

The idea for the tour emerged from initiating some visits to Exeter College of Art for the purposes of film study, taking advantage of the budget available for that, and utilising the scheme recently set up by the Arts Council 'Film-Makers on Tour'. In order to extend the availability of the films to people outside of the college, the film study group, (drawn from the three years of the Fine Art degree course), meet as an evening class in the centrally placed and publicly available, city central library. With a wish to make it more worthwhile for the film-makers to travel the distance into deepest West, a mailing to other potential bookers was got off and received favourable response from seven other places. Three areas became the mainstay of a tour taking all ten of the film-makers selected as being, in the knowledge of the co-ordinator, representative of the range of independent film-making. Exeter, Dartington RFT and a triad comprised of a college in Falmouth, an art gallery in St Ives and another in Penzance took all ten; an art gallery and an arts centre in Bristol, an arts centre in Plymouth and a film society in Exmouth taking three each. The Co-ordinator simply juggled dates between the film-makers and the venues to meet everyone's convenience and then announced the results to all involved with two memos - one to the film-makers giving details of screenings confirmed and information on each of the venues useful for the purposes of a screening visit, another to the venues confirming dates and giving information about the film-makers useful for advance publicity. Other than organising a poster designed with space for the addition of local information and despatching to each venue, other arrangements were left to the film-makers and venues to sort out, such as projection requirements, specific show information, biographies, etc.

With the first film-maker Laura Mulvey through and Liz Rhodes half-way round the size of audiences and their response to the work has surprised even the most hardened independent screener; 'Riddles of the Sphinx' was seen by three audiences of 80 - 100; 'Lightmusic' by a similar number. Naturally the testing time will be in about the fifth week but although publicity has been adequate, it certainly has not pulled all the stops out in terms of newspapers, local radio and TV etc. A proper perspective and analysis will not be available until the end of the tour in December, but a few observations for anyone thinking of attempting something similar would be -

1. Three months between starting to organise and the first show was only just enough time - four would be a better working period, possibly more, to allow for people who are away, replying to letters, accumulating publicity, meeting printers deadlines etc.
2. Advance publicity is important and film-makers and inexperienced venues must be made aware of this. Stills make a big difference to this and being able to offer them means that, in some places, you are put on a publicity footing with the 'money-making' programmes which always have pix. Other material is only useful if it arrives no later than six weeks before the showdate.
3. The venues not used to handling screenings need a lot of advice and patience, particularly from the film-makers. The full-time screening venues should be worked on to provide regular shows on equal footings at least, instead of relegating them to an obscure hour with bottom-of-the-back-column-one liners. Strangely these venues were the ones most awkward in fixing dates - perhaps they need preferential treatment!
4. South West Arts were most helpful with providing a phone, duplicating, mailing and some financial support. David Curtis at the Arts Council, Hilary Thompson at the BFI and Lindsay Gordon at the Scottish Arts Council are the people to contact about subsidised screenings based on the Arts Council £10 charge to the venues and payment of £25 + expenses to the film-makers. Further advice about do-it-yourself tours from Mike Leggett, College of Art, Exeter, Devon.

IFA S-W would like to acknowledge the assistance given by South West Arts for this newsletter.