

Report/Notes on Co-op's participation in Edinburgh Film Festival 1978

- 1) Notes on 'what was wrong': aftermath meeting at Co-op
 - a) It was felt there was a discrepancy, not only between the 2 avant-garde programmes, but mainly in relation to the rest of the festival and other filmmakers. Hospitality by the festival was good but in spite of this and an impromptu 'party' (i.e. evening of free booze) on the Co-op's behalf, there was still no real contact with filmmakers, critics or anyone else!
 - b) There was no platform for talk/common threshold or someone there to take responsibility/lead debate.
 - c) No space for seminars either.
 - d) There was a strong feeling of ghettoisation, both physically in that films were shown the other side of town from clubroom/preview theatre, and temporally in that films were all lumped together, sometimes 33 programmes a day and at the end of second week of festival.
 - e) Publicity poor - audiences variable but not large.
 - f) Projection unsympathetic.
- 2) Suggested proposals and/or questions for future festivals: same meeting
 - a) Should there be two public shows?
 - b) Should avant-garde be lumped together with mainstream narrative? The idea of 'shorts' (i.e. 'support' films) not unanimously favoured.
 - c) How else to get critical attention/press notice? Label of avant-garde (or for that matter any labelling) possibly a deterrent.
 - d) Exhibition space for documentation.
 - e) It was generally felt that packages not a good idea, from either the AC or the Co-op, that Co-op should strive for a co-ordinated Co-op presence - i.e. filmmakers' own programmes within the mainstream festival. No labelling, just titles or films by ... Co-op to negotiate/press for commitment to support individuals.
 - f) This raised the question: would only well-known filmmakers get shows or those with a large body of work? Whatever the fault of the Co-op package it gave new filmmakers a chance and also didn't discriminate against the short film.
 - g) Possibility of space given over to Co-op, within the festival, for expanded cinema, short films, etc.. On the same basis of ex. cin. at ICA - perhaps negotiating direct with SAC for money. If so also get commitment to, say, 12 filmmakers to hold own shows, i.e. those wanting 'straight' projection.
Care needed that this setup would be within the context of festival, i.e. not further isolation, therefore should be in main area and space used for discussions/seminars/debates/open screenings etc..
 - h) It was agreed that whatever the outcome there should definitely be more debate and less isolation between other filmmakers/audience. If there is to be an 'avant-garde' tag, it should be represented by individuals from USA, Europe, Australasia etc. and more critical context, including perhaps publication of papers - something like Anthology of Av.-gde. film.

The above points and suggestions were all made in the optimistic belief that reuniting/rebuilding of Film House (festival premises) would be completed by next year, that the 'Co-op' would be in the same building as this year but that this would house 2 cinemas (one being the press/previewing theatre), bar and clubroom, further space for exhibition, documentation, seminars. i.e. same space but better therefore no ghettoisation ... BUT ...

- 3) Meeting with Lynda Hyles to discuss future programming 11.10.78
 - a) Exactly the same spatial problems would be present next year as building would not be finished. Impossible to programme 'minority' stuff in large commercial cinemas.
 - b) Most of proposals such as integration and debate were agreed to (next year less films and more seminar time) but if debates and seminars held in Film House same problems: who wants to leave coziness of clubroom bar to trek across town to bleak half-finished building? Response from the 'unconverted' will be same as this year.
 - c) Main theme for next year's festival will be feminist films. Camera Obscura etc will be invited for debates. (Definite NO to the idea of open screenings).
 - d) It was agreed that individuals participate in mainstream but the idea of separate ex. cin. space dubiously received - i.e. not accepted by committee and would possibly also increase separatism. Needs more thinking about. The idea of published papers (not necessarily new ones) v. tentatively agreed to.
 - e) Whole question of finance as well as building needed to be sorted out by festival organisers before firm commitments made. Lynda having meeting 30 Nov and proposed contacting Co-op early in Dec to continue negotiations. She affirmed definite commitment to the Co-op and the work it represents but proposals need thinking out more fully.
- 4) Personal proposals for this: being in part response to M Leggett's paper for GM of 28 October.

As suggested by Mike there's definitely a need for more consolidated participation by filmmakers in the screening/viewing/general presentation of their work. To some extent the AC's Filmmakers on Tour scheme has ameliorated this but being a govt. subsidised scheme it still lays itself open to abuse by lazy/ignorant venue organisers, particularly the more theatrical venues. The same applies to package deals/shows (particularly subsidised ones but also Co-op packages!) where no initiative is needed by the venue - i.e. programmes handed to them on a plate, no work, hattle or no publicity therefore little response from a large potential audience/critical work outside the Co-op itself. Shows organised in isolation from the venue tend (it seems to me) to further isolate the filmmakers and their work from the audience and often there isn't enough information around to even attract an audience let alone encourage critical feed-back. An example of this is Edinburgh as outlined in the notes and, more recently, the Beaubourg (c.f. Distribution report para 4). Both shows were put together by people outside of the organisations with similar poor results. For Edinburgh at least I think things could change and propose that:

- a) Instead of frantically working for 2 months prior to the festival as James did, completely ignorant of what else was being programmed by Lynda and her 'advisory committee' (Peter Hollen, Laura Mulvey, Claire Johnson, Simon Field et al) a representative of the Co-op's members should be working with this committee NOW.
- b) As the main issue of the festival will be feminist films I would suggest that that person is a woman and a practicing filmmaker, preferably from within the Co-op and familiar with Co-op films (both from the UK and abroad).
- c) That this person be paid for the time of involvement - if not a proper fee at least all expenses (ie travelling to E'burgh). Money to come from venue or AC.
- d) Person to see that proper publicity and posters are done and if possible an anthology publication put together - investigate BFI Pub. for money, and of course press for more Co-op inclusion but not isolation.