

LONDON FILM-MAKERS' CO-OPERATIVE

Working Party on Problems of Distribution and Exhibition

PROPOSAL FOR A CO-OP MAGAZINE

Need for a magazine. Though some publications cover independent and avant garde film there is no frequent British journal with information, critical reviews and discussion by and about Co-op film-makers and their work. Also, the Co-op has no efficient means of broadcasting topical information to film-makers, film-goers, renters, etc.

Objectives: to inform members; to introduce Co-op films more widely; to be a forum for discussion and writing by film-makers; to provide a 'notice-board'; to promote and review Co-op and allied activities; (possibly) to generate material for a new catalogue; to give members editorial experience.

Readership; Co-op members, cinema club members, film renters; libraries, educational institutions, teachers, students; other publications, film critics, writers; independent film-makers, workshops, venues; an international spectrum of like subscribers.

Format. We considered After Image, Screen, Filmmakers Europe, Readings, Cinim (the defunct Co-op mag.), the BFI periodicals and Cinemanews and other little magazines. We haven't seen Oxford's Flicks. A Co-op magazine could learn from the strong and weak points of each, but the format of Musics, published every 2 months at the London Musicians' Collective, was seen as the most useful example in many details - it is innovative and topical, attractive but not costly, co-operatively run, self-sufficient, and has survived over 2 years.

Circulation needs more detailed planning. Ads in other publications and promotion through existing subscription/ mailing lists would be worthwhile. A key to foreign sales is the statutory libraries' info. network. To secure the co-operation of the Publications Distribution Collective would be valuable. Musics has just moved from 1,000 @ 35p to 1,500 @ 45p; S.B. of LMC felt that the avant garde/independent film constituency was probably much larger than the free/collective music one. Perhaps 750 @ 40p for a first issue?

Finance - the most important issue after the need for a mag itself, and one that needs more work. Musics is now self-sufficient, without ads (its last run of 1,000 cost £450, earned by subs and sales) but relies on unpaid contributions and voluntary editorial and handling work (paste-up, collating, mailing). Financial independence could be a long-term aim for us.

(a) Income. (i) Subscriptions (to include postage) and Sales.
(ii) Grants. The BFI Editorial Department has made grants to periodicals which turned out to be short-lived, suggesting a reasonably risk-taking attitude on its part, given a persuasive application. Other bodies might provide loss guarantees, or donations.

Magazine Finance - (a) Income - continued...

(iii) Advertising: the Working Party concluded that it would be acceptable to seek ads, e.g. from publishers, film labs, venues.

(b) Expenditure (i) Type-setting, printing (photo litho or letterpress). (ii) Postage, promotion. (iii) Payment to editorial worker(s). See 'Structure', below. (iv) Editorial payments to contributors of articles. We felt it would be healthy for the proposed mag to budget for 3 'substantial articles' of 3 or 4 thousand words each at perhaps £10 per 1,000wds, to encourage the serious critical attention independent film needs.

(c) General. Sound finance (e.g. stock control, i.e. every copy taken is paid for) will be vital for continuity after No 1, and for the visual quality (stills etc.) needed in a film mag. Our model has a 'mixed economy', with both paid ads and free small ads and notices, and with both paid articles and unpaid reviews, shorter pieces by film-makers, letters and reports. Printing: paid; mailing: unpaid. One idea would be to limit contributors' fees to the level of advert. revenue.

Structure - running it. The question of individual v. collective control is difficult: some mags have found that survival requires lone responsibility, but we feel that the Co-op's aims are essentially collective. Finance also affects the possibilities. Anyone donating services should at least have advisory involvement in the content. Briefly, we recommend 3 options in this order of preference:-

- 1] Paid editor/co-ordinator plus elected committee or group of working volunteers.
- 2] Editor with full responsibility for editorial and production budgets.
- 3] Collective voluntary operation producing self-sufficiently.

The mag should have its own bank account and be accountable to Co-op General Meetings by presentation of a report and election of worker(s).

Content, the main question, has to be left problematic. We feel that it should be initiated from within the Co-op, specifically serving Co-op members and sympathisers as well as a wider readership. The Executive C'tee and the Co-op's 3 depts should be encouraged to use its pages, and members should be strongly advised to subscribe. However, the mag should not just be Co-op-centred, but allow for the wider concerns of independent film and related media.

If the mag is to be in part a 'feeder for an eventual new catalogue, then comprehensive coverage of new acquisitions and active attention to retrospective articles will be added to editorial policy.

The working party adds the caution that a good issue 2 and after are always harder than Issue no. 1.

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