

Thinking out

WE'VE NOT been short of film-related excitement in Scotland over the last few years. Epic historical movies like *Mary Queen of Scots*, *Outlaw King* and *Robert the Bruce*, as well as more contemporary offerings such as *Wild Rose* and *Beats*, have won both awards and critical acclaim. Major television productions like *The Victim* and, more recently, *Guilt*, have also ensured that Scotland's creative potential has been highlighted. And that's without even mentioning the whole *Outlander* phenomenon!

The film and television industry contributes a significant, and growing, amount of money to the Scottish economy. In 2017 that figure was around £100m and the lead body for the industry, Screen Scotland, has a target of raising that to £160m by 2022. But that growth is by no means guaranteed or straightforward despite the undoubted wealth of writing, acting and production talent in Scotland or, indeed, the abundance of screen-friendly locations. One huge disadvantage is the lack of studio facilities. Currently, Wardpark Studios in Cumbernauld is Scotland's only full-time elite film and television studio. Developed specifically for *Outlander*, Wardpark is unlikely to be available for any other use for the next few years as the time-travelling juggernaut shows no signs of slowing down. A second studio development is, however, apparently close to becoming a reality at Leith Docks, with an opening date announcement said to be 'imminent'. By the way, let's not forget that the blockbuster *Lord of the Rings* prequel, claimed to be the most expensive television series ever to be made at £1.2bn, was reportedly scheduled for extensive filming in Scotland until the clusterbourach that is Brexit stymied

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that major investment too... and it went instead to New Zealand!

There are other, less tangible, 'hindrances' too. Many *iScot* readers may be aware of the difficulties Angus Macfadyen faced, for example, in bringing *Robert the Bruce* to the big screen. For reasons best known to themselves, the major cinema chains appeared less than enthusiastic about putting it on general release, even within Scotland – it certainly wasn't due to lack of demand from the Scottish public! Shades of David Cameron and the 2014 *Outlander* transmission shenanigans methinks – is there a referendum around the corner? Damn those rebellious Scots! Anyway... less well known are the many other film projects that never see the light of day through either lack of funding or promotion, not through lack of talent or creativity. And then there are those that have no budget whatsoever, yet still go on to win awards, such as the Peebles-based short film *The Box*, written by lead actor and co-producer Vivien Reid. She describes *The Box* as, "a psychological drama that shifts through many different worlds; home life, work life, the woods and nature, and then the unconscious or dream world". Vivien's long road to overnight success is probably typical of many actors.

"I've always wanted to be an actor – I've never wanted to do anything else. At school in Edinburgh I enjoyed taking part in plays and singing in the choir. When I was 14 I was accepted into The National Youth Theatre of Great Britain and headed off to London. It was a magical experience, but a tough one. However, my burning passion to act became even stronger. I then auditioned for the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (RSAMD), now the