



Simon Bateson is the director of Take One Action, Scotland's social action cinema project and annual social action film festival. He was born south of the border but has lived and worked in Scotland since 1999.

Q: How would you describe Take One Action?

A: Take One Action is about reclaiming aspects of the cinema, both space and content, for transformative exchanges which run beyond the screen. When people come together and are inspired, which is what cinema does all the time, they have the opportunity to become powerful actors in the story themselves. Historically, this started in the theatres, many of which are rediscovering it. But the cinema, which on one level engages a far greater number of people, hasn't quite seized that opportunity, although it's a different story in certain parts of Africa for example. Take One Action is trying to change this by turning the lights up at the end, sometimes earlier, and asking the audience to say what should happen next, in real life. It's empowering, and because we specifically show films about areas of global society where power has been denied to ordinary people, it also feeds into concrete action for a fairer world.

Q: What's been your favourite moment since the project started?

A: There have been lots, particularly where younger audiences are concerned, because as you'd expect they are really up for experimenting with how cinemas operate. One event that stands out was the Scottish Youth Parliament asking audience members to change seats depending on what they thought about certain aspects of a particular film we showed. But in general, I'm always inspired by the fact that nearly everyone wants to stay for discussion after the films we show, and that so many have taken their first or next steps towards political action as a result of the ideas they share between themselves.

Q: Which film has most changed your own life?

A: I'm moved by arthouse and romantic comedies just as much as socially-minded drama and documentary, although I think the first time I saw Disney's *Robin Hood* was probably pretty formative. After that, the work of British filmmakers like Ken Loach, Paul Laverty and Mike Leigh has inspired me enormously, and I'm delighted that Ken and Paul are patrons of the project. But perhaps it was seeing Mathieu Kassovitz's *La Haine* aged about 15 which made me realise film can present issues in ways that make it impossible to simply watch and turn away.

Q: What drives you most?

Two things. Every year I meet dozens and dozens of inspirational Scots who remind me of Helen Keller's words, that while the world is full of injustice, it is also full of the overcoming of it. And I love cinema. Simple as that.