

*Summer '78 appraisal
to BFI*

History, Aims, and Constitution.

The London Filmmakers Co/operative was begun in 1966 with the intention of presenting and distributing independent film work in the UK. It was, thereby, the first British organization to emerge in this field, a region of film culture which continues to develop in scale. Soon after its inception, the LEMC identified the need to stimulate and service independent and experimental film making and to this end began to establish a filmmakers workshop equipped with editing facilities also taking the unique step of building a 'laboratory' centred around printing and developing. In spite of great difficulties and a lack of response to requests for finance from official bodies like the BFI and Arts Council, the workshop was in operation by late 1969 equipped with ex-lab professional equipment purchased with private assistance. From the beginning, three relatively defined 'departments', each with a separate account, have emerged: Distribution, Cinema, and Workshop. Though each area is autonomous, the policy is defined for the whole Co/op by general meetings of the members. In broad terms, the Co/op is a non-profit making organization run by filmmakers for filmmakers, day to day decisions being in the hands of appointed officers in each area. As far as possible, an open access, egalitarian attitude is applied to all activities of the Co/op (though this needs qualification as use increases particularly in the workshop).

Distribution is open to any filmmaker who deposits a print. The filmmaker retains ownership and copyright of the film and can determine the rental fee and the catalogue entry (within limits). No filmmaker's work is promoted beyond another by the Co/op. The filmmaker receives 70% of all rentals approximately twice yearly the remaining 30% covering all distribution overheads. The percentage ratio can be adjusted by the meeting in response to the financial state of the Co/op (the only change which has ever been made improved the filmmakers percentage by 10% to the present level).

The Workshop is open to any filmmaker at a cost of £5.00 per year. Though not strictly enforced, those using the workshop are expected to distribute their films through the Co/op. The workshop provides facilities and where possible, tuition, but has never been intended to function as a 'cut-price' lab. Filmmakers do their own lab work.

*FROM BUSINESS
FILE
(CURTIS 6/94)*

The Cinema has unavoidably worked on a selective policy, presenting members' work as the current organizer sees fit. However, the broad intention to provide a show-case for the filmmakers working through the Co/op, particularly those resident in the UK, has been maintained. No Co/op filmmaker has been refused a show. Either film rental or a fee is paid to each filmmaker. Whenever someone has been willing to organize it, 'open' screenings have been held where any filmmaker could show work (without payment and un-scheduled). The cinema has been organized as a club with a membership of £100 and 50 p entrance. (Since it began, the only paid staff for any LFMC department has been the distribution secretary (this state of affairs is being reviewed, see later). Those responsible for the various areas have never received any payment for their services and have always been answerable to the membership for their actions.) The Cinema has 1,300 members.* The Cinema has presented, 1971-1974, in three years, 150 programs of 90 minute shows of international experimental, independent film, all shown for the first time in the UK.

Achievements.

Distribution.

In the nine years since distribution began, the library has increased to approximately 500 titles. These are split between foreign and British films at approximately 50/50. Most of the British films in the catalogue have been produced through the Co/op and represent the bulk of British Independent cinema production (very little work in this area having been produced before 1967). The films are mainly but not only distributed in Britain to film societies within universities and art colleges. However, an increasing number of films are being booked in Europe as the Co/op is the main distributor of Avant-Garde and Experimental cinema outside the USA, and is recognized as such. Whilst the catalogue is smaller than that of the NY Filmmakers Co/operative, the London Co/op has a wider spread of international work, and is the most representative collection in the world of experimental and independent film. It is the largest independent film distributor outside the US. The distribution secretary is paid £30 pw, rent and other overheads is approximately £20 per week. The annual income from distribution is £4,500, of which £1,500 (30%) is used to cover the overheads. Main inefficiencies are in the area of mailing, checking and cleaning and repairing films, and in the canvassing of new bookings. All these are related to understaffing of the service. For future developments, see below. No external funding ever received for distribution.

Workshop

The workshop is responsible for the existence of the very strong situation which now exists for independent experimental film in the UK. Before it opened no more than a handful of films of this kind had been produced here. In the last five years, the work produced in Britain, largely through the workshop, has steadily gained an international reputation which strongly challenges that of the American developments in this field. Comparable organizations abroad like Millenium in New York and Stoff, in Amsterdam (the latter workshop directly modelled on the London Co/op) openly admit the supremacy of the London conception and achievement, even though both organizations are handsomely (massively) financed from government sources. Since 1969 some 200 films by 30 filmmakers (see Appendix) have been largely produced through the workshop. The contribution of the workshop is both financial and aesthetic. So far as the use of the workshop's resources by educational establishments is concerned, 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. Students from the Royal College of Art and Slade Film School have also used workshop facilities and expertise. Outside London, groups of film students from Reading University and Wolverhampton Polytechnic have arranged to use Co/op facilities for specific projects. Plans have been made to extend the educational function of the workshop. A major part of the workshop's effectiveness has been through drastically cutting the costs for members, making possible films which otherwise could not have been made. However, perhaps its main historical impact will be seen to have been in its extension of the filmmakers' area of control to include the laboratory aspect of the process. See below for sample of press coverage festival and other significant screenings. Whilst the BFI have discussed 'open access' film workshops, the Co/op are well into the later stages of such a conception. The workshop currently has the following equipment:

Editing

- 1x Admade motorized editing table (on loan from BFI)
- 2x editing tables with 4-way film rewinds
- 1x pic/sound synchronizer

Printing

- 2 x Debie 16mm contact printers
 - 1 x Debie grading table
 - 1 x Debie exposure band machine
 - 1 x Debie film notcher
-) these items
) comprise print-
) grading unit

Processing

- 1 x Houston Fearless b&w processing machine(not working)

Sound

- 1 x Akai 2 track tape recorder

Appendix

List of filmmakers making regular use of the Co/op Workshop

- | | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| John Blake | ✓Mike Leggett | Fran Schiff |
| Paul Botham | ✓Malcolm LeGrice | Barbara Schwartz |
| Tim Bruce | Carla Liss | ✓Guy Sherwin |
| Ian Breakwell | Bill Lundberg | John Smith |
| Tim Cawkwell | Chrisonger | Brian Trenery |
| ✓David Crosswaite | Ken Mcullen | ✓Garry Woods |
| Fred Drummond | Anthony McCall | Chris Solisby |
| ✓John du Cane | Lorraine Leeson | |
| ✓Mike Dunford | ✓Annabel Nicolson | Some visitors from |
| Steve Dwoskin | Bernie O'Regan | abroad utilizing |
| Lynne Fredlund | David Parsons | Workshop: |
| Graeme Ewens | James Parry | Hatteijn Leip |
| ✓Gill Eatherley | Kevin Pither | Barbara Heter |
| Steve Farrar | David Pierce | Tony Conrad |
| Laurie Gane | Sally Potter | Jos Schoffelin |
| Peter Gidal | ✓Clive Myer | David Rimmer |
| ✓Marilyn Halford | Stuart Pound | Piero Heliczor |
| Simon Hartog | William Raban | etc, etc, etc |
| Jacky Hall | Julian Roberts | |
| Ron Haselden | Liz Rhodes | |
| Nick Hamlyn | Liza Ridley | |
| Mike Henley | Rod Stoneman | |
| Tony Hill | Savva Savva | |
| ✓Jonathan Langram | Shristina Sasportas | |
| David Lanchester | Carolee Schmeeman | |

Publications

Various journals on art and film have been concerned with the films made at the LFMC and the filmmakers producing them: some of the major articles dealing with such are:

Cinema Rising Issue No.1 / Directory of Indep. Brit. Filmmakers
After Image No.3/On Indep. Avant-Garde Film

Art and Artists/Special Artists' Films Issue (major articles by LeGrice and Gidal; other articles discussing work by 6 important LFMC filmmakers)

Studio International/ various issues throughout the year, as well as LeGrice's monthly film column

Sight and Sound / Tony Rayns on LFMC films, in context of ~~London~~ Avant Garde Film Festival, 1973 (March 1974 issue)

Underground Film Festival 1971 (Jan. 72 issue)

Knokke Experimental Film Festival 1974 (March 75 issue)

L'Art Vivant, Paris, Feb 1975 (also Jan. 1974 on English LFMC films)

Village Voice, NY, over past 4 years: 10 "Film Journal" pages devoted to English Avant Garde Experimental film, and by LFMC filmmakers. This column is by Jonas Mekas.

NY: SoHo Weekly News (alternative to Village Voice); Jan. 1975

Essay devoted to British Film

Forthcoming: (in 1975)

Special English Avant Garde Film issue of ARTFORUM

Special English Avant Garde Film Issue of STUDIO INTERNATIONAL

Special English Avant Garde Film Issue of AFTER/IMAGE

and Mekas/Bitney's FILM CULTURE magazine to include special discussion of British Avant Garde filmmakers

Time-Out / Since the 1971 move to Prince of Wales Crescent, there was each week for two years a column on Independent Cinema, specifically on those films showing at the Co/op Cinema. 25 programs of the 50 yearly were by British Co/op filmmakers. Time-Out also did half a dozen special feature articles on British films and British filmmakers the first 2 years (1971-3) at the Crescent. Then the articles were produced bi-weekly, again one out of two on British Independent LFMC films, and/or filmmakers.

. One must add: virtually all writing in art and film magazines on non-British independent work of avant-garde and experimental film is also due to such work being distributed and shown through the London Filmmakers Co/operative:

Sight and Sound

Screen

Art and Artists

Studio International

Cinema

Film

Cinemantics

Light

After Image

All had articles which were about, and/or referred to, recent developments (1966-75) in experimental independent filmmaking, and all access was through LFMC showings and distribution, either at the Co/op cinema or at NPT special seasons, or at various art colleges and university film societies, specifically the Royal College of Art Film Society, which for two years presented work predominantly (85%) by the LFMC. Similarly, the Slade film program, when dealing with avant-garde film and experimental film, relies predominantly on the LFMC, as do Chelsea School of Art and St. Martins. For 2 years, the London College of Printing Film Program relied on the LFMC similarly. This goes for weekly showings at above institutions, and for the internal seminars and study programs of film. It is this access through LFMC that has allowed for the beginnings of a critical context to current filmmaking to develop. And it is through such a development that above-mentioned publications receive essays and articles dealing with current film culture. That is why the rubric "publications" includes, in fact, "screenings", and can not be easily separated.

Major Showings and Festivals:

In the case of the following one man and one woman shows, each site has shown at least three and in some cases the work of a dozen English filmmakers:

One man and one woman shows of Co/op filmmakers have been put on at

Austrian Film Museum 1969

Tate Gallery 1973 and 1974

Danish Film Museum 1971

National Film Theatre 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974

Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam 1973, 1974

Royal Belgian Film Archive and Cinemateque, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974

Paris Biennale 1974

Toulon Film Festival 1972, 1973, 1974

Palermo Film Festival 1971, 1972

Norwegian Film Institute and Archive 1972

Molde (Norway) Film Festival 1972

Swedish Film Institute 1972

Wallraf Richartz Museum, Köln 1974

Arsenal German Film Archive and Cinemateque 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974

Berlin Film Festival, Forum of Young Film, 1972, 1973 (36 films)

Carnegie Museum Institute of Art, Pittsburgh 1974

Millenium Film Workshop 1973, 1974, 1975

Museum of Modern Art, NY, 1973, 1974

Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis, 1975

Throughout Canada, Holland, Germany, France, there have been repeated one man and one woman shows of Co/op filmmakers, as well as British Council assisted LFMC tours, as well as each year at the Edinburgh Film Festival.

Avant Garde Film Festivals and Weeklong Seasons of Independent and Avant Garde Film, at which the LFMC took a major part and/or was invited to present the dominant block of films:

National Film Theatre Underground Film Festival 1970

National Film Theatre 8 Programs of Independent English Films 1972

National Film Theatre 8 Programs of Independent American Films 1972

Arsenal Film Forum Berlin 8 Programs of Avant Garde English and

American Films

Hamburg Filmschau 1971 and 1972

Nancy, France 5 day festival of Avant Garde film (50% of festival, 8 English

LFMC filmmakers, and Snow, Frampton, Wieland, Jacobs,

Warhol, Deren, Markopoulos, Anger, Landow, Smith). 1974

Bordeaux Festival of Avant Garde Film, Presentation of 4 LFMC British
Filmmakers, 1973

Festival of Independent Avant Garde Film, National Film Theatre, 1973
Film Studio 70, Rome, Season of Independent Cinema, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975

Bristol Festival of Independent British Cinema, 1 Week 4 shows daily, 1975
Oberhausen Film Festival, Germany, 1975

In the case of the festivals mentioned, they were often day long and
night long screenings, i.e. over 7 hours of film per day

At the Knokke Experimental Film Festival 1974/5, 4 of the 8 major
prizes went to English filmmakers, three of them associated with the
LFMC (McCall, Ambrose, Dunford) the fourth (Wooley) loosely associated
(not a member).

The British Council film selection for 1974, Europalia, in Brussels, was
constituted totally of LFMC films. The Royal Belgian Film archive
thereafter purchased works by twelve English filmmakers, including
LeGrice, Gidal, Raban, Dunford, Latherley, Nicolson, Dwoskin, Leggett,
Crosswaite, Diamond, DuCane.

Tate Gallery's recent landscape film show included work by Raban,
Clare/Duckworth, Croft, Wellsby, Pierce.

List of Practical Needs and Costs:

- 1) Rent and Rates, 2,000 sq.ft = 1,500-2,000 p.a. (maximum)
2) Light Heat Electricity, 600
Phone 200
= 800 p.a.

3) Salaries at 35 p/w:

- 1 Secretary
1 Running Cinema
2 Running Workshop (organizing, operating, and education)
1 shared distribution (3 days cleaning films, fixing film, mailing; 2 days help in workshop)
Total: 5 people at 1,820 p.a.

Total: 9,100 p.a. (Min).

- 4) Cinema maintenance, 10 p.w.
Workshop maintenance, 10 p. w.

1040 p.a.

5) Equipment needed immediately (workshop):

- | | |
|--|--------|
| 1) Leavers Rich sound transfer machine | 1,000 |
| 2) Crystal Sync Nagra Tape recorder | 1,000 |
| 3) Lawley Junior b&w processing table | 1,100 |
| 4) Steenbeck motorized editing table | 1,000 |
| 5) 2 x moviola pic/syncs (4 track) | \$ 650 |
| 6) 4 x C.I.R tape splicers | 220 |
| 7) 20 split spools of various sizes | 160 |
| 8) Sennheiser gun microphone | 230 |
| 9) low impedance AKG microphone | 90 |
| 10) Siemens Double head rushes projector,
extremely important | 1,000 |

TOTAL: 6,450

- 6) Move (wiring, blackout for rooms, furniture, seating in cinema, materials for projection and sound transfer booth, fixtures such as paint, lights, light faders, extra sockets built in, double glazing, rewind table, seating, ventilation, heating, moving costs per se (transport).....)

TOTAL: 5,000

7) Catalog(1973 print run 3,000 copies at 300 £,for five hundred film catalog,and 15 pages of stills)
Price now needed:

450

8) Subsidy needed for cinema showings,which average 40 viewers per show,at 50 p each,totals 20 pounds per show.Filmmaker rental needs 30 pounds per show(average;sometimes lower,i.e. 20-25,sometimes higher 40,45,if filmmaker personal presentation or expensive rentals e.g.twin screen or 3 screen programs).Thus 30 per week is minimum average payment of filmrentals.

520

To dispense with 1£ membership,which stops students and even nonstudents who want to come three or four times not necessarily though every week of the year...we need subsidy to cover that loss. 1,000 members every two years,over the past years,so at 500 members per yearz that's £500 needed per year to subsidize that.

500

TOTAL: 1020 p.a.

TOTAL of items 1-8: 25,860

Previous Sources of Income:

1966-1975

3,000 anonymous personal loan
500 BFI 1972 editing table
250 moving 1971
1000 1975 Gulbenkian
1000 1974 BFI Production Board
150 GLAA against loss (cinema) ^{'75}
100 GLAA for Crescent Festival ^{'75}
Cinema Membership 1971-1974 £800
Workshop Membership 65 paid up members at 5 each = 325

Future Developments:

What we want to do is to expand. We think it clear from the background enclosed that expansion would be necessary on all fronts, in order to double and triple audiences over the next five years, double and triple distribution, both to film societies within and outside of universities and art colleges. We want to expand the possibilities of work within the workshop, so that more sophisticated sound work can be elaborated, so that better cleaner more efficient conditions of work will help produce not only better work, more tightly controlled work, but also more work by more filmmakers. The necessities for such expansion are largely based on economic needs, though of course discussion of film is an ongoing activity within the Co/op amongst certain of its members. A more feasible venue for the cinema and workshop, with more adequate facilities, would enable amongst other things, a situation to develop where filmmakers and nonfilmmakers can have the time and surroundings in which film discussion is encouraged (film viewing connected to possibilities of theoretical discussion). A Co/op situated in an old factory, with no emphasis on anything but immediate practical work, is not conducive to an environment wherein film discussion takes place. We want the Co/op to develop in that sense film-politically, to have it as a focus for relevant film theoretical development without which cinema flourishes in a vacuum. So far, this function has taken place in the seminars at various art colleges and universities in and outside of London, and at specifically organized festivals and screenings. But the LFMC could to some extent

add to this by being well housed. Also, monies for decently programmed shows in an environment where even less hardened avant-garde film addicts congregate, would be a good thing. This kind of expansion thus is not a purely quantitative (economic) one.

Cinema Expansion:

- 1) Increased Screenings (up to 5 nights a week)
- 2) To include work by other groups being presented, though clearly run by LFMC
- 3) Seminars Following films, and: film lecture series relating to
 - 1) Shows
 - 2) Workshop Situation
- 4) Re-instatement of open screenings *

Workshop Expansion:

- 1) Classes in film production
- 2) Facilities offered, i.e.
 - 1) Developing
 - 2) Optical Printing
 - 3) Sound Transfer
 - 4) Further and Improved editing (Steenbeck)
 - 5) Rushes Viewing facilities
 - 6) Facilities available on selective basis to other groups

Distribution Expansion

- ☆ (
- 1) Package tours (!) in UK, Europe, and USA
 - 2) Increased canvassing of potential show-places, and liaison with festival

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