

LONDON FILM-MAKERS CO-OPERATIVE: GUIDELINES FOR FILM-MAKERS AND RENTERS(Draft 1.; 11.3.79) PRE-AMBLE

The London Film-makers Co-operative was established in 1966 to provide a non-commercial service to film-makers and those who booked their films, the film-renters.

Over the years both these groups have numerically increased and the ~~nu~~ number of films available is now over 1,000. This has provided the LFMC membership not only with a lot of direct experience in the problems of distribution and exhibition but accumulated knowledge on the problems facing the film-renters in instigating and organising film screenings. But it is not just a gathering of practical experience that causes us to reflect on ~~the present state of screenings~~ the present state of screenings, the expectancies of the film-viewer, the relationship between film-maker and the film that is completed. In the past the films available from the LFMC have rarely sought simply to entertain; rarely too have they sought through ~~the~~ the film itself to represent aspects of life (such as social relationships) unconnected with either with the production or a viewing of ~~the~~ the film. ~~xxxxxx~~. The filmviewer has, essentially, been asked to re-assess their attitudes to and expectations of that experience as a representational system. In so doing, the practical, logistical and economic relationships within the institution that is the screening point, together with its organiser and the film-maker, have been brought into question; is the ~~environment~~ environment of the conventional cinema and the retained aura of the Cinematic Culture antipathetic to the possibilities the work possesses for the film-viewer?

It has been found for instance that the way the films are ~~introduced~~ publicised and then introduced to and discussed with the audience have come to be recognised by many film-makers as essential elements involved in the move away from the notion of 'film ~~as~~ for consumption'. Factors such as the availability and effects of state subsidy, the peculiar and particular problems of publicity, print availability and the connection with educational and workshop organisation are seen as areas closely

related to this overall direction.

With an increase in the scale and diversity of films available and their aesthetic implications these notes are designed to centralise a collective knowledge and provide suggestions to both groups in order to improve dealings between each other and provide some basis for consistency in transactions and mutual understanding ~~of~~ motivations.

The various procedures and ~~tasks~~ ^{tasks} involved in mounting a screening are discussed from both points of view; the film-makers one side of these sheets, the film-renter on the other. Copies are held by all film-makers with entries in the LFMC catalogue, and all film-renters both past and potential.

The procedures and advice being offered are grouped under the following headings and are covered for both groups;

A. Initial contact

B. Presentation Format; packages, festivals, expanded cinema, accompanied shows (film-makers and lecturers).

C. Workshops and Education.

D. Enquiry Information - general

E. Booking (prints and visitors), administration and subsidies.

F. Pre-publicity.

G. Equipment.

H. Programme information.

J. Travel.

K. Accommodation.

MM. Payment; fee, travel and rentals.

Nxx

Procedures for Film-makers

The notion of the film-maker being responsible in parallel with the function of the Distribution Office for distribution and exhibition of the completed film as has been described above is not new but clearly a desire to differentiate between passive distribution (the 'customer' approaching the distribution outlet) and active distribution raises problems which are not entirely the responsibility of an audience and its representative, the screening organiser.

Close collaboration with the organiser is an essential feature of mounting screenings. Besides advising on procedures, many organisers need quite committed encouragement to present shows of avant-garde and independent work and too much advice is often better than too little!

A. Initial contact needs to understand the range of 'experience' of audiences one from the other; - 'Informed' audiences encountered in specialist cinemas or programmes ref. Film-makers Europe, Film-makers Travelsheet (USA)

- 'uninformed' audiences centred on the Film Societies ref. Federation of British Film Societies, RAAs Film Officers. (Television and movie-house chains have special problems associated with them which requires an organised lobby in order to provide the context rather than accept theirs.)

- 'mixed' experience audiences such as at colleges, ~~and~~ universities and film study groups ref; F-M Europe and Film Officer RAAs.

B. Presentation Format needs to be clearly worked out in advance - whether an individual's one-off show, a package of selected work, expanded or installational cinema and the degree of audience participation whether actual or through discussion and whether this as part of a series of screenings.

C. Workshops and Education as a specific project related to screenings either tutoring in film production or lecturing in film studies require quite detailed collaboration with the local organiser in designing course purpose and specification. Besides being located institutions of education the BFI, RAAs and enterprises such as Arvon are becoming more involved in successful short-term concentrated study programmes spread over the week or week-ends. Accurate budgeting is essential with such undertakings.

D. Enquiries about mounting screenings should be accompanied by two sides of A4 photocopy information about the work and mode of presentation *and* is all that most organisers would need to gauge the suitability of a show for their locality. A return address is essential.

E. Bookings for a particular Format should be confirmed by the film-maker with the organiser and the Distribution Office, who hold all prints, in writing. If subsidy is being utilised (in cases where a show would clearly not otherwise take place) the Arts Council, BFI or RAA should be informed at this stage, again in writing.

F. Pre-publicity is one of the ~~organiser's~~ main problems for the organiser; with the specialist venues certainly those abroad, programmes are prepared several months in advance and it is necessary to provide material ^{from} which ~~the~~ the organiser can select with your guidance. Written description, posters, reviews, quotes, diagrams and photographs make it possible for the weight of mass-mediated publicity to be less overwhelming.

G. Equipment required for the presentation should be provided at this confirmatory stage. Particular care should be given to describing sound track requirements and estimating the amount of time required in setting-up.

H. Programme Information to be provided to the audience (bearing in mind the audiences ~~experience~~ experience) should be prepared to allow time for the organiser to duplicate. With the less experienced audience, a description of from where the work derives and the context or discourse it might apply is usually desirable.

J. Travel takes much longer than initial estimates reckon and even with the 'straightforward' shows, to arrive an hour before time is not excessive. Venues (or the appropriate subsidy body) always pay travel and ^{SOMETIMES} meals subsistence - do not accept anything less! The British Council will sometimes assist foreign travel (not the USA) if one is prepared to have ones work assessed by them in advance. A package of films is more conveniently carried on one or ~~more~~ two large spools and ~~usually are~~ ^{then} broken-down at the venue.

K. Accommodation for overnight stay can usually be arranged by the organiser if requested; or drop a line to a near-by film-maker ref; IFA membership.

M. Payment should be settled at the time of the show rather than after and in the case of educational institutions Claim Forms must be fully signed-up and ~~can~~ take about four weeks to produce a cheque. If rentals are a separate deal from the attendance fee some kind of invoice is required and if this comes from the Distribution Office they will need to know from You how the print is travelling.

For Screening Organisers

The London Film-makers Co-op is not the conventional film distribution operation and some background might assist in describing the kind of function the film-makers ^{see their} ~~and the~~ films offering the film-viewer.

Though any film made by anyone can be deposited in the Distribution Office and listed in the LFMC catalogue, the majority of the films fall ~~into~~ a category which could be described by using the words formal, avant-garde, personal, poetic, underground or simply experimental. Many of these make reference to or are part of a discourse that has re-examined over the last 15 years the structural and material nature of the film medium, its representational parameters and its possibilities as a means of narrative description. All of the films require the active engagement of the audience rather than simply seeking to be passively consumed as an entertainment though of course 'entertainment' ~~xxxxx~~ happens in the self-reflexive response that is ^{being} ~~primarily~~ sought.

A. Initial contact is made either directly with the film-maker (or lecturer/writer), or the Distribution Office. Either will give advice about the following categories and generally assist in mounting the show appropriate to your audience.

B. PRESENTATION FORMAT

~~A.~~ To encourage the audience to actively engage with the work, organisers are strongly encouraged to place the films into an appropriate context for such activity either by structuring programmes or by inviting a film-maker or writer/lecturer to introduce and discuss the work.

~~B. Presentation Format.~~ In constructing your own programmes, some understanding of the development of independent film-making over the last 15 years is necessary and can be referred to (though patchily) in such publications as Afterimage, BFI Structural Film Anthology, Screen etc. When working with ~~a~~ someone who will be present for the screening, particularly with a large festival-type event or an installation or expanded cinema piece, then that person will be able to provide a lot of that background together with practical advice on its presentation.

C. Workshops and educational projects ~~xxxxxx~~ related not only to film-viewing but film production have been found to be useful ways of augmenting screenings and taking up much of the works implications. Courses in film production incorporating film study and analysis both inside and outside recognised educational institutions have found financial support from national and local authorities and RAAs. Utilizing available space, specific equipment and modest material resources, such course have lasted anything from a few hours to a week or more.

D. Enquiry information concerning film-makers and specific films can be handled by the Distribution Office of the LFMC. Other sources are local and ~~an~~ national and local subsidy bodies such as the Arts Council, the BFI and RAAs together with national and local officers of the Independent Film-makers Association. It is also desirable to inform the LFMC that your screening space exists, the kind of programmes you are interested in and name and address of the organiser.

E. Booking of all films is conducted with the Distribution Office as far in advance as possible; a confirmation order copy will be issued and later an invoice copy for settlement the day after the screening: (see para M). Alternative titles should be provided and clear indication given of mailing addresses for paperwork and film despatch together with the name of the organiser.

When a film-maker or lecturer is attending the screening(s), confirmation of the event must be received ~~in~~ writing by ~~that~~ person together with the terms of the engagement. A fee would be about £25-35 and does not normally include the hire of prints.

Subsidies are offered by some organisations to assist with the cost of having a film programme accompanied. The Film Officer of the Arts Council of Great Britain, the Production Board Distribution Office of the BFI and the Film Officer of your regional Arts Association should be approached. The CBA offers % educational discount of some LFMC films.

K.E. cont; It is essential that the visitor understands that subsidy is required at an early stage in order to make necessary arrangements. These schemes do not exist to short-circuit the function of the Distribution Office.

F. Pre-publicity is of vital importance; even an audience with some experience of this work will not necessarily know the work of the next ~~visit~~ visiting individual so the information necessary to encourage an inexperienced audience to attend the screening has to be carefully prepared particularly in the face of massive usually incidegus publicity for the commercial products. ~~Visual~~ Visual and graphic information often makes this distinction ~~clear~~ apparent. The right number of words (relevant to the work) helps this along. Circularisation of galleries, colleges, libraries, social centres etc and contact with the local press and radio gets it to a wider audience. Again a visitor would advise and assist by providing relevant information and copy. It is suggested that broadly speaking, the audience should be encouraged to ~~believe~~ believe they will encounter work which is fundamentally different (rather than novel) in its approach to and use of the medium of film, that they will be involved in seeking meaning rather than having meaning presented.

G. Equipment requirements may be different from normal single screen projection and with some events may prove to be a major undertaking. Again close and specific liason with the person attending well in advance will reduce this workload. RAAs and colleges usually advise and assist in providing ~~requirements.~~ EQUIPMENT.

H. Programme information for distribution before the actual screening is a good way of giving the audience opportunity to find out something of the film-makers concerns, intentions, working methods, etc which will assist a viewing of the films. General statements help in broadening the scope of the discussion which follows the screening.

J. Travel expenses should be provided to the person accompanying the programme in the same way as the ~~extra~~ carriage of films is paid. Often this expense can be avoided by the visitor being prepared to bring the programme by hand. Subsidy for travel is usually available; (see para E)

K. Accommodation should be provided where necessary since this is an item not covered by subsidy and could prove to be an expense removing a considerable part of the modest fees received by the visitor.

M. Payment must be prompt; 75% of the rental charge is paid back to the film-maker on a regular basis and often forms the only income available for further production. It is you, the filmviewer, who thus has a direct effect on future production of each individual, rather than simply increasing the dividend of some multi-national entertainment corporation! Visitors will expect either cash settlement or the signing of relevant forms for payment, immediately after the screening. If a subsidy is being used, the visitor will provide the necessary forms.

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