

European Cinema Giant Vue and BFI Unite to Bring More British, International Films to U.K. Screens (EXCLUSIVE)

[Manori Ravindran](#) May 9, 2022 11:39am PT



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European cinema giant [Vue](#) is partnering with the British Film Institute to create more exhibition opportunities for British, independent and international movies.

From May, the cinema chain is set to screen a series of films curated by the [BFI](#) across all of its venues in the U.K. The program will be called “BFI Presents” and films will screen at Vue’s 88 movie theaters across the country.

Vue and the BFI have a special connection given the exhibition chain’s CEO and founder [Tim Richards](#) was [appointed chairman of the film org in February 2021](#). However, the Canadian executive tells *Variety* that discussions for such an initiative were underway well before the pandemic, and that his desire to bring more independent fare to Vue cinemas “predates [his] chairmanship.”

"We know there's a market for independent, foreign and British films," Richards tells *Variety*. "We want to try and get those films out to our customers. This is our belief that it exists. I look at this a little bit like a curated film service for our customers, where the BFI with the experience they have will actually look at the smaller films and look at what's [appropriate for Vue]."

Richards admits "there's a perception that big operators don't play anything but mainstream films — but that's not the case."

"This is going a step beyond where we've been in the past and going into a more curated [arena], and really using a world-class org like the BFI to program films on our screen," he added.

There will be no added cost for selected movies to exhibit at Vue, *Variety* confirmed.

The films will range from newly released and award-winning British and international film through to hidden gems and restored classics. The titles — many of which normally play at independent cinemas or specialist chains like Everyman or Curzon — are all hand-picked from BFI seasons by a team led by Stuart Brown, head of program and acquisitions at the BFI, and Julie Pearce, head of distribution and program operations.

The program kicks off on May 18 with special preview screenings of "Benediction" (pictured), a biographical drama about Siegfried Sassoon written and directed by Terence Davies and starring Jack Lowden as the British poet. The pic will be shown two days ahead of its general U.K. release on May 20.

Other films coming up include "Brian and Charles," a comedy from British director Jim Archer. The film will screen on June 28 ahead of its release in

July. (Both "Benediction" and "Brian and Charles" are backed by the BFI with National Lottery funding.)

It's still unclear how long chosen films will screen at Vue. Tickets for "Benediction" and "Brian and Charles" go on sale on Tuesday.

Richards says he'd like to eventually invite prominent directors and producers to program the "BFI Presents" screen for a period of time. "We'd simply go to a top director and say, 'Here's the palette and you can program it however you think is appropriate with hidden gems,'" explains Richards. "This is the beginning."

[The BFI reported earlier this year](#) that U.S.-studio backed films had their highest U.K. box office share on record in 2021 with 36.1%. In sharp contrast, the market share for independent U.K. films was 5%, a sharp decline from 2020's share of 14%.