

from
RABAN
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APPLICATION FOR ASSISTANCE

This is an application from the London Film Makers Co-operative and the Film Co-op Workshop for various forms of assistance.

Founded in 1965 as an organisation to promote experimental independent cinema, the London Co-op has expanded to become one of the most important centres of the new International alternative cinema culture.

It currently functions in three distinct areas:

- 1). Distribution.
- 2). Cinema.
- 3). Workshop/laboratory.

It is within these three main categories that financial assistance is sought.

I). DISTRIBUTION

The earliest development of the London Film Co-op was the distribution service; as with all other aspects of the Co-op, this is non-profit making. Film-makers deposit prints of their films in the Co-op, which are entered in the catalogue and are then available for screenings at a rental determined by the film-maker. 70% of this fee is returned to the film-maker and the remaining 30% is retained to cover the costs of the service. Any excess revenue to the Co-op is passed on to the film-makers through an improvement in the percentage. The Distribution account cannot be used to finance the other areas of the Co-op since many film-makers in the catalogue derive no direct benefit from the other departments, and should therefore, bear no burden of their support.

The collection of over 500 films is by far the largest of Underground, Experimental, and Avant Garde film outside of the USA. Because of its location in London, it has become the most internationally representational collection anywhere. (Equivalent collections in the USA are much narrower with little European work and sketchy cross representation between East and West Coasts of America.)

The library of films continues to grow at a rapid rate, due to the Co-op's reputation of making regular payments to film-makers, to the extension of the distribution to the European centres, and to and to a steadily growing interest in this country.

Another expanding development of the film distribution service, is the organisation of personal film tours by film-makers from Europe and America. The rapid expansion of the Co-op Distribution has brought with it, new organisational and financial problems.

Areas in which the Distribution requires financial assistance

- a). Financial aid for the day-to-day running of the distribution service to help cover the costs of the following: rent, telephone, stationery, salary of secretary/Co-ordinator, pay for a person to do the film handling (packing, posting, checking, cleaning, etc.). Assistance in this area is to allow the percentage paid to the film-maker from rentals to be improved, and to afford the distribution service a greater efficiency to deal with a larger number of films.
- b). Assistance in organising and financing the visits to England by foreign film-makers with programmes of films and lecture tours.
- c). Assistance in bringing foreign films into the country for short periods or for permanent inclusion in the Co-op catalogue. This includes i) customs clearance and ii) assistance in transport costs.
- d). The production of a supplement to the catalogue listing all films available in England from the distribution.
- e). Aid in establishing a European Film Circuit or alternatively financial assistance in producing two or three programmes of films (duplicate copies) which can go on extended tours of Europe.
- f). Aid in the organisation of tours for British film-makers of this country and Europe
- g). Aid in the replacement of worn parts prints.

a). The average weekly overheads incurred by the Distribution Service:

Secretary/Co-ordinator Fee	£20
Rent, Telephone, Electricity, stationery etc.	£13
average total.....	£33

The income for the distribution service comes entirely from the 30% taken from film rentals. This means that the rentals must exceed £100 per week, to cover the costs of running the service. The Co-op would like to: a) improve the rental percentage to 75% - 25%. b). increase the amount of time that the Co-ordinator can devote to promotional and informational work, which with increasing numbers of films, implies the necessity for employing a person part-time to assist with film handling.

With present overheads, the improved percentage would mean an increase in film rentals per week to £130, with the additional employment, the average weekly rentals would have to exceed £150. If the weekly rentals could average £125 (a plausible figure with improved promotion) and if £5 were available for part-time help, and the improved percentage was adopted, then all this would involve a deficit of £500 per year.

If this figure could be found then the percentage improvements could be made in two steps in one year.

a). b). c). e). and f). These four categories represent an expansion of the Co-op's activities into fields for which there are few precedents on which to base estimates.

b). The recent NFT Festival could be taken as a precedent, and here the approximate total cost for travel was £800. This was a large affair and included more film-makers than might reasonably be expected to tour in one year. A more realistic approach to this problem might be to make an application for finance, mostly to cover the costs of organisation and to attempt to make the tours cover their own costs. Certainly, in this respect this should be possible with European Film-makers. If we consider foreign Film-makers in general, and include the USA, then applying the same principle, would imply that the tour should include Europe as well. This makes it reasonable that section e). could be taken and costed together with b). This means that the form of this section of the application is as follows:

A financial grant to cover the costs of initiating two or three tours of foreign film-makers in England, and one or two film-makers in Europe. The grant to be spent on all organisational overheads, a reasonable fee to the film-maker organiser, and in certain circumstances, some direct travel assistance to the film-maker.

£1000 is seen as a reasonable figure to cover the first years' work in categories b). and e). provided that the costs of duplicate prints are included.

c). Transport costs of previous shipments of American films has been The situation as regards possible help in the customs clearance of 1 is still not clear. An approach to this problem might be gained by having the NFT programme certain films which may be left here permanently, while the NFT pays transport costs in the normal way, and whatever customs costs there are on import, be found in some other way. (This procedure would certainly benefit short tours of films, where the customs simply require a deposit).

It seems that there is no way of making a general costing for this category. This is one instance where indirect assistance would be more useful than a direct grant, unless some form of expediency were available to cover situations as they arose.

f). The main area of assistance required by film-makers operating film tours in this country, and abroad, is for travel. It is to be expected that the link between film-makers and the regional film theatres will continue to grow. Groups of film-makers have in the past been able to present filmshows in the provinces with the aid of the regional arts associations.

£900 would be required in the first year, to cover the costs of travel for shows in this country and abroad.

g). At present £300 per year would be a reasonable figure for the replacement of worn prints.

2). CINEMA

The Co-op has always tried to be a presenter of experimental work in London, and since the construction of its present cinema (in a temporary building which can only be assumed as a base for another twelve months or so) it has run regular weekly screenings. Despite it being the coldest, least comfortable cinema in London, situated on the second floor of a derelict, dirty factory with half-functioning sanitation, and a front entrance which needs a detective to find: despite dependence on projectors constantly developing faults due to their overwork since their first use in the Arts Laboratory, Drury Lane in 1966. Despite all this, the cinema has built and maintained an audience which has allowed all the film-makers to be paid for their screenings, and which has allowed ~~all the~~ financed the presentation of a number of foreign film-makers with their work. (included in the documentation, is a list of screenings and press reviews since the establishment of the cinema in its present building.)

The two Bell & Howell projectors currently used for the weekly screenings, are nearing the end of their useful life, and at some time in the very near future, replacements must be sought. This would cost in the region of £900. A further £100 needs to be spent on installing permanent speakers in the cinema.

The average cost of each programme is £20. The admission charge is 50p which means that in order to cover essential running costs (projector maintenance, electricity etc.) audience numbers of fifty plus are needed. The cinema cannot comfortably hold more than this number, and in the long term, great economy could be gained by enlarging the cinema space to give an increased seating capacity of between 80 and 100. The layout of the total space available, makes this a feasible project. It would have the added advantage of widening the the screen area to make a film presentation space which afforded opportunities for showing multi-screen and expanded works. Enlarging the cinema would cost approximately £350. The savings provided by increasing the seating capacity would pay for maintenance of equipment and improvements in the cinema seating arrangements.

3). WORKSHOP / LABORATORY

Plans and the ideological basis for the workshop were established in 1967. From then until 1969, attempts were made to function in a rudimentary form using 'home-built' equipment for developing and printing, a camera loan scheme and cheap stock buying. In 1969, following a private gift of £3000 (technically the loan of the equipment bought with the money) it was possible to buy a range of second-hand professional equipment and to install it in the New Arts Lab. in Robert Street. The installation was completed with great difficulty by March 1970 and functioned after a fashion for 6 months before preparations had to be made for its reinstallation. The equipment - 16mm contact printer, large black and white processing machine and minimal editing equipment, was installed in its present site by Autumn 71. £250 provided by the BFI to assist with the move only represented a small part of the actual cost, and together, the two periods of installation cost a large part of the initial gift intended for equipment purchase. It cost a considerable amount of time and energy, disrupting months of film work. Since the installation in today's (temporary) site a primitive optical printer and an old 'Acmade' editing table (£500 on permanent loan from the BFI) have been added to the equipment, and there have been two years of uninterrupted work.

The total finance raised since 1969 has been £3750 (as outlined above. Members of the workshop are charged £5 per year (deliberately low to anybody to join). Most of the income has been used for equipment purchase but at least one third was spent on installation, maintenance and essential running costs. The present state of finances is very bad, with a bank balance of around £30 and bills for rent and power for over £200.

What is offered and what has been achieved?

The workshop offers: shooting facilities (camera loan and cinema/studio supply of cheap stock (camera & print) production advice (to the level of film education Centre B & W negative and positive processing printing in colour and black and white. Final graded prints to professional standards. "Creative" use of printing. The workshop is responsible for a wide range of complex and new printing and optical techniques, freely exchanged. editing of picture and sound. projection there are no sound dubbing facilities, and no permanent sound recording equipment. (This is the only stage of production for which the film-makers need to rely on commercial laboratories.

Achievements of the workshop in concrete terms:

Over 30⁵⁰ film-makers have completed at least one film using the workshop. of these, 15 have used the co-op in all its aspects for the total production of all their work (except for minor details and sound transfer work). In addition, there is a regular passage of foreign and provincial film-makers using the workshop for all aspects of their production, but on a temporary basis. Film-makers from other London organisations eg. Womens Film Group, Cinema Action, frequently do some part of their production work at the Co-op. Three London colleges - St. Martin's School of Art, Chelsea School of Art, and the North East London Polytechnic, have made frequent use of printing facilities, and students from the RCA and London Film Schools, have often used the facilities.

Since 1967, but mostly since the installation of the professional equipment, about 130¹⁴⁰ films have been entirely produced in the film workshop (excluding sound transfer) and another twenty-five or so, have utilised some particular aspect of the production facilities. This ignores the films made by people who have partly produced films there, but who have subsequently distributed

At least 1000 copies of the film-makers have

the Slade, in 1969-71

through the Co-op

STOCK REQUIREMENTS FOR PRINTING

At the present rate of use in the workshop, 2,400 ft. per week would be a reasonable average for black and white print stock; the cost of this material is } II per 2,400ft. (in fact, a small quantity of more expensive duplicating stocks should be included in these requirements). This would make a total annual budget of } 600. If it were possible to have direct grants of stock the proportions of particular types should be as follows:

fine grain positive	60-80%
" " duplicating	10-20%
duplicating negative	5-10%

Slightly outdated stocks are available from Kodak, Ilford and Ferrania; these are all equally good and would be quite acceptable.

COLOUR STOCK Since there is no immediate prospect of having processing facilities for colour, it seems appropriate to work with the Kodachrome II type print stock (7387). The unit cost of this stock is substantially lower than for other types of film requiring lab. processing eg. 7389. On average, 1,000 feet of colour material is printed in the workshop each week, at an approximate cost } 40. Over the whole year, the buget for colour printing works out at nearly } 2,000.

3b) The immediate needs of the workshop are for specific items of film equipment.

At present there are no sound recording facilities at all. The contact printer which had already seen many years of service before being installed in the workshop, is showing signs of serious wear.

As has been previously mentioned, the one area of film production which the workshop has been unable to provide, is that of sound transfer and dubbing. If the workshop possessed a single-system sound camera (buying second-hand) it would at least provide the opportunity for making sync. sound films at a very low cost thereby increasing the self-sufficiency of the workshop on a very important level of film production.

ESTIMATE FOR IMMEDIATE EQUIPMENT NEEDS

Revox II04 tape deck	279.00
Quad 33 amplifier	52.00
Quad 305 amplifier	62.00
Pair of KEF Cadenza speakers	78.00
Sony stereo mixer	100.00
Pair of low impedance microphones	40.00
sound equipment Total	611.00

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second Debric contact printer (already located and available for purchase)	500.00
single-system Auricon camera (negotiations re. cost, in progress)	450.00
insurance and security	40.00
TOTAL required for purchase of immediate equipment	1,561.00

In the near future, it is hoped that it will be possible to equip the workshop with adequate machinery for sound transfer and dubbing facilities.

SUMMARY OF BUDGET

10. DISTRIBUTION

category a).	500.00
category b).	1,000.00
category d).	200.00
category f).	900.00
category g).	300.00

TOTAL £2,900.00 (annually recurrent).

2). CINEMA

purchase of projection equipment	1,000.00
enlargement of cinema	350.00

TOTAL £1,350.00 (non-recurrent)

3). WORKSHOP

a). PRINT STOCK

b&w	600.00
colour	2,000.00

TOTAL £2,600.00 (annual-recurrent)

b). IMMEDIATE EQUIPMENT NECESSITIES

purchase of sound equipment	611.00
purchase of contact printer	500.00
purchase of single-system camera	450.00

TOTAL £1,561.00 (non-recurrent)

insurance and security of equipment 40.00 (annual-recurrent)

4161.00 total
4201.00 total