

Filmhouse fundraiser to Open the Doors begins today

A fundraiser to ensure that Filmhouse on Lothian Road reopens in 2024 will begin accepting donations from today. The crowd funder aims to raise around £250,000 but it could take around £1.25 million to raise standards inside the building to suit today's audiences.

A group of people who have all been involved with the organisation at some point in the past – but not with the Centre for the Moving Image, the parent charity which ran Filmhouse and which went bust last year – are moving towards running an independent cinema in the building once again.

Directors Ginnie Atkinson, James Rice, Rod White and Mike Davidson formed a company Filmhouse (Edinburgh) Limited in late 2022 which became a charity earlier in the summer.

The building had in the meantime been bought by developers Caledonian Heritable Limited a company which owns many licensed premises in the city, including the Dome. The new owners are carrying out a programme of works to repair the fabric of the building and make it wind and watertight before winter. Caledonian have recently agreed to gift all projection equipment to the new Filmhouse including the customised

analogue 35mm and 70mm projectors.

While Caledonian Heritable paid £2.65 million for the building it is still in need of some repair and renovation.

Ginnie explained that their view is the cinema needs essential refurbishment. She said: "We feel we've got to be competitive with the experience that people have when they go to other cinemas and the seats in Cinema 1 for instance, and Cinema 2 have not been changed for I can't even remember how long."

- **Fundraising contributions can be made here <https://crowdfunder.co.uk/filmhouse-open-the-doors>**
- **The campaign hashtag for social media is [#filmhouseopenthedoors](#)**

Once Filmhouse has raised the required funds they can then enter into a 21-year lease with Caledonian Heritable and operate the building as an independent cinema.

It is planned to run Filmhouse in much the same way as before with the profits from an in-house café supporting the charity. The previous café was a much loved feature of going to the Filmhouse – even when you were not there to see a film. What would be different this time round is that the Filmhouse Edinburgh will be run as a standalone company and not as part of a bigger entity.

Director Rod White said: "The Filmhouse was prior to October 2022, part of a larger organisation, many of the staff worked across the various elements of the organisation. So the fundamental difference here will be that everyone who's employed, we'll be working for the direct benefit of the cinema."

From its reopening the venue will work on attracting new audiences in Edinburgh, to support a wide range of local and national film festivals, and to bring cultural cinema back into the capital.

Former programme manager Jim Rice said: "There is so much on here which can't really be seen elsewhere. We have had discussion events, practitioner appearances, guest appearances, live musical accompaniment all sorts of activity which doesn't happen in other cinemas. That's because it doesn't work in their particular commercial setting and they're not equipped to do it. So it really is a kind of unique resource in Edinburgh, allowing a much more densely intricate kind of programming."

Filmhouse used to screen 80 film titles each month in their three screens, but it is more than just the number of films it was the kind of films and the cultural breadth which will be important in the future.

Ginnie said: "Oppenheimer for instance, the film that with Barbie has proved that cinema is not dead. We would have screened that in 70mm because we have a 70 mm projector and, and that was one of the formats that director Christopher Nolan wanted the film released in. So that's a really good example of what Filmhouse can do that's special."

Screen Scotland, [The City of Edinburgh Council](#) and The Scottish Government have been working to secure a future for cultural cinema in the city across the months since the CMI's collapse. Since Filmhouse (Edinburgh) Ltd. secured an exclusive agreement with Caledonian Heritable all three bodies have been working with the charity to support its ambitions and return Filmhouse to operation. Following the news that Filmhouse (Edinburgh) had secured an interim agreement with Caledonian Heritable, Screen Scotland confirmed it had awarded Filmhouse (Edinburgh) Limited £60,000 to support its planning and development work in the near-term.

Ginnie Atkinson said: “This is a significant step on the journey towards restoring cultural cinema provision for the city. Filmhouse is more than just a cinema – it’s a home for cinema lovers and for film festivals and is proud of its track record in the area of film education, which would continue. We are delighted to be able to launch the fundraising campaign with the goal of opening the doors to a newly refurbished cinema building in 2024.

James Rice said: “The building is in an ideal city centre location and is well configured, but currently in run down condition. We want to improve and modernise the whole experience of visiting Filmhouse so it can survive and thrive into the future and we need the support of everyone who wants the same thing.”

A Caledonian Heritable spokesperson said, “Caledonian Heritable have a long-standing appreciation of the vital importance of culture and the arts to the city of Edinburgh. We are pleased to be working with Filmhouse, Creative Scotland and the City of Edinburgh Council in anticipation of a new era at this key cultural venue.”

David Smith, Director of Screen Scotland said: “Ginnie, James, David and Rod have worked incredibly hard over the last few months to secure this opportunity for the city and Scotland. I know that everyone round the table shares the same ambition – one also held by those many campaigners who raised their voices in support of the Filmhouse across recent months – to see the Filmhouse projectors kick back into life and the seats full of cinema lovers for decades to come. That’s an ambition Screen Scotland is very happy to support.”

Cllr Val Walker, Culture and Communities Convener said: “We are clear in our commitment to maintaining 88 Lothian Road as a world-class hub for independent, cultural cinema. We have been working closely with our partners at Creative Scotland/Screen Scotland, the Scottish Government and Scottish

Enterprise on forging a sustainable path forward for this Edinburgh institution, and spiritual home of the Edinburgh International Film Festival.

“We will continue to support our partners, the building owners, and Filmhouse (Edinburgh) Ltd. in our common goal to return 88 Lothian Road to its rightful place in Edinburgh’s cultural landscape.”

The office bearers of Filmhouse (Edinburgh) Ltd are:

- James Rice is the former programme manager and now a cinema strategist at specialist consultancy Mustard Studio
- Rod White was former Head of Programming
- David Boyd was former Head of Technical
- Ginnie Atkinson was former CEO of Filmhouse and Edinburgh International Film Festival until 2010.
- Mike Davidson CA, a strategic financial consultant, has recently joined the board bringing his extensive charity experience to the new body.



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