



Co-op Distribution Preview Show 1985

REPORT

The 1985 Co-op Distribution Preview Show was held on Friday 17th, Saturday 18th, and Sunday 19th May 1985. Films were screened throughout the day, from 10am, and in the evenings on Friday and Saturday, and in the afternoon on Sunday. Altogether, seventy-two pieces of work were shown, incorporating at least one piece of work by each film maker who has put work into distribution at the Co-op during the last year. This included work on 16mm, Super 8, tape-slide and two double screen pieces. Much of this work had not been screened before in Britain.

Distribution staff previewed as much of the work as possible before the Show and programmed work, as far as possible so that daily programmes worked in a way suitable and complementary to the individual films.

As in 1984, the Show was advertised to the public through the regular Co-op cinema programme leaflet and through listings in 'City Limits'. A press screening was organised for Jo Comino, who reviewed in advance a selection of films from the Show for 'City Limits'. Thirty per cent of cinema seats were reserved for members of the public. We operated an advance seat reservation system for members of the public and for invited guests who indicated that they would like to come. Seventy per cent of seats were held for invited guests. We mailed invitations, with cinema programmes to 800 regular film hirers, programmers, film video and photography workshops, critics, press contacts and film makers in Britain and abroad.

Attendance to the Show by hirers was fairly evenly spread over the three days. 39 invited guests came on Friday, 34 on Saturday and 31 on Sunday. Many of them attended all three days for all or part of the time. This seems to indicate that those who came to the Show found it interesting and worthwhile enough to watch a sizeable proportion of twenty hours of film! Also, the morning screenings were noticeably better attended than in previous years. Hirers from Belgium, Willem de Greef and Frank Vranckx came to Britain for the Show. They work with the 'Beursschouwburg' Nieuwe Workshop in Brussels. Dagmar Beake, who is in Britain as a representative of the German TV station ZDF, and Karola Gramann, programmer of the Oberhausen Film Festival also attended the Show. Film makers Killian Dellers and Tomi Streiff came from Basle, Switzerland for the Preview Show, and Phillip Hoffmann, a Canadian film maker who has put films into Distribution also came. Representatives from 'Undercut' and 'Framework' magazines and from the BBC were also among the audience. The Belgian and Swiss visitors accepted our offer of accommodation in London with members of the Co-op. This arrangement worked extremely well and those hosting guests felt that the opportunity to watch film and to talk at length with the visitors was a very valuable one.

Before the Preview Show, Distribution collected information leaflets about forthcoming festivals, funding, bursary and tour schemes and organisations. This information, which included leaflets about the Edinburgh and Tyneside Film Festivals, ACGB and GLAA funding schemes, the work of the Independent Film & Video Association and the Women's Film, Video & TV Network and publicity material from film makers about their work, was put on display at the Show for people to read and take away. 'Undercut', 'Heresies' and the Co-op catalogue (incorporating the latest annual supplement of new work) were also sold at the Show.

There was an ongoing discussion throughout the Preview Show about the importance and the disadvantages of operating an 'open access' policy in Co-op distribution; and about the politics of visual images. People at the Show - hirers, film makers and staff also discussed the way our policy of not promoting individual films affects bookings for work, especially new work. There was discussion about how film makers can go about publicising their own work and have influence in how programmers and other people 'package' film work. There was useful feedback from film makers and programmers about international film festivals, events and contacts, and some constructive criticism of the Co-op distribution and ways in which it could develop - Ideas for changing the Co-op catalogue, possibly raising recommended prices, expanding the profile of Distribution abroad... As workers in Distribution, we find this informal dialogue very useful. The Preview Show combination of watching film work which has recently come into Distribution, and the discussion of current issues and trends is important. We intend to follow up the discussion of issues raised by holding a General Distribution members meeting (by popular demand), in the near future.

A wider promotional strategy for distribution, and the place of the Preview Show within that strategy, will also be subjects for discussion over the next year.

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