# UK film unions vow to fight 100% tariffs amid fears of industry collapse



The alarming proposal of a 100% tariff on foreign films has sent shockwaves through the UK’s creative industries, drawing stern criticism from performers' union officials. At a recent conference in Londonderry, General Secretary Paul Fleming’s declaration that these tariffs will not deter their demands for better pay and stringent regulation of artificial intelligence in film production resonates with the urgent need for a more robust approach to safeguarding domestic industry interests. Such unilateral tariffs, rather than fostering growth, threaten to suffocate the already fragile British film sector, grappling with the fallout of a post-COVID market and the rapid rise of digital streaming.

Fleming's assertion highlights the worrying dependence of the UK film industry on the U.S. market. The proposed tariffs have contributed to a staggering $20 billion market value drop for major studios such as Netflix and Disney, revealing the immediate and severe financial implications for UK filmmakers. The union’s bold call for significant improvements in pay and working conditions reflects the most ambitious agenda in a generation—prioritizing not only fair remuneration but also crucial concerns over worker dignity and the implications of generative AI on employment. Fleming's words serve as a rallying call, emphasizing that waiting for government intervention or global stability is no longer an option for their members.

Donald Trump’s tariff proposal—a thinly veiled protectionist move under the guise of national security—has ignited a fierce backlash within the industry. Critics argue that these tariffs are fundamentally flawed, especially as the U.S. entertainment sector already enjoys a favorable trade balance. The impracticalities of enforcing tariffs on digitally transmitted media further complicate matters and raise critical concerns about the potential stifling of creativity and the disruption of vital international partnerships. Experts warn of the dangers posed by retaliatory actions from other nations, which could exacerbate job losses in America and inflate production expenses across the board.

The crux of the matter lies in the precarious balance between defending domestic industries and nurturing essential international collaborations. Joe McVay, CEO of Pact—the UK screen sector trade body—has articulated that the creative community's health relies heavily on cooperative projects with international allies. In contrast to punitive tariffs, Pact has actively championed tax incentives to enhance conditions for independent filmmakers, advocating for a more growth-oriented philosophy.

Given its position as the second-largest exporter of television content worldwide, the UK stands to face catastrophic repercussions from the enactment of such tariffs. Export reductions in the British film industry could threaten content creation and result in the loss of skilled jobs across the sector. Furthermore, ongoing negotiations regarding trade agreements highlight the urgent need to protect the audio-visual sector in the context of UK-US relations, underscoring the intricate challenges policymakers must navigate amid these turbulent times.

As the film industry grapples with unprecedented digital transformations, the discussion around Trump’s tariffs signifies a crucial turning point for creative sectors on both sides of the Atlantic. The unwavering commitment from unions to pursue their agenda, irrespective of external pressures like tariffs and economic uncertainty, signals a formidable readiness to advocate for their interests and to drive more meaningful negotiations within the industry.

As the specter of tariffs looms large, the repercussions could reshape not only the economic landscape of the film sector but also the fundamental essence of international creative collaboration for years to come. With stakeholders preparing for potential industrial action, the future now hinges on striking a balance between protecting national interests and fostering a robust global creative economy.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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2. <https://www.ft.com/content/d922c15a-aa52-48fb-ba7d-7a0cfe3cd855> - President Donald Trump has proposed a 100% tariff on foreign-produced films entering the U.S., aiming to revitalize Hollywood. This move has led to a $20 billion drop in market value for major studios like Netflix, Disney, Warner Bros, and Paramount. Industry insiders criticize the plan as misguided, citing Hollywood’s existing trade surplus and practical challenges in taxing digitally transmitted content. The proposal has drawn both ridicule and support, with unions like the Teamsters endorsing the protectionist stance. The administration has stated no final decision has been made, leaving industry leaders in uncertainty. ([ft.com](https://www.ft.com/content/d922c15a-aa52-48fb-ba7d-7a0cfe3cd855?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://apnews.com/article/8008248fc08c748a7e8a174306ba66ba> - President Donald Trump has proposed a 100% tariff on all films produced outside the U.S., citing national security concerns and claiming that foreign incentives are undermining the American movie industry. Although no final decisions have been made, Trump has directed the Commerce Department and U.S. Trade Representative to explore implementation. The proposal has sparked significant uncertainty in an industry already facing challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic, labor strikes, and wildfires. Industry experts warn that such a policy could increase production costs, hamper international collaborations, and lead to retaliation from other countries, potentially affecting billions in revenue and thousands of jobs. The American film industry currently enjoys a trade surplus and strong global market share, making the tariffs particularly controversial. Additionally, experts note that implementing tariffs on digital, service-based productions would be complex and unprecedented. Some groups, like the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, support addressing international competition but advocate for tax incentives rather than punitive tariffs. Critics argue that the plan could stifle creativity, reduce global cooperation, and restrict U.S. films' access to international markets, ultimately harming a thriving sector of the economy. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/8008248fc08c748a7e8a174306ba66ba?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/us-media-stocks-fall-trump-threatens-100-tariff-foreign-made-films-2025-05-05/> - President Donald Trump's recent announcement of a proposed 100% tariff on all foreign-produced movies has left the film industry confused and concerned. Though the policy aims to revitalize U.S. film production, Trump provided little detail on how such a tariff would be implemented or enforced. Questions remain about whether the tariffs would apply to streaming platforms, how co-productions would be assessed, and how costs would be calculated. The announcement has already shaken investor confidence, leading to a dip in media company shares, with Netflix particularly affected due to its international production model. Analysts and industry leaders have raised concerns over retaliatory tariffs from countries like China and challenges in enforcement due to the global nature of media conglomerates. Many fear this move will increase production costs, reduce content creation, and threaten international collaborations. Industry stakeholders in the UK, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as labor unions, warned of the potential damage to local film sectors. The initiative is seen as potentially harmful rather than helpful to Hollywood, especially after recent strikes and amid ongoing challenges like declining box office returns and changing viewing habits. ([reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/us-media-stocks-fall-trump-threatens-100-tariff-foreign-made-films-2025-05-05/?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.locationhq.co.uk/blog/the-potential-impact-of-trumps-tariffs-on-the-british-film-industry/> - The U.S. trade deficit reaching a record $1.2 trillion in 2024 has been a key driver behind President Trump's trade policies, including proposed tariffs on foreign-produced films. If such tariffs were imposed on British film exports, they could reshape the entertainment industry, impacting investment, production, and international collaboration. The UK is the second-largest exporter of TV content globally and the biggest international exporter of program formats. Excluding the audio-visual sector from future trade agreements is crucial to protect the UK's successful legislative and regulatory interventions in the sector. Pact, the UK screen sector trade body, has long argued for this exclusion and is pleased that the audio-visual sector was excluded from the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement. The government needs to ensure that this exclusion is extended to all future FTAs, including the UK-US Agreement. ([locationhq.co.uk](https://www.locationhq.co.uk/blog/the-potential-impact-of-trumps-tariffs-on-the-british-film-industry/?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.screendaily.com/news/pact-ceo-john-mcvay-on-lobbying-rishi-sunak-for-a-transformational-indie-tax-credit/5191306.article> - Pact, the UK screen sector trade body, has played a key role in lobbying for the UK Independent Film Tax Credit (IFTC), which offers an effective 40% tax relief for UK-qualifying films costing up to £15 million. This initiative was secured after extensive discussions with the Treasury and the Prime Minister's team. Pact CEO John McVay highlighted the existential problem faced by the industry, noting that out of over 40 films slated for production this year, only six were set to be made in the UK, with the majority planning to shoot elsewhere, particularly in Italy due to its 40% credit and skilled workforce. ([screendaily.com](https://www.screendaily.com/news/pact-ceo-john-mcvay-on-lobbying-rishi-sunak-for-a-transformational-indie-tax-credit/5191306.article?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://aflcio.org/press/releases/afl-cio-president-responds-trump-administration-tariffs-targeting-canada-and-mexico> - AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler issued a statement in response to tariffs levied by the Trump administration against Canada and Mexico. While supporting the targeted use of tariffs to protect workers from unfair competition, Shuler expressed concern that the administration's blanket tariffs could cause unnecessary economic pain for American workers without addressing core economic priorities. She emphasized the importance of working with unions to promote a worker-centered trade agenda that protects jobs, rebuilds American manufacturing, and addresses challenges in the global economy. ([aflcio.org](https://aflcio.org/press/releases/afl-cio-president-responds-trump-administration-tariffs-targeting-canada-and-mexico?utm_source=openai))