

Response to:  
DEVELOPING THE INDEPENDENT FILM AND VIDEO SECTOR  
report from Boyden Southwood & Comedia

Page and (paragraph/Number)

- 2 (i). The term "programme-making" demonstrates a restricted overview of A-V production practice. Even as a filmmaker commissioned by Channel Four, I am not necessarily a 'programme-maker'. The production has a non-broadcast life as a film. An experimental film is rarely (if ever) a 'programme'. Much video art is also unlikely to be 'programmatic'.
- 3 (i). Reduced understanding of what an integrated practice is and what its objectives are. There exists a strong historical tradition based not simply on the existence of a range of activities or 'permutations' but rather their vital interrelatedness. Equally, the intention has not been simply to break down production/audience barriers but in many cases to prevent one aspect (eg. distribution) being in outside hands and having a monopolistic stranglehold on another aspect (eg. production), with the result that the distribution 'industry' would refuse to handle radical productions ultimately destroying both exhibition potential and future production possibilities.
- 8 (vi-vii). These paragraphs neatly avoid painful truths about the demise of the GLC, the real levels of independent production funding and the scandalous abuse of replacement funds and democratic accountability by both the BFI and GLAA.
- 9 (3). It is faintly comical to suggest that client groups were in positions of power vis-à-vis funding agencies after the demise of the GLC!
- 19 (4). I would not agree that it is only for funders to decide what constitutes 'independent' practice. In the light of later points in the report, it is more for the 'parallel' sector to define itself in the first place and then consult with funders.
- 21 (iii, 2). Two paragraphs are rightly linked; 'IFVPA has 214 individual members in London' and 'individuals have almost no voice'!
- 22 (vi). Factual error:- The LFMC DOES receive its funding from MORE than two sources.

- 25 (2-4). Developed managerial, financial and marketing skills, and marketing expenditure to produce greater income are objectives many independents share. But this model is not without its problems and the 'success' of ruthlessly pursuing these objectives may produce encouraging results from the funders point of view but may be destroying the entire *raison d'être* of particular funded groups, thus making the funded clients no more than the servants of the funders. I believe that this would be an obscene contradiction of the funder's rightful rôle.
- 25 (vii). Consideration of AIP, BFTPA and IPPA is largely irrelevant for all but franchised workshops. My personal experience of these (including membership) is that they are wholly incapable of representing or comprehending my broader interests, regardless of the benefits of a Joint Industrial Relations Service and the like. Simple practical assistance, such as copyright law etc., could be dealt with by IFVPA consultancies or funded half-day workshops where necessary.
- 26 (v). These are valid criticisms of IFVPA. It is vital that the Association reorganise as quickly as possible. But [see 21 (iii, 2) above], the Association serves no purpose if it becomes another National Organisation of Workshops or becomes little more than the servant of (franchised) workshops etc. Individuals deserve a significant (if not majority) voice and the sooner an active London Section is established (with meetings in the evenings) the sooner IFVPA can claim to be a genuine Association once again.
- 27 (3). This rôle for IFVPA can only be reasonably developed in the light of 26 (v), above, and in adopting this rôle it should be careful to avoid being perceived as a tool for the funders rather than its members. The proposal on page 86 paras 2 and 4, is, however, totally unacceptable as it is clear that IFVPA would be reengineered to be unrepresentative and a mere tool of the funders. Why should they then not use it as a stick to beat us with, since they will have already denied us any representation?
- 30 (3). "Fuzzy historical notions...of co-operatives...should not be tolerated" apparently, despite the long terms success (existence) and adaptability of LFMC which even now will survive and strengthen whilst other more 'practical' approaches go to the wall. The Co-op has strengths which Boyden Southwood/Comedia will never dream of - and are beyond any explanation I'm prepared to give here.
- 31 (4-6). "Power relations DO exist" - who says they don't? This is simplistic knee-jerking.  
"Pay differentials should be encouraged" - regardless of the disruption, distrust, destruction?
- 36 (iii). Factual error:- Conclusions are based on absent information! Film post production is substantially different from video. It does not involve expensive time in edit suites. Also, a post-production percentage will include large laboratory costs which are not transferable to independent facilities.

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- 36 (vii). C4's encouragement of "innovation and experiment in the form and content of programmes" has been/become very disappointing, commissioning from the (really) independent sector has been impoverished and largely restricted to familiar models and is today under very real attack from Michael Grade (and his complacency towards the White paper) - see page 83 of the report!
- 38 (iv). Factual error;- It should be underscored that a great many people pursue neither of these 'stage before employment' nor 'stepping stone to the industry' strategies. Even 'successful' film/video makers avoid both these. This statement really suggests the socially and culturally limited perception of the authors of this report.
- 38 (1). Factual error;- 'Film products' essentially ARE of broadcast standard! Is this really not understood?
- 38 (3). It is vital that these contract producers and advisors should have a good practical knowledge of the sector. Industry experience has no monopoly on production wisdom and is in some respects more stupid and wasteful than the 'independent' sector. A 'no budget' filmmaker is usually **extremely** resourceful! Such contractors could have a useful or even vital rôle to play, but please lets avoid being patronised - industry-based people often have a very limited knowledge of film production outside their microcosm of expertise.
- 39 (4). Funders to negotiate production opportunities! It's about time that funders had to answer their own questionnaire: 'what positive steps have you taken to seek funds elsewhere?' I sincerely hope, however, that funders are not going to become co-producers of cheap, safe, 'independent' (eg. amateur dramatics/film school) TV product. Will they have a choice? Will they be able to resist their own careerist ambitions into the 'real' world? What won't GLA do for, say, £100-200,000 from the BBC?
- 42 (vii). Factual error;- LFMC alone has 11 16mm and Super 8 cameras and 6 editing facilities (4 for 16mm and 2 for Super 8). LFMC also has sound transfer, mixing and dubbing facilities and also operates a telecine service. Didn't Boyden Southwood/Comedia have this basic information?
46. (ii). Factual error;- "film remains a comparatively cheap production media for transfer to broadcast standard". Firstly, video is rarely a cheaper production medium, anyway. Secondly, film is also comparatively cheap for NON-broadcast use and is itself of broadcast standard - it doesn't get transferred to become of broadcast standard. Once again, the report has a basic lack of understanding of film and appears only capable of perceiving it in relation to video and TV!
- 45 (1-2). This is a vital point in the report; that funders should recognise the essential need for 'attractive premises' which should be 'accessible in all senses' and that funders 'should invest capital in new premises' (in place of simply increasing grants to cover rents?)

- 49 (iv). Courses to have clear objectives about students entering into further education or industry is a sensible aim for many workshops but takes no account (again) of training and skill sharing which are of use to film and video artists who would be unlikely to benefit from further education (increasingly vocational/industrial) and have no desire to enter the industry.
- 53-54. The authors of the report clearly have no experience or knowledge of dealing with foreign broadcasters. I challenge them to name ANY broadcaster of the kind of work commissioned by Independent Film & Video in C4, for example, let alone uncommissioned work! Jane Balfour is best at selling work that would 'sell itself' anyway and (especially having been dropped by C4) is totally irrelevant to the majority of 'independent' production considered here. Proposal # 1 on page 91 suggests a 'special relationship' with a TV sales company. This could easily become little more than another expensive consultancy achieving no more than would be achieved without it.
- 55 (v-vi). Factual error:- The Film & Video Artists on Tour Scheme has not existed now for several months and may never be reinstated. Has the BFI really acquired Glenbuck? Or is Glenbuck rather in receipt of BFI funding?
- 57 (i). Anything that assists audience identification and development is to be warmly welcomed. The BFI could be of great help here. Their Regional Film Theatres lack awareness/education in indie work and its uses and values and I strongly suspect that there is real resistance to experimental work among these programmers and the BFI's own Programming Unit is largely uninterested or not prepared to be bothered with work which requires greater time/effort for lower returns.  
Is the proposed 'network of independent film & video viewers' to be organised by IFVPA?
58. Factual error:- The NFT's Art in Cinema slot has not existed for some several months.
59. Factual error:- The ICA's video library has been essentially non-operational for several years.
- 73 (3). Having studiously avoided formal training and education in film and video, I am not at all attracted to the idea of having to work in educational institutions! There are also serious problems with a public grant aid body getting directly involved in educational institutions. It may be seen as the thin end of a wedge which stitches up education, training and workshop (etc.) access and ultimately leaves no place for the film/video maker outside this potentially hermetic convenience.

87-89. A well organised efficient and cheap equipment pool could well be of benefit to groups and individuals in receipt of production funding. Whilst the report recognises that film equipment has a longer shelf life than changing video technologies, it should have recognised that there will need to be substantial initial maintenance to get equipment up to a high standard of operation which can then be upheld by relatively minor regular maintenance programmes. Certainly LFMC and LVA might be good models in some respects, but it must be stressed that LFMC is not an 'equipment pool'. Every aspect of production and post-production facility exists at the Co-op in order to achieve very real aesthetic objectives which can only be reached by access to the full range of equipment, including a hands-on laboratory facility, sound studio, rostrum , optical printer, etc. etc. which enable unique experimentation and innovation. This resource is not divisible. Nor should the Co-op ever be transformed into an 'equipment pool'.