



discover film

Tortoise in Love

The Village that Made the Film

October 2012

Introduction

This is the story of *Tortoise in Love*, a British romantic comedy made by a village that set out on an ambitious journey from its peaceful provenance of rural Oxfordshire, bound for London's Leicester Square. *Tortoise in Love* was the vision of writer and director Guy Browning who corralled (almost) the entire village of Kingston Bagpuize to make the vision a reality.

Thanks to the BFI's Prints & Advertising Fund the story didn't end in the Square, or even the small release that was planned. Instead, *Tortoise in Love* became the first film to release simultaneously in rural communities across the UK as well as mainstream theatres. On 13th July, as well as Vue, Apollo and Showcase Cinemas, scores of village halls pushed back the pantomime sets, poured the tea and took part in the first rural release of its kind. In doing so, *Tortoise in Love* became the film that was made by a village, for hundreds of other villages around the country. It's since gone on to release theatrically in Australia, New Zealand and the USA and this short report documents how it all happened.

Film club's tortoise treat

AN EAGERLY-anticipated film will be screened in Portishead on the first day of its release in the UK.

As the film, *Tortoise in Love*, makes its debut at cinemas around the country this week, volunteer-led Portishead Film has embraced the unique opportunity to show the romantic comedy on the same day.

A spokesman for Portishead Film said: "This is too good an opportunity to miss. The film is tipped to be one of the hits of the summer and Portishead residents have the opportunity to see it in their home town on the day of its release in the UK."

The making of *Tortoise in Love* could be a film in itself, with much of the finance and many of the parts being sup-

plied by members of the community of Kingston Bagpuize in Oxfordshire. In this remarkable, home-grown effort, young mums helped with the sales and publicity, retired folk provided drivers and props, the local Women's Institute organised the catering and all the cast and crew were lodged in village homes for the duration of the shoot.

The film tells the story of Tom, a gardener who falls for a beautiful Polish au pair called Anya and who sets out to win her heart.

Written and directed by Guy Browning, *Tortoise in Love* will be shown at the Jubilee Hall in Slade Road on Friday at 8pm. Doors will open for refreshments at 7.30pm. Admission is £5 or £4.50 for concessions.

The Story

Thick snow covered the little Oxfordshire village of Kingston Bagpuize when local writer Guy Browning decided the village should make a film. Almost four hundred villagers volunteered to make it happen and the village rapidly became the unlikely setting for *Tortoise in Love*.

The entire cast and crew stayed with villagers, the Women's Institute organised catering on a vast scale and props, driving, costumes, make-up and a thousand other logistical tasks were all undertaken by a highly organised and frighteningly motivated army of villagers. The production was also crowd-funded by the villagers, using a unique mini-mogul scheme.

In the same breath as suggesting that the village make a film Guy Browning had also promised that, when the movie was finished, he would order coaches to line the main road in Kingston Bagpuize to take the villagers to their very own Leicester Square Premiere. Incredibly this also happened in May 2012, complete with a tractor on the red carpet. Very fortunately Tortoise in Love's release timed perfectly with the re-opening of Leicester Square and Westminster City Council sponsored the event to help the film become the first premiere following the official re-opening of the Square.



In spite of the high profile media attention this caused, Tortoise in Love still struggled to gain the interest of distributors due to the lack of big name stars. Through Martin Myers at Miracle Communications we secured a 20-screen release, but we felt that the UK run could be bigger and reach a wider audience of many thousands of people who had already expressed an interest in the film – not to mention the millions who had followed its progress on television, radio and in the press since the story began.

The Film

Tortoise in Love tells the story of Tom, gardener at the big house, who is not a fast mover with women. In fact he is glacially slow. When beautiful Polish au pair Anya arrives for the summer, Tom falls for her catastrophically like the felling of one of the giant trees he cares for in the manicured grounds.

Tom's adviser in matters of the heart is young Harry, abandoned by the rich owners of the house to run wild in the gardens. Harry's secret wish is for the Red Arrows to appear at the village fair: Tom's is to win the heart of Anya. Both seem impossible dreams until the whole village decides to lend a hand.

Application to the BFI's Print and Advertising fund

In order to orchestrate a release that was true to the film's back-story, we decided we wanted the film to be screened in village halls across the country. With the media attention from the premiere and the great responses from test screenings, we believed that Tortoise in Love could be the film to pioneer a unique approach to distribution.

In order to make this possible we approached the BFI Print and Advertising fund to ask for financial support to enable us to fund distribution costs such as supplying the venues with a copy of the film in the correct format, printing cinema-style quad posters for all venues, finding a PR company to provide support locally as well as nationally, and recruiting a distribution manager to manage and administer the bookings.

Whilst the BFI has been running its Rural Cinema Pilot Scheme recently, most films are still only available to non-mainstream venues 12-16 weeks after their cinematic release. The BFI-funded rural distribution strategy – created by Immense Productions for Tortoise in Love - aimed to bring a current movie to the countryside at the height of its media buzz and allow rural venues the opportunity to be part of a national release at the price of a Filmbank title.

Project Execution

A paid internship was advertised to ensure that the P&A funding was put to its optimum use. However the role was extended after four weeks and the job description updated to reflect the scope of the work that was being carried out, which included:

- Locating venues
- Making contact and garnering initial interest with venue and film club managers
- Agreeing the financial deal with each venue – the fee was 35% of receipts with a £100 minimum, but this wasn't possible for some venues
- Contacting rural film networks and writing copy for them to send to their members
- Supplying each venue with the relevant materials including serialising and tracking film 'prints' on DVD, Blu Ray, Digibeta and DCP
- Completing order confirmation forms
- Providing each venue with a digital press kit and connecting them to the appointed PR agency Porter Frith
- Providing each venue with a screening report to gather feedback
- Invoicing for each screening and collecting fees
- Documenting takings, audience numbers and feedback from each venue

- Keeping the online and offline PR companies up-to-date on each other's work
- Creating and maintaining an online presence via social media
- Organising speakers for the venues that requested them

Think Jam and Porter Frith, who had been appointed to carry out PR for the premiere, had their remit extended to include the new, first-of-its kind rural release.


Think Jam handled online PR, including:

- Reaching out to a broad online audience, particularly sites with a key regional focus
- Ensuring significant online buzz that was created around the premiere at Leicester Square extended into the rural release
- Including additional and extended activity on key older female lifestyle sites and listing sites
- Highlighting the endearing background story of Tortoise in Love in all activity
- Utilising additional competitions and features to enhance the campaign during the premiere and rural release

Porter Frith were responsible for offline PR including:

- Supporting each of the rural venues in their own local PR activity
- Informing regional press and listings about the film and all local screenings
- Lining up TV, printed and radio media to cover the release of the film
- Updating the mainstream press story to include the innovative distribution strategy
- Preparing and dispatching press kits to each venue containing relevant press coverage, imagery, marketing materials and a press release about the distribution strategy
- Contacting regional publications and listings organisations for each region, and telling the story of this innovative distribution programme to relevant trade press

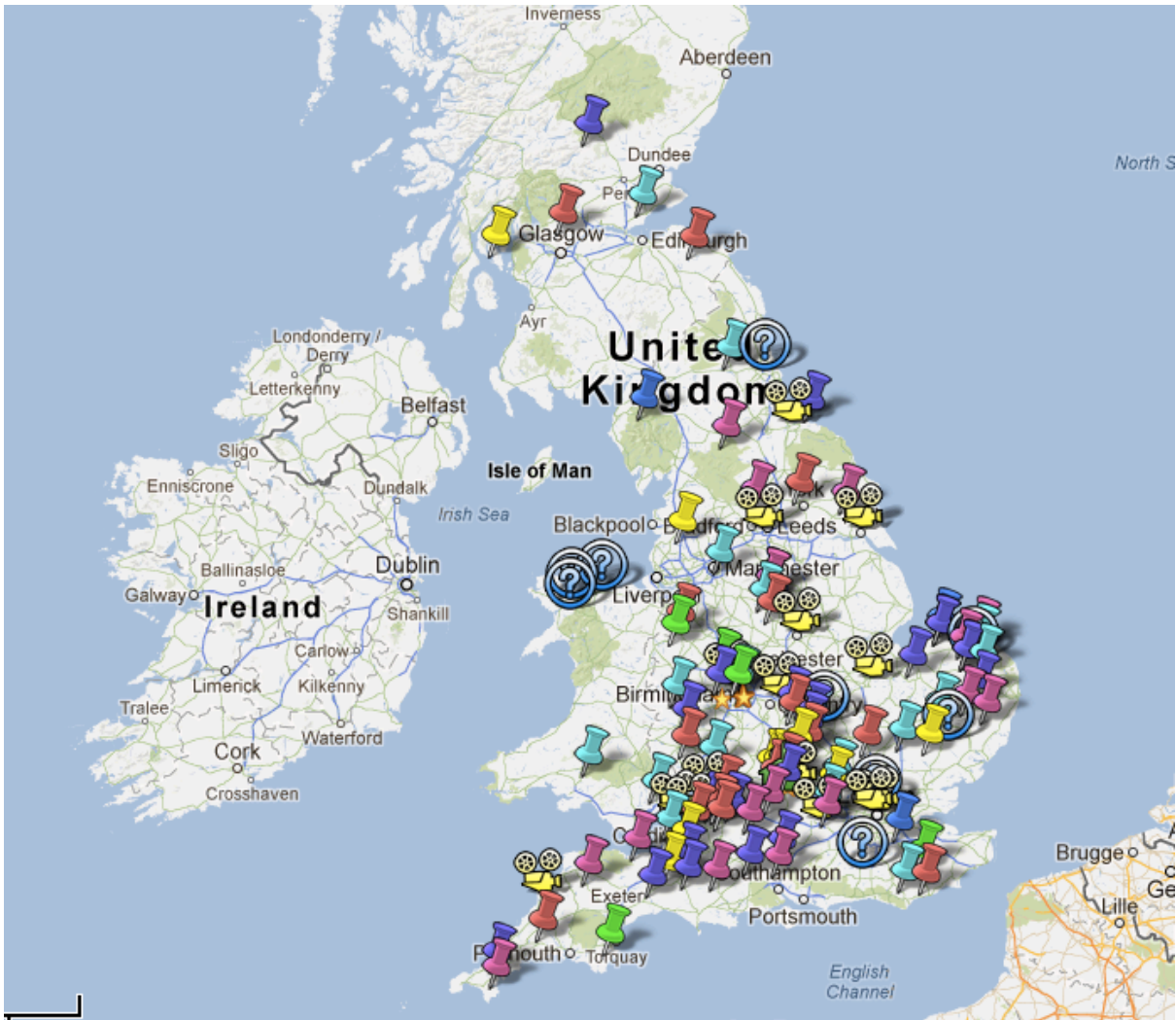
The Tortoise in Love website and Facebook pages were redeveloped to include (amongst other things) an interactive map of every screen showing the film.



Tortoise in Love
719 likes · 12 talking about this

Movie
Romantic comedy produced by (almost) the entire village of Kingston Bagpuize and Southmoor in Oxfordshire, UK. DVD out now! http://www.amazon.co.uk/Tortoise-Love-DVD-Tom-Mitchelson/dp/B008582FBQ/ref=sr_1_2?s=dvd&ie=UTF8&qid=1337850020&sr=1-2

About Photos Likes



Outcomes

The Rural Distribution Scheme meant that the film release has totalled 123 venues so far: more than 100 more than were originally expected. It has allowed the film to reach places as far-flung as the Isle of Bute and to be shown alongside caber tossing at the Aberfeldy Show Week. We have worked with Moviola, Big Country, Creative Arts East, Scott Cinema Network, Cine Yorkshire, Centre Screen Northampton and Arts Alive to secure screenings, but have also created relationships directly by researching, identifying and contacting venues that didn't appear to be affiliated with any of these networks.

In each case, full support has been given to each venue in the run up to their screening. Emily provided a fresh report to Porter Frith every few days so that they could begin to work on researching local press for each venue. The venues themselves played a part in this by providing the details of any existing press contacts that they had in their area. Each screening was a collective, co-ordinated effort and this resulted in great turnouts for the most part.

The typical feedback received was very positive, with most venues suggesting that they would love for this type of release to happen more often. Below are some samples of the screening reports that we asked each venue to complete after their screening.



13th

Tortoise in Love

Regional Release Programme – Screening Report

If you have any queries please contact emily@immenseproductions.co.uk

Venue Name:

Stanton Prior Film Club

Total audience attendance:

35

Box office total:

£105

Payment agreed:

? See Steffan's email attached (+VAT)

Any comments / feedback?

As a very small local Film Club we were really pleased to be able to participate in this Premier! Our village has only 50 adults so a turn-out of 35 made it a great (if crowded!) event in our small 1924 Village Hall. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the film – much chatter over wine afterwards. We did manage to get the format of the “Making Of” changed by about 30 minutes before the start and again – so many resonances with the various characters and events within the village – inspiring too.

I pushed the DVD in my closing words so hopefully that will help with sales.

One piece of feedback that I hope might be useful. I had shown the trailer about 8 days earlier and a number of people on the night said they felt the film was much better than they had expected from the trailer...

Thanks again for a great, British, feel-good film (a few tears at the end too!)

Glad to pass on the total box office for such a good night out – enc cheque.

Immense Productions Ltd., The Old Granary, Kingston Bagpuize House, Abingdon, OX13 5AX
Registered in England. Company Number 6510664

Total audience attendance: 79

Box office total: £395

Payment agreement: £138.25 (inc VAT)

(35% Box office takings)

Any comments / feedback?

This was a very successful screening with our highest ever turnout (previously 66), albeit with more attending from outside our village and many new faces for us. Hopefully a few will ask to join our mailing list and maybe come to future film showings.

It was an interesting exercise for us as we normally take a Summer Break from May to September.

Best regards and thanks for your help Emily and Steffan

Tim Hall

P.S. I enclose a cheque payable to Immense Productions for £138.25. Please will you send a receipt for our accounts. TH

Press and PR

The enthusiasm of local press was impressive, with articles being placed on the online versions of SoGlos, The Cornish Guardian, The Oxford Mail, The Buckingham Advertiser, Lynn News, and The North Somerset Times amongst others. There have been many more newspaper clippings sent back to us and it has been difficult to track how many articles have been sent out in print. In addition, the Tortoise in Love pages on Facebook and Twitter showed large amounts of activity. For instance, the information posted on the Facebook page during the second week of September reached 6,000 people according to Facebook insights. This number was even higher during the months of July and August and was definitely impacted by the amount of local press coverage.

Film to be shown to rural audience

A film producer originally from Aylsham is returning to his roots in Norfolk to showcase his new movie.

Steffan Aquarone (right), who grew up near Blickling, has had a love of the big screen since the age of five, after he made his first film.

At sixth form he carried out work placements at television companies in London and, keeping up the connection, was recently hired as the producer of the new film, *Tortoise in Love*.

The film, which has just been released in UK cinemas, is set to receive investment through the British Film Institute's Prints and Advertising Fund to ensure



that it reaches out to a wider audience by including rural venues as part of the first run of the release.

Using this approach, the film has already taken bookings from more than 50 small screens, such as smaller rural venues and film clubs, and a substantial number of

bookings are still expected to come.

Mr Aquarone said: "This funding means the film can be shown in some of the smaller cinemas, town halls and wherever there is a film club and facilities to show such a film.

"I will be doing a question and answer piece at the Town Hall in Aylsham on September 14 and then it will also be on show in other places around the county.

"I am really looking forward to this film coming back to Norfolk. It is a wonderful county and I am now planning a move back [here] if I can find the right place to build a new home."

North Norfolk News

Extra Film Screening This Month

Liskerrett Community Cinema are pleased to announce that they will be screening the newly released feel-good romantic comedy **Tortoise in Love on Friday 20th July (Certificate 12A)**

A genuinely funny romantic comedy made by (almost) the entire village of Kingston Bagpuize and Southmoor had a red carpet premier in Leicester Square on 24th May and will be available in cinemas from 13th July.

However the films distributors are making the film available simultaneously in both big cinemas and in local village halls through Community Cinema groups.

We felt this was far too good an opportunity to miss.

The Hub, Liskerrett

A tale of a tortoise

COMMUNITY film *Tortoise In Love* will be shown in Liskeard's Liskerrett Centre at 7.30pm on Friday, July 20.

It was conceived and directed by Guy Browning, who lives in the Oxfordshire village of Kingston Bagpuize, after he wondered if it would be possible to make a film using only local people. More than 400 took part, including Culture Secretary Ed Vaizey MP.

Cornish
Guardian

filming goes local



A film made with a cast of members of the same village is about to be shown in Aylsham. *Tortoise in Love*, which is due to play at Aylsham Town Hall on the September 14, is billed as a lovely story and one which is both uplifting and inspiring and a true reflection of British spirit. The film was conceived and directed by Guy Browning, who lives in the small and picturesque Oxfordshire village of Kingston Bagpuize. He wondered, out loud, if it would be possible to make a film using only people from the village and put the idea at a village meeting. The village thought it a great idea and before long it was in full production with more than 400 villagers involved. There's even a cameo performance from local MP and

Culture Secretary Ed Vaizey. The film enjoyed a major premiere in Leicester Square and has just received a major UK cinema release thanks to a new initiative funded by the BFI, whereby a myriad of rural cinemas and film clubs are being given the opportunity of playing this film when previously they would have had to wait many months. Producer Steffan Aquarone originally comes from Norfolk and is an old boy of Norwich School, having also worked at the Bucks Arms. He will be attending the Aylsham viewing and be taking part in a special Q & A session. The film starts at 7.30pm and tickets cost £5. They can be bought in advance from the council office or on the door.

September 2012

TORTOISE IN LOVE - SYNOPSIS

Tom, gardener at the big house, is not a fast mover with women. In fact he's glacially slow. When beautiful Polish au pair Anya arrives for the summer, Tom falls for her catastrophically like the felling of one of the giant trees he cares for in the manicured grounds. Tom's adviser in matters of the heart is young Harry, abandoned by the rich owners of the house to run wild in the gardens. Harry's secret wish is for the Red Arrows to appear at the village fair: Tom's is to win the heart of Anya. Both seem impossible dreams until the whole village decides to lend a hand.



Villager and Script Supervisor Sarah Lewis does a sound test



The Husband Obedience Trials

Editor's note: Am I the only one to be inspired by this story? Is a feature film made by local people something we could achieve? I have an idea for a story line, perhaps others will too. Please contact me if you are interested in developing this further.
editor@hustantonnewsletter.co.uk

Hunstanton Town and Around

Just Aylsham, Norfolk

TORTOISE IN LOVE



FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 7TH

Tortoise in Love

(12A) UK 2012. 106 mins. 8pm
Dir. Guy Browning. Tom Mitchelson, Alice Zawadzki

This will be a very special opening of the Autumn season - as both the director Guy Browning, and producer Steff Aquarone have accepted the Roxy's invitation to personally introduce this screening and perhaps inspire Axbridge to follow in their footsteps! This romantic comedy was entirely funded and largely made by the people of an Oxfordshire village, Kingston Bagpuize, and premiered at London's Leicester Square. We thought this film more than any other reflected the ethos of the Roxy, and so we are delighted to welcome men: Tom, gardener at the big house, can talk to plants but not to women. When Polish au pair Anya arrives for the summer, Tom falls for her catastrophically.

The Roxy, the smallest cinema in the UK, which re-opened with *Tortoise in Love*

7 September 2012 Last updated at 14:22



'UK's smallest' cinema relaunches in Axbridge after transformation

A 32-seat cinema - thought to be one of the UK's smallest operational cinemas - has relaunched in Axbridge, Somerset, following a five-year transformation.

The Roxy, housed in the old Red Lion pub, was installed by owners Juliet and David Maclay, who moved to the town in 1997 from New York, via London.

The volunteer-led redevelopment by former Aardman Animations set designer Sarah Laborde was a "labour of love".

Facilities include an Art Deco box office, 1950s bar and 'snogging sofa'.

'Pints of beer'

The Red Lion in the High Street was a derelict Georgian coaching inn when the couple's original restorations on the building began 15-years ago and it had been a pub for more than 250 years previously.

"The former coach entrance, formerly the public bar, [was] complete with full ashtrays and pints of beer left over from its last night of trading over two years before," said Juliet and David Maclay.



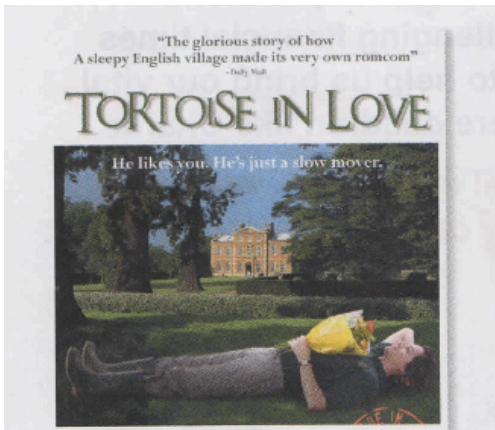
The Roxy cinema in Axbridge, Somerset, is housed in an old Georgian pub in the High Street

Related Stories

[Cinema emerges from cold storage](#)

[Campaign to save 'finest cinema'](#)

[Film buffs hope to revitalise cinema](#)



On a roll

It was lights, camera, action for an Oxfordshire WI when they were called in to feed the cast and crew of the romantic comedy, *Tortoise in Love*, pictured above. Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor WI provided free breakfast, lunch and afternoon tea for the duration of the six-week shoot. The cast was made up of local residents, including a few WI members.

The WI survived illness and a crew mutiny over a lack of bacon butties (quickly added to the menu) to deliver a first-class service. Vice-President Sue Melling said: "There were times when we thought, "what have we let ourselves in for?"

Members were rewarded with an invitation to the film's London premiere. Grateful Director Guy Browning told Sue that the WI's culinary contribution had 'helped to make his dream come true'.

BBC Somerset News Website

WI Life Magazine



SCREENPLAY

The Newsletter of Badby & District Film Society

July 2012

WE'RE PROUD TO BE PART OF THE NATIONAL LAUNCH OF

TORTOISE IN LOVE

He likes you. He's just a slow mover.



This month really is something special. The new British romantic comedy *Tortoise in Love* is released to cinemas on July 13, and we are able to show it on Saturday July 28. It's a film set in a village and made by people in the village: if ever there was an example of our own aim of films contributing to the community, this is it in spades! And because of its origins it is being launched not only to the cinema chains but to community cinemas up and down the country. We're proud, privileged and excited to be part of it and above all to extend a warm welcome to its producer, Steffan Aquarone.

Tom, gardener at the big house, is not a fast mover with women. In fact, he's glacially slow. When beautiful Polish au pair Anya arrives for the summer, Tom falls for her catastrophically, like the felling of one of the giant trees he cares for in the manicured grounds. Tom's adviser in matters of the heart is young Harry, abandoned by the rich owners of the house to run wild in the gardens. Harry's secret wish is for the Red Arrows to appear at the village fair: Tom's is to win the heart of Anya. Both seem impossible dreams until the whole village decides to lend a hand. Thick snow covered the little Oxfordshire village of Kingston Bagpuize when local writer Guy Browning decided the village should make a film. Almost four hundred villagers volunteered to make the film happen and the village rapidly became the

unlikely setting for one of the freshest and funniest films of the last few years.

The entire cast and crew stayed with villagers, the WI organised catering on a vast scale, and props, driving, costumes, make-up and a thousand other logistical tasks were undertaken by a frighteningly motivated army of villagers.

On 24th May 2012 the entire village went to Leicester Square to walk up the red carpet to the Premiere of the Hollywood-style feature film that they made.

Much of the budget of the film was raised by a mini-mogul scheme of small local investors. In return for its spectacular voluntary effort, the village owns a 'Golden Share' of the film meaning that clubs, schools and societies in the village will benefit from any future profits.

© Immense Productions 2012

This is a special occasion for our Society, so we're going to make a meal of it. Doors will open at 6.45 p.m. and the programme will start at 7.00 with an introduction to the making of the film by its Producer, Steffan Aquarone, who has also kindly agreed to stay on through the screening and answer questions at the end. Before the main feature we shall serve a two-course supper with a choice of Quiches (Salmon or Spinach and Ricotta), New Potatoes and Salads, followed by Fresh Fruit Pavlovas and Coffee. We shall toast the film's success with a glass of wine, but if you want more than the one glass please bring your own as usual.

Tickets for the evening will be £12 each (please indicate your choice of Quiche when you order your tickets). Seating is limited when we set the Hall out for a meal, so it would be a good idea to book your tickets early.

Along with this edition of *Screenplay* you will have received the programme for the next six months. As always, we've gone for a mixed bag: more than half are British, the two American ones are right up to date and highly rated, and to complete the package you have

absolute classics from China and France. Our films are getting younger too: over the last six months the average age was 16, while this time that's been halved to just 8. And as for the youngest - well that's what most of this *Screenplay* is all about. Enjoy!

AND FINALLY: Funding is now in place for our Young Film Makers' Project. More about this next month.



National Offline Response

- A total of **12 national newspapers and film magazines** carried reviews of the film including Guardian, Independent, Daily Mail, Time Out, Empire, Times, Sunday Times, Daily Telegraph and Financial Times.
- Local press and radio including Oxford Times and Mail, Heart FM, BBC Oxford News and ITV Meridian featured radio and TV stories on the preparations for the premiere
- The red carpet premiere was broadcast live on the BBC's One Show to an audience of over 4 million
- BBC Breakfast featured live interviews from Kingston Bagpuize as almost the entire village got ready for the premiere
- ITN News and BBC national radio ran the story on major bulletins throughout the day

Online Response

- A total of **38** sites picked up the trailer including **Empire, View London** and **Contact Music**; in addition to this, **27** sites also included the official poster
- Premiere ticket competitions on **5** sites providing fantastic early buzz and excitement for the film, ranging from film sites, to entertainment and regional sites for broad coverage on **Orange, Entertainment Wise, Itchy London, HeyUGuys** and **Culture Critic**
- Premiere coverage on a total of **7** sites (**Implausible blog, Premiere Scene, Pearl and Dean, Brit Flicks, Filmoria, Red Carpet News** and **Leicester Square TV**) ranging from print to video pieces
- The tour and tea promotion on **Mature Times**, one of the key sites for the campaign, was a definite highlight with homepage coverage reaching out to the ideal target demographic
- Further outreach to the core demographic with a regional focus thanks to the additional promotion on **Gransnet**, another key target site, with homepage coverage plus coverage on **The Lady**; Gransnet and The Lady have provided some great sustained activity to this campaign following day of release
- The exclusive clip on **The Huffington Post** received great exposure on their entertainment, film and trailer homepage plus mentions on their social networks
- Securing **7** features focusing on a variety of topics surrounding Tortoise in Love and its fantastic background story and the regional initiative. These were featured on **Female First, MaleXtra, Teen First, iVillage, Entertainment Focus, The Fan Carpet** and **Cinemas Online**
- **Total News Impressions 909,729**
- **Total Estimated Online Media Value £480,529**

Online Reach and Sentiment

The following information is pulled from our Social Media Monitoring Tool 'Sysomos' which searches the Internet for mentions of specified terms within a date range. Using this tool we can ascertain the levels of conversation around Tortoise in Love over the past six months, looking at the reach this activity has had and the overall online sentiment.

ACTIVITY SUMMARY - 31st Jan – 31st July 2012



TWITTER REACH AND DEMOGRAPHICS

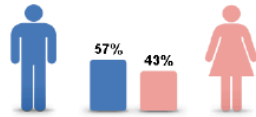
456, 524 impressions*

1.5

tweets / day

0.06

tweets / hour



Taken from public profiles only

OVERALL SENTIMENT



The majority of online sentiment is positive with extremely low negative sentiment. This is a fantastic result for Tortoise in Love.

NEWS SENTIMENT



It's even more impressive to see that Tortoise in Love received no negative sentiment in news, demonstrating the admiration of Tortoise in Love and its background story too.

Courtesy of Think Jam

What went well

The best aspect of the whole strategy was having the opportunity to build rapport with the rural venues that decided to screen the movie. While the rural release has not been a big money-spinner, it was a crowd-pleaser and we have had the opportunity to hear how real audiences responded to the film.

We have been amazed at the sheer volume of positive support, which translated into over 100 rural community screenings. The story behind the movie is always a great selling point, but the venues often came on board specifically because of the BFI-funded PR assistance which they saw as offering important support for their local society.

We have had considerable support from the BFFS, Moviola, CineYorkshire and Arts Alive, who all sent out an email to their membership to promote the film. The response from the Moviola network was particularly strong, with 23 member venues agreeing to show the film in the South of the country.

Within the established industry the project benefited from sponsorship from Sony Europe in the form of VPF fee reductions on what would normally have been applicable to some of the larger venues that the film was screened in. Sony Europe has expressed an interest in supporting the future development of rural independent screen networks too.

Another positive aspect is that a lot of societies really got on board with the story and opted to make their screening of *Tortoise in Love* a special occasion. A few societies came out of their summer hiatus in order to screen the film in its first week, some arranged sit-down meals, there has been a society wishing to book a stately home for its screening, and we have had a request for the film to appear at the Aberfeldy Highland Show Week alongside the Best Marrow Competition.

The qualitative feedback from screening reports has shown that audiences who saw *Tortoise in Love* as part of the BFI-funded Rural Distribution Strategy were delighted to see a film that was amusing, warm and inoffensive. Many felt that UK mainstream cinema had nothing to offer them and said they rarely or never attended mainstream cinemas. Several audience members in their older years fed back that their local community cinema or film club provided them with an exclusive opportunity to see films with audiences since rural transport was insufficient to provide access to town-centre based cinemas. It was very satisfying to be able to offer *Tortoise in Love* to these often neglected social groups.

The tricky parts

Whilst recruiting venues we couldn't help but notice a disparity in the number of film societies in different areas of the country. We have had particular difficulty getting the film shown in Northumberland and Wales and received no response at all from Northern Ireland venues. It seems that North Yorkshire and Cumbria are also areas that could do with more screens. Another tricky issue was the speed at which society members and venue programmers responded – the majority organise their societies as a hobby.

Another difficulty is that a lot of film societies do not show films between the months of April and September. This was a particular worry with our release date in July, although it is understandable that these societies would time their break for the summer months. There was also the issue that a lot of independent venues organise their programmes months in advance, which was not ideal when trying to book in a week before the release.

Financially, it seems that we set our terms just about right. The terms did however exclude a few venues from showing the film – some thought that the £100 minimum would be too big a risk for their club and a few exceptions were made in the interests of widening participation.

Box Office Performance

Mainstream release*	Gross	£8,129	Net	£2,845
Rural release**	Gross	£29,740	Net	£10,228

*Figures are subject to final statements from some venues

**Gross is estimated based on screen averages from venues that declared; net is estimated based on invoices served to date (some screening reports are still due)

Legacy and Recommendations

Tortoise in Love has demonstrated the demand for genre-based independent British film amongst a segment of society that is poorly served by mainstream film distributors. In particular the opportunity to carry out Tortoise in Love's unique rural distribution strategy meant that audiences who rely on community cinemas and film clubs could experience a film that was at the height of its release and whose provenance they could relate to strongly.

This report has highlighted the existence of networks around the country that provide catalogue services to film clubs. However further work could be done to address areas where few or no film clubs exist, and/or where there are weaker networks to help those venues select and screen films. This could be achieved by targeting grant opportunities or by providing additional funding to existing network organisations to increase their geographical reach.

Releasing Tortoise in Love in rural communities at the same time as its mainstream release undoubtedly increased audiences' enjoyment and many community venues experienced increased attendance and membership subscriptions as a result of the publicity they were able to generate with our support. To extend this aspect of the project's success, a national independent film distribution network could be created to repeat the work carried out by Immense Productions for other eligible British films – doing what Moviola, Arts Alive, BFFS etc. do but from the point of view of the independent film distributor, allowing easy (and cheap) access to these additional concurrent revenue and audience generating opportunities during mainstream theatrical runs.

Martin Myers at Miracle Communications was a pivotal part of the success of the project in having the technical and industry expertise to handle bookings from independent and rural venues that required DCP prints via mainstream distribution channels. He was able to recommend expertise and reach deals whose cost-savings were in excess of the fee for the rural element of his engagement. Likewise Think Jam, and especially Porter Frith, went well beyond the brief and the budget to support individual rural screenings in every corner of the country. Substantial experience and value has been built up in the networks and operations that were undertaken by the parties involved, albeit with huge effort being put in by all parties.

Tortoise in Love also teamed up with Sony Europe who expressed an interest in supporting the future development of rural film distribution networks in the UK in particular with

regards to equipping venues with appropriate, affordable hardware for film projection. We recommend the BFI pursue this opportunity in earnest.

Film is a core aspect of British culture and film clubs offer much more around the experience of film watching than mainstream cinema venues. Rural and community film societies provide social inclusion for often neglected groups, help build communities, and cost very little to support. We hope BFI's investment in Tortoise in Love's Rural Distribution Strategy will provide some insight and motivation to develop further support for independent cinema networks in the UK, both from the point of view of the venues and the producers/distributors.

Steffan Aquarone and Emily Behan, October 2012

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A full list of contact details of participating venues can be provided on request.