Between Like and Love: Cinephilia and connected viewing in film festival audiences

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Abstract:
Film festivals have long been held as a refuge for a classic form of cinephilia. They echo, as Liz Czach (2010: 141) has noted, the cinephilic impulse through 'their promise of a unique, unrepeatable experience' and the 'rare' chance to view many films in darkened theatres up on the big screen. Yet if film festivals generally are safe-havens for cinephiles, they are also cultural events that must compete for the attention and patronage of a wider audience. As emergent digital technologies plot new lines of connectivity and establish new modes of participation and viewer behaviour, expectations surrounding audience interaction and event experiences are shifting. In response, recent years have witnessed a growing number of film festivals (Melbourne, Toronto, Sundance, among others) employ an array of apps, social media and online platforms to engage audiences and expand events.

This essay explores the tension that emerges from film festivals balancing their cinephile identity against the impulse to engage with technological change. Focusing on film festival audiences, this essay explores the changes that have accompanied the increased presence of the internet and personal web devices within the festival space. Looking in particular at the recent example of the Melbourne International Film Festival, which worked to both encourage and discourage the use of mobile phones and social media at set times within its screening venues, this essay explores the construction of appropriate audience behaviours at film festivals. It asks: to what extent are practices of connected viewing, such as second screening and multi-platform interactions, reconcilable with established modes of cinephilic film festival decorum? In so doing it opens up questions around the function of festivals as both social and cinematic events and examines what future might exist for the expression of cinephilia within the digitally connected festival.

Keywords: film festival; cinephilia; digital; audience; social media; connected viewing

Digital technology – particularly that which takes portable and personal form through smartphones, mobile Internet, and social media – has drastically impacted how we experience the world around us. The ready access to the online world has shaped how we communicate, produce and recall memories, divide and focus our attention, as well as how we navigate our physical reality and our social and cultural encounters. Our daily exchanges have not only become mediated, through apps and technologies which enable an expansion of social behaviours (such as the move from face-to-face communication to text-based exchanges via email and across social media), but have also been transformed through new patterns of sociality and behaviour that are informed by the logics of digital technology. The discovery that search engines such as Google are transforming how humans remember and the forms that transactive memory take – with the storage of facts and specific memories increasingly relocated outside ourselves and accessed primarily via the Internet (Sparrow et al. 2011) – speaks significantly to the impact of such technologies. Yet, if these technologies have increasingly become a ubiquitous part of our daily lives, they remain an uneasy fit when it comes to cinema, or more specifically, to the ways in which cinema is experienced inside the auditorium.

Seeming to capture this tension around both the (inevitable) presence of and anxiety over personal digital technology use within the cinema theatre were a series of festival-authored announcements that screened at the Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) in 2015 and 2016. Appearing on screens in cinemas immediately before the start of each program session, the announcements spoke directly to the growing presence of digital technology within the festival space and its use by both festivals and their audiences. Rather than identifying a clear place for such technology, the announcements highlighted the competing agendas and imperatives that govern the use of personal digital devices within the cinema and festival auditorium.

The majority of these announcements took form as adverts for MIFF's smartphone app and online content. Highlighting all the ways that audience members could enhance their festival experience through accessing MIFF's website, app functions and social media, the adverts encouraged festival patrons to pick up their smartphones and 'join the conversation' around the festival and its films. Offering audiences the chance to rate films, purchase tickets, as well as follow all the latest news, reviews and festival buzz via the festival's official social media channels, the adverts seemed focused on integrating the use of smartphones into the festival space and specifically into the auditorium where these adverts screened. If this seems to suggest that MIFF was taking a progressive step towards integrating phone use into the 'sacred' space of the cinema, such a move only extended as far as the start of the film itself.

Immediately following these adverts encouraging festival audiences to turn to their phones for an extended and enhanced festival experience was one further announcement from festival organisers, this time admonishing audiences to turn off their phones. The announcement, which warned: 'no texting, no swiping, no video watching, no facebooking, no instagramming, no snapchatting, no tweeting', instructed audiences to put their phone

away and 'enjoy the film, without distraction'. With such an instruction, already familiar to cinema audiences, MIFF ultimately reasserted a conventional exclusion of phones and other personal electronic or digital devices within the auditorium. If the festival ultimately aligns with convention, the juxtaposition of these competing versions of festival participation seems to nevertheless capture something of the current state of tension that exists around the place of personal digital devices within the context of communal cinema viewing. Highlighting the clash of old and new modes of film-viewing and festival participation – the cinephilic impulse to be immersed entirely within the world of the film contrasted against the need within some audience-members for a near permanent connection to a world beyond the immediate spatial and temporal one we occupy (facilitated through social media and Internet access) – the festival's pre-screening adverts point to changing expectations around how cinema is accessed and experienced within public settings.

Building on the questions raised by MIFF's adverts, this article seeks to interrogate how technological change is impacting contemporary practices of cinephilia and, in turn, how these practices are transforming the way films are watched within the auditorium. Taking the film festival as its principle site of inquiry, this article argues that the tendency within scholarly writing and critical reportage to equate film festivals with a classic cinephilic experience of cinema situates these events as ideal spaces to explore the how personal digital technology is changing the in-theatre experience of cinema and cinephile audiences. Engaging with both first-hand experience of film festivals in Australia and Italy, as well as drawing on the growing literature on both film festivals and cinephilia, this article examines the place of cinephilia within the normative viewing practices of film festival audiences.

In the first section, this article examines the film festival as a site conventionally predisposed to cinephile audiences and cinephilic viewing rituals. It traces the way in which the film festival as event has been positioned as paralleling constructions of a classic mode of cinephilia and the way in which these parallels have worked to construct film festivals as 'refuges' for such cinephilic practices. In order to draw out these resemblances, this section briefly buys into the construction of what Lindiwe Dovey has criticised as the 'standard definitions of a "film festival" that seems to be settling in all too easily within the scholarship' (2015: 159). This 'standard definition,' or what we might also call the prototypal film festival, broadly describes the international film festival model which has become increasingly standardised, professionalised and institutionalised since the format's rapid global proliferation in the 1980s (de Valck 2007: 20). In broad terms this festival is marked by a preference for international art house (or increasingly 'festival') cinema, the organisation of programs that include streamed sections or side-bars devoted to national cinemas, retrospectives on internationally recognised auteurs and other 'significant' cinema movements and discoveries, the presentation of awards, and an audience that conforms to the normative behaviour of western cinema-goes (sitting silently and observantly within cinema auditoriums).[1] In focusing in on this prototypal festival, this article thus, in its first instance, engages in an examination of the imaginary order of festival experience for the

purpose of interrogating how this connects to an (equally imagined) experience of cinephilia as a distinct order of audience experience.

Following this interrogation of film festival as cinephile experience, this article then explores how such parallels have more recently been disrupted by the growing use of personal digital technology within the festival space. Using the case of recent festivals in Australia and Italy to examine how digital technologies have become embedded within the festival experience, the latter sections of this article question whether the festival's growing digital connectivity signals a break from or an evolution of cinephilic behaviour. Looking to debates around Internet cinephilia as a contemporary mode of cinephilic expression, this article works to relocate practices of online cinephilic discourse and connected viewing behaviours typically associated with domestic or private spaces back within the public auditorium. In so doing, it argues that an increased reliance on personal digital technology does not signal the end but rather a refiguring of contemporary expressions of cinephilia and their place within the film festival as social cinematic events.

Cinephilia and Film Festivals

Film Festivals have long been imagined and constructed within their written accounts as a refuge for a classic form of cinephilia. For Thomas Elsaesser film festivals represent cinephilia's 'natural home' (2005: 36), while for Marijke de Valck and Malte Hagener (2005: 13-14), they provide 'hunting ground[s]' for cinephiles that 'still put their stake on the projected celluloid image on a cinema screen'. As events tied to the projection of cinematic images before a communal audience, the pursuit of particular types of cinema, and the fleeting and ephemeral experience of an event, film festivals align with the conditions that have traditionally underscored the cinephilic engagement with cinema. The result, as Hagener and de Valck explain, is that 'arguably, one of the most "classical" of contemporary cinephile practices is the festival visit' (2008: 25).

The notion of a 'classic', or what Elsaesser (2005) has termed 'first generation' cinephilia, references a specific articulation of cine-love that is historically located, bound to a set of practices and rituals that centre on the experience of cinema within the auditorium, and ultimately imaginary – in that it has rarely, if ever, existed in its purest form.[2] On the one hand, it denotes the engagement with cinema that is broadly situated historically within the cinema theatre's heyday from 1929 to the 1970s, and specifically within the theatre-based viewing and discursive practices of the *Cahiers du cinema* critics and the *Cinémathèque Français* through the 1950s and 1960s. On the other hand, it describes a set of preferences and behaviours, which frame the love of cinema as linked to a certain type of cinema, to particular viewing rituals, and to an attitude towards cinematic discourse around both the films watched and the acts of their watching. It is this set of practices, in particular, that resonate most clearly with the imagined and 'standardised' film festival experience and that conditions these events as refuges for the cinephilic impulse. Moreover, it is precisely in relation to these practices, as will be taken up in the next section, that the rise of personal

digital technology poses the greatest disruption and contestation of contemporary auditorium-based cinephilic experience.

In the first instance, classic cinephilia is linked to a specific kind of cinema. In a historic sense, this cinema was that of Howard Hawks, Alfred Hitchcock, Fritz Lang, and Sam Fuller, as well as Bergman, Rossellini, Tarkovsky, and Bertolucci (but not that of the Coens, Kirostami or von Trier [Möller 2010], who would find their devotees within later generations of cinephiles). At its core, it was the types of modernist cinema that epitomised the *Cahiers du Cinéma* critics' and Andrew Sarris's formulations of auteur politics in the eras that these theories were conceived (1950s) and transported from Europe to the United States (1960s). It was, more specifically, the type of cinema that, in her notorious article 'The Decay of Cinema' (1996), Susan Sontag was eulogising – a kind of cinema that was built around masters and masterworks, and the ability of the cinephile to recognise who these were and to tell the difference between them and all others (de Valck and Hagener 2005: 12). In this sense, classical cinephilia was a system of (mainly Eurocentric) tastes, which validated certain films and filmmakers as worthy of love, admiration and fascination based on the artistic competence of the director and an evaluation of his idiosyncratic stylistic signature.[3]

This pre-occupation with a particular type of cinema, and the prominence of the auteur within it, finds resonance within the space of the film festival and, more particularly, within its program. Since the 1970s when, as de Valck (2007: 174) explains, festival programming became, among other things, 'an issue of cinéphile passion (recognising new great auteurs and movements)', the festival has privileged its program as a locus for a cultivated 'good' cinematic taste (Stevens 2016: 145). Through official competitions, retrospectives and specialised sidebar programs that highlight key developments within world cinema, festivals lay claim to an authority over what constitutes the important and influential cinema in any given year. While such claims may be disputed – by cinephiles, film critics, other filmmakers – the festival program, through a politics of selection (Staiger 1985: 8), makes an argument about which films should and should not receive the necessary attention to enter into the broader social and cultural consciousness that conditions our understanding of 'cinema.' Like cinephilia, then, the festival program offers both a means for approaching the celebration of cinema, but also an argument about what constitutes cinema – an argument that shares key foundational elements with that of classic cinephilia itself.

Beyond the pre-occupation with this particular type of cinema, classic cinephilia also denotes, in its second instance, a particular set of rituals and observances that inform how films are watched. Both as a result of its historical specificity – emerging from an era where the cinema represented the dominant site to watch films – as well as its distinct preference for a certain type of film viewing experience, classic cinephilia is indelibly linked to the cinema auditorium. More specifically, it is linked to a tradition of cinema theatre experience that became standard in the years following the introduction of sound and the establishment of purpose built, single screen cinemas: namely, the experience of a seated audience before a large illuminated screen and within an otherwise 'darkened womb-like

auditorium' (Elsaesser 2005: 32). As Sontag argues, such an environment, accessible by 'going to the movies,' was an essential pre-condition to the cinephile engagement with cinema – to watch a film in any other way, as she explains, 'isn't to have really seen that film' (1996: 60). The primacy of the auditorium within Sontag's construction of the cinephilic experience is both spatially specific – tied to the physical space of the movie theatre and the spectator's place within it – as well as experientially contingent, in that the fleeting temporality of the public screening and the immersive power of the cinematic moment become key concerns in constructing the classic cinephile encounter.

In a physical sense, classic cinephilia was concerned with locating the cinematic encounter between spectator and (big-)screen. As Elsaesser explains, 'Cinephilia meant being sensitive to one's surroundings when watching a movie, carefully picking the place where to sit, fully alert to the quasi-sacral feeling of nervous anticipation that could descend upon a public space' (Elsaesser 2005, 29). Yet such awareness to the cinema's physicality ultimately stood in aid of a specific experience that such surroundings enabled: an 'immersion in the film itself' (Martin 1988: 117). The power to be carried away by a film, to become lost in a fleeting moment of cinema, came to epitomise the classic cinephile encounter. As Sontag explained, 'You wanted to be kidnapped by the movie – and to be kidnapped was to be overwhelmed by the physical presence of the image' (1996: 60). Yet, more than a desire to be kidnapped, the transportive quality of the auditorium experience also offered the condition of an unrepeatable moment: to have watched the film in that place and at that time, in an unalterable and unstoppable presentation.

The result, as Elsaesser explains, is that the cinephilic act of filmic encounter also became one of memory and the recollection of filmic moments. He argues:

> Cinephilia take one, then, was identified with the means of holding its object in place, with the uniqueness of the moment, as well as the singularity of the sacred space, because it valued the film almost as much as the effort it took to catch it on its first release or its showing at a retrospective, as for the spiritual revelation, the sheer aesthetic pleaser or somatic engagement it promised at such a screening. (2005:38-9)

The moment in this sense operates as a reminder of not only the film's material and temporal existence, but also as a reminder of the spectator's physicality, mortality and context within the auditorium. For Elsaesser, as with Sontag, classic cinephilia therefore marked an engagement with cinema that was transportive, fleeting and ultimately nostalgic, as it was an experience that lived in the past tense as memories or, in the case of Sontag (1996), as something that was already lost and decaying. The ritual of the auditorium visit then not only conditioned a specific relationship of spectator to the screen within a communal space, but also the privileging of unrepeatable filmic experiences.

Connections can be drawn between the experience of cinema desired by both the cinephile and the festival. Like classic cinephilia, film festivals privilege a particular

relationship with cinema that is underscored by the fascination of a located cinema experience, of films projected onto the big screen before a communal audience. In short, as Liz Czach has noted, for a cinephile spectator, 'Festivals screen films as they were "meant to be seen", in the immersive space of the darkened movie theatre' (2010: 141). Moreover, such a presentation of cinema, as for the cinephile, becomes imbued at the festival with transformative qualities, as something more and distinct from simply 'watching films.' As Czach (2010: 141) argues, then, through their viewing rituals 'Film Festivals present a seductive return to classical cinephilia with their promise of a unique, unrepeatable experience frequently offering a rare opportunity to view films on the big screen before they disappear into the ether or only reappear on DVD.'

Like classic cinephilia, the appeal of the festival as event is conditioned around the fleeting presentation of cinema – of films bound to their running time and to their location within festival schedules, which require audiences to seek out the films in the moment of their exhibition or else miss them entirely. The festival thus reflects both the physical and experiential conditions of the classic cinephile's desired cinema. Through its privileging of the delivery of cinema within the auditorium, the festival offers a transportive experience, albeit one that, as Hegener and de Valck assert, 'is more spectacular than its classical prototype' due to its context within the (often spectacularly located) festival environment' (2008: 25).[4] It further privileges the experience of cinematic moments, which must be experienced first and foremost within the here-and-now of the auditorium presentation, and recalled later as acts of memory. For Janet Harbord, it is precisely the power of the film festival's temporality – its liveness as conditioned by contingency (the misfire or accident) – that marks such presentations as cinematic events. She reasons, 'contingency testifies to the event as a shared experience, a collective experience dependent on being at one place and at one time' (Harbord 2016: 79). Through both their temporal constructions as fleeting presentations, and their concern with presenting cinema on the big-screen within the auditorium, it is then, as Czach suggests, 'no surprise that film festivals emerge as one of the last refuges for the cinephile' (2010: 140)

If classic cinephilia is both a taste for a specific kind of cinema and a preference for a particular viewing experience, then in its third instance, it is also a discursive practice. In their definition of cinephilia, Antoine de Baecque and Thierry Frémaux note that it is not only 'a way of watching films', but also that it is inherently a way of 'speaking about them and then diffusing this discourse' (in Elsaesser 2005: 28). The act of watching films – which in its first instance, as Czach and Christian Keathly explain, is a private one, regardless of the numbers of people with whom you may physically share a viewing space (Czach 2010: 143) – is also only the first part of what codes cinephilia. The second part, which is inherently social, relies on discourse. Cinephilia thus is dependent on both the production and consumption of reflections on cinema. While in the historic setting of first generation cinephilia the ability to contribute through writing to this discourse was limited, with few produces and many more consumers reading cinephilic discourse in publications such as *Cahiers du Cinéma* and *Positif*, the 'speaking about' films was more democratic – if also

restricted to the local geographies of cine-clubs and movie theatres. Both practices were, however, in de Baecque and Frémaux's articulation, crucial to the practice of cinephilia, incorporating into such an engagement with cinema an 'element of shared experience,' as Elsaesser (2005: 28) explains, as well as a working to construct the very tastes and conditions that prescribed the cinephilic disposition.

Here too we find a continued parallel between the cinephile and the festival. If cinephilia is transformed from the personal to the communal experience through the speaking about and sharing of writing on cinema, then once more the festival space becomes a privileged site where such behaviour is enacted. As communal events, festivals offer not only the spectacle of film screenings, but also, among a myriad of attractions, a social experience in which the atmosphere, buzz and communal setting of the auditorium encourages exchanges and discussions of the films on display. Indeed, it is often the post-screening conversations and in-queue discussions, as much as the films screened, which become a marker of the film festival experience (de Valck 2007: 45). Furthermore, although film festivals are seemingly focused on the exhibition of motion pictures, they are also a locus for a large volume of written exchange, which includes programs notes, film reviews, and festival round-ups that perform the task of diffusing festival discourse. The result is a surplus of written material which operates to engage participants in what Daniel Dayan describes as a double festival – that of the audiovisual festival of films and the 'written festival' which acts as a type of meta-event, commenting on and describing its audiovisual counterpart (2000: 52). Much as with cinephilia then, the film festival space is defined not only by its engagement with cinema, but also with the discursive exchanges about cinema that it enables.

What then emerges from this comparison of two imagined forms of cinematic experience – the prototypal film festival with the classic cinephile – is an understanding of the appeal that the latter has for the former in regards to the preservation of a particular engagement with cinema. Yet, it is more than simply that film festivals can serve up the necessary conditions to enable a classic cinephile experience, rather it is also that such a cinephile audience then becomes the preferred and imagined spectator of film festivals. If, as de Valck and Hegener contend by way of Colin MacCabe, the *politique des auteurs* 'was not only concerned with establishing the primacy of the filmmaker-director, but also aimed at the creation of a new "perfect" audience' (2005: 11), then equally a similar argument can be made of the prototypal film festival presentation. Such film festival programs and screenings do not simply present a version of cinematic engagement that reflects a cinephile disposition; it also seeks to condition a cinephile audience.

The interaction with cinema demanded by festivals and their selection, articulation and scheduling of films prefigures a cinephilic spectator. Through the privileging of certain constructions and juxtapositions of films – such as through retrospectives, specialist side-bar streams, national movements and waves – standard festival programs foreground particular ways of 'reading' and engaging with cinema. In particular, this sensibility reflects, as de Valck argues, a shared set of concerns between the cinephile and the festival. She explains

(2007: 186), 'Both film festivals and individual cinephiles are highly concerned with revelatory moments (discoveries), authorial signatures (tributes and retrospectives) and discourses that define one's relationship to the films (festival coverage and publications)'. This shared sensibility thus positions the cinephile as the 'perfect' audience of the festival for the simple reason that they meet the requirements for achieving the optimal interaction with cinema that the festival provides. Yet more than this, it also ensures that festival engagement becomes conditioned by the requirements of such cinephilic sensibilities. For the duration of the festival audiences typically enact, to greater and lesser degrees, a version of festival cinephilia that echoes that of the classic cinephile in both taste and decorum. The relationship of the cinephile to the festival can then be understood as reciprocal: just as film festivals offer a lasting refuge for classic cinephilia, so too can classic cinephilia be understood as a preferred precondition and basis for audience engagement with film festivals.

The Digitally Connected Festival

If the prototypal film festival up to this point can be constructed as a safe-haven for classic cinephilia, we must also consider that it is not only this. As film *festivals*, such events are also simultaneously cultural events that must compete for attention and patronage within a competitive cultural economy. As emergent digital technologies plot new lines of connectivity and establish new modes of participation and viewer behaviour, expectations surrounding audience interaction and event experiences are shifting. In particular, the pervasiveness of smartphones (estimated at 72% of American adults in 2016) and social media use, with 79% of online adults in America on Facebook and some 56% of online adults utilising two or more social media platforms (Greenwood et al. 2016), has seen a significant change in how audiences access information about both films and cultural events, as well as in the types of experiences they pursue. The logics of social media, which encourage not only online conversation and inter-personal exchange, but also increasingly mediated acts of documenting, performing and witnessing experiences, have significantly impacted on film festival participation. In response to these shifts, film festivals have increasingly engaged with and been transformed through a growing reliance on digital technology. Through the development of specialised apps, web-content and targeted social media channels, the festival experience has become one that combines the in-cinema experience with access to world beyond the screen.

The changes affecting film festivals in many respects reflect the broader impact that personal digital technology has had on how films are consumed, viewed and experienced in more commercial cinema exhibition environments. In recent years the mobile Internet, along with advances in portable web devices such as smartphones, tablets and handheld game consoles, have increasingly found a space within the cinema auditorium itself. Examples of filmmakers actively encouraging audiences to use their phones and mobile devices to access additional content for certain films are slowly accumulating, with films such as *Clerks II* (dir. Kevin Smith, 2006), *The Brothers Bloom* (dir. Rian Johnson, 2008) and

Looper (dir. Rian Johnson, 2012), offering in-theatre audio-commentaries by way of files made available for personal audio devices, and *The Angry Birds Movie* (dir. Clay Kaytis and Fergal Reilly, 2016) tying a movie-themed smart-phone game into the movie-going experience. Some films have even looked towards the potential of digitally-enabled narrative interventions, with interactive app experiences such as in the Dutch horror film *App* (dir. Bobby Boermans, 2013) – which features 35 moments of additional synchronised content as well as behind the scenes footage – working to enhance the in-theatre spectacle. Similarly, in Japan and China, the introduction of bullet screens – which enable real-time SMS commentary from audiences to be displayed on screen during film sessions (Gaunson 2016) – actively encourage audiences to engage in disruptive practices within the cinema space that fundamentally change the narrative experience of the films on display.[5]

While these types of explicit interventions into the screening of films remain rare within the film festival space, the logics of access to and use of smartphones that underpin such experiments find resonance in the ways that mobile Internet technologies have been taken up within the film festival space. Specifically, they work to translate the ideas of connected viewing and second screens, which emerged around the viewing of content on television screens and computer monitors, into the auditorium. The notion of connected viewing, as Jennifer Holt and Kevin Sanson explain, 'refers specifically to a multiplatform entertainment experience, and relates to a larger trend across the media industries to integrate digital technology and socially networked communication with traditional screen media practices' (2014: 1). As one among a multitude of practices, it thus references the integration of social media into the viewing and communication around more traditional media, such as television or movie watching, as well as the development of media-specific applications and web content aimed at creating an enhanced and extended engagement with an original media text. Within this paradigm, it also references the evolution of the 'second screen,' which, as Sarah Atkinson explains, 'is the relatively new term used to identify instances of mobile phones, smartphones, tablets or computers are used in synchronization and in subordination with a dominant 'first screen' experience' (2014: 79). Like the recent experiments in engaging connected viewing practices and second screens within the movie theatres mentioned above, over the past decade film festivals have also increasingly drawn on the logics of these practices to create a digitally enhanced festival experience.

In 2011, MIFF became one in a growing line of festivals (including Sundance and the Seattle International Film Festival) to develop a festival smartphone application. While initially enabling easy access to program information and ticketing services, the app quickly evolved as a gateway to the festival's interactive online features. In its 2016 iteration, the app offered users the ability to link directly with Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to both follow the festival's official feed as well as to 'join the conversation' through adding their own views. Users could check into sessions via the app, rate films as part of the festival's audience awards, follow 'festival buzz,' share photos and, using the festival's program wishlist features, curate their own versions of the festival program to be shared with friends

via iCal and Facebook. Like other connected viewing and second screen apps designed for television – such as companion apps which sync viewer's mobile devices with primary screen content, or franchise apps, which offer condensed versions of official show websites (Tussey 2014: 205) – the festival app offered an enhanced and extended version of the festival that drew on the connective and networked potential of the smartphone to link audiences to a world beyond the auditorium. Taking on a second screen function in relation to the 'first screen' experience of the festival as live event, the app, while intended for use only before and after the screening of films, nevertheless imbedded the logics of connected viewing into the festival space.

While the festival app encouraged connected viewing practice within the festival environment, however, it was through the event's promotion of and engagement with social media – broadly defined as Internet-based applications that allow for the exchange of user-generated content – that such practices found their strongest articulation. Film festivals become a locus of social media exchanges, as both the tools provided by the festival and the array of available online platforms open opportunities for festival-goers to discuss, record and engage with the event and share their experiences. Since what has been dubbed as the launch of Twitter at the 2007 South by Southwest (SXSW) festival, in which the platform experienced a dramatic rise in daily use with festival-goers tweeting their experiences and using the platform to organise festival gatherings and parties (Tyron 2013: 166), social media has become a key aspect of the festival experience for audiences. On platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest, Facebook, YouTube and more, festivalgoers create their own narrative of festivals by commenting on and documenting what is seen, heard and thought throughout the festival. Their commentary forms a translation of the post-screening and in-queue discussions that have long marked the festival experience, remediating this into the text and image based communication of the online environment.

In turn, festivals harness the social media activities of their audience in building and highlighting their celebratory atmosphere. Taking advantage of the festival's entreaties to 'join the conversation,' as one example, MIFF 2016 audiences actively engaged via Facebook, Instagram and, in particular, Twitter (using the festival's official hashtag #MIFF2016) to comment on the event. Ranging from reviews of films seen, to anticipated experiences still to come (such as upcoming films or panel discussions), to commentary on festival-adjacent activities (including photos of pre-film drinks or meals sought between screenings), the social media commentary provided the backdrop to the unfolding event, highlighting and communicating the festival atmosphere that surrounded the festival venues, screenings and audience. Capitalising on this commentary, MIFF further integrated this online buzz back into the physical festival environment. Before festival screenings, a scrolling curated selection of tweets, appeared on cinema screens, alongside information about what was showing in other venues and immediately after the current session. Through this, the festival not only embedded into its presentation, via the MIFF App, the tools for audiences to engage with the festival in a more mediated and interactive fashion,

but also made visible the performance of this participation by incorporating it into the space of the festival screening. Moreover, the curated nature of this reintegrated commentary – which tended to direct attention towards repeat screenings and undersold sessions – worked to simultaneously promote official and sanctioned readings of the festival while also conditioning understandings of the 'typical' festival experience. MIFF's integration of app and social media technology at the heart of this normative and idealised festival experience ultimately worked to merge the computer monitor with the cinema screen to create a highly connected spectacle.

Towards a digitally-enhanced Festival Cinephilia

If the above examples highlight a potential avenue for a digitally integrated future of theatrical film exhibition, however, they also belie the tension and unease that accompanies such experiments. Despite the pervasiveness of smartphones and social media use, the possibility of widespread phone-use *during* screenings remains divisive. At CinemaCon in 2012, strong resistance met a suggestion by Regal Entertainment's CEO Amy Miles that exhibitors should allow texting during screenings, with Alamo Drafthouse CEO Tim League suggesting that texting in cinemas represented 'a scourge of the industry' (Verrier 2012). For League, phone use in cinemas represented a sacrilegious violation of the 'sacred' auditorium space (Verrier 2012), a disruption of the viewing conditions and rituals that distinguish the cinema theatre experience from other forms of film consumption.

League's response to Regal's suggestion – which was echoed by the public outcry that followed a similar suggestion by AMC Entertainment in 2016 to allow texting in cinemas (Gaunson 2016) – speaks to an ongoing anxiety that exists over the nature of the cinematic experience and the (inevitable) presence of personal digital technology within the auditorium. In the assumed cinephile space of the film festival, this anxiety becomes even more pronounced – highlighting the tension that stems from their structuring, on the one hand, as an event aimed at an (imagined) audience with distinct viewing rituals and relationships with cinema, and on the other hand as a contemporary spectacle offering an engaged and connected festival experience.

At one level, this seemingly contradictory nature of the film festival and the in-cinema experience it provides speaks to the multifaceted quality of festival events. While, as explored above, the prototypal festival predisposes itself to an imagined cinephile audience, in reality the diversity of film festivals in operation address and attract a similar multiplicity of audiences (both to different events and within individual festivals) for whom an intense engagement with cinema may not be the primary motive driving festival attendance. Writing in 2005 of audiences at the International Film Festival Rotterdam, de Valck outlined a typology of festival audiences, which included such groupings as the lone list maker, the highlight seeker, the specialist, the leisure visitor, the social tourist, and even the festival volunteer. Each of these audiences were characterised by their differing approaches to the task of dissecting and navigating the festival's program and social events. Likewise, in 2010, Czach noted that alongside the imagined cinephile audience at the Toronto International

Film Festival, other types of festivalgoers had appeared: in particular, the stargazer and the scenester, for whom celebrities and their parties held more allure than the festivals cinematic offerings. For Czach, 'The threat to film festival cinephilia and the cinephile is most evident in the anxiety over particular festival participants who embrace a noncinephiliac disposition' (2010: 141). While for Czach, the threat came from the growing celebrity culture of festival festivals that displaced their focus as film culture events, in the contemporary setting we might point to the smartphone users and connected viewers as the new source of anxiety.

However, to simply reduce the changing nature of film festivals and the tension around their growing digital integration to the competing agendas of different audience segments is to overlook more complex relationships between audiences and the changing dynamics and imperatives of communal auditorium-based film exhibition. To suggest that the difference between those who seek out the more connected viewing experiences opened up through such events is situated neatly along the (elitist) divide between cinephiles – seeking an immersive and transportive cinema experience – and non-cinephiles, as everyone else, ignores the impact that technological change is having on the expression and enactment of contemporary cinephilia itself.

The remainder of this article therefore turns its attention to an examination of the changing nature of contemporary cinephilia and its expression within the film festival auditorium. Engaging with debates on how digital technologies and the Internet in particular are shaping the contemporary cinephile practice, this final section argues that emerging forms of cinephilia are not simply reflected in where and how films are viewed outside of the movie theatre, but rather that they are also refiguring how films are watched on the big screen inside the auditorium.

As Christian Keathley observed in the preface to Scott Balcerzak and Jason Sperb's edited collection on cinephilia in the digital age, 'Cinema's first century has shown that there is no better formula for stirring up cinephilic discourse than the introduction of new technologies into the film experience' (2009: 1). From the introduction of sound, to the arrival of 16mm film, to the invention of television and later the VCR, VHS tapes, the remote control and DVD technology, to finally the arrival of the Internet and its attendant platforms and devices, the steady development of entertainment technologies has seen the experience of 'cinema' change significantly. With each new arrival, the question of what constitutes the 'proper' way to engage with the cinematic image has come under review and debate. Since the 1980s, when home video technologies opened up access to movies in a non-theatrical environment to an even greater degree than had television before it, these debates have tended to focus on the differences that exist between the auditorium experience of film and its replication on various domestic platforms, such as the VHS tape, laser disk, DVD and finally the Internet. In the wake of Sontag's declaration of cinephilia's death in 1996, as de Valck and Hegener explain, this debate tended to polarise into the differences between opposing types of cinephilias that variously championed 'going out' and 'staying in' (2005: 13). While the latter spoke to a new and changing understanding of

cinephilia which rallied behind the domesticated and democratised technologies of home video and the Internet, the former was seen as continuation of earlier cinephile practice, one that 'kept faith with auteur cinema, with the celluloid image and the big screen' (Elsaesser 2005: 36).

Recently, however, such distinctions have become sidelined as a more inclusive definition of cinephilia has come to dominate a renewed academic interest in the concept. Jonathan Rosenbaum and Adrian Martin's 2003 edited collection of letters and correspondence, *Movie Mutations: The Changing Face of World Cinephilia*, opened up a discussion of a more global expression of cinephilia. Within this model the distinctions between 'going out' and 'staying in' became increasingly irrelevant (de Valck and Hegener 2005: 13), while the importance of a global cinephile community serviced by the expanding distribution of world cinema titles on DVD and writing about such films moved to the fore. More recent collections such as de Valck and Hagener's *Cinephilia: Movies, Love and Memory* (2005), Balcerzak and Sperb's *Cinephilia in the age of Digital Reproduction: Film, Pleasure and Digital Culture* (2009) and the *Cinema Journal* special 'In Focus' issue on cinephilia (Betz 2010), similarly look beyond these simplistic divides, to explore how technology is reshaping cinephilic practice and its connection to a wider range of academic and professional discourse. However, while each of these texts works to rethink and reshape conventional understandings of cinephilia, what has remained largely unchanged and unchallenged – outside of considerations of cinema multiplexing and the move from celluloid to DCP projection – is the specificity of the in-theatre cinephile experience. Yet it is precisely this experience that is shifting within the contemporary connected festival environment.

Of all the recent contributions to the cinephilia debate, it is perhaps Girish Shambu's *The New Cinephilia* which offers the means by which the contemporary expression of an evolving cinephilia within the auditorium can be articulated. Looking to the developments of new media technologies, the digital revolution, and the Internet, Shambu proposes a contemporary '*expansive* cinephilia' that includes older cinephilic tastes for art cinema, 'but also many other kinds of cinema', as well as including the traditional viewing experience of the cinema but also 'many other kinds of viewing situations' (2014: 4). Looking to the networked capabilities of the online world, as well as the attendant technologies of the laptop and the smartphone, Shambu offers a view of contemporary cinephilia that takes into consideration its many interests, temporalities, and discursive modes. It is the latter of these in particular – both the centrality of conversation to the cinephile yet also the different forms this can take online – that becomes a key concern of the book. While Shambu too stops short of reimagining the 'traditional theatrical viewing experience' as something other than a fully immersive and distraction and device free engagement with the screen, his articulation of an Internet cinephilia nevertheless offers the tools through which such an updating of previous cinephilic dispositions might be approached.

More specifically, what Shambu's work offers is a new way of thinking about how the online fits into the daily life experience of the cinephile. It allows us to consider that if it

is no longer relevant to distinguish between forms of cinephilia tied to 'going out' and 'staying in' then equally, as Angela Jones and Rebecca Bennett argue, 'it is no longer viable to conceive of online and offline as representing mutually exclusive categories' (2015: xiii). If Internet cinephilia marks the most recent iteration and evolution of the cinephilic disposition, then such a cinephilia is not simply restricted to the keyboard and monitor situated in the private dwelling or to the mobile Internet device on the move, it also exists now within the space of the auditorium.

The first way in which we can understand Internet cinephilia as marking an evolution of older forms of in-theatre cinephile practice is through its collapsing of the temporalities, if not also localities, that governed the older auditorium experience of cinema. In particular, this collapsing of cinephile space and time is appreciable through the forms that discourse takes in the current era of Internet exchange. As Shambu explains, and has been argued above, cinephilia involves 'Not only watching but also thinking, reading, talking and writing about cinema in some form, no matter how unconventional' (Shambu 2014: 4). For Shambu, what the emergence of Internet cinephilia has signalled is a significant diversification of the types of cinephile conversations – written, spoken or otherwise communicated – that form the basis of cinephile discourse. Alongside printed articles and reviews, tweets, Facebook status updates, forum posts and blog entries also contribute to the community of cinephilic exchanges that constitute its discourse (Shambu 2014:29). Furthermore, where previously a clear distinction existed between the temporalities of spoken conversations – which could occur immediately following a film screening – and the more considered written discussions of films that took longer to produce, the instantaneity of social media disrupts this model, with the written text able to pre-empt in many cases the spoken conversation.

The disruption that such instantaneity of discursive exchange produces becomes compounded as we consider that it is not only the capability to produce cinephilic discourse, but also to tap into the exchanges and writing of others, that transforms the auditorium experience, bringing it increasingly in line with more domesticated forms of cinephile engagement. Drawing on the work of Catherine Fowler and artist Pierre Huyghe, Shambu notes that an interaction with cinema is always a negotiation of two kinds of cinema experience – namely that of the film text as it unfolds 'there' before us, and of the confluence of our memories, experiences, knowledge of other films and contexts that are produced 'elsewhere' but which nevertheless come to bear at the moment of watching (2014: 8). As Shambu explains (2014: 8), the 'there' and the 'elsewhere' of this relationship informs the cinephile experience, as it is both the personal experience of the film within the moment as well as the product of the cinephile's engagement, elsewhere and else-when, with cinephilic discourse and knowledge that conditions its reception. Yet, just as the proximity of personal digital devices opens up the potential for audiences to produce and circulate cinephile writing from within the auditorium, so too do such devices open a gateway to this 'elsewhere', situating it before the screen and within the space of the cinema theatre in a way not previously possible.

It is then not simply a remediation of the in-theatre conversation into a text-based and online form, but rather a fundamental altering of the previous temporalities that surrounded both the production and consumption of cinephilic writing that marks the inclusion of Internet cinephile practice into the auditorium. At the production end, the ability to write instantly after – if not also during – the theatrical screening collapses the temporal separation that previously governed the transformation of the spoken discourse of auditorium cinephilia into its written form. Meanwhile, at the consumption end, a similar collapse occurs, in that written information is searchable and accessible within the auditorium space in a way that is both instant and more expansive than before. This instantaneity of access to and production of the written cinephilic exchange speaks to the expectations of the Internet cinephile, whose experience of cinema is always already accompanied by an access to knowledge that exists beyond the film text.

The collapse of time and space that the mobile Internet and its extension into the auditorium allow is echoed by another form of collapse, this time between two constructions of cinephile memory. The experience of film within the auditorium has long been linked with the power of the filmic moment as a transient experience of cinema. As Paddy Scannell observes, the power of the moment as a concept exists in its fleeting yet memorable nature: 'In its utter transience and perishability it is nevertheless a moment out of time, never to be forgotten by those who experienced it' (Scannell 2016: 99). The uniqueness of the moment, which underscored the privileged position of memory and remembrance within the classic cinephile experience, distinguished the cinema theatre experience from that enabled by home-video technologies. However, if the moment defined the auditorium experience of cinephilia, then it was the fragment that came to distinguish the technological evolution of cinephile experience. In the place of the uniqueness of the unrepeatable experience, the cinephile of the home-video, DVD or digital file increasingly sought out the isolated favourite image or fragment as cinematic epiphany (Martin 2009: 31). Freed by the repeatability and malleability of the viewing experience on disk or VHS, the treasured 'moment' became an experience that could be rewound and re-watched, explored again and again as a moment suspended out of time. While still connected to a form of cinematic remembering, the recollection of the fragment signalled a shift from the moment, connecting with what Elsaesser describes as 'memory in the modern sense, as recall mediated by technologies of recording, storage and retrieval' (2005: 40)

While these two forms of cinephile memory epitomised by the moment and the fragment previously distinguished two separate modes of cinephile experience, the pervasiveness of digital technology and the logics that govern its use bring these two forms into contact. Specifically, the ability to photograph and document one's experiences, which is not only enabled by the functionality of the smartphone but is encouraged, if not demanded, by the conventions of social media exchange, have opened up the potential to document and thus capture the auditorium experience. For audiences at Bologna's Il Cinema Ritrovato festival, this practice is already familiar. At the 2017 event, festivalgoers could frequently observe audience members rising in their seat to take photographs of

memorable moments mid-screening on smartphones or larger digital cameras. While the screenings in Bologna did not echo MIFF's interest in the presence of such technology – neither overtly encouraging it through apps or adverts nor directly restricting it through interdictions to not use such devices – by way of its audience's behaviour the festival nevertheless illustrated the growing mediation of cinematic and film festival experience. The capturing of such filmic moments, whether for personal pleasure or as something to be shared later online as a performance of festival participation, enacts a merging of the moment with the fragment within the auditorium space. In so doing, it blurs formations of cinephile memory – for in the capturing of the screen shot on the smartphone there exists simultaneously the material document of the 'moment' but also the insubstantial memory of being in the auditorium, in front of the screen as the film continued to play.

Such behaviour, for Elsaesser, taps directly into contemporary logics of experience and memory. As he observed in 2005 (40):

> In our mobility, we are 'tour' –ists of life; we use the camcorder with our hands or often merely in our heads, to reassure ourselves that this is 'me, now, here.' Our experience of the present is always already (media) memory, and this memory represents the recaptured attempt at self-presence: possessing the experience in order to possess the memory, in order to possess the self.

While Elsaesser made this observation before social media had risen to its current ascendency, it nevertheless neatly summarises the ways in which the Internet and social media have altered our engagement with the world around us. Increasingly, participation and experience is no longer something to be known by the self, but rather requires acts of documentation, sharing and witnessing in order to count. The fragment (document) and moment (experience) thus increasingly become one in the same, with the one needed in order to substantiate and confirm the existence of the other.

If the ability to access and contribute to cinephilic discourse at any time and in any location, as well as the ability to document and preserve experience, speaks to how the tools and technology of the Internet and personal digital devices are changing how cinephilia is practiced within the auditorium, it also highlights a key point of conflict. In each case, the accessibility of the Internet within the auditorium works to conflate the previously separate practices of cinephilia that exist within the public and private realms – that is, how cinephilia is enacted when 'staying in' and 'going out'. Along with access to discourse and the preservation of cinematic fragments, however, such actions also bring a level of distraction into the previously immersive environment of the auditorium. It is here that the fullest expression of Internet cinephilia meets its greatest obstacle.

Advocates of technological change note that the integration of smartphone use, connected viewing practices and second screens into the auditorium offer an expanded experience of cinema that has the potential to open up approaches to storytelling through 'the dissolution of boundaries between diegetic levels whereby multiple concurrent streams

of information are facilitated through new screen consumption modalities' (Atkinson 2014: 9). However, its critics contend that when such use of technology is not directly connected and necessitated by the film on display, 'the general, unregulated use of mobiles at the cinema does nothing but distract and annoy other filmgoers' (Gaunson 2016). The use of smartphones and other devices within the cinema are seen to disrupt the 'collective excitement, togetherness and emotions generated by crowds as they focus on a spectacle together, and the lasting memories these experiences create' (Hutchins 2016). Moreover, if the appeal of the auditorium lies in its ability to kidnap its audience, then the 'continual partial presence' within the outside world that social media produces (Tyron 2013: 120), works against the ability of a film to enrapture and transport its audience.

While such objections to the glowing lights of smartphone screens within the darkened auditorium raise valid concerns, as Dudley Andrew observes, distractions within the movie theatre are also not entirely new, but rather speak to a tradition of cinema and cinema-going not yet absorbed by the Hollywood system (2002: 164). The immersive auditorium experience, which views distraction as anathema, is only one construction of the communal viewing experience. Certainly there have existed many alternative modals of communal cinema exhibition and experience enacted throughout the world over the course of cinema's history. The many outdoor screenings at film festivals speak to one alternative kind of cinema experience where distractions are tolerated, while the experience of screening films at African film festivals as recounted by Dovey (2015) (where both unexpected power-outages and disruptive non-screenings mark a distinctly participatory cinema), or within the context of the Latin American Third Cinema movement (where audience interruptions and dialogue were encouraged [Davies 2017: 48]), or indeed at cult cinema screenings or *Grease* sing-alongs, present instances where distraction is actively sought. Likewise, although Elsaesser notes the importance to the classic cinephile of being sensitive to ones surroundings, his recollections of memorable screenings that formed his cinephile training were not restricted only to those in which the perfect conditions of immersion were met. Rather, they included memories of 'the Brixton Classic in South London, where the clientele was so rough that the house lights were kept on during the feature film, and the aisles were patrolled by security guards with German shepherds' (2005: 29).

The immersive experience of the cinema that represents 'the most powerful effect the cinema seems capable of,' then, as Andrew suggests, 'is also a rare experience, one we remember from our youth and are nostalgic for' (2002: 162). In reality, we are confronted with and have overcome the multitude of (acceptable) distractions, such as uncomfortable seats, the crinkling of pre-packaged food sold from the concession stand, or strangers passing us on their way to the bathroom, which in reality condition the experience of cinema in the auditorium. In this context, the question that becomes most likely to be answered, then, is not 'whether', but rather 'how long until' the glow of an LCD screen will become naturalised within the darkened space of the festival cinema as just one more distraction?

The arguments traced above, which seek to highlight the ways in which digital technology have changed not only audience participatory cultures but also cinephilic temporalities and discursive engagements, begin the work of opening up these discussions. However, what remains under-examined here is the strong personal reactions that such debates can trigger. As the responses noted above to proposals by both AMC and Regal to support texting during film screenings indicate, the reality of phone use in cinemas has still some way to go before it achieves widespread acceptance. Certainly, the appearance of a glowing phone screen in a darkened film festival auditorium is still likely to trigger outcries and admonishments aimed at the perpetrator by other festival-goers – and, indeed, as often as not by this author. Yet, even as I may react in such a way to the presence of a phone, so too would cinephiles of a different disposition look disapprovingly on at my choice to consume noisy cinema snacks during a screening, even while, in previous generations, being at ease with the glowing ends of cigarettes and smoke filling the auditorium. What this article attempts to set in motion is then not a restatement of my own cinephilic disposition, but a reconsideration of the sanctity of the cinema, of the film festival auditorium and of cinephilia as a prescribed and singular experience. Rather, through exploring the space of the film festival auditorium, this article seeks to examine how our growing reliance on digital technology is impacting both expectations and expressions of cinephilia within contemporary communal screening environments. In looking to the way in which access to personal digital technology is informing practices of both cinephilia and festival organisation, this article seeks to update debates around both institutions and to open the conversation around what awaits them in a digitally connected future.

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Notes:

[1] What is excluded within a focus on such a prototypal film festival is the recognition that in reality the term film festival describes a wide range of events for which cinema may or may not be their primary concern. Within the vast array of film festivals now in existence there are many that operate along distinctly different lines and in turn construct their audiences and experiences in service of different agendas and goals. For instance, the role of an activist film festival (such as a human rights or environmental film festival) or identity-based film festival (LGBTQI, women's or disability film festival) mark out events that construct both themselves and their audiences along lines for which cinephilic engagement becomes less important than other concerns.

[2] As argued by Elsaesser (2005) and discussed later in this article, the nature of the communal cinema experience – the inevitability of distraction, a reliance of available premises and the mechanics (and contingency) of real-time film projection – mean that cinephilia has never stood in

for only a singular experience of cinema, nor has it truly existed in a pristine and perfect form, despite being often recalled nostalgically as such.

[3] And it was overwhelmingly *him*, in this director. Even now the category of auteur remains primarily associated with male directors: the *female* auteur is, as Patricia White (2015) has suggested, always a contingent category.

[4] As Hagener and de Valck argue (2008: 25), film festivals are often staged in attractive tourist destinations and include outdoor screenings where natural spectacles compete with cinematic ones for the attention of audiences. Moreover, the atmosphere and staging of the festival often transforms space to create new articulations of place, which do not exist in the same way within a perennial movie theatre.

[5] The recent spate of disruptive practices enabled by digital technology build on earlier experiments in more interactive forms of cinema spectatorship – which include but are certainly not limited to examples such as Smell-O-Vision, Cinema-Motion, 4D Cinema, Secret Cinema and the like. It is also worth noting that while the move towards digitally-enabled audience interactivity is a more recent phenomenon, digital cinema as a projection-based technology or sound-based technology is far older and, in ontologically transforming the (celluloid) film experience, has signaled its own disruption of cinephilic practice over the past thirty-plus years (Balcerzak and Sperb 2009)