

# **ACOFS - The Australian Council of Film Societies**

## **Film Society Handbook**

### **Chapter 14: ON THE NIGHT**

[Jan 2010]

The presentation of the program to the members is the culmination of all the hard work put in by the committee, but the success of the evening is not solely dependent upon the choice of good films. There are many non-film details which can either enhance the enjoyment of the program presentation, or cause annoying distraction. Careful planning, forethought and attention to detail is the key to a pleasant evening for members.

Whilst most of the items listed below are commonsense it is useful to review them from time to time as, taken as a whole, they will ensure that your society gets repeat attendance of the members.

The person checking membership cards at the door should always be pleasant to every member no matter how annoying some people may appear.

It is a nice touch to have music playing over the sound system before, and after the show, as well as during the interval.

Unless the film is specifically made with an interval (not many are), it should be screened without a break. NEVER force an interval just to include refreshments. Coffee can be served after the film.

If a breakdown occurs don't leave your members in the dark. Turn on the lights, dimmed if possible, and explain to them what has gone wrong and how long it will take to rectify the fault.

Latecomers are a nuisance to members who arrive on time. To discourage them, make sure your programs commence precisely at the advertised time. Also, if there are shorts on the program, don't let latecomers into the theatre until the next short is over. Having to wait outside will hopefully discourage members from coming late next time.

Basically, there are four jobs that need to be done in presenting "A Night at the Film Society":-

- (1) Ensure the programmed film or DVD is supplied in good condition and in good time. This is usually done by the Film/DVD officer.
- (2) The actual technical presentation of the program, as organised by the Technical Officer who may be the projectionist for the evening.
- (3) The admission of members and guests, as organised by the Front of House.
- (4) The serving of refreshments at, or after the screening, as organised by the Refreshments Organiser.

The splitting up of the jobs as outlined below is not a hard and fast rule. It depends very much on the size of the society. For example, in a society comprising 10 members with screenings in a private home, one person may be house manager, usher, film manager, projectionist and still have time to duck out and make a cup of coffee for everybody. This chapter shows you what may need to be done to have a smoothly running operation. How you eventually split up the work is up to you.

### **Film/DVD Officer**

The film/DVD officer has the responsibility to see that the film or DVD is in good condition and at the theatre in plenty of time to set up. Occasionally films do get lost, and film reels do get mixed up. This should be discovered and rectified before the day of the screening.

### **Technical Officer**

Sees that projectionists have been rostered for the screening and all the equipment needed for the presentation is in good operating condition.

Before the Show: Check that the film arrives in good time and is in good condition. Deliver it to the theatre in plenty of time to set up and test. Check the projection and sound equipment. Roster projectionists. Provide special instructions to projectionists if required. Arrange for music before curtain time.

During the Show: Monitor focus and picture quality, volume and sound quality and supervise the correction of any breakdown and keep audience informed.

After the Show: Pack up and remove the equipment. Make sure the projectionists' report form is completed. Return films to the source.

In most film societies the film manager is just a fancy name for the projectionist.

### **Front of House**

The Front of House acts as host for the evening. He or she is assisted by a number of volunteers from the membership who serve as ushers. The ushers check the membership cards for admission and help seat latecomers. Ushers should be provided with torches so that they may show members in or out of their seats after the lights go down. Whenever problems arise with admission because members may have lost their cards, or request to bring in a guest, the Front of House serves as a guide or liaison to solve these problems, either on his own, or in consultation with another office bearer.

In summary:

Before the show: Organise ushers roster (if applicable). Prepare instructions to ushers (if applicable). Take charge of admission problems.

During the show: Be available to take charge of non-technical problems, admission of latecomers. Be available to assist film officer, if necessary.

After the show: Collect film appraisal forms or count the votes. Deliver of film appraisal forms (when required). Store away ballot boxes and other non-technical equipment.

#### Refreshments Organiser

The refreshments organiser is responsible for the smooth dispensing of refreshments at interval or after the film. This involves the purchase of coffee, tea sugar, cordial, biscuits, paper cups and milk, as required.

The refreshments organiser is also responsible for arranging helpers, delivery of refreshments and other equipment to the theatre, making sure the urn is full and set to the correct temperature and finally organising the clean-up after the screening.