made in the local area and the stunt teams involved, such as the likes of *Hobbs and Shaw*, *The Batman* and *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny* all being filmed in Glasgow.
- **Wales:** *The Raid* director Gareth Evans has worked with Chapter putting on screenings of East Asian action films
- **Midlands:** Leading UK action star Scott Adkins is based in Sutton Coldfield and has worked with Mockingbird Cinema and Fighting Spirit Film Festival in the past and has seen his star rise since *John Wick 4*
- **North:** Leading UK stunt coordinator and Angelina Jolie's stunt double Eunice Huthart is from Liverpool and was recently name-checked in the film *Polite Society*.
- **South West:** Bristol-based Nida Manzoor (*Polite Society*) has a love of action genre cinema and Bob Anderson who fenced for England in the Olympics and went on to help create some of Hollywood's greatest sword fights, was born in Gosport.
- **London:** UK Stunt Register is based in London and has a wealth of experience and knowledge including 'the world's greatest stuntman' Vic Armstrong and 'UK's oldest stuntman' Rocky Taylor.
- **South East:** Liaise with the ICO for South East-based talent and region-based challenges.
- Northern Ireland: Reach out to local stunt teams that have worked on local productions such as *Game of Thrones* and *The Northman*.

**Please refer to the [funding guidelines](#) for more ideas and details.**

# AUDIENCE PRIORITIES





Audience development and wraparound activity should be an integral part of any proposal, making the collective big screen experience unique and memorable and/or offering routes into and a deeper engagement with this celebration of action cinema.

Action cinema is hugely popular across the world. With visual artistry at its heart, it's also very accessible, so there's huge potential in line with BFI's Screen Culture 2033 priorities; engaging young people (16 -25) and tackling under-representation: be that on our screens, in the workforce or among audiences.

Please refer to the fund's guidelines for more detail but here are some prompts about specific audience groups you might want to consider as part of developing your activity:

- 16-25 young people who have been inspired by online martial arts trickers (such as Brian and Andy Le who went from YouTube as 'Martial Club' to choreographing *Everything Everywhere All At Once*).
- The generation of women who grew up watching the likes of *Charlie's Angels* (2000) and might not be as familiar with the film's wire-fu influences or simply celebrating the legacy of pioneering stuntwomen like Helen Gibson or Eunice Huthart.
- New martial arts fans on the back of the Michelle Yeoh boom, the 50th anniversary of Bruce Lee's death and shows such as *Cobra Kai*, *Warrior* who have launched a host of new action stars such as UK-born Andrew Koji (*Bullet Train*)
- South Asian / East Asian / Afro Caribbean communities tapping into influencers such as Juice Aleem, Eastern Kicks, Action Reloaded, Kung Fu Movie Guide, Late Night Kung Fu at Genesis Cinema, Kung Fu Kingdom, Scott Adkins' Life of Action and the online stunt community. Inc. fans of hip-hop that were strongly influenced by SE Asian action films such as Wu-Tang Clan. (The RZA is now a martial arts star/director – *The Man With The Iron Fists*, *Nobody*) – there is also a revived interest in Indian action films post-RRR.
- d/Deaf audiences who have always been a core audience for action cinema particularly given the visual dynamism of action films.
- Core BFI FAN / cinephiles interested in getting insights into the world of action, particularly hidden voices and how action fits into the wider cultural film canon.

# GET INVOLVED!



*The Train* © 1964 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios Inc. All Rights Reserved

We are offering up to £15,000 to enable FAN members to organise programmes and events responding to our creative brief:

**There are three ways you can engage with the programme and access support:**

- 1) MENU:** Pick from the menu of key titles available from assorted distributors in the UK and access support of up to £125 per film for enhancement wraparound activity and audience development; with a very straight-forward process to access the support.
- 2) BESPOKE:** Up to £15,000 (average awards likely to be circa £5,000 based on previous activity) to develop bespoke projects to allow exhibitors to develop a more bespoke activity within the parameters of the Creative Brief. Receive up to £15,000 (average awards likely to be circa £5,000 based on previous activity)

- 3) CROSS-FAN:** Up to £15,000 to develop programme and/or Marketing/Outreach Activity with the potential to scale or tour across the UK and/or projects involving multiple site-specific events across the UK.

**Read the [Funding Guidelines](#) for more information and guidance.**

# TIMELINE



## Timeline

- Final deadline for Bespoke and Cross FAN Proposals – 5pm Friday 21 June 2024
- Decisions made: Monday 15 July 2024
- Menu Expressions of Interest can be submitted until Monday 30 September 2024 (but note that for your activity to be included in initial listings announcement, you will need to submit your EOI and confirm your bookings by the end of July.)
- BFI Full Programme announcement: early August
- Period of Activity: October – December 2024 (except for the Menu titles which can be booked until January 2025 and some special regional preview events)

**Please refer to the [funding guidelines](#) for more guidance. Get in touch with your Film Hub if you have any questions.**