

**Northern Alliance**

**Review of short film in the UK and the UK  
Film Council's support for short film  
production, 2001-2009**

October 2009

## Contents

	Pages
1. Executive summary	5
1.1 Introduction	5
1.2 The UK Film Council's support for short film	5
1.3 Access and diversity	6
1.4 Evaluation of the UK Film Council's support for short film	6
1.5 Recommendations	7
2. Context	10
2.1 The review	10
2.2 History	10
2.3 The audience for short films	10
2.4 Returns to investors	11
2.5 Filmmaking	11
2.6 Value	12
3. The UK Film Council's support for short film	14
3.1 The UK Film Council's objectives	14
3.2 The UK Film Council's strategy	15
3.3 The New Cinema Fund's short film activities	16
3.4 The UK Film Council and its partners' roles and responsibilities	18
3.5 The UK Film Council's activities in respect of access and diversity	19
4. Evaluation of the UK Film Council's activity	22
4.1 Objectives	22
4.2 Data collection systems	24
4.3 Talent discovery and development	25
4.4 Access and diversity	36
4.5 The management of programmes: partners and projects	37
4.5.1 Lifesize Pictures	37
4.5.2 Revenues	39
4.5.3 Budgets	40
4.6 The roles of higher education and Skillset	41
4.7 Support for showcasing films at festivals	43
5. Conclusions and recommendations	44

Appendices		
I	Case studies	56
II	Definitions	61
III	A brief history of short film	62
IV	Why short films are made	65
V	The public value of short films	67
VI	The economics of short films	68
VII	Short film schemes 1997-2000	72
VIII	Overview of the UK Film Council's principal short film schemes	75
IX	The UK Film Council and partners: processes and projects	76
X	Contrasting views? Short film, the BBC and Channel 4	78
XI	Short film internationally	81
XII	Data availability	85
XIII	Platforms and audiences for short films	89
XIV	Short film versus other media as preparation for feature filmmaking	92
XV	Access and diversity	93
XVI	Business affairs	95
XVII	Summary of evaluation of short film training schemes	100
XVIII	The role of film festivals	103
XIX	List of interviewees	105
XX	Sample survey questionnaire	107
XXI	Summary of questionnaire responses	116
XXII	Northern Alliance	125

## List of tables

	Pages
<b>Table 1:</b> UK Film Council supported activity 2001-2009	5
<b>Table 2:</b> Summary of the New Cinema Fund's (NCF) production spend and number of films produced per scheme from inception to August 2009	17
<b>Table 3:</b> Digital shorts applicants and awardees, 2002/03-2008/09	20
<b>Table 4:</b> Recent applicants and awardees from minorities across schemes 2008/09	21
<b>Table 5:</b> Strategic partners' priorities regarding the role of short films	23
<b>Table 6:</b> Festival screenings and prizes, from inception to August 2009	25
<b>Table 7:</b> International Festival screenings and prizes, from inception to August 2009	26
<b>Table 8:</b> Success and its cost from inception to August 2009	27
<b>Table 9:</b> International success and its cost, from inception to August 2009	28
<b>Table 10:</b> Ancillary distribution 2006-2009	30
<b>Table 11:</b> Filmmaker career progression 2006-2009	32
<b>Table 12:</b> Minority groups as a percentage of each scheme's total, 2006-2009	34
<b>Table 13:</b> Scheme cost per minority filmmaker 2006-2009	35
<b>Table 14:</b> Scheme revenues 2006-2009	39
<b>Table 15:</b> Interviewees' priorities regarding the role of short films	44
<b>Table 16:</b> Filmmakers' priorities regarding the making of short films	65
<b>Table 17:</b> Support for short film in a sample of European countries	82
<b>Table 18:</b> A comparison of short film schemes' current contracts	95

## 1. Executive summary

### 1.1 Introduction

The UK Film Council commissioned Northern Alliance to undertake a review of short film in the UK and the UK Film Council's support for short film production, to inform its future approach to the sector. In addition to research and analysis of existing information, we interviewed 28 key stakeholders and conducted four focus groups. Further details of the work undertaken are appended.

Short film had a long, chequered history before the creation of the UK Film Council, with sales to broadcasters already in decline in the 1990s. On average, a UK short film now generates just £160 in revenue. The production of cinematic quality short films largely depends on public support.

### 1.2 The UK Film Council's support for short film

Shortly after its inception, the UK Film Council moved swiftly to replace the 'patchwork quilt' of public funding for short film with a coherent and well resourced framework, including specific measures to ensure that minorities were among the new voices it helped to discover and support. Since then, the New Cinema Fund's (NCF)'s four core programmes - Cinema Extreme, the Completion Fund, Digital Shorts and Digital Shorts Plus/Digital Nation - have helped to make over 800 films; over the same period, however, the UK's higher education providers have invested substantially more money in more films.

**Table 1: UK Film Council supported activity 2001-2009<sup>1</sup>**

Scheme	NCF spend (£) from inception	Number of films produced
<b>Cinema Extreme</b>	642,703	24
<b>Completion Fund</b>	380,118	72
<b>Digital Shorts</b>	3,821,400	684
<b>Digital Shorts Plus / Digital Nation</b>	250,000	25
<b>Total<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>5,904,221</b>	<b>805</b>

<sup>1</sup> Figures reflect activity up until August 2009.

<sup>2</sup> In addition, three smaller programmes produced 12 films: CNC (3), Comedy Shorts (4) and Viral Shorts (5).

### 1.3 Access and diversity

The UK Film Council aims to help the UK film industry to build a more diverse workforce, and diversity is one of its key policy priorities. Digital Shorts films have been made in every nation and region of the UK and, in order to further its aim, the UK Film Council has backed two positive action schemes, Blank Slate and The Magic Hour, targeting black and minority ethnic and disabled filmmakers respectively.

### 1.4 Evaluation of the UK Film Council's support for short film

The UK Film Council's support has achieved a great deal, including one of the founding objectives of the NCF's investment in short films which was to create a generation of filmmakers who were comfortable in the use of digital production technology. There have also been some significant changes in the context for short film since the UK Film Council's original strategy was set, not least the rapid development of the internet as a means of viewing short form audiovisual content.

Between them, the 805 short films which the UK Film Council has supported have secured 144 selections at A-list festivals<sup>3</sup> and 58 high profile awards or nominations,<sup>4</sup> including ten non-UK A-list festival selections and seven non-UK high profile awards (eg Oscars®, Berlin, Clermont Ferrand, Sundance and Venice). Despite this, fewer than a quarter of the films (from each programme) are available online and the viewings for those Digital Shorts films that are available online averaged just 463.

There is, however, a clear consensus that the main value in making short films is instrumental, not intrinsic; that is their ability to nurture and develop talent in readiness for feature filmmaking.

NCF research indicates that 63% of the feature directors it has backed have made short films. It also indicates that one third of Cinema Extreme directors and 8% of Completion Fund and Digital Shorts Plus/Digital Nation directors have already gone on to make features.

Unfortunately, short film activity supported by the UK Film Council has largely failed to meet its diversity targets, with the participation of disabled people in short filmmaking clearly remaining an area of concern. During the period 2006-2009, Cinema Extreme, the Completion Fund and Digital Shorts Plus/Digital Nation did not

---

<sup>3</sup> A-list film festivals referred to are: Berlin, Cannes, Clermont-Ferrand, Edinburgh, Encounters, London, Sundance and Venice.

<sup>4</sup> Source: official UK Film Council collected statistics. High profile awards refer to prizes awarded at the following film festivals: Berlin, Clermont-Ferrand, Edinburgh International, Sundance and Venice; and prizes and/or nominations at the Academy Awards®, BAFTAs, BIFAs, European Film Awards, Scottish BAFTAs, and the TCM Classic Shorts awards.

support a single disabled filmmaker. The involvement of black and minority ethnic filmmakers in programmes other than Blank Slate is patchy, and the involvement of women, especially as directors, also appears to be lower than it should be.

## 1.5 Recommendations

This review was performed against a backdrop of reducing financial resources available to fund all aspects of the UK Film Council's activity, including its support for short filmmaking. However, the current review of the UK Film Council's broad programme of activity also presents an opportunity to re-set its aims, objectives and strategy for short film, in the context of its track record to date, the changes affecting short filmmaking that have already occurred during this decade and those anticipated for the next. In particular, we recommend that:

- The UK Film Council should clearly re-state that its overriding objective is the discovery, development and progression of talented feature film directors, and that it is impact (the emergence of new feature directors) rather than activity (the making of short films) that is of paramount importance;
- Specific, measurable key performance indicators, such as the cost per new feature director and the number and category of nominations or awards per film, should be agreed for all schemes. The UK Film Council should withdraw and replace support from any strategic partner that is failing to meet its key performance targets without good reason;
- The UK Film Council's investment in Cinema Extreme and the Completion Fund should be reconfigured;
- Efforts to promote diversity in short filmmaking should be redoubled especially among makers of Digital Shorts films. The primary objective of the UK Film Council's support for short film - to develop feature film directors rather than to subsidise short filmmaking activity *per se* - should apply equally to targeted schemes;
- The UK Film Council should lead the development of policy in areas affecting short filmmaking, for instance by promoting a dialogue with HM Revenue and Customs to ensure that an appropriate balance is struck between exploitation and volunteerism in complying with national minimum wage legislation; and by continuing to work to ensure the fullest possible use of the Department for Work and Pensions' Access to Work scheme designed to help disabled people into work;
- All of the UK Film Council's financial support for short film production should be channelled through a single contractual relationship; Regional Investment Fund England (RIFE) funds and NCF contributions should not be mixed; and either UK Partnerships or the NCF should take lead responsibility for managing the application and use of funds advanced to the National and Regional Screen Agencies;

- The UK Film Council should simplify its business affairs in respect of its short film activity; it should cap its contribution to the budgets of short films, not the budgets themselves;
- Management and control functions should be brought back in house, with greater co-ordination and integration of functions in areas such as data collection and monitoring. Lower tier schemes<sup>5</sup> should be managed at the level of the scheme rather than at the micro-level of the films they support; for example, the UK Film Council should cease to take a right of final cut on Digital Shorts film;
- The concept of a clear pathway for directors, leading from lower tier schemes like Digital Shorts into UK-wide higher programmes such as Digital Nation should be retained;
- Agencies lacking the scale, resources or experience to deliver improved levels of effectiveness in short filmmaking should be encouraged to consolidate with, or sub-contract responsibilities to, agencies or third parties that do;
- There should, however, be a significant reduction in the numbers of Digital Shorts films made each year, and reductions made in the overall number of films funded via National and Regional Screen Agencies, perhaps by as much as 50% in some cases;
- A new top tier scheme should be introduced, through which the UK Film Council directly commissions short films from production companies that have a manifest ambition to make a feature film with a new director;
- Better use of existing UK Film Council interventions should be made to showcase short films; for example, the Find any Film website should be made capable of finding any UK Film Council backed short film available online or on DVD;
- Closer associations should be developed between strategic partners, Skillset and Skillset-accredited institutions; the Skillset talent scout should play a central role in ensuring a comprehensive and coherent strategy, from instruction in filmmaking to the refinement of talent;
- There should be a specific review of the UK Film Council's work in showcasing talent by a suitably qualified expert in business to business marketing;
- Subject to that review, a new intervention should be established to support the international marketing of the talent behind the UK's best short films.

We believe that support for short filmmaking should be prioritised during the formulation of the UK Film Council's spending plans. There is a broad consensus that short filmmaking plays a vital role in the development of new feature filmmaking talent, and that there is little chance that alternative sources of funding will emerge to replace any significant reduction in the level of support from the UK Film Council. However, the UK Film Council does not appear to have developed reliable mechanisms for monitoring what proportion of new feature film directors actually do

---

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix VIII for an overview of the UK Film Council's short film schemes.



emerge as a result of the structured short filmmaking it supports. We are therefore highlighting the recommendation below as the most important, in our view:

- **The UK Film Council needs to develop a methodology for accurately monitoring how new feature film directors emerge and the contribution that its programmes of support for short filmmaking make to that process, relative to other means of preparing for and entering the industry.**

Section 5 of this report summarises the conclusions on which these recommendations are based.

## 2. Context

### 2.1 The Review

The aim of this review was to describe and evaluate short film<sup>6</sup> in the UK, including undertaking a detailed review of the UK Film Council's support for shorts over the period 2001-2009, and to provide recommendations for future action.

The context for short filmmaking was principally evaluated through desk research. In May and June 2009, 28 interviews were conducted with key stakeholders identified by the UK Film Council steering group and Northern Alliance (see Appendix XIX for a full list of interviewees). In addition, four focus groups were held. Three of these comprised filmmakers (one in Sheffield, one in London and one at the Edinburgh International Film Festival). The fourth brought together the UK Film Council's strategic partners in delivering the NCF's entry-level short film scheme, Digital Shorts. Appendix XXI contains further notes on the methodology employed.

### 2.2 History

The early history of cinema resides entirely in short films, and in the UK short filmmaking has been strongly influenced by the intervention of the public sector to complement the commercial resources available to support it (see Appendix III for a brief history of short film). Sales both to UK and mainland European broadcasters used to be the main source of revenue for short films, but the period immediately before the formation of the UK Film Council saw radically decreasing support for short films from broadcasters, both in financing and broadcasting them.

### 2.3 The audience for short films

The stakeholders consulted for this report clearly view film festivals in the UK and internationally as the most important means of obtaining exposure and recognition for short films. Although exceptions exist (see case study *From short films to DreamWorks*, Appendix I), online platforms were generally viewed as poor substitutes for festival representation and, so far, either fail to differentiate user-generated content from professionally made short films, or have not yet developed a valuable audience for the latter.

Despite these frustrations, the consensus among the filmmakers interviewed was that the general public was not the primary audience for short films in the UK. The main

---

<sup>6</sup> For the purposes of this report, short film was defined as "a film to a maximum of 60 minutes in length, fiction, animation or documentary". See Appendix II for the definitions of key terms used in this report.

target audience consists of the various stakeholders in the film industry – agents, talent scouts, producers, financiers and filmmakers themselves.

## 2.4 Returns to investors

Little data is published, but where figures are available they tend to show a very low rate of return on short films, typically less than 5% (see Appendix VI for an overview of the economics of short film). Given the almost certain losses facing investors, it is extremely difficult to raise private funding for the production of short films. Investment in the production of short films can, for the time being at least, only be rationalised in terms of the secondary benefits accruing to the investors, such as building a relationship with a talented individual or helping to refresh the gene pool of the industry.

## 2.5 Filmmaking

Short films are made by people ranging from amateurs and film students to seasoned professionals, with practitioners often crossing between short film production and making commercials and music videos.

There is no reliable data on the total number of short films made in the UK each year outside the NCF schemes. However, we estimate that over 2,000<sup>7</sup> short films are made in the UK each year. Of these around 150<sup>8</sup> are financed<sup>9</sup> by the public sector (principally by the UK Film Council) and around 1,800<sup>10</sup> are made in the context of

---

<sup>7</sup> Exactly what constitutes a short film in the YouTube era is open to debate. This estimate is derived from an average of the total number of shorts recognised by the Edinburgh International Film Festival's Film UK Guide over the last three years (2006/07-2008/09 = 303), together with an internal estimate of 1,794 credible 'first class' graduation films, taken from information provided by Skillset.

<sup>8</sup> Average number of strategic partner-funded films for corresponding time period (2006/07; 2007/08; 2008/09), Source: strategic partner questionnaire, see Appendix XXI for details.

<sup>9</sup> Typically, the production budgets of UK short films range from virtually nothing to £50,000. Only very occasionally do short films cost more than this.

<sup>10</sup> Source: an estimate, using the volume of short films produced by Skillset's screen academies as the basis to further estimate the number of short films made throughout tertiary education more generally. Please note that while the former can be estimated with a reasonable degree of accuracy, the latter is much more subjective. The *Film UK Guide* estimates exclude documentary and animation, so the overall total of short films could be higher; at the same time, there is almost certainly an overlap of student films in the guide which would counterbalance this. The figure of 2,000 seems likely to indicate the volume of short films made with the serious intention of progressing to a career in feature filmmaking.

higher education. Certain film schools, and in particular the National Film and Television School, were specifically referred to by interviewees as a source of high quality short films. Broadcasters occasionally commission short films; the rest, which we estimate at around 50 a year, are financed privately.

Although detailed figures do not appear to have been compiled, we believe that the annual cost of the short films produced within UK higher education runs to several millions of pounds. This would appear to make the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) the largest single investor in the production of short films in the UK.

Given the very limited private finance available for short filmmaking, the four programmes financed by the UK Film Council, examined in detail in section 3, represent the most important source of funding for films made in the UK outside of higher education<sup>11</sup>.

The National and Regional Screen Agencies were frequently quoted by interviewees as being among the most important organisations supporting short film in the UK. This is not just because of their role in delivering the UK Film Council's programmes, but also because of other activity relevant to short film production. For example, EM Media and Scottish Screen support the production of short films by targeting the provision of 'next step' shorts support (similar in their aims to Cinema Extreme). Film London manages an Arts Council England (ACE) funded initiative called Flamin, which targets artist filmmakers. The Film Agency for Wales operates a scheme to test feature directors, and Scottish Screen provides another targeted at documentary filmmakers. Several Screen Agencies also offer a small number of non-production schemes targeted at the makers of short films, primarily to support the completion and/or festival exhibition of films.

The present level of short film production in the UK is therefore largely a factor of public funding of one kind or another.

## 2.6 Value

When considering the payback that short films make to the UK's cultural life in return for this public funding, it may be useful to think of their contribution in one of two ways: their intrinsic value as a form of art or entertainment in their own right; and their instrumental value as a means of developing the skill set of the UK industry as a whole, in particular the subsequent feature films of short film 'graduates'.

---

<sup>11</sup> Further sources of public finance include local authorities, especially the London Borough Film Funds, and broadcasters (BBC and Channel 4).

While our interviewees had sympathy for the former, there was a clear consensus that the primary contribution made by short films was instrumental in nature, and they saw the provision of content for audiences as essentially a by-product of activity dedicated to the discovery, development and showcasing of prospective feature filmmaking talent (see Appendix V for further comment on the public value of short film).

A commonly held belief among interviewees was that the writers, directors and producers of short films are likely to come from a broader cross-section of the UK's population than those of feature films. Despite concerns that more could be done, there was widespread appreciation of the public value of short filmmaking in refreshing and sustaining the UK feature film industry and the UK's feature film culture (see case study *A New Voice*, Appendix 1).

### 3. The UK Film Council's support for short film

#### 3.1 The UK Film Council's objectives

Since its inception, the UK Film Council, via its New Cinema Fund (NCF), has supported the production and distribution of short films throughout the UK. The following key objectives were set for the NCF's short film strategy, in October 2000:

1. To provide a coherent, focused and UK-wide framework to support the production and dissemination of short films, replacing the existing patchwork of funding-led schemes;
2. To develop new creative and technical talent;
3. To encourage the use of digital production and distribution technologies;
4. To promote cultural diversity and tackle social exclusion.

The strategy also advocated a two-tier system for short film support. The first tier would consist of each nation and region producing digitally made short films for a budget of no more than £10,000 each, with a minimum output per region of eight short films a year. The second tier would be dedicated to short film initiatives that would meet specific strategic objectives, such as particular genres of short films, with an aim to work with partners already active in short film funding, such as the BBC and Channel 4.

Since the original objectives were set, the NCF's short film strategy has evolved. The NCF summarised those changes in 2008, when it described the overall aim for its intervention in short filmmaking as, "bringing creatively outstanding feature filmmakers into the UK film industry". In addition to re-stating the fund's original objectives for short film, new objectives covered:

- The provision of a UK-wide framework to support *career development of filmmakers*;
- Working with a range of UK-wide funders, partners and industry in the progression of emerging talent;
- An emphasis on developing *innovative* and *original* filmmaking.

Critically, the NCF states that its priority has moved from filmmaker 'discovery' to filmmaker 'development'. The strategy paper clearly illustrates this new focus:

"While the New Cinema Fund realises it cannot provide a seamless ladder of opportunity for every short filmmaker, we are working with all our partners to focus attention and resources on progressing the most talented of our emerging filmmakers towards feature films." *New Cinema Fund Strategy 2008-2010*

## **3.2 The UK Film Council's strategy**

A range of measures have been taken by the various departments of the UK Film Council to meet the key objectives of its short film strategy, including:

### **1. Provision of a coherent UK-wide framework**

- Funding has been made available by the NCF to each nation and region in the UK, on a matching basis, to support digital short filmmaking;
- Originally, the £10,000 maximum budget per film and annual output requirements were stuck to across the board, but over time each of the strategic partners in the UK's nations and regions have had more freedom to plan their initiatives to fit local circumstances;
- The NCF also appointed Lifesize Pictures, an independent company, to manage all its short film schemes in partnership with the National and Regional Screen Agencies and other strategic partners.

### **2. Development of new creative and technical talent**

Four distinct, UK-wide short film initiatives have been put in place, which target filmmakers at different stages of their careers. These provide a ladder of talent development, leading from entry-level schemes all the way up to schemes that support filmmakers who are approaching their first feature film.

### **3. Encouragement of digital production and distribution**

Two of the NCF's four short film initiatives, Digital Shorts and Digital Nation, have an explicit requirement to shoot the films on a digital format. In terms of numbers of films made each year, these two schemes represent the vast majority<sup>12</sup> of the short films financed by the NCF. However, apart from the discontinued Viral Shorts scheme, there are no ongoing NCF initiatives to encourage the digital distribution of short films, such as a dedicated online platform.

### **4. Promotion of cultural diversity and tackling social exclusion**

In addition to working with its strategic partners to reach out to under-represented communities, the NCF also funds two specialist short film initiatives targeting filmmakers from black and other ethnic minority backgrounds (Blank Slate, managed by B3 Media) and disabled filmmakers (The Magic Hour, managed by 104 Films). The UK Film Council's Diversity Unit became a co-funder of these initiatives in 2008.

---

<sup>12</sup> 93% of all NCF films since inception. Source: UK Film Council official collected statistics.

### 3.3 The New Cinema Fund's short film activities

The New Cinema Fund (NCF) allocates a little over £1 million a year to its programme of short film production schemes. A total of 817 short films have been co-financed since the inception of these initiatives in 2001/02 (Digital Shorts Plus from 2005). Of these, 684 are Digital Shorts films, 25 are Digital Shorts Plus/Digital Nation projects, 24 are Cinema Extreme films and 72 short films have been supported via the Completion Fund.<sup>13</sup> The remainder were made through one-off, specialist or discontinued schemes (see Appendix VII for a summary of short film schemes since 1997 and Appendix VIII for an overview of the four main current schemes).

Via Lifesize Pictures, the NCF is closely involved in the selection and development of each of the short films commissioned through the four principal schemes, including the approval of the final cut. The UK Film Council's Communications Department, Lifesize Pictures and the strategic partners also undertake a range of activities to promote the short films funded by the UK Film Council's short film schemes.<sup>14</sup> In total, 144 short films supported by the UK Film Council have been screened at A-list festivals and have won or been nominated for 58 high profile awards.

The NCF typically provides 50%<sup>15</sup> or less of the finance required to make each short film. The UK Film Council also funds Skillset's provision of the training that complements the short film programmes (see Appendix XVII for an overview of this training). It secures its investment by taking a share of the copyright in each film.

---

<sup>13</sup> Source: UK Film Council official collected statistics.

<sup>14</sup> For example, Cinema Extreme and the Completion Fund films have dedicated screening slots at the Edinburgh International Film Festival and Encounters, and Completion Fund short films are also screened to a London audience at Curzon Soho. Lifesize Pictures works with the UK Film Council communications department to promote these events.

<sup>15</sup> The NCF's expenditure leverages further funding to bring the schemes up to much higher levels of total expenditure, In 2008/09 this leverage has been in the order of 62%. Other funding comes from sources including the UK Film Council's diversity unit, Skillset, in kind support, and partnership funding (from broadcasters and National and Regional Screen Agencies, for example) and from the filmmakers themselves.



**Table 2:** Summary of the NCF’s production spend and number of films produced per scheme, from inception to August 2009

<b>Scheme history<sup>16</sup></b>			
<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Year started</b>	<b>NCF spend (£) from inception to August 2009<sup>17</sup></b>	<b>Number of films produced</b>
Cinema Extreme	2002	642,703	24
Completion Fund	2002	380,118	72
Digital Shorts	2002	3,821,400	684
Digital Shorts Plus / Digital Nation	2005	250,000	25
CNC	2002	93,940 <sup>18</sup>	3
Reasons to be Cheerful (Comedy Shorts)	2002	77,270 <sup>19</sup>	4
Viral Shorts	2002	27,500	5

<sup>16</sup> Source: UK Film Council official collected statistics.

<sup>17</sup> Excluding all management, distribution and marketing costs.

<sup>18</sup> Total of film grants. Source: UK Film Council official collected statistics.

<sup>19</sup> Total scheme costs. Source: UK Film Council official collected statistics.

### 3.4 The UK Film Council and its partners' roles and responsibilities

UK FILM COUNCIL				
<p><b>Diversity Team</b></p> <p>Invests in outreach and specialist short schemes; advises Digital Strategic Partners</p>	<p><b>Communications Department</b></p> <p>Funds shorts marketing events; liaises with NCF and Lifesize regarding shorts press, marketing and events, eg festivals</p>	<p><b>New Cinema Fund</b></p> <p><b>Decides strategic direction; develops new initiatives; tracks talent; funds schemes and runs management renewal processes; funds and manages Lifesize</b></p>	<p><b>Finance Department</b></p> <p>Due diligence on new partners; payments to management partners and other recipients; invoices for share of revenue on shorts</p>	<p><b>Business Affairs Department</b></p> <p>Approves scheme guidelines; due diligence; set legal terms and provides standard documents; contracts with scheme providers or with production companies per film; advice on legal complications</p>

Lifesize Pictures	
<p><b>Skillset</b></p> <p>Funds training and workshops</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advises UK Film Council on managing partner applications for schemes</li> <li>• Contracts with The Bureau and Mayavision</li> <li>• Oversees the selection development production and delivery of all short films with shorts partners</li> <li>• Editorially inputs to shorts development and production</li> <li>• Approves production elements of individual Cinema Extreme and Digital Nation films</li> <li>• Approves invoices</li> <li>• Advises partners on design of training schemes</li> <li>• Proactively sources and advises filmmakers</li> <li>• Provides targeted marketing and promotion of NCF shorts, eg at festivals</li> <li>• Checks and archives all delivery materials</li> <li>• Handles short film inquiries</li> <li>• Develops new initiatives and partnerships</li> <li>• Runs the Director's Lab at the Edinburgh International Film Festival and Virgin Media Shorts</li> <li>• Reports quarterly to UKFC and collates talent tracking information</li> </ul>

<p><b>Digital Shorts and Digital Nation Partners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise partnership funding</li> <li>• Set the strategy and guidelines for individual schemes</li> <li>• Run the application shortlisting selection development, production and delivery of schemes</li> <li>• Develop scripts and creatively oversee production</li> <li>• Report quarterly data and collate diversity data</li> <li>• Contribute to national training scheme</li> </ul>
---

<p><b>The Bureau (Cinema Extreme) and Mayavision International (The Completion Fund)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run the application shortlisting, selection, production and delivery of short films</li> <li>• Develop scripts and creatively oversee production</li> <li>• Report quarterly and collate diversity data</li> <li>• Run training for shortlisted applicants</li> </ul>
---

All of the entities in the table above deal to some degree with individual short films and the individuals who make them. To complete the picture of the UK Film Council's support for short filmmaking, the roles of two further units within the UK Film Council should be considered: its Monitoring Unit and the UK Partnerships Department. Neither is explicitly tasked with dealing with individual filmmakers or films, but both play important roles in the provision of the UK Film Council's support.

The UK Film Council's Monitoring Department gathers and analyses information about the UK Film Council's activity, in order to aid the assessment of its effectiveness and inform its future practice. It does not, however, have lead responsibility for the collection of data or the development of systems to ensure such data is comprehensive. (See section 4.2 and Appendix XII for further discussion of this topic).

In addition to the £5.9 million invested directly in short film programmes, the UK Film Council has made available significant blocks of funding for its partners to invest in short films. This has principally been via RIFE, administered by the UK Partnerships Department. The total amount of RIFE funding administered by Regional Screen Agencies to support short filmmaking is around £300,000 a year.

### **3.5 The UK Film Council's activities in respect of access and diversity**

Diversity is a policy priority for the UK Film Council. This is reflected in the objectives of all the NCF's short schemes.<sup>20</sup> The numbers of awardees from ethnic minority backgrounds and people with a disability are increasingly represented<sup>21</sup> among filmmakers supported by the Digital Shorts programme in recent years.

---

<sup>20</sup> Digital Shorts guidelines to applications by strategic partners (2008) state: *"By 2010 we hope that 50% of our applications and films will be made by female directors, 25% by minority ethnic directors and 4% by disabled directors."*

<sup>21</sup> Source: UK Film Council official collected statistics.

**Table 3: Digital Shorts applicants and awardees 2002/03-2008/09<sup>22</sup>**

	2002/ 03	2003/ 04	2004/ 05	2005/ 06	2006/ 07	2007/ 08	2008/ 09	Average all years
<b>Applicants (%)</b>								
<b>Ethnic minority</b>	21%	14%	20%	16%	23%	24%	17%	21%
<b>Female</b>	42%	33%	37%	27%	34%	33%	32%	33%
<b>Disabled</b>	1%	2%	2%	3%	7%	10%	4%	6%
<b>Awardees (%)</b>								
<b>Ethnic minority</b>	8%	11%	17%	17%	8%	18%	31%	15%
<b>Female</b>	29%	25%	35%	30%	28%	32%	39%	32%
<b>Disabled</b>	0%	0%	1%	4%	3%	4%	8%	3%

The Completion Fund and Cinema Extreme<sup>1</sup> monitored applicants and awardees in different ways,<sup>23</sup> so it is only possible to compare recent awardees.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> This table shows the change in the proportion of minority applicants and awardees for the Digital Shorts scheme from the UK Film Council's inception; it includes Blank Slate but not The Magic Hour data. Figures reflect activity up to September 2009.

<sup>23</sup> The Completion Fund only collected data on the diversity of its applicants, and not its awardees, for the period from 2003/04 to 2006/07. Applicant trends show female applicants rising from 18% to 36%, ethnic minority applicants rising from 13% to 22% and disabled applicants rising from 3% to 4% over this period. This is similar to the application trend for Digital Shorts for the same period. For the year 2008/09, both applicant and awardee data have been collected. Conversely, Cinema Extreme has only collected data on the diversity of its awardees, and not its applicants, over the period 2002/03 to 2007/08. During this time, female awardees have fallen from 50% to 33%; and ethnic minority awardees stood at 0% at the beginning and the end of the period, reaching a high of 18% in 2006/07. Over the entire period, ethnic minority representation averaged 7%. No awards have been made to disabled filmmakers.

<sup>24</sup> Source: UK Film Council official collected statistics. Digital Shorts figures exclude minority schemes; no separate UK Film Council diversity key performance indicators were available for the Digital Shorts Plus/Digital Nation scheme, though some Digital Nation films appeared to be recorded in the same database so we can assume that the Digital Shorts key performance indicators are the best available estimates for both schemes.

**Table 4: Recent applicants and awardees from minorities across schemes, 2008/09<sup>25</sup>**

<b>2008/09 Applicants (%)</b>	<b>Completion Fund</b>	<b>Cinema Extreme</b>	<b>Digital Shorts (excl. special schemes)</b>
<b>Ethnic minority</b>	28%	17%	17%
<b>Female</b>	40%	31%	32%
<b>Disabled</b>	5%	1%	3%
<b>2008/09 Awardees (%)</b>			
<b>Ethnic minority</b>	10%	0%	15%
<b>Female</b>	30%	50%	44%
<b>Disabled</b>	0%	0%	7%

The UK Film Council's Diversity Unit recognises that in schemes tasked with discovering and advancing talent, quotas and targets cannot be arbitrarily imposed: "We need to make access and diversity a way of doing things, rather than a set of outcomes."

Using its grant in aid budgets, the Diversity Unit has recently partnered with NCF Lottery funds for short film production. These joint funds have been directed towards two positive action programmes: Blank Slate<sup>26</sup> run by B3 Media, which supports black and ethnic minority filmmakers; and The Magic Hour<sup>27</sup> run by 104 Films, which supports disabled filmmakers. The grant in aid funding from the Diversity Unit allows B3 Media and 104 Films to provide specific outreach and access activities that would be difficult to fund through NCF Lottery funds alone. Both schemes are conceived as temporary, fast-track initiatives to encourage ambition, engagement and the development of skills and knowledge among target groups, anticipating a point at which such special measures will no longer be needed and the mainstreaming of diversity will be effective. The UK Film Council recognises that achieving that aim will be difficult, especially in a way that does not exclude disabled filmmakers.

<sup>25</sup> Figures reflect activity up to September 2009.

<sup>26</sup> B3 Media describes the primary objective of Blank Slate as the opportunity to make digital shorts and develop talent with a twist - "The twist is the ethnic remit". B3 aims to support filmmakers to improve storytelling skills, and develop a knowledge of the film industry and how it works. Film production budgets range from £4,000-£17,000; the lower end of the spectrum enables B3 to work with and develop very inexperienced filmmakers "with little or no formal training, but who show a spark of talent", without the pressure and risk that higher budgets would bring.

<sup>27</sup> The Magic Hour scheme represents "a tectonic shift in the presence of disabled people in UK film". Its key aim is to put more disabled people in front of and behind the camera. In addition, it aims to provide training for the filmmakers and "best practice examples" of the value working with disabled filmmakers, aimed at the industry; an evaluation report of The Magic Hour scheme is intended to introduce best practice models to the national and regional screen agencies, for example. Working with disabled filmmakers involves specific access costs, such as additional carers or specially adapted vehicles for disabled filmmakers. All films are made on a budget of around £8,000. The filmmakers and producers consulted agreed this was a very demanding figure.

## 4. Evaluation of the UK Film Council's activity

### 4.1 Objectives

Many stakeholders shared the view that there is a lack of clarity over the current objectives and/or priorities for the UK Film Council's short film activities. This lack of clarity seems to apply to the UK Film Council's various internal departments and teams as well as its strategic partners and other stakeholders consulted. The following quotes from interviewees illustrate this point.

"We feel we have delivered against what we understood to be the objectives. We don't have many formal targets, but informal benchmarks have developed and been communicated."

*Strategic partner*

"The actual objectives for schemes are unclear. Are they calling cards? To build a network in a particular region? Provide access? Build diversity? There needs to be greater clarity of objective."

*Industry interviewee*

Given the perceived lack of clarity of objectives, Northern Alliance asked the strategic partners to rank the objectives of their short film schemes from 1-9, with 1 as the highest priority. The results are summarised below (see Appendix IV for more detail on why short films are made).

**Table 5: Strategic partners' priorities regarding the role of short films**

Rank	Strategic partners' priorities <sup>28</sup>
1	Developing exceptional talent
2	Discovering new talent
3	Helping key talent move to feature films
4	Producing critically acclaimed short films
5	Encouraging creative experimentation
6	Encouraging diversity in the film industry
7	Producing short films for a wide public audience
8	Encouraging use of digital and new technologies
9	Training all crew

In addition, there was a broadly held view among interviewees that the UK Film Council is focusing on the wrong aspects of projects: both in concentrating on individual films rather than underlying talent, and in focusing on the volume of films produced, rather than the effectiveness of the schemes in nurturing talent.

As part of this review, we compared the UK Film Council's provision to that of some international peers (see Appendix XI). In larger mature and developed economies similar to the UK, a tiered pattern of support at national, regional and local level is not unusual. As well as a more devolved approach at lower levels, the resources invested in individual short films produced at the top of the range was typically higher than in the UK. Some of these countries, most notably New Zealand, also appear to have prosecuted a strategy vigorously targeted at achieving international recognition via representation at leading film festivals and major awards ceremonies. There appears to be significantly higher commitment, both in terms of finance and human resources, to marketing the makers of their best short films to the international industry and making explicit commitments to their transition to feature filmmaking.

There is a need to refresh and re-state the UK Film Council's aims, objectives and targets so that its programmes remain relevant and competitive on a global stage.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Source: strategic partners questionnaire for this report, completed by a sample of 25 strategic partners in May 2009.

<sup>29</sup> The principal conclusions from each section of this report (underlined) are carried forward into section 5, where they are discussed further and form the basis of recommendations.

## 4.2 Data collection systems

Our survey revealed that talent development is perceived as the first priority of the strategic partners when considering the relative importance of objectives of short filmmaking. Despite this, there is currently no system in place to collect quantitative data measuring talent development and career progression across the UK Film Council's short film initiatives. Some *ad hoc* qualitative tracking has been made, such as recording screenings and awards, but typically the data has been organised around the short films that are most successful, rather than the talent that makes short films. The tracking has not been comprehensive, systematic or long-term.

There is currently no single, centralised database that would hold all the relevant quantitative and qualitative data that is collected at one stage or another on the short films made with financing from the UK Film Council. Instead, data is stored in separate documents and databases in separate departments of the UK Film Council, Lifesize Pictures and the strategic partners.

The consensus of opinion surveyed is that the value of short film is largely instrumental not intrinsic; that the primary goal of short film production is the progression of talent from making short films to making feature films. As such, its success should be measured by what it leads to rather than the extent of activity itself, yet there appears to be no methodical monitoring of this particular outcome:

"We are not contractually obliged [to the UK Film Council] to track what happens to films and filmmakers after they are screened."

*Sally Thomas, Mayavision International*

There also appears to have been no methodical attempt, either in forming or carrying out the UK Film Council's short film strategy, to place its support for short film in the context of feature films by, for example, analysing where successful new directors actually originate from. The UK Film Council's investment in short films appears to have been largely predicated on intuition, rather than on proof that this is the best way to develop and launch feature film talent.<sup>30</sup>

While we do not want to imply that experience and judgement is in any way a poor substitute for accurate data, we believe that the UK Film Council's activity should be informed by both.

---

<sup>30</sup> After seeing a draft of this report, the NCF provided information on the number of feature films made by directors of short films supported by UK Film Council programmes. Out of all directors supported by each programme: Cinema Extreme – seven features or 29%; Completion Fund – six features or 8%; Digital Shorts Plus/Digital Nation – two features or 8%; Digital Shorts – 16 features or 2%. However, this does not indicate how successful those feature films were, or how other routes into feature filmmaking compare with short filmmaking in terms of effectiveness.



There is a need to ground all future support for short film on much firmer evidence, especially with regard to the impact of the activity that the UK Film Council supports.

This fragmented data collection structure, together with insufficient measurable targets on the *impact* of activity, makes it very difficult to perform quantitative analysis of the effectiveness of the UK Film Council’s short film activities. Because of this, we had some difficulty in executing this review, and the remainder of this section and the recommendations that follow in section 5 should be read in that context.

### 4.3 Talent discovery and development

“We spend a huge amount of time watching short films, and the quality difference between self-made and publicly funded shorts is huge, even if the [public] schemes do not always get it right.”

*Mia Bays, Producer and Creative Executive, Film London’s Microwave*<sup>31</sup>

Filmmakers of distinction, such as Andrea Arnold and Duane Hopkins, have emerged through the NCF’s short film schemes, and the following tables summarise how the success of filmmakers and their films is evidenced by the receipt of awards and festival selections. They are based on records kept by the NCF, Lifesize Pictures and the UK Film Council’s strategic partners.

**Table 6:** Festival screenings and prizes, from inception to August 2009<sup>32</sup>

Scheme	Number of films produced	High profile awards won / nominations	Per film	A-list festival selections	Per film
Cinema Extreme	24	11	0.46	26	1.08
Completion Fund	72	8	0.11	18	0.25
Digital Shorts	684	31	0.05	86	0.12
Digital Shorts Plus / Digital Nation	25	8	0.32	14	0.56

<sup>31</sup> The Microwave scheme from Film London and the BBC challenges filmmakers to shoot a feature film for no more than £100,000 with cash and in-kind support. It is open to filmmakers working in documentary, fiction, animation and to artists working with the moving image.

<sup>32</sup> Source: UK Film Council.

Arguably, if the intention is to bring the best talent to the attention of what is very much an international film industry, success in the leading non-UK festivals and awards programmes is a key performance indicator. This would seem to be particularly appropriate for the programmes designed to launch the careers of new feature film directors where, even for financiers, producers, distributors and agents based in the UK, certain international awards have currency (see Appendix XVIII for further analysis of the role of film festivals).

**Table 7:** International festival screenings and prizes, from inception to August 2009<sup>33</sup>

Scheme	Number of films produced	High profile awards won / nominations	Per film	A-list festival selections	Per film
Cinema Extreme	24	5	0.21	4	0.17
Digital Shorts Plus/ Digital Nation	25	2	0.08	6	0.24

The level of success also needs to be compared against the cost of securing it.

---

<sup>33</sup> Source: UK Film Council. Please note that these figures, and those included in similar tables above and below, are simply comparing the *totals* of films and selections/awards – one film can be selected for many festivals and receive several awards, and that will be included in the total and averaged across all films. Conversely, a film may not win any awards but be allocated its average share of the awards won by other films.

**Table 8: Success and its cost, from inception to August 2009**

Scheme	Number of films produced	Total cost to NCF <sup>34</sup> (£)	UK Film Council recorded outputs		Cost of success (£)	
			Selected for A-list festivals for shorts	High profile awards and nominations	Cost per screening at A-list festivals for shorts	Cost per award/nomination
Cinema Extreme	24	966,574	26	11	37,176	87,870
Completion Fund	72	675,240	18	8	37,513	84,405
Digital Shorts	684	4,129,571	86	31	48,018	133,212
Digital Shorts Plus / Digital Nation	25	448,871	14	8	32,062	56,109

Again, it would seem appropriate to highlight the cost of achieving international recognition for the 'higher level' programmes.

<sup>34</sup> Where possible, scheme-specific management, marketing and distribution costs (to the NCF) have been added, including the attribution of the total costs of the management company for the short film schemes (ie Lifesize Pictures). The latter has simply been split in four and added to each scheme - an admittedly crude allocation, but there does not appear to be any reliable basis for allocating the costs of Lifesize to the activity it manages on behalf of the UK Film Council.

**Table 9:** International success and its cost, from inception to August 2009

Scheme	Number of films produced	Total cost to NCF <sup>35</sup> (£)	UK Film Council recorded outputs <sup>36</sup>		Cost of success (£)	
			Selected for A-list festivals for shorts	High profile awards and nominations	Cost per screening at A-list festivals for shorts	Cost per high profile award or nomination
Cinema Extreme	24	966,574	4	5	241,644	119,315
Digital Shorts Plus / Digital Nation	25	448,871	6	2	74,812	224,436

On the basis of this (admittedly crude) analysis, while Cinema Extreme has been effective at producing short films that garner attention and praise, this appears to be largely attributable to a small number of its earlier productions.

The Completion Fund appears to be less effective; the proportion of films that achieve recognition appears especially low given the nature of the fund's intervention. Its engagement, which comes after principal photography, should allow it to achieve the highest percentage of awards, nominations and screenings. It also appears to be relatively inefficient; again the nature of its intervention should in theory allow it to direct resources to where the highest payback is likely. In practice, it is only 22% more cost effective<sup>37</sup> at securing high profile screenings than the higher risk intervention of the Digital Shorts programme which funds the entire filmmaking process.

Given its role, it is perhaps most unfair to measure the Digital Shorts programme in this way. However, after discounting the inevitably higher level of redundancy associated with providing a programme to include new or recent filmmakers, Digital

<sup>35</sup> See footnote 34 above.

<sup>36</sup> Source: UK Film Council official collected statistics.

<sup>37</sup> Cost per screening for Completion Fund films, as calculated above, divided by the equivalent for Digital Shorts.

Shorts appears relatively efficient, in terms of securing screenings for the films it helps produce. It is perhaps also unfair to consider the performance of the Digital Shorts programme alone, as it is intended to feed into the Digital Shorts Plus/Digital Nation programme.

The Digital Shorts Plus/Digital Nation programme appears to have been relatively effective and efficient from its first incarnation, especially in terms of securing international recognition for its films at A-list festivals outside the UK.

Interviewees regarded festivals as the most important platforms for showcasing short films, and therefore screenings and awards represent key measures of success. Other platforms are not necessarily as highly regarded and are more complicated to analyse, even where data are available. This is especially the case for short film online; however, the following table gives an indication of success in these other platforms (for further details of platforms and audiences for short film, see Appendix XIII).

**Table 10: Ancillary distribution 2006-09<sup>38</sup>**

Scheme	Number of films produced	Percentage of films with:				Total number of online views
		Distribution deal (%)	Broadcast <sup>39</sup> deal(%)	DVD label (%)	Online availability (%)	
Cinema Extreme	14	71%	n/a	n/c <sup>40</sup>	n/c	n/c
Completion Fund	25	32%	0%	0%	12%	n/c
Digital Shorts (per film)	281 <sup>41</sup>	15%	12%	7%	23%	130,125 (463)
Digital Shorts Plus / Digital Nation	18	6%	n/a	6%	22%	n/c

However, the consensus of opinion is that the acid test for short films is the subsequent progression of talent, especially directors, into feature filmmaking.

“A good measure of success of short film schemes is to look at how many people go on to make features, and good features; ie demonstrating that progression on the ladder from shorts to features...”

*Chris Collins and Lizzie Francke, Development Fund, UK Film Council*

<sup>38</sup> This table shows the various deals achieved and/or platforms utilised by UK Film Council supported short films from 2006 to 2009, as recorded by the UK Film Council’s strategic partners. Neither Cinema Extreme nor the Completion Fund track online views and, though almost all Digital Nation strategic partners reported that they did not collect this information either, one respondent reported their results as zero. Figures reflect activity up until May 2009.

<sup>39</sup> Both Cinema Extreme and Digital Nation schemes are broadcaster supported.

<sup>40</sup> n/c = not collected.

<sup>41</sup> Scottish shorts results have been removed from the sample, as the provision of data was not adequate for reliable results.

As noted in section 4.2 above, the data collection methodologies adopted often do not lend themselves to accurate measurement of the impact of activity. In our survey, all of the strategic partners cited career development as a measure of success for their short film activities. Despite this, four of the respondents do not collect career-tracking data at all, and half of all respondents did not track all of the categories which they stated – as part of the questionnaire - were key career tracking data.

However, according to information supplied by the NCF after the completion of the field work undertaken for this report, 63% of NCF backed feature directors have made short films and, measured over the life of the programmes, almost one third of Cinema Extreme directors and 8% of Completion Fund and Digital Plus/Nation directors have gone on to make features.

Strategic partners stressed that a key issue in monitoring talent is to do so over a sufficiently long time period (see case study, *Shane Meadows and short film*, Appendix 1). It can take several years for a filmmaker to progress from his/her first engagement with the funding system to achieving visibility as a features director. Frequently, by the time such breakthroughs have occurred, this initial engagement has been forgotten.<sup>42</sup>

The data in Table 11 should therefore be viewed in that context; there are certainly exceptionally talented filmmakers who have made short films in the period analysed who have not yet made a feature film, but will go on to do so in the future.

---

<sup>42</sup> For example, Anthony Minghella's short film award from the now-closed Southern Arts Board film and video production fund. Similarly, Saul Dibb had early support from First Take, a joint initiative by Eastern Arts Board and Anglia TV, in the mid-1990s, almost ten years before his first feature *Bullet Boy* (2004). Andrea Arnold was supported by First Take at around the same time, well before her breakthrough short film, *Wasp* was supported by Cinema Extreme in 2003.

**Table 11: Filmmaker career progression 2006-09<sup>43</sup>**

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Percentage of filmmakers making further shorts (%)</b>	<b>Percentage of filmmakers making a feature (%)</b>	<b>Estimated number of filmmakers<sup>44</sup></b>	<b>Total cost to NCF (£)</b>	<b>Cost per feature filmmaker (£)</b>
<b>Cinema Extreme</b>	n/c	4%	2	249,991	124,996
<b>Completion Fund</b>	9%	1%	1	183,823	183,823
<b>Digital Shorts</b>	23%	2%	16	1,634,400	102,150
<b>Digital Shorts Plus / Digital Nation</b>	28%	11%	4	180,000	45,000

Although it would be much more informative to perform the above analysis over a longer period of time, the fact that we can only analyse recent data at least means that errors from double counting<sup>45</sup> are more likely to be limited. The timeframe also coincides with the prosecution of the New Cinema Fund's revised strategy.

While the analysis above is constrained by the information available, it appears that the Digital Shorts Plus/Digital Nation scheme is not only effective but also, relative to the other schemes, cost-efficient.

<sup>43</sup> This table shows the career development of filmmakers (writers, directors, producers) per scheme, from 2006 to 2009, as recorded by the UK Film Council's strategic partners. Source: strategic partners questionnaire. Please note, these figures include short films that have been funded but not yet completed (particularly in the most recent year). Figures reflect activity up until May 2009.

<sup>44</sup> Estimated by multiplying the number of films by three (to allow for one writer, director and producer) and then again by the percentage given. It has not been possible to identify the actual number of writers, directors and producers who have progressed to make feature films nor to examine the trend of progression over a longer (and thereby arguably more relevant) timeframe.

<sup>45</sup> For example, double counting a Digital Shorts filmmaker who subsequently makes a Digital Shorts Plus film, and then a Cinema Extreme film.



Given that Cinema Extreme positions itself as being a programme for filmmakers only one short away from a feature, its recent performance appears disappointing. However, as noted above, measuring it over a longer timeframe results in a higher percentage of its filmmakers - 29% - going on to make feature films.

The Completion Fund arguably should also be in a position to advance more of the filmmakers it supports into further filmmaking; filmmakers that attract the support of the fund do so later in the production cycle and so therefore should be closer to preparing a subsequent film. The fund should also be in a better position to identify filmmaking potential, given that its intervention is later in the production cycle. Its performance therefore appears disappointing compared to the other schemes.

Although the information available is limited, there is both evidence of success as well as ineffectiveness and inefficiency among the short film programmes supported by the UK Film Council.

#### **4.4 Access and diversity**

The NCF's approach appears to have been effective in creating a UK-wide network of access points for entry-level filmmakers, via the Digital Shorts initiative. Certainly there is a more consistent pattern of access to short film opportunities via Digital Shorts than there had been before.<sup>46</sup>

The degree of autonomy granted to National and Regional Screen Agencies has allowed each one to develop additional filmmaker support – bursaries, business development assistance and so on – in attempts to support progression from shorts to features and from student/voluntary engagement with film into permanent employment in the industry.

Despite this, short film activity supported by the UK Film Council fails to meet its diversity targets, with the participation of disabled people in short filmmaking a particular area of concern. The involvement of women, especially as directors, also appears to be lower than it should be.

---

<sup>46</sup>

As revealed in *Lowdown, the Low Budget Funding Guide 1999/2000*, BFI.

**Table 12: Minority groups as a percentage of each scheme's total, 2006-09<sup>47</sup>**

Scheme <sup>48</sup>	Minority group as a percentage of each scheme's total								
	Writers (%)			Producers (%)			Directors (%)		
	Females	BME <sup>49</sup>	Disabled	Females	BME	Disabled	Females	BME	Disabled
<b>Cinema Extreme</b>	33%	5%	0%	53%	5%	0%	5%	13%	0%
<b>Completion Fund</b>	18%	0%	0%	43%	7%	0%	19%	15%	0%
<b>Digital Shorts</b>	21%	2%	1%	40%	7%	0%	22%	6%	2%
<b>Digital Shorts Plus / Digital Nation</b>	50%	20%	0%	23%	8%	0%	23%	23%	0%

A larger group of films should be more able to reflect the composition of the society in which they are made; in this context, the involvement of minorities in Digital Shorts programmes appears disappointingly low.

Given that the programme is tasked with breaking new feature filmmaking talent and that it operates at the entry level to professional filmmaking, it might be expected that it would give people from all sections of society a chance to demonstrate whether they have what it takes to become a filmmaking practitioner.

<sup>47</sup> Monitored minority groups as a proportion of the total number of filmmakers (writers, directors, producers) per scheme over the last three years, as recorded by the UK Film Council's strategic partners. Figures reflect activity up until May 2009.

<sup>48</sup> Source: strategic partners questionnaire, except for Cinema Extreme figures where source is UK Film Council official collected statistics.

<sup>49</sup> Black and minority ethnic (BME).

Figures for the Digital Shorts programme in the table above exclude the targeted interventions, Blank Slate and the more recently introduced The Magic Hour, which support diversity within entry-level short films. However, it should be noted that targeted diversity schemes have been promoted from time to time since at least 1996,<sup>50</sup> and typically had similar, temporary objectives to these recent schemes. The fact that such catch-up schemes are still necessary may reflect either the scale of the challenge and/or the ineffectiveness and inconsistency of previous initiatives.

“I haven’t noticed a particular impact from the public intervention to date – in terms of diversity - as film is still very much a white man’s domain. Oddly, UK theatre seems much more diverse: how and why has that been achieved?”

Alexandra Stone, Creative and Management Productions (CMP)

Certainly, the mainstream schemes have largely been cost-inefficient at involving minority filmmakers.

**Table 13: Scheme cost per minority filmmaker, 2006-09<sup>51</sup>**

	Blank Slate	Magic Hour	Digital Shorts (Other) <sup>52</sup>	Digital Shorts Plus / Digital Nation	Completion Fund	Cinema Extreme
<b>£ per minority filmmaker<sup>53</sup></b>	3,563	6,467	6,234	10,000	12,222	25,000
<b>£ per female director</b>	57,000	97,000	25,263	n/a <sup>54</sup>	55,000	200,000
<b>£ per black &amp; minority ethnic director</b>	9,500	n/a	96,000	30,000	n/a	200,000
<b>£ per disabled director</b>	57,000	19,400	480,000	n/a	n/a	n/a

<sup>50</sup> *The Low Budget Funding Guide* (1996) lists two strands targeting diversity: Black Tracks and the Disability Arts Video Project (both Arts Council England).

<sup>51</sup> Cost (NCF + diversity) divided by filmmaker statistics as noted in Table 12 above. Figures reflect activity up to May 2009.

<sup>52</sup> ie the Digital Shorts programme excluding Blank Slate and The Magic Hour

<sup>53</sup> Because it has not been possible to identify any double counting within the number of minority directors, the figure given for the main Digital Shorts programme is the minimum possible figure.

<sup>54</sup> n/a = not applicable; in this instance, there were no female directors and hence no relative cost.

Filmmakers and producers involved in the positive action schemes, Blank Slate and The Magic Hour, suggested that broader definitions of talent would be helpful in addressing access and diversity issues. Traditionally, shorts are seen as a calling card mainly for directors. This might miss an opportunity to identify talent across the industry spectrum. However, given the consensus of opinion that advancing the careers of directors is the principal function of short films, this might also divert attention from the key performance indicator - new feature directors from minorities. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to determine this information and, therefore, reveal the real legacy of both mainstream and targeted schemes.

What we are left with is the assurance that the specialist schemes are, unsurprisingly, efficient at engaging the minorities they target in short filmmaking activity (though appear no more effective at engaging women directors than the mainstream schemes). This could, however, be a false friend, mistaking activity (making short films) for impact (new feature filmmaking talent).

There seems little doubt that people who participate in the targeted schemes appreciate them. In addition to receiving funding to make short films, filmmakers consulted in a focus group about access and diversity issues cited networking as one of the most powerful additional benefits of public support; as one disabled filmmaker put it, "Getting into the secret world is the hardest thing. No-one would think to invite me in, but once I'm there it [my disability] is not an issue."

Stakeholders consulted spoke positively about Blank Slate and The Magic Hour, but tended to agree that, as one interviewee stated, their "contribution to diversity in the industry is work in progress".

While there appears to be real short-term value in introducing targeted remedial schemes to develop talent from specific, under-represented groups, this strategy carries with it a danger that the mainstream believes that diversity issues are being dealt with somewhere else.

"Digital Shorts is not a diversity scheme (ie selecting primarily for diversity). Diversity schemes are already in place – eg B3 – and partners already work with these."  
*Strategic partner*

The second equal most popular measure of success identified in our survey of strategic partners was diversity, with 95.5% approval. However, only eight out of 22 respondents were able to cross-reference this with career development data. This indicates that even though the strategic partners appear to regard diversity targets as a key measure of success, they do not appear to systematically monitor whether the people representing these figures go on to develop their filmmaker careers. In practice, 'diversity' as strategic partners view it appears to be an activity, rather than an outcome. Sometimes it is disregarded entirely.

“We have no brief to work towards specified quotas of black, female or disabled filmmakers’ films, and in that sense we are not directly encouraging diversity – our selection is based on the quality of the film, not who has made it or what the subject matter is.”  
*Strategic partner*<sup>55</sup>

If the value of short film is instrumental, and there is no credible method for tracking the progression of minority filmmakers from short filmmaking into feature filmmaking, there is a risk that the work of the UK Film Council is predicated too much on instinct and not enough on evidence. There is also the risk that it does not remain focused on securing primary objectives such as encouraging more diversity among new feature film directors

**The UK Film Council appears to be at risk of repeating errors made by its predecessors in focusing on activity as opposed to impact, and thereby allowing mainstream production to remain exclusive of minorities.**

Further analysis regarding access and diversity is included in Appendix XV.

## **4.5 The management of programmes: partners and projects**

### **4.5.1. Lifesize Pictures**

The role currently delegated to Lifesize Pictures was originally undertaken by the UK Film Council in house. The strategic partners feel that Lifesize Pictures adds value by providing a feedback and coordinating function, and by contributing towards a level playing field in the UK’s short film sector. There is particular appreciation of its contribution of expertise to smaller strategic partners which may not have a strong track record in all aspects of production and distribution. However, there appears to be a strong sentiment amongst the strategic partners that the involvement of Lifesize Pictures does not add value to the short film scheme management outside these areas.

Lifesize believes that it is important to have a regional avenue into filmmaking, and that filmmaking should develop from the grass-roots upwards rather than UK Film Council downwards. It thinks that each region should have a hub where filmmaking takes off, but feels that the National and Regional Screen Agencies can be bureaucratic and often have the mentality of one size fits all. Lifesize Pictures sees itself as fighting the NCF corner in terms of taste and talent development, whereas strategic partners may give preference to regional considerations.

---

<sup>55</sup> Not involved in the Digital Shorts programme.

Lifesize holds a discussion each year with filmmakers about professional conduct, including copyright, contracts and the working time directive, but there is a duality in practice with ostensible compliance disguising breaches of policy. Lifesize feels the UK Film Council is not involved enough to appreciate this fully.

Lifesize says it focuses on cherry-picking talent that is suitable for the international marketplace, whereas strategic partners promote at a local or national level, and tend to promote every film they fund. It also feels that the National and Regional Screen Agencies can also be dogmatic about targets and that some poor films are commissioned simply to help meet targets. It believes that Digital Nation plays an important role in moving on from this context, with bigger budgets and a more flexible approach. Lifesize concedes that data management has not been efficient in the past; it would like to stop having to report back on the money made on the sale of films and would like more flexibility in the way films are contracted.

Via Lifesize Pictures, the NCF is closely involved in the selection and development of every short film commissioned through the four schemes including the approval of the final cut (see Appendix IX for detail on the individual schemes' processes). Conversely, although both the UK Film Council and Lifesize Pictures actively promote many short films, in the majority of cases (especially at the Digital Shorts level) the responsibility for actually marketing the films is left with the filmmakers themselves. This may reflect the economic reality that there is no viable business model for short film distribution. Certainly the returns from Digital Shorts and Digital Shorts Plus/Digital Nation support this conclusion.

## 4.5.2. Revenues

Table 14: Scheme revenues 2006-09<sup>56</sup>

Scheme	Number of films produced	Total expenditure on film production <sup>58</sup>	Total revenue (£) <sup>57</sup>				
			Total	Distribution	Broadcast	DVD	Online
Digital Shorts	281	2,329,221	40,845	3,938	34,682	960	1,265
As a % of cost			1.8%	0.2%	1.5%	0.0%	0.1%
Digital Shorts Plus / Digital Nation	18	363,000	5,766	2,200	3,566	n/c	n/c
As a % of cost			1.6%	0.6%	1.0%		

It is clearly only worth monitoring and collecting revenues for a few films, yet all filmmakers appear obliged to account for their projects in the same way regardless of the extent of their success or scale (for further information on shorts recoupment see Appendix XVI).

<sup>56</sup> This table shows total revenues recorded by the UK Film Council's strategic partners over the last three years across various distribution platforms, for Digital Shorts and Digital Nation films (Cinema Extreme and Completion Fund do not record this information). A sample of the returns from all short films made in the UK, with and without the support of the UK Film Council, is provided for comparison.

<sup>57</sup> Information on DVD revenues and, more so, online revenues appears to be only haphazardly collected by strategic partners. On the basis of the scant information available it appears that, on average, a short film made either with or without the support of the UK Film Council does not generate any revenue of any significance from online distribution.

<sup>58</sup> Includes all NCF, partner, and other funding, as recorded by the strategic partners.

### 4.5.3. Budgets

Stakeholders expressed concerns about a similar, blanket approach to budget levels. However, it should be noted that the NCF no longer imposes a budget of £10,000; instead, it is at the discretion of individual strategic partners to determine appropriate budgets for the short films they fund, as long as they produce a minimum of four Digital Shorts films each year. However, many of the stakeholders feel that the current budget levels, especially for Digital Shorts, are still too low and too rigid.

“While understanding the need to set limits and have rules around public funds, ultimately the film itself determines the budget.”

*Sean Gascoine, United Agents*

There is consensus among the stakeholders that all short films made with public money, from Digital Shorts level upwards, should pay their crew and cast at least the national minimum wage. However, many stakeholders question whether it is actually possible to adhere to national minimum wage legislation at the budget levels that Digital Shorts are made on.

Despite the establishment of Digital Shorts Plus/Digital Nation, the perception remains that there is insufficient flexibility within the UK Film Council’s programmes; that there are not enough opportunities for filmmakers to progress to making mid or higher-budget short films, and to make enough of them, before taking the leap to feature filmmaking. Low budgets are perceived to constrain the kinds of stories that can be told, thus contributing to perceived homogenisation of short films financed by public sector initiatives.

“Working with bigger budgets offers a completely different learning experience and a step up for teams than working within the constraints of £10,000 budgets; it offers more scope to make the shorts look cinematic. Perhaps a way forward would be to have the regional funds collaborate more, supporting fewer filmmakers with more concentrated efforts and bigger budgets.”

*Mia Bays, Producer and Creative Executive, Film London’s Microwave*

(See also the case study on *Six Shooter*, Appendix 1)

The only scheme with a clear remit to produce films at higher budget levels is Cinema Extreme programme. Some interviewees saw it as a valuable and provocative showcase for distinct voices:

“What comes out (of the short film schemes), including the alliances between filmmakers, are quite good – in particular the Cinema Extreme films.”

*Alexandra Stone, CMP*



Others were more critical, openly questioning the value of the programme on three principal grounds: the quality of the films produced, the funds expended on making the films and the fact that it stands alone at the apex of the talent development pyramid. This appears to be a significant concern: if the key role of short films is to nurture filmmakers to the point at which they can step into the feature film industry, is a single bridgehead at that critical point appropriate?

While the challenge of managing so much activity across the UK should not be understated, there appear to be areas where control is exercised too tightly or there is insufficient management by exception, and other areas where leadership is absent. There appears to be a need to consider the efficiency and effectiveness of employing an intermediary company to manage all of the UK Film Council's short film activity and re-assess whether that activity is optimally balanced.

#### 4.6 The roles of higher education and Skillset

"Many people do not have the privilege of going to film school, so short films offer an opportunity to learn on the job, and [to learn] from making mistakes you cannot afford to make while working on feature films."

*Mia Bays, Producer and Creative Executive, Film London's Microwave*

If the central purpose of short filmmaking is to develop talent, Skillset ought to play a central role. Skillset employs a talent scout to identify the best filmmaking talent emerging from tertiary education (especially undergraduate programmes) and signpost them towards the best forum for their continuing development, in particular the screen academies.

"Overall, we feel the short filmmaking in the academies is strong, though the education system is too much about 'bums on seats'. My instinct is that this is also the case about the shorts schemes themselves; too much money spread across too many people, a scattergun approach – though the timeframe over which you need to measure progress is significant."

*John Lee, Skillset Monitoring and Evaluation Co-ordinator*

In general, there seems little co-ordination of NCF activity with the training that Skillset supports<sup>59</sup> and that the higher education funding councils make a major contribution to.

---

<sup>59</sup> Skillset's support has made possible initiatives such as the London College of Communications 35mm project, which uses the production of a short film to teach students about high-level set crafts. The programme is expensive, costing several hundred thousand pounds each year, and although it is primarily intended to advance set crafts rather than showcase creative talent, it seems as though a specific opportunity to develop synergies with the other programmes may have been missed.

There was a very high level of consensus that talent development through short filmmaking requires subtlety and sophistication in approach. At its most advanced, short filmmaking is seen as allowing filmmakers to perfect their art through performance, while for relative novices more formal support is required and the opportunity to train and be trained is as important - or even more important - than the final product.

As noted in section 3, Skillset supports dedicated training schemes which run alongside the Digital Shorts and Cinema Extreme programmes: in both instances, Skillset categorises this support as 'training linked to production'. Although this is clearly not an illogical categorisation, it is notable that Skillset does not consider its support for either Cinema Extreme or (in particular) Digital Shorts as part of its commitment to new entrants – which includes training strands for writers, directors and producers (as well as craft and technical grades). It appears that there is an opportunity for greater efficiency and effectiveness through a more co-ordinated approach.

"It is difficult to assess properly without adequate information, but I feel we should be identifying talent at First Light and supporting it through to feature filmmaking."  
*Paul Green, talent scout, Skillset*

Probably the most important objective and rationale for higher education institutions is the development of skills, technical competence and other broadly educative goals, rather than the development of feature filmmaking talent. However, it is hard not get the impression that an opportunity is being missed, especially given the amount of money the funding councils devote to the production of short films, and the resources and expertise that Skillset engages to develop new entrants training, unrelated to the NCF's short film activity.

"We need a more joined-up strategy, where there is a smooth transition from training to production. At the moment, they don't marry up."  
*Neil Peplow, Head of Film, Skillset*

Evaluation of individual training programmes specifically related to the UK Film Council's short film schemes was generally positive,<sup>60</sup> but this was contradicted by the frustration expressed by some attendees of the focus groups, especially the more experienced filmmakers who felt the support made available to them was not geared up to their stage of development.

There is an opportunity for increased coordination of the work of Skillset and the NCF, and for better leverage of the considerable sums invested in short filmmaking via higher education.

---

<sup>60</sup> See Appendix XVII.

#### **4.7 Support for showcasing films at festivals**

The UK Film Council has no systematic support in place for films which are accepted into A-list festivals. The British Council is able to contribute towards print costs, but many leading festivals and awards programmes require more than one 35mm print and the costs of participation can often far outweigh the contribution that the British Council is able to make.

The UK Film Council's Export Development team contributed to the costs of participation in international festivals/awards for a number of years, but internal budgetary limitations put a stop to this support. Additional costs therefore need to be met by the filmmaker or a partnership body if the film is to be represented.

Many National and Regional Screen Agencies provide support for prints, travel and other costs of festival attendance. In a few cases, where this has not been enough (for example, when a short film has been selected for competition in Cannes or has been nominated for an Academy Award®), the NCF has stepped into fill the gap. However, the NCF has no formal provision for this kind of expenditure.

**Given the core mission of short filmmaking, the limited support available for the makers of short films to be showcased at international industry events appears to be a critical weakness.**

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

### Objectives

In section 4.1, we found that there is a need to refresh and re-state the UK Film Council's aims, objectives and targets.

There was broad consensus among stakeholders as to what short films are for.

**Table 15:** Interviewees' priorities regarding the role of short films<sup>61</sup>

Rank	Strategic partners' priorities	Filmmakers' priorities
1	Developing exceptional talent	Produce critically acclaimed shorts
2	Discovering new talent	Develop my skills/talent
3	Helping key talent move to feature films	Help me move to feature films
4	Producing critically acclaimed short films	Be discovered as new talent

We believe the work undertaken that this study indicates that the UK Film Council's objectives, including the revisions undertaken by the NCF in 2008, are appropriate.

There does, however, appear to be a need to re-state and clarify them, in particular to emphasise that the primary, overriding objective is the development and showcasing of the UK's most talented prospective feature film directors so that they can progress to making films with the support of the industry.

Recommendation:

- **The UK Film Council should clearly re-state that its overriding objective is the discovery, development and progression of talented feature film directors, and that it is impact (the emergence of new feature directors) rather than activity (making short films) that is of paramount importance.**

We feel that diversity is an important secondary goal, but that skills development (as defined in Appendix II) should be the responsibility of Skillset, not the NCF, and should be focused on the development of directing skills. The development of writers and producers should be provided for, but these should be tertiary objectives for short film training programmes viewed in the context of Skillset's broader provision for new entrants and continuing professional development. This should not pre-empt the involvement of the NCF with Skillset's work (and is not intended to suggest that Skillset should fund filmmaking *per se*).

<sup>61</sup> Source: strategic partners / filmmakers questionnaire; priorities were ranked 1-10 by a sample of 25 strategic partners and 21 filmmakers in May-June 2009.

The provision of culturally significant short films should be seen as a potentially valuable by-product - especially if the potential to reach a mass audience via the internet is realisable - but not a priority.

While restating its goals, the UK Film Council should also restate its commitment to short film. There are almost certainly areas of the UK Film Council's activity where the extent to which the market could compensate for a reduction or withdrawal of support from the UK Film Council is not known for sure. With short filmmaking there appears to be no doubt: its role is pivotal. Short filmmaking in the UK will reduce in proportion to any reduction in the UK Film Council's support. We therefore believe that support for short filmmaking should be prioritised during the UK Film Council's current forecasting and planning of expenditure, though this should not prevent changing the allocation of that support to obtain greater effectiveness and efficiency.

### **Data collection systems**

**In section 4.2, we found that there is a need to ground all future support for short film on much firmer evidence, especially with regard to the impact of the activity the UK Film Council supports.**

The UK Film Council appears to have replaced the fragmented production schemes but without fully unifying the information gathered on short filmmaking. Most importantly, there appears to be no effective system in place to collect and consolidate quantitative data measuring talent development and career progression across the UK Film Council's short film initiatives.

The entire work of the UK Film Council appears predicated on an assumption that new UK feature filmmaking talent needs short film programmes for it to develop. Although this is strongly endorsed by industry opinion canvassed as part of our research, we believe it should be validated given its importance in forming the UK Film Council's overall strategy. In particular, while it seems axiomatic that new UK feature film directors emerge from short film programmes, it is not proven that the overwhelming majority of them do.

Recommendation:

- **The UK Film Council needs to develop a methodology for accurately monitoring how new feature film directors emerge and the contribution that its short filmmaking programmes make to that process, compared with other means of preparing for and entering the industry.**

If this assessment validates the prioritisation of support for short filmmaking during the UK Film Council's current forecasting and planning of expenditure, then further activity, including the possible adoption of recommendations made here, would be

worthwhile. If it does not, the UK Film Council should consider wholesale reductions in its support for short filmmaking.

An initial longitudinal study of where new UK directors originate from should be undertaken with a view to incorporating this in the annual reporting cycle of the Monitoring Unit and including relevant information in the UK Film Council's annual Statistical Yearbook on film.

Each strategic partner should be tasked with developing adequate information systems, especially in respect of what has happened and what is intended to happen to the directors they support, along the pathways noted above. Over the medium term these should form benchmarks for measuring each strategic partner's success.

All benchmarks used to assess programmes should be based on the instrumental value of short film over simply supporting activity.

One part of the UK Film Council should be given the responsibility and authority to develop a robust information system that adequately tracks these key performance indicators.

In the medium term, the UK Film Council should withdraw support from any strategic partner that is failing to meet its targeted key performance indicators without good reason, and replace them with new strategic partners, or extend the scope of others to ensure the talent is adequately supported.

Recommendation:

- **Specific, measurable key performance indicators such as the cost per new feature director, and the number and type of nominations or awards per film should be agreed for all schemes. The UK Film Council should withdraw and replace support from any strategic partner that is failing to meet its key performance targets without good reason.**

### **Talent discovery and development**

**In section 4.3, we found that, although the information available is limited, there is evidence of some success as well as evidence of ineffectiveness and inefficiency among the short film programmes supported by the UK Film Council.**

Over 800 films have been produced with the support of the UK Film Council, but this has been at considerable cost - over £8 million, excluding the contribution made via RIFE.

The Digital Shorts/Digital Nation combination of schemes appears to be effective and efficient, with the cost of launching a filmmaker into the industry around a third of that of a Cinema Extreme filmmaker (as measured over the period 2006-2009), and

less than a quarter of the cost of launching a filmmaker via the Completion Fund. But these are relative measures, and the UK Film Council's programmes appear to be underperforming, with the average cost of supporting new feature film directors appearing to be quite high in absolute terms, again with the possible exception of the Digital Shorts Plus/Digital Nation scheme (see Table 11 above).

We believe that it is appropriate to raise the bar higher, and adopt simple but stringent targets for all the UK Film Council's funds, as noted above.

Given Cinema Extreme's apparent recent underperformance in progressing new feature film directors, the NCF should consider exploring with The Bureau and Channel 4 ways in which the UK Film Council's investment in the scheme might be reconfigured, so that in future it can achieve the level of success demonstrated in its early years.

A similar dialogue should be undertaken with Mayavision, with the aim of reducing the UK Film Council's investment in the Completion Fund, perhaps by reducing the proportion of expenditure the UK Film Council provides and cutting the number of films supported.

Recommendation:

- **The UK Film Council's investment in Cinema Extreme and the Completion Fund should be reconfigured.**

### **Access and diversity**

**In section 4.4, we found that the UK Film Council appears to be at risk of repeating errors made by its predecessors in focusing on activity as opposed to impact, and thereby allowing mainstream production to remain exclusive of minorities.**

Despite much praiseworthy work by the UK Film Council and its partners, UK short filmmakers still fail to reflect UK society at large.

Short film activity supported by the UK Film Council fails to meet its diversity targets, with the participation of disabled people in short filmmaking an area of particular concern.

While there are logistical barriers that need to be overcome to enable disabled directors and producers to work in the industry, it is more difficult to understand why, for instance not one of the Completion Fund, Cinema Extreme or Digital Shorts Plus/Digital Nation have backed a film written by a disabled writer.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, it is difficult to rationalise why, out of the 338 films made with the UK Film Council's

---

<sup>62</sup> Quantitative data was unavailable for the period before 2006; however anecdotal evidence appears to support this conclusion.

money over the last three years, less than a quarter were directed by women. In terms of diversity, the results of the Digital Shorts programmes are particularly disappointing.

The failure of Digital Shorts films produced outside the specialist schemes to achieve diversity targets appears to us to reflect the limitations of introducing targeted schemes; it is difficult to prove, but we believe the introduction of targeted schemes has given implicit permission for the generalist schemes to believe that diversity is being addressed somewhere else.

We feel the answer is to place diversity in the mainstream, not to marginalise it, and so would recommend that the diversity targets are applied across all tiers of activity, with credible tracking in place to monitor performance. The existing providers of targeted schemes could be engaged in either providing advice and support to the UK Film Council's mainstream funds, or managing one of those mainstream funds themselves. In any event, although the involvement of minorities in short filmmaking is important, the extent of their involvement in the feature film industry is the most important measure to gauge the success or failure of the UK Film Council's activity.

Recommendation:

- **Efforts to promote diversity in short filmmaking should be redoubled especially among makers of Digital Shorts. The primary objective of the UK Film Council's support for short film - to develop feature film directors and not to subsidise short filmmaking activity *per se* - should apply equally to targeted schemes.**

The UK Film Council should continue discussions with the Department for Work and Pensions, to explore whether engagement as a director or producer of a UK Film Council backed film is automatically classed as paid work for the purposes of obtaining support under the Access to Work scheme. A similar dialogue should be brokered with HM Revenue and Customs, to ensure that there is clarity and equity in the application of national minimum wage legislation to short filmmaking activity.



Recommendation:

- **The UK Film Council should lead the development of policy in areas affecting short filmmaking. For example, by promoting a dialogue with HM Revenue and Customs to ensure that an appropriate balance is struck between exploitation and volunteerism in complying with national minimum wage legislation, and by continuing to work to ensure the fullest possible use of the Department for Work and Pensions Access to Work scheme designed to help disabled people undertake work.**

### **The management of programmes: partners and projects**

**In section 4.5, we found that, while the challenge of managing so much activity across the UK should not be understated, there appear to be areas where control is exercised too tightly, or there is insufficient management by exception, and other areas where leadership is absent.**

At present the makers of a short film might obtain financial support from the UK Film Council's budgets in a number of ways, for instance by combining NCF finance with RIFE funding or support from the Diversity Unit. We believe this may reduce the focus on the core objective (new feature directors) and does not lend itself to clear, purposeful management of strategic partners.

Recommendation:

- **All of the UK Film Council's financial support for short film production should be channelled through a single contractual relationship. RIFE and NCF support should not be mixed, and either UK Partnerships or the NCF should take lead responsibility for managing the application and use of funds advanced to the National and Regional Screen Agencies.**

If the UK Film Council's support for short filmmaking in the UK's regions and nations was folded into its broader support for film in those nations and regions, it could facilitate the contextualisation of that support with other activity to support the emergence and development of local filmmakers. It would also allow the NCF to focus on providing support for the better quality short filmmaking, and promote an objective, customer/supplier relationship between the lower and upper tier programmes. In any event, whichever unit took lead responsibility for managing the relationships, this would not preclude both working together to ensure the agencies delivered against their agreed objectives.

The procedures adopted to contract and manage the UK Film Council's investment in short film appear to be overly influenced by the custom and practice of investment in

feature films. For example, with average revenue per film of less than £160,<sup>63</sup> the emphasis placed by the UK Film Council on securing a share of revenues, although not currently great, is disproportionate. The recoupment position it insists on may actually disincentivise sales; Network Ireland, for instance, expects to generate €5,000 to €8,000 per short film it represents. Similarly, interviews with filmmakers indicated that there is significant under-reporting of the true cost of films; filmmakers top up funding available from the UK Film Council and its strategic partners, but do not report it for fear of breaching actual or perceived budgetary limits that are largely unpoliced.

We appreciate the argument that the application of feature film standards of business affairs can have an educational function, but we believe this hinders the primary objective of developing directors. The UK Film Council should therefore simplify its business affairs, ceding the first tranche of recoupment to filmmakers (eg £5,000 being required to be earned before income is reported or paid to the UK Film Council), and securing its investment by a very simple, standard short form assignment. Responsibility for practical matters, such as ensuring a clear chain of title to the underlying intellectual property, should be delegated to strategic partners. Any strategic partners lacking the requisite skills to undertake such business duties should be encouraged to join consortia, or contract with other strategic partners who can provide such skills.

Recommendation:

- **The UK Film Council should simplify its business affairs in respect of its short film activity; it should cap its contribution to the budgets of short films, and not the budgets themselves.**

The UK Film Council should not take final cut rights on any bottom tier (Digital Shorts) films. It should, however, continue to take final cut rights on all mid and top tier films, as well as full approval rights over the principal creative, financial and physical production elements of those top tier films.

**In section 4.5, we also found that there is a need to reconsider the efficiency and effectiveness of employing an intermediary company to manage all of the UK Film Council's short film activity.**

We believe that it is the role assigned to Lifesize Pictures, and not its inherent capability, that is the issue. We therefore recommend that the management and control functions are brought back in house by the UK Film Council, and that Lifesize is engaged either by the UK Film Council or directly by strategic partners to provide support and guidance to the schemes and the filmmakers. This should help to

---

<sup>63</sup> This figure is arrived at by dividing the total revenue by the number of films in Table 14 analysing revenues accruing to Digital Shorts and Digital Shorts Plus/Digital Nation.

remove the perceived element of command and control, and create a customer/supplier relationship between the strategic partners and Lifesize. We think this would be particularly helpful for those agencies that may lack the human resources to meet the increased demands of the NCF for high quality short films.

Recommendation:

- **Management and control functions should be brought back in house, with greater co-ordination and integration of functions in areas such as data collection and monitoring. Lower tier schemes should be managed at the level of the scheme, rather than at the micro-level of the films they support including, for example, the UK Film Council ceasing to take a right of final cut on Digital Shorts.**

**We also found in section 4.5, that there is a need to consider the efficiency and effectiveness of the UK Film Council's short film activity and re-assess whether that activity is optimally balanced.**

There is a strong consensus that it takes time for talent to develop to the point at which it is clearly of feature film calibre. We would therefore strongly recommend that the UK Film Council proceeds with caution in any re-arrangement of its support for short film, as a reduction in the effectiveness of programmes may take many years to become apparent. In particular, we believe the existing configuration of programmes, especially the relationship between Digital Shorts and Digital Nation, should be retained for the short to medium term, though within this core framework, resources should be reallocated to promote greater effectiveness and efficiency.

Recommendation:

- **The concept of a clear pathway for directors leading from lower tier schemes (eg Digital Shorts) into UK-wide higher programmes (eg Digital Nation) should be retained.**

For that reason, the UK Film Council should continue to adopt the National and Regional Screen Agency footprint as the primary means of allocating funds to the lower tier for the short term, but with clear advice as to the extent of success expected and therefore the level of expertise required. Agencies should be encouraged to consider forming consortia or sharing resources to deliver programmes where the level of activity is not cost efficient, or the agency is not equipped to support filmmakers within its area of responsibility.

Recommendation:

- **Agencies lacking the scale, resources or experience to deliver improved levels of effectiveness in short filmmaking should be encouraged to consolidate with, or sub-contract, responsibilities to agencies or third parties that do.**

While retaining the broad current framework, a number of changes appear warranted:

The Completion Fund appears to apply its resources ineffectively; it should be more judicious, and make fewer investments in smaller proportions of the completion costs, of films that are genuinely capable of making an impact at leading festivals and industry awards ceremonies.

There should a greater accent on quality, with fewer films produced by all programmes, especially Digital Shorts, but with the exception of Digital Nation.

Recommendation:

- **There should be a significant reduction in the number of Digital Shorts films made each year, and reductions in the overall number of films funded via National and Regional Screen Agencies, perhaps by as much as 50% in the case of some.**

Cinema Extreme appears to struggle to reconcile its position as the only top tier scheme, which means it acts as the final step on a pathway to feature direction, with a mission to provide a space for *avant garde* filmmaking. An additional top tier scheme should therefore be introduced. This should not be a programme managed by a third party, but instead a series of highly ambitious short films, individually commissioned and managed by the NCF. The production of these films should be specifically linked to potential feature film projects for their directors. These NCF shorts should be targeted at the best prospective filmmaking talent emerging from a broad spectrum of sources including the theatre, commercials and music video production. They should be deliberately high profile, produced with international recognition in mind and used as locomotives to drive increased interest in short films among mass audiences, as well as within the industry.

Recommendation:

- **A new top tier scheme should be introduced whereby the UK Film Council directly commissions short films from production companies that have a manifest ambition to make a feature film with a new director.**

No short film should be made with the UK Film Council's support at any level unless it is made within the context of a clearly articulated pathway for the director's progression through short filmmaking to feature film production. (The appended case study, *Calling card and what next*, illustrates what can happen in the absence of such a pathway). The assessment of the viability of such paths should be central to the decision to award support.

There should be no restriction on the number of short films an individual director can make, but there should be an obligation to clearly demonstrate progression along a path that leads to feature filmmaking.

As part of our review we checked the ease with which some of the most successful short films could be found on the internet; in practice these films are not readily available. We believe that as the born digital generation matures, the current gap between the online audience and short film practitioners will close. The UK Film Council should anticipate this and provide for increased awareness and appreciation of short film. We believe that can be achieved through better co-ordination of existing resources, such as the Find Any Film website which should be made capable of finding any UK Film Council backed short film, and the BFI's work in film education.

Recommendation:

- **Better use of existing UK Film Council interventions should be made to showcase short films; for example, the Find Any Film facility should be made capable of finding any UK Film Council backed short film available online or on DVD.**

### **The roles of higher education institutions and Skillset**

In section 4.6, we found that there is an opportunity for increased coordination of the work of Skillset and the NCF, and for better leverage of the considerable sums invested in short filmmaking via higher education.

The largest funder of short film in the UK is not the UK Film Council - it is the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

As well as encouraging Skillset to continue deploying the industry accredited branding to full effect, we recommend that closer associations are developed between individual short film programmes, the strategic partners that support them and Skillset-accredited institutions, so that students emerge with a better understanding of the next rung on the ladder.

We also recommend that Skillset and the NCF explore opportunities for the Skillset talent scout to provide feedback on the results of his work, and that of the students who are discovered, to the strategic partners, perhaps by arranging closed screenings of student work for the agencies.

Overall, there seems scope for greater collaboration and co-ordination between the UK Film Council, Skillset and the strategic partners to ensure that the pathway from the emergence and discovery of talent, through to its final refinement and launch, is appropriately illuminated by instruction, advice and mentoring relevant to each stage of development.

Recommendation:

- **Closer associations should be developed between strategic partners, Skillset and Skillset-accredited institutions. The Skillset talent scout should play a central role in ensuring a comprehensive and coherent strategy, from instruction in filmmaking to the development of talent.**

### **Support for showcasing films at festivals**

**In section 4.7, we found that, given the core mission of short filmmaking, the lack of support available for makers of short films to be showcased at international industry events appears to be a critical weakness.**

We believe that the UK Film Council should shift the centre of gravity of its support for short filmmaking away from the production of short films and towards the showcasing of the talent that they represent. To explore and plan this, organisations with proven expertise in business to business marketing should be invited to tender for a review of the UK Film Council's work in showcasing talent. This exercise should include an assessment of the effectiveness of the festivals the UK Film Council supports, especially the Edinburgh International Film Festival and the BFI London Film Festival, identifying opportunities for greater use of the resources that the UK Film Council already provides to them to promote short films. It should also explore whether the UK Film Council's international connections, especially those in Los Angeles, can be better used to bring the very best talent emerging from the schemes it supports to the attention of the international industry.

Recommendation:

- **There should be a specific review of the UK Film Council's work in showcasing talent by a suitably qualified expert in business to business marketing.**

At present, filmmakers perceive representation at festivals or online as a zero sum game, as making a film accessible online denies the opportunity to have it shown at most leading film festivals.

The UK Film Council should work with the festivals it supports to ensure that representation at festivals and online showcasing of short films is synergistic. Approaches might include supporting improvements in the online presence of the festivals (in particular the Edinburgh International Film Festival and the BFI London Film Festival), and exploring with leading online outlets for short films the potential of releasing films simultaneously with festival screenings.

Subject to the findings of the review proposed above, we recommend the creation of a specific intervention to support the marketing of the talent behind the best short

films produced in the UK. We would further recommend that this intervention is managed on an arms length basis from the agencies responsible for production, to ensure objectivity, and that activity is grounded in the realities of the international feature film industry.

Recommendation:

- **Subject to that review, a new intervention should be established to support the international marketing of the talent behind the UK's best short films.**

This intervention should be principally tasked with developing and prosecuting strategies for the engagement of the international industry with talent emerging from the middle and top tiers of the UK Film Council's programmes. An important secondary goal is the development and communication of models of best practice for self distribution of shorts online.

In this way, the returns from the extensive investment by the UK Film Council in short filmmaking activity will be maximised, and new feature film directors brought to the attention of the local and global markets which can sustain their careers as professional film directors.

Case Study	Page
From short films to DreamWorks	56
Shane Meadows and short film	57
<i>Six Shooter</i>	58
Calling card and what next?	59
A new voice	60

### From short films to DreamWorks

BBC Three New Film Makers Awards 2007:

Jim Field Smith, director of the comedy short *Where Have I Been All Your Life?*

Jim Field Smith read politics and international studies at university and got into writing and acting in television comedy soon after. He has directed three short films including *Goodbye to the Normals* (2006) and *Where Have I Been All Your Life?* (2007), as well as several award-winning commercials. Despite the comparative brevity of experience, he was hired by DreamWorks to direct the feature-length *HARD 10*, scheduled for release in March 2010.

*Goodbye to the Normals* is a four-minute short, funded by Robbie Williams's record company as part of a series of shorts for his 2006 Rudebox album. *Where Have I Been All Your Life?* is a more ambitious, 20-minute comedy made as part of a new comedy scheme by BBC Films, BBC Comedy and BBC Film Network - and with more music money (this time promoting the group Passenger). The film stars James Corden, James Cosmo and Imelda Staunton.

Both *Goodbye to the Normals* and *Where Have I Been All Your Life?* were about dysfunctional families, but according to Field Smith this was more by coincidence than design. "We didn't choose to make two films on similar themes, but both scripts were very self-contained and we felt they would put our limited resources to good use. A lot of short films are very ambitious, which is no bad thing, but whilst everything we read was great on the page, we knew the difficult part would be how to make that into a film within the budget we had available." Fortunately directing Imelda Staunton became a "nice problem to have". "She didn't treat the project as a short film; she was on set for three days and worked as hard, if not harder, than everyone else on the set."

A viral email of *Goodbye to the Normals* - sent by a New York dentist to an intern in LA - offered Field Smith a short cut into the studio system. "Although it seems like the archetypal YouTube success story, we hadn't intended it to work that way. It wasn't us that put it online, but it went from a few hundred hits to around half a



million in only a few weeks. I was taken by surprise by a call from LA from someone I'd never met but who is now my manager, and through him I was taken on by an LA agent and that led to DreamWorks." Field Smith adds, "So, for all those people slogging away and putting their films online thinking 'what's the point, its worthless' – keep going! It happened to me, so it can happen to you."

Adrian Hennigan for BBC Film Network, December 2007

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/filmnetwork/A29849458>

<http://www.idiotlamp.com>

<http://www.jimfieldsmith.com>

### Shane Meadows and short film

It was not until Shane Meadows was 22, after he had moved to Nottingham and enrolled on a performing arts course, that he began making short films with his friends. He soon became a prolific short filmmaker. In 1994 he made six films, including the first two versions of *Where's the Money, Ronnie?* The next year he made 13, including the first on the subject of the king of the Gypsies. He was supported through these years by an ongoing relationship with Intermedia Film and Video (which later became part of the Broadway Media Centre). "I never set out to be a filmmaker. I was making films to have a laugh and get people together. It just turned out that I was the guy behind the camera making them, because I had the drive."

1996 saw the final version of *Where's the Money, Ronnie?* and his first long-form work, *Small Time*. "I never really thought of myself as a director until I made *Small Time*, which came in at 60 minutes. When I made that, I sat back and thought, 'this has consumed my life for 18 months; I've done nothing but make this film'. So I'd probably made about 20 short films before I really contemplated that I could make it professionally."

1997's films included the first work entitled *A Room for Romeo Brass*, a 13-minute short. It also saw the production of Meadows's first feature length film, *Twenty Four Seven*. "Getting your first feature film financed is notoriously difficult, and trying to do it without a body of work to convince people you are worth backing probably makes it impossible."

Meadows continued to make short films while prepping the feature film version of *A Room for Romeo Brass* which was co-written by a collaborator on previous short films, Paul Fraser, and marked the screen debut of Paddy Considine, who Meadows originally met at Burton College and who had also worked on short films with him. *A Room for Romeo Brass* was nominated in three categories at the 1999 British Independent Film Awards (BIFAs).

"Directors tend to like to have some familiar faces around them as they move from film to film. Short films allow those collaborations and friendships to deepen and prove themselves before they are tested by the challenges of feature film-making. That was certainly the case with me."

Meadows still alternates between short and feature length formats: *Somers Town*, which gathered another four BIFA nominations, was originally conceived as a nine or ten-minute short film. "The division between feature and short films is driven as much by commercial as creative considerations. Obviously feature filmmaking is more lucrative, but short films can be rewarding in other ways and you can explore ideas in shorts that sometimes end up as features. I definitely wouldn't like to think that I've made my last short." Meadows hopes to be shooting a feature length version of *King of the Gypsies* in the near future.

### *Six Shooter*

Eighteen months of marketing efforts yielded an Oscar® and television sales.

An interview with Mia Bays, producer of *Six Shooter*.

*Six Shooter* is a black and bloody Irish comedy. It won the US Academy Award® for Best Live Action Short in 2006 to round out a string of other nominations and awards (BAFTAs, BIFAs, Cork and Raindance). It was written and directed by Martin McDonagh, who until then was an acclaimed playwright and subsequently went on to write and direct the feature film *In Bruges* (2008). The experienced cast includes Brendan Gleason as a recently widowed man who meets an oddly behaved youth, Rúaighrís Conroy, on a train bound for Dublin.

"*Six Shooter* was written by an established writer, made for £125,000 and featured a well-known cast. Even then it took 18 months of hard work to get it visible; things were not made easier by the fact that, at 27 minutes, the film was too long for most short film programmes.

"We positioned the film more as a feature film than a short, and got a leading sales agent, The Works, on board before the film was awarded the Academy Award®. The film was, for example, later sold to Sundance Channel for a healthy five figure sum. So there can definitely be some economic value in shorts, but I would say any money made from shorts is a bonus, not the focus of short film activities.

"I knew very little about the shorts market place when the process started, but I did a lot of research and put a lot of work in, and it paid off. Of course, my background in features marketing helped, but the things one needs to do are actually quite simple, it's much more about persistence and dedication than anything else."

That dedication and persistence has paid off, with *Six Shooter* being released in North America by Magnolia and by 2 Entertain in the UK. The film has been acquired by a number of broadcasters, including the UK's Film4 and Ireland's RTE. In 2008 Bays was nominated for BAFTA's Carl Foreman Award for the Most Promising Newcomer after producing the documentary *Scott Walker: 30 Century Man*.

"By and large, there is not much economic value in shorts. However, with the right positioning, it is definitely possible to generate returns from shorts, both financial and non-financial."

### Calling card and what next?

René Mohandas is the writer, director and producer of *Elephant Boy* (2005), a 26-minute short that garnered a 2005 BAFTA nomination. Since the success of that film, he has developed feature length screenplays but to date has not made any more films.

After seeing screenings of *Elephant Boy*, and having read his feature film outline, Emma Clarke, senior production executive at the UK Film Council, encouraged Mohandas to apply to the Development Fund, which he did in 2006.<sup>64</sup> Mohandas found the experience a complete contrast to Clarke's helpful, constructive approach. Rather than an exploratory development of the work and relationship, development support was noted as only available to writers with three to four screenplays and not first-time writers. He had no further engagement with the UK Film Council until last year.

Mohandas feels the critical step from shorts to features is a major challenge for the UK Film Council. Micro budget film schemes work for certain projects, but for others there are too many restrictions imposed by funding constraints and the management of those schemes.

Mohandas has entered a series of scriptwriting competitions sponsored by a variety of film schemes and broadcasters, including the BBC. While he believes they have their merits and are well intentioned, they have failed to live up to his expectations, mainly because the script development is tailored to the competition and not to the individual needs of the project. Despite being a finalist twice, neither scheme produced or funded any of his films.

---

<sup>64</sup> The UK Film Council has stated that René's experience in 2006 was under a previous funding structure Development Fund. The current Development Fund engaged with René at the Director's Lab in 2008, and encouraged him to think about submitting a feature idea.

Mohandas was selected for the 2008 Edinburgh International Film Festival Director's Lab (run by Lifesize Pictures and supported by the NCF, Film4 and Skillset). Mohandas describes the experience as "exceptional", providing him with knowledge and giving his confidence a massive boost. He would love to make another short at the same time as researching and writing his next feature length script, as a means to develop his directing and come back into the fold, though at present he does not have a short film in development.

"The process of making funded shorts has been essential to my development. If there are fewer such opportunities, that would be sad to see, but technology is making filmmaking much more accessible and that is fantastic."

### **A new voice**

Destiny Ekaragha, writer and director of *Tight Jeans* (2008), was born and raised in London to Nigerian parents who came to Britain in the 1970s. Her passion for film began early. She remembers watching *A Nightmare on Elm Street* aged five. "My relationship with the dark was never quite the same, however neither was my relationship with film. The idea of escaping to a world other than my own was very compelling."

She studied film at college and university, and after various runner jobs, teamed up with producer Tamana Bleasdale to make her first short film *Tight Jeans*. It is a humorous and authentic slice of life from the perspective of the young black British male. The film was funded by the Lewisham Film Initiative (later known as Southern Exposure). This was the only scheme that they approached. *Tight Jeans* went on to be officially selected by the 2008 BFI London Film Festival and was also voted the best short film shown there by *The Observer*.

Ekaragha still lives in south east London, a place that greatly influences her work. While her films are clearly inspired by her personal experiences, she prefers to think of herself as a filmmaker, rather than be put in a box as a black filmmaker or female filmmaker.

Currently, she has a second short film in post-production called *Jerningham Road* which was self-funded, and she has recently finished shooting *The Park*, her third short film, which was funded by the Digital Shorts scheme. She is also working on several music videos and developing a feature film with the UK Film Council. In 2009, Ekaragha won the Best Newcomer Award at Soho Rushes.

<http://www.destinyekaragha.com>

## Appendix II                      Definitions

Exactly what constitutes a short film in the YouTube era is open to debate. There is almost certainly a grey area between films made with the aspiration of becoming professional in some part of the media sector, and user-generated content made with no such intention in mind. For the purpose of this report, we have focused exclusively on short films made with the serious intention of progressing to a career in feature length theatrical filmmaking.

In discussions about short filmmaking there are often references made to talent, as in talent development, and similar expressions. For the purposes of the report and in the context of short filmmaking, we have adopted the following definitions.

**Talent** means, primarily, the directors of short films, though it will also include writers, producers and members of the cast and crew who make a significant creative contribution to the completed film.

**Talent development** means the development of the capacity of talented individuals to make an increased creative contribution through their filmmaking careers, in particular achieving a transition from making short films to making feature length films.

There is a substantial grey area between talent development and skills development, and that grey area also includes a wide variation in professional experience - from inexperienced practitioners making their first short to people about to complete the transition to feature filmmaking. For the purpose of this report, talent development is regarded as something that accrues with practice and reflection, whereas skills development requires practice and instruction, though the two are likely to be intermingled to a greater or lesser degree.

Talent is not taken to include crew who make a primarily administrative or technical contribution, no matter how significant or important that contribution is. This does not mean, however, that there is no role for short filmmaking in terms of developing set crafts and similar filmmaking skills, just that there is a degree of independence between the manifestation of talent and the development of such skills. It may well be possible for major administrative and technical contributions to be made to a film that manifests little talent, whereas the greater the creative contribution, the greater the film is likely to be; some great films are made despite significant administrative and technical constraints.

**Diversity** refers to the characteristics of ethnicity, gender and disability.

**Strategic partner** refers to 104 Films, B3, Cinema Extreme, Mayavision and the national and regional screen agencies that manage short film schemes (see p16).

## Appendix III            A brief history of short film<sup>65</sup>

The early history of cinema lay entirely in short films. Early producers made large numbers of one and two reels – films of usually less than ten minutes duration. The first feature-length films were produced in 1912 in the UK and USA.<sup>66</sup> Longer-form narratives slowly developed into the cultural and industry norm. Once the feature film was firmly established at the heart of cinema programmes the short film could emerge as something separate and special.

In the UK, short filmmaking has been strongly influenced by the intervention of the public sector. Perhaps the most famous British short documentary film, *Night Mail*,<sup>67</sup> was produced by the GPO film unit. The Free Cinema screenings<sup>68</sup> (1956-59), organised by Lindsay Anderson and Karel Reisz, were described in terms that may still be recognised as valid:

"Most of [the films]... have been produced outside the framework of the film industry, though not without the help of the industry. This has meant that their directors have been able to express their own viewpoints, sometimes unusual, without obligation to subscribe to the technical or social conventions imposed on work under commercial conditions."

The BFI's involvement in short film production began in 1952 with the creation of the Experimental Film Fund<sup>69</sup> which aimed "to launch new filmmakers". The BFI produced relatively low numbers of shorts, typically five to eight a year as one-off investments, until the introduction of production strands.<sup>70</sup> The longest lasting strand, New

---

<sup>65</sup> Unfortunately, there are few historical data available on short films in the UK. The shifts that have happened in the organisational landscape have perhaps had a part to play in this. It is also worth noting that the UK Film Council's Statistical Yearbook has not referenced short films to date.

<sup>66</sup> In the UK, *With our King and Queen through India and Oliver Twist*; and in the USA, *From the Manger to the Cross* and *Richard III*.

<sup>67</sup> Harry Watt and Basil Wright, 1936, featuring music by Benjamin Britten and poetry by WH Auden.

<sup>68</sup> These were not exclusively dedicated to short films.

<sup>69</sup> Re-launched and restructured in 1966 as the BFI Production Board.

<sup>70</sup> Its alumni included Ken Russell (*Amelia and the Angel*, 1958), Tony Richardson and Karel Reisz (*Momma Don't Allow*, 1956), Ridley Scott (*Boy and Bicycle*, 1965), Tony Scott (*One of the Missing*, 1968 and *Early One Morning*, 1969), Peter Greenaway (*a walk through h*, 1978) and Nick Broomfield (*Who Cares*, 1971). The BFI backed a wide range of genres, including animation and documentary as well as narrative fiction, and worked with both British and international directors, such as Franco-Swiss director Claude Goretta. The BFI also supported what claims to be the first (certainly it is a very early) computer animated short, *The Mathematician* (1971).

Directors, started in 1989 and produced six to ten short films a year on budgets of up to £40,000.<sup>71</sup>

From the late 1980s until its absorption within the UK Film Council, British Screen Finance<sup>72</sup> also funded between three to ten short films per year, typically contributing around 40% to budgets of £50,000-100,000.<sup>73</sup> It also helped fund short film programmes with national and regional partners, including broadcasters like Anglia Television (First Take), Sgrîn Wales (Screen Gems) and Channel 4 (Short Sharp Shocks).

As well as the BFI and British Screen, there was a plethora of short film schemes across the UK supported by a wide range of agencies. The pattern of support across the UK was very uneven; some regions offered several different strands and very substantial levels of support, while others provided only very small, one-off grants. In all, 21 separate short film schemes<sup>74</sup> were in operation not including very local, low-scale strands.<sup>75</sup>

“There is a long tradition of short filmmaking in the UK. In the past, shorter films weren’t called ‘shorts’ – but ‘films’! There was Len Lye and the Post Office; artists working with film and commercials films... and then BBC’s 10 x 10 changed things, short films became more uniform in length and purpose.”

*UK Film Council strategic partner*

A notable feature of the short film landscape before the UK Film Council was instituted, was the wide-scale participation of broadcasters in short film support. Not only did both the BBC and Channel 4 support national short film schemes,<sup>76</sup> but many of the regional ITV companies were also active supporters of short film.<sup>77</sup> As a result, short films were broadcast on what would now be regarded as prime terrestrial TV slots. This included work by first time directors, especially in the case of

---

<sup>71</sup> By 1999.

<sup>72</sup> British Screen Finance was a leading UK public sector investor in shorts during the ten years leading up to the establishment of the UK Film Council, which subsequently undertook responsibility for its portfolio.

<sup>73</sup> British Screen helped fund short films by new directors including Mark Herman (*Unusual Ground Floor Conversion*, 1988), Philip Ridley (*The Universe of Dermot Finn*, 1988) and Peter Cattaneo (*Dear Rosie*, 1990).

<sup>74</sup> Source: *Lowdown - Low Budget Funding Guide 1997/98, 1998/99 & 1999/00*; BFI.

<sup>75</sup> Two examples are the Wandsworth Film and Video Making Award and the Croydon Film Fund.

<sup>76</sup> Through the BBC’s 10 x 10 series, and Channel 4’s Short and Curlies.

<sup>77</sup> Usually through partnerships with regional arts boards and other predecessor bodies of the regional screen agencies.

regional broadcasters. Another feature was the existence of diversity strands targeting disabled, black and Asian filmmakers.<sup>78</sup>

“In the past, the BFI, BBC and Channel Four all supported shorts. Now, a lot of good films have to be self-financed.” *Ben Gibson, Director, London Film School*

Sales both to UK and mainland European broadcasters used to be the main source of revenue for short films. However, the period immediately before the formation of the UK Film Council saw radically decreasing support for short film from broadcasters, both in financing and broadcasting them.

---

<sup>78</sup> These were typically considered to be short-term measures needed to accelerate opportunities for target groups and individuals.



## Appendix IV

## Why short films are made

The consensus of opinion consulted was that the primary purpose of short filmmaking was instrumental, with filmmakers at all levels principally focused on using short films as a vehicle for career progression.

**Table 16:** Filmmakers' priorities regarding the making of short films

Rank	Filmmakers' priorities <sup>79</sup>
1	Produce critically acclaimed shorts
2	Develop my skills/talent
3	Help me move to feature films
4	Be discovered as new talent
5	Produce films for a wide public audience
6	Experiment creatively
7	Use digital and new technologies
8	Get trained in working as part of a crew

"Short filmmaking serves as an apprenticeship process, in particular for producers, writers and directors but also for other crew, before moving on to features."

Mia Bays, Producer and Creative Executive, Film London's Microwave

The role of short film schemes in developing skills in all grades was highlighted by many industry National and Regional Film Agencies executives and there is appreciation of the potential for short filmmaking in a higher education context to develop skills (with developing talent, as defined above, as a strong secondary benefit).

All stakeholders agreed that high-quality short films work as calling cards for directors – and, to a lesser extent, for writers and producers - and this aspect becomes increasingly important as the transition to feature filmmaking draws nearer.

"Certain short films have caught my eye and I've become a fan of the filmmaker and then wanted to work with them once we'd found the right piece of material.

Sometimes it has worked in a different way: David Mackenzie got in touch via his brother, whom I already knew, about developing *Young Adam* and it was then that I looked at his shorts. Either way, shorts play a critical role in supporting the case for working with emerging talent."

*Alexandra Stone, CMP*

<sup>79</sup> Source: filmmaker questionnaire; in May-June 2009, 21 filmmakers were asked to rank these priorities from 1-10; see Appendix XXI for details.

Short films are not the only route for new filmmaking talent to develop and progress, but there was a strong view among interviewees that no other medium (eg commercials, music video, television or theatre) is as accurate an indicator of feature filmmaking talent as short films are (see Appendix XIV for selected stakeholder opinions on the issue).

“Short films are about personal stories and ideas; the format is much freer. You can choose whom to work with, establish relationships, and learn about the whole process – from fundraising to distribution - whereas with commercials you generally deal with just the production process, and the story and other parameters of the project come from the client.” *Claire Cook, BBC Film Network*

Despite the perceived value of short films in identifying talent and preparing that talent for feature filmmaking, the sheer number of short films made each year in the UK<sup>80</sup> suggests that not all short films lead to opportunities in longer-format work; there is a very high level of redundancy in short film production, and very few of the hundreds of short filmmakers reach their ultimate goal.

“Short films play an extremely useful role in the discovery of talent. It is less clear how filmmakers progress. You find a talented director through their short film calling card - and what next?” *Sean Gascoine, United Agents*

---

<sup>80</sup> As already documented, there are over 2,000 - of which around 1,800 are made in the context of higher education - compared to 160 feature films (the annual average of the total number of UK feature films made over last three years, according to the Film UK guide).

## Appendix V            The public value of short films

When considering the payback that short films make to the UK's cultural life in return for the public funding devoted to their production, it may be useful to think of their contribution in two ways: their intrinsic value as a form of art or entertainment in their own right, and their instrumental value as a means of developing the skill-set of the UK industry as a whole, in particular the subsequent feature films of short film 'graduates'.

Interviewees appreciated their intrinsic value:

"Short films are a showcase for different stories and opinions. Shorts also allow audiences to engage with bolder and 'higher risk' storylines than are possible in television or feature films."

*Claire Cook, BBC Film Network*

"Great shorts can be more satisfying than feature films, and can be easier to engage with because they are shorter!"

*Mia Bays, Producer and Creative Executive, Film London's Microwave*

This cultural value can often be latent or deferred:

"There can be a 'retrospective' cultural benefit from shorts when an audience is given the opportunity to discover a canon of early work by an established filmmaker as was the case with Martin Scorsese's short films."

*Alexander Stone, CMP*

However, there was a clear consensus that the primary contribution made by short films was instrumental in nature:

"Short films are an essential part of talent development. They are a great medium for exploring a filmmaker's tone and style."

*Chris Collins and Lizzie Francke, UK Film Council Development Fund*

Precisely where talent development starts and skills training stops is harder to discern, though the value of a continuum of formal training was evident in much of the opinion canvassed as part of this review:

"Short films play a very important role, primarily in talent development, and primarily in developing and discovering directors. However, I think they are a great training ground for people in every department, for instance I first came across Seamus McGarvey through a short he'd shot."

*Julie Baines, Dan Films*

There are few active UK distributors of short films, either theatrically or in the form of DVD compilations. At present, the main suppliers in this limited marketplace are the BFI along with Dazzle Films and Shorts International. Short films make up a significant proportion of the catalogues of publicly subsidised distribution/touring agencies active in artists' moving image such as Film and Video Umbrella and Onedotzero. Many short filmmakers are left with little option but to self-distribute their own films, though whether this is an effective model is open to question.

"If there is an economic model for short films, it is perhaps via a brand such as Cinema 16. People can be reluctant to pay for short films because they have to filter through a plethora of films, but where that has been done for them and the films come with a stamp of quality I think people will pay for them."

*Mathieu de Braconier, The Bureau*

There are few short films screened in cinemas in the UK or internationally outside of film festivals.<sup>81</sup> Even though acquisition budgets for short films have been shrinking in recent years, television remains the most important source of income for most sales agents representing short films.<sup>82</sup> Mainland European broadcasters, particularly Arte, Canal+, RTI and ZDF, are significant purchasers of short film, while Australia, Canada, Japan and South Korea are also fertile territories. In the US, the Independent Film Channel, Sundance Channel and PBS are the key outlets for short films.

There is evidence of increasing demand for animation and similar, family-oriented short films. Some of this market growth is likely to be a consequence of the growing number of specialist children's channels on television. Specialist short film channels such as Canada's *Moviela*,<sup>83</sup> France's *ShortsTV* or the UK's *Propeller TV* have had various degrees of success; however, none of them are able to pay fees that match the mainstream channels.

Profit margins from selling DVD compilations of short films are narrow, and some producers of short film DVDs say that their releases are about raising awareness as much as they are about generating revenue. Short films have not yet made an impact on mobile platforms, because of the unwillingness of consumers to pay for content, as well as the limited availability of content suitable for viewing on a handset, long download times and limits on file sizes.

---

<sup>81</sup> This and the three paragraphs that follow are a highly abridged version of *Short Film Export* (2008), UK Film Council Film Export Group, which provides a detailed overview of the key markets for short films.

<sup>82</sup> Average broadcast fees for shorts range from €40-€60 per minute.

<sup>83</sup> *Moviela* has around one million subscribers.

Social networking sites, such as Bebo, are currently focused on music videos and branded content, and the pay-per-download model such as Shorts International's arrangement with iTunes has so far proven to be a suitable platform mainly for short films with star names, major awards or prior word-of-mouth' attached to them.

There have been some commercial and quasi-commercial ventures formed to act as distributors (and/or related agency models) specifically for UK shorts, usually looking to exploit the markets for short films via a long tail economic model – such as Short Circuit and Short Film Bureau (both dating back to the early 2000s). Both of these are now defunct; and no such ventures appear to have survived for long without public subsidy.

A new venture, MiShorts, is currently in start-up mode, and both Dazzle and Shorts International have business plans which focus on distributing shorts via a range of platforms, handling UK and non-UK short films. There is some evidence that they will be able to garner revenues from online platforms, as well as via more traditional routes such as TV sales. Whether they can generate sufficient revenue to cover their own costs, as well as begin to reward financiers and filmmakers, is much more uncertain.

"The models for successful audience growth and content exploitation, to bring financial returns to filmmakers, in this (online) window are not yet apparent."

*Mary Davies, Head of Industry, Edinburgh International Film Festival*

Despite this, the willingness of some short filmmakers to place material online with limited or no expectations of a financial return has certainly contributed to the creation of successful business models for such aggregators and streaming sites. None of this appears to have opened up the possibilities for individual shorts to earn significant revenues, and in fact may even have limited them.

"There may be an audience via mobiles but it is not apparent yet. The internet is not a place to build views, it is a threat to a short film's premiere integrity and hence any TV or DVD sales."

*View expressed at filmmakers' focus group during the  
Edinburgh International Film Festival*

Few data are published, but where revenue figures for publicly funded short film schemes are available, they tend to show a very low rate of return. For example, British Screen has recouped under 5% of its investment to date. Data on recoupment of the UK Film Council's investment in short films do not appear to be collated methodically,<sup>84</sup> but what is available suggests a minimal return on the slate with only a very few titles achieving any recoupment at all.<sup>85</sup> It is highly unlikely that returns to private investors in short films are significantly different, in total.

Financial returns to the individuals who make short films appear similarly low. Anecdotally there are accounts of individual shorts earning (comparatively) high returns, usually through international sales to broadcasters. However, published examples of such coups appear extremely rare and broadcasters seem unlikely to reverse the trend of reduced expenditure on short films that has persisted throughout this decade.

"Shorts are generally unpopular to finance because they are considered to offer very limited returns. For a broadcaster they are difficult to programme. Our challenge is to maximise the impact we can have with limited resources... we hope to continue limited, targeted investment in the production of short films."

*Jack Arbuthnott, BBC Films*

Given the almost certain losses facing investors, it is extremely difficult to raise private funding for the production of short films. Private finance consists predominantly of filmmakers self-financing their projects, or sourcing budgets through family and friends. Rare exceptions include small-scale sponsored initiatives, usually competitions, where brand owners<sup>86</sup> commission individual short films or a series of short films. Facilities and equipment houses often provide discounted products and services, and crew and cast often work for below their usual rates or on a *pro bono* basis.

"Production companies, such as Working Title, also give occasional development grants to shorts. The amount of in-kind support for short films is huge. Many filmmakers have day jobs in production and other film-related companies, that let them use the company's facilities and equipment and other resources – the impact of this kind of subsidy should not be underestimated."

*Sally Thomas, Mayavision International*

---

<sup>84</sup> The scarcity of reporting figures means that we cannot get an accurate overview of UK Film Council revenues for all short films made; and in any case, there is no industry-wide framework of recoupment data to compare them with.

<sup>85</sup> The collapse of the TV sales market for short films is one possible reason behind low recoupment figures. It should also be noted that British Screen's short film slate has had more time to recoup its investment than the UK Film Council's slate.

<sup>86</sup> Diesel and Carolina Herrera are two examples.

Investment in the production of short films can, for the time being at least, only be rationalised in terms of the secondary benefits accruing to the investors, such as building a relationship with a talented individual or helping to refresh the gene pool of the industry.

"There are a few examples of short films that have sold to television and made money and thus created direct economic impact. However, there is a significant indirect economic value in shorts. They can attract the attention of commissioners and talent scouts, who might be persuaded to support the talent... some of whose work will eventually create significant economic impact. In other words, shorts could be seen as an investment which yields returns in the longer term."

*Maggie Ellis, Head of Production, Film London*

Appendix VII

Short film schemes 1997-2000

Agency	Scheme	Number of shorts	Budget/genre
BBC	10x10	10	Commissioning scheme
BFI Production	New Directors	6	Up to £40,000; with C4 Independent Film & Video
	Projects fund		Co-funding and Completion Fund, £15-20,000
	Disability Film Fund	4	One-off scheme
Film4	Short and Curlies	4	£90,000
Arts Council England	Artists Film & Video National Fund		Single screen artists work; up to £20,000
	Animate!		Experimental animation with C4
	Lottery Short Films for Cinema		
	Artists Film & Video		Not solely shorts
National Disability Film & Video Project	NDFVP	2	Up to £25,000
Northern Ireland Film Commission	Premiere Short Film Scheme	5	
Scottish Screen	Tartan Shorts	3	Up to £45,000; with BBC Scotland
	Prime Cuts	5	Up to £23,000; with British Screen and Scottish TV
	First Reels		Up to £5,000
	New Found Land	6 x 30 mins	c. £45,000; drama



<b>Agency</b>	<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Number of shorts</b>	<b>Budget/genre</b>
<b>Sgrŷn</b>	Big Little Pictures		30 mins; with HTV Wales
	Animate It!	3	With S4C; animation
	Rarebits	3	With BBC Wales
<b>East Midlands &amp; West Midlands arts boards</b>	First Cut	5+	Up to £7,500; with Central TV; parts of southern region also eligible
<b>First Take Films</b>	First Take	5-10	With Eastern Arts Board and Anglia TV
<b>London Film &amp; Video Development Agency</b>	London Production Fund		Up to £15,000 for production or completion
<b>MIDA</b>	NW Film & Video Production Fund		Shorts & creative documentary
<b>Northern Arts Board</b>	Northern Production Fund		Short and long form drama, documentary & experimental; up to £15,000
<b>North West Arts Board</b>	North West Production Fund		Short and long form.
<b>Southern Arts Board</b>	Film & Video Production Fund		Up to 15 mins
	Taped Up		With Meridian TV
<b>South East Arts Board</b>	Production Fund		Up to £10k
<b>SW Media Development Agency</b>	Animation Award	1	With Aardman & BBC
	Kodak Award	1	£5k
	Western Lights	4x30mins	With HTV West, for TV

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Number of shorts</b>	<b>Budget/genre</b>
<b>West Midlands Arts Board</b>	First Academy Film & Video Production Scheme	8	£4k/£13k. With Central TV, for television
	New Work Commissions		£5k, experimental and new technology
<b>Yorkshire &amp; Humberside Arts Board</b>	Short Film & Video Production Awards		Up to £10k
<b>Croydon Borough Council</b>	Croydon Film & Video Awards	3	Up to £1.3k
<b>Wandsworth Borough Council</b>	Wandsworth Film & Video Making Award	2	Up to £5k

## Appendix VIII Overview of the UK Film Council's principal short film schemes

- **Cinema Extreme** is targeted at filmmakers who are thought to be one short away from making their first feature length film. These films are made for around £50,000, can be shot on film or digitally, and usually have a longer running time of around 20 minutes. Cinema Extreme is managed by London-based independent production company, The Bureau.
- **The Completion Fund** targets entrepreneurial filmmakers that have produced a short film independently, but who lack the funding to complete the post-production on their film. The Completion Fund is managed by Mayavision International, also a London-based production company.
- **Digital Shorts** is an entry-level scheme, with budgets up to £12,000 and film lengths around ten minutes on average. Since 2006, filmmakers have been able to receive funding through Digital Shorts more than once. Following this decision, some regions introduced two levels of Digital Shorts – micro-budgeted short films targeting absolute first timers (such as North West Vision's Virgin Shorts scheme) and basic Digital Shorts, targeting filmmakers with some experience, for example a student or self-financed short film. Both Digital Shorts and Digital Nation are managed by each of the regional screen agencies, and Northern Ireland Screen; in Scotland both strands are delivered by independent agency DigiCult.<sup>87</sup> There is a minimum delivery requirement of four short films per year for each scheme.
- **Digital Shorts Plus (now Digital Nation)** is aimed at filmmakers who have already made a short film, either through Digital Shorts or in another context. These films have higher budgets, in the region of £17,500-£20,000, and can be longer than ten minutes.

---

<sup>87</sup> Film Agency for Wales has managed a short film scheme in the past but is not currently involved in Digital Shorts.

## **Appendix IX            The UK Film Council and partners: processes and projects**

The schemes' processes are different in key areas. For example, Digital Shorts is devolved funding in the sense that the UK Film Council does not directly contract with the filmmakers, as it does with its other production schemes. Lifesize Pictures also takes a more direct creative role in Digital Shorts projects than it does in the other schemes.

### **Cinema Extreme and the Completion Fund**

The management processes and division of labour within both Cinema Extreme and the Completion Fund are largely similar to those described for Digital Shorts.

#### **Festivals and distribution**

- Active filmmakers promote their own films;
- Strategic partners have their own, individual marketing plans, from festival strategies to DVD distribution;
- Lifesize has its own marketing plan, including festival screening slots, for Cinema Extreme and Completion Fund films;
- Lifesize works with the UK Film Council Communications Department;
- Digital Shorts and Digital Nation produce 100-150 films a year; Once a year, Lifesize executives sit down to watch them all and create a long list of 20-30 films to promote in an appropriate way, eg by curating festival programmes consisting of Digital Shorts or Digital Nation short films;
- There is no long-listing for Cinema Extreme or the Completion Fund, as those schemes produce fewer films;
- Cinema Extreme and the Completion Fund have dedicated screening slots at the Edinburgh International Film Festival and the Encounters Shorts Film Festival; Lifesize pushes their promotion.

#### **Digital Shorts and Digital Nation**

##### **Guidelines and rules**

- All the strategic partners have slightly different deadlines;
- Lifesize executives approve and have input into the guidelines (input and feedback could include anything from structural issues, such as whether teams or individuals should be applying, to clarity of application forms and transparency);
- Guidelines change from one year to another – sometimes small changes, sometimes radical changes;
- In the early days of Digital Shorts, the rules were more rigid regarding budgets and film durations – there is now more flexibility;
- This has led to strategic partners developing more films, making fewer films, with different durations and budgets;

- Some rules, such as the requirement to film on a digital format, stay constant;
- When the schemes are launched each year, strategic partners respond to queries; Lifesize also receives queries and diverts them to strategic partners.

### **Applications and selection**

- Applications are made to strategic partners who prepare the initial shortlist;
- Lifesize approves the shortlisting methodology for each strategic partner (eg the use of readers, etc);
- There are differences from one strategic partner to another - some executives read all applications, others employ readers;
- Lifesize asks to see full lists of applicants in addition to shortlists, in case some people are missed – and Lifesize can add people to the shortlist;
- Lifesize executives will read 20-30 complete applications per scheme (including supporting material), depending on the number of applications;
- The selection process is a discussion between Lifesize executives and strategic partner executives – it is a mutual decision-making process;
- Some strategic partners use a points system to assess applications; others use a more subjective approach.

### **Post-greenlight**

- Development: strategic partners executives have a direct relationship with filmmakers; Lifesize feeds in development feedback through strategic partners, at appropriate stages during the post-greenlight development phase;
- Similarly, Lifesize feeds into the editing process at various stages, by providing notes to be conveyed to filmmakers via strategic partner executives;
- The UK Film Council shares sign-off responsibility on screenplay, final cut and credits.

### **Contractual arrangements on NCF short film schemes**

There are three ways for strategic partners to contract with filmmakers on Digital Shorts:

1. Strategic partner acts as a production company and pays all film costs directly;
2. (a) Strategic partner pays the whole production budget to an individual filmmaker (without a production company); (b) Strategic partner pays the whole production budget to an individual filmmaker (with a production company);
3. Strategic partner pays a production company that is producing a slate of films for the scheme; only one agreement needed.

## Appendix X                      Contrasting views? Short film, the BBC and Channel 4

### BBC Films

(With thanks to Jack Arbuthnott)

#### Summary

- BBC Films's focus is on the production of feature films. It sees the primary value of short films as a way to discover, develop and test new talent.

#### Context

- BBC Films is not directly involved in the production of shorts for their own sake. Shorts are generally not an attractive proposition because they offer very limited returns. For a broadcaster they are difficult to programme.
- BBC Films considers short films to be an invaluable way to discover and identify new talent from a wider and more diverse pool;
- The short film landscape has changed significantly in the last ten years. Barriers to entry have collapsed, and festivals and broadcast slots are no longer the only ways for new filmmakers to be discovered.

#### Strategy

The challenge for BBC Films is to maximise the impact the organisation can have with limited resources, to take advantage of recent trends in short film production and distribution, and to make sure its involvement is geared towards supporting the production of feature film. In addition to tracking short films as a way to track talent, BBC Films is currently involved in shorts in the following ways.

#### BBC Film Network

Since 2008, BBC Films has directly supported the Film Network, which is both a curated platform for quality short films and a community for filmmakers. The Film Network is a way to engage and support a far wider range of filmmakers and a greater variety of storytelling. For a filmmaker, internet distribution via the Film Network compliments, and can offer considerable advantages over, a traditional festival release. It is also a mechanism to introduce short film to a new audience. The relaunched Film Network will be more tightly integrated into other BBC websites, and by covering film in the UK more generally, offers a range of content beyond short films.

#### Pilot short film production schemes

BBC Films has recently run two schemes, producing five shorts each, both targeted towards developing talent and relationships with filmmakers who it might work with in the future. The films have been co-financed with other partners, the UK Film Council and BBC Comedy, in part to keep costs down.

## The future

The short film schemes have exceeded BBC Films expectations. Although conceived as a vehicle for talent development, one short was nominated for an Oscar®. This success, and the involvement of TV friendly talent, has meant that a number of shorts will screen on BBC 3. As a result, BBC Films hopes to continue limited, targeted investment in the production of short films. More broadly, the proliferation and increased popularity of short form content, for instance on YouTube, bodes well for increased interest in short films.

## Film4

(With thanks to Peter Carlton)

### Summary

- For Film 4, the rationale for involvement in shorts is to explore feature talent.

### Context

- Shorts with purely cultural ambitions –as art – are, for Film4, a bit of a side-show;
- The hit rate for Film4's short film projects and for short film schemes in general, is small, but this is "as it should be".

### Strategy

Film4 has supported UK Film Council shorts schemes, in particular Cinema Extreme. Film4 also has a discretionary shorts fund and has supported filmmakers including Sam Taylor-Wood and Martin McDonagh, as a deliberate strategy to try out potentially promising feature directors. Even with this, the hit rate is comparatively low.

### Working with the UK Film Council

Peter Carlton believes that the UK Film Council has – historically – got its short film strategy more or less right. Digital Shorts in particular, although sometimes problematic in the detail of execution, is a welcome initiative for access, diversity and cultural democracy. However, he also feels that Digital Shorts – and possibly the other strands – need to be reinvented.

In his view, it is important for the public sector to continue to provide support for shorts. Access and diversity are essential values and valid criteria for the public sector. It is very unlikely that the market alone will deliver diversity. Even open platforms like the internet, Bebo and YouTube are not meritocracies – the best (and certainly the most deserving) will not necessarily thrive. If the UK Film Council does not look after entry level talent, then who will? The UK Film Council and its National and Regional

Screen Agency partners are the most appropriate bodies to fulfil that function. It should be core to the UK Film Council's mission.

### **The UK short film universe**

The Film4 view is that shorts are a better predictor of feature filmmaking ability than pop promos, advertising and so on, but are still not a perfect predictor. Even shorts that get festival attention are not necessarily good predictors, as they can be over-reliant on techniques like voice over, or may represent the only creative idea a filmmaker ever has - the equivalent of one hit wonders in pop music. Short filmmakers can also be swayed by fashion; they may attempt to recognise trends in festival taste, or emulate popular feature themes. This can give a false indication of ability (and can become very dull). Film4 does, however, look at all relevant media to identify talent – artists' films, TV drama, pop promos, etc – and has taken an active interest in directors from all of these sources.

### **Future shorts**

Looking to the future, Carlton is not convinced that the Digital Shorts model of equal geographic access is still appropriate. He would propose a model which worked through fewer centres of excellence around the UK. These centres should be outward facing and proactive about partnership, and open to application from all. There is the potential for film workshops, such as Knowle West Media Centre and Threshold Studios, to act as a support/feeder network for centres of excellence.



## Appendix XI      Short film internationally

In Europe, including the UK, short films are widely seen as representing the future of filmmaking. They play a role in visual experimentation, creativity and talent emergence, and act as a training ground for directors and producers who then move on to make feature films. A wide range of country-specific public funding mechanisms is in place to support the sector. The following table summarises the support available for short film in a sample of European countries.

In these countries, it is customary to define a short film as being less than 60 minutes in length, though the required duration of films funded through individual schemes varies. An exception to the 60-minute rule is made by the Italian Film Commission, which provides loan funding for short films of under 75 minutes in duration, covering up to 100% of the budget, to a maximum of €75,000. An interesting feature of the Italian system is that if the loan is not paid back within a three-year period, the state can take possession of the rights of the film for the outstanding amount of the loan.

In addition to the shorter short films (5-20 minutes), many national public funds in Europe finance short films of around 30 minutes and over. The schemes for these longer short films often have national broadcasters on board as co-financiers and broadcasting partners. These initiatives could be seen as bridging the gap between shorter short films and feature films and/or television drama. For example, the Finnish Film Foundation and YLE, the Finnish national broadcaster, have been co-financing four 28-minute novella films a year since 2007, with the aim of encouraging new writers, directors and producers to create fresh and original films. The novella films are made for €170k budget each (co-financed by the partners on a 50-50 basis), and broadcast on a dedicated programming slot on YLE's Channel 1.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cinema Extreme has not collected data on the diversity of its applicants only its awardees over the period 2002/03 to 2007/08. During this time female awardees have fallen from 50% to 33%, ethnic minority awardees began and finished this time period at 0% though reached a high of 18% in 2007/07 – over the entire time period measured ethnic minority representation averaged 7%. No awards have been made to disabled filmmakers.

**Table 17: Support for short film in a sample of European countries<sup>88</sup>**

	<b>France</b>	<b>Belgium</b>	<b>Netherlands</b>	<b>Ireland</b>	<b>Poland</b>	<b>Greece</b>
<b>Population (mn)</b>	63.5	10.6	16.3	4.4	38.2	11.2
<b>Domestic feature films and co-productions p.a.</b>	133+95	42+15	20+1	5+10	39+9	20+5
<b>Short films p.a.</b>	450	100	160	50	250* (*see note 1)	80
<b>Short film financiers</b>	CNC, Grec, Procirep, Ministry of Youth and Sport, regional & local authorities	Centre du cinema et de l'Audiovisuel, Hainaut Cinema, CLAP, Agence Wallonne des Telecomms., VAF	Netherlands Film Fund, Dutch Cultural Broadcasting Fund, Rotterdam Film Commission	Irish Film Board, RTE (Irish broadcaster)	Polish Film Institute, TVP (Polish broadcaster), Polish Filmmakers' Association	Greek Film Center, ERT (broadcaster)
<b>Schemes</b>	9* (*see note 2)	5	5	8	3	3
<b>Awards per film</b>	€2k-€70k	€35k-€87k	up to €30k	€10k-€90k	n/a* (*see note 3)	€10k-€28k
<b>Support available for</b>	Pre-production, post-production, companies, digital production technology, expenses, first timers (18-30 yrs old)	Production	Development, production, distribution & marketing	Production	Film schools and training programmes that produce short films, production	Production & prizes for finished films
<b>Notable schemes</b>	<u>CNC Corporate Program</u> Backs the growth of dynamic production companies by supporting max 3 films per company	<u>Promimage</u> Interest-free loans to audiovisual projects that develop or use innovative digital tools or procedure	<u>One Night Stand</u> 9 x 40-minute shorts per year, all screened at a festival, broadcast on TV and screened digitally online	<u>Virtual Cinema</u> Under 2-minute films aimed at new distribution platforms	<u>Short Film Script Competition</u> 18 x 30-minute films made each year, by students or directors who have not yet made a feature/ full-length film	<u>Microfilm</u> The broadcaster ERT finances 15 short films a year, selected via a two-round script competition

Notes:

1 This figure includes films made as part of higher education

2 Excludes some regional measures

3 Polish Film Institute support is indirect – it is channelled via film schools and training schemes

<sup>88</sup>

Source: adapted from *Short film production support institutions in Europe* (February 2009), MEDIA Desk France.

## Beyond Europe 1: New Zealand Film Commission's (NZFC) short film strategy

Outside Europe, New Zealand provides an interesting example of a smaller country whose focused short film strategy has been successful in assisting filmmakers to progress to feature filmmaking and in making a mark internationally. A recent review of the NZFC's short film strategy revealed that of the 197 filmmakers that made short films through its short film scheme between 1997 and 2007,<sup>89</sup> over one-third have accessed NZFC feature film development funding and/or been credited as a writer, director or producer on a feature film – exceeding its original target of 25%.

On the exhibition side, film festivals are generally regarded as the most important showcase of short films internationally. There are more than a thousand festivals in the world that showcase short films, but only a handful of these are seen as having a significant impact on progression to feature films.<sup>90</sup> Of the 73 NZFC short films completed by June 2007, 50% were invited to A-list festivals,<sup>91</sup> defined by the organisation's marketing team as "major events with prestige and influence", as follows:

- Anney International Animation Film Festival
- Berlin Film Festival
- BFI London Film Festival
- Cannes Film Festival
- Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival
- Edinburgh International Film Festival
- Hiroshima International Animation Film Festival
- Melbourne International Film Festival
- New York Film Festival
- Pusan International Film Festival
- Rotterdam International Film Festival
- Sundance International Film Festival
- Tampere Film Festival
- Telluride Film Festival
- Valladolid International Film Festival
- Venice International Film Festival

---

<sup>89</sup> The review focused only on films made through the NZFC's own scheme (which is not aimed at entry level filmmakers) and not on all short films made in New Zealand, nor all publicly funded shorts.

<sup>90</sup> Source: Ian Francis, *Short Film Export* (November 2008); policy report to the UK Film Council Film Export Development Team.

<sup>91</sup> Source: Ruth Harley et al, *Review of NZFC Short Film Strategy* (October 2007).

The NZFC review deemed the number of A-list festival invitations as significant, because it observed a correlation between a director's A-list festival success with a short film, and the likelihood of that director's first feature film achieving festival success and/or international sales, and therefore a return on investment to the NZFC.

### **Beyond Europe 2: South Africa's national film and video foundation (NFVF)'s short film strategy<sup>92</sup>**

Although short films are not perceived to play a major role in the broader framework of film and television production activities in South Africa, they are nonetheless seen by filmmakers to represent an opportunity to showcase directorial and writing ability for the cinema screen. The NFVF only finances four or five short films per year. More short films are made in the context of higher education, and the remainder are largely self-financed by filmmakers. There is no formal tracking of the number of short films made without NFVF funding; the perception is that independent short filmmaking is not widespread in South Africa.

An interesting new initiative in development since 2009 is the NFVF's plan to join forces with Africa First (an initiative of Focus Features) in the search for new talent across the African continent. Africa First awards five prizes of \$10,000 towards the production of short film proposals. The approach is hands-off, allowing filmmakers to find their voice and giving them an opportunity to interact with a panel of international advisors. The filmmakers are free to seek additional funds elsewhere to complete their films at a budget level that makes sense for the short. The first of these short films is due for completion in autumn 2009, and the NFVF hopes the filmmakers will gain international attention through their association with Focus Features.

Most of South Africa's feature film writers and directors come from a television drama background, with few individuals emerging via the commercials or documentary routes. The NFVF views short films as an opportunity to drive the career of talented commercials, documentary and TV drama directors and writers into the feature film arena, as good short films can act as their calling cards.

There is currently no indication that internet distribution is significantly changing the market for short films in South Africa. However, the NFVF anticipates that cell phones will be a future platform for short film exhibition, due to South African telecommunications companies' hunger for content.

---

<sup>92</sup> This case study is based on an interview conducted by Northern Alliance with Clarence Hamilton and Ryan Haidarian of the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF).

## Appendix XII      Data availability

### Summary

Northern Alliance attempted to obtain data that would encapsulate the UK's short film universe, and specifically the UK Film Council's role within it. The data can be split into two categories: inputs and outputs.

The input data include the number, aim and type of filmmaking schemes; scheme funding per year (UK Film Council, Skillset and partnership); film budgets and filmmakers/participants.

The output data include the number of films made (per scheme, per year); their duration; format (film/digital); screenings and awards; revenues; and distribution and exhibition data. Plus, the diversity and career progression of the filmmakers was also subject to research.

An initial review of all data available from the UK Film Council and its short film scheme management partner, Lifesize Pictures, was undertaken. These data presented problems, as they were incomplete and non-uniform in coverage, (eg number of years), type and format. Output data for screenings and career progression, where present, were anecdotal, qualitative and not centrally collated. Although for some issues (such as talent audit, recoupment, and National and Regional Screen Agency Digital Shorts diversity key performance indicators), spreadsheets and methods have become standardised, in many other instances this is not the case. Even in the case of diversity, reporting styles and detail can vary greatly between schemes.

A questionnaire to gather quantitative data from the UK Film Council's strategic partners was used to supplement what was already available. This questionnaire is included as Appendix XX. It is important to note that across the various strategic partners, and across the schemes, the types of data collected differed greatly. In some cases, data noted as 'not collected' had in fact been submitted to the UK Film Council, and in others, data provided in the questionnaire do not tally with UK Film Council figures. Additional research into non-public funded short film activity also contributes to the report.

A supplementary questionnaire for filmmakers was also used, the results of which have fed into the report's overall findings

A detailed breakdown of the problematic issues with the available data is set out below, followed by a series of recommendations.

## Problems and recommendations

The main issues concern the division of labour between the UK Film Council and Lifesize Pictures, and their specific responsibilities for data collection. At present, inputs are not joined up to outputs and this makes it difficult to assess whether objectives have been achieved.

There does not seem to be a coherent policy, or system, to determine which organisation collects which data. The result is that neither the UK Film Council nor Lifesize are sure what data they actually have, and this is further complicated by problems encountered by Lifesize in obtaining data from the strategic partners.

## Inputs

UK Film Council data include:

- A complete list of all the short films made under their schemes, their title and filmmakers for the whole period of review;
- Expenditure figures for the funding of each scheme, by partner and region for the period of review;
- Partner/Skillset funding data for each scheme in total for 2008/09;
- A detailed breakdown of partner funders for Digital Shorts 2008-2010.

Just these few data sets amply illustrate that the key input data are now being recorded, but are incomplete for the whole period and are not joined up to key outputs. Further information is available in individual applications and contracts, but is not always collated in the same way.

## Outputs

### Awards and nominations

The UK Film Council holds centralised lists of short films and the awards and nominations they have achieved. However, screenings are also included under this heading, which means that neither the UK Film Council nor Lifesize Pictures kept regularly maintained records of the awards/screenings of the films to hand for analysis. This data set appears to aim at being comprehensive and the application of value to any award/festival appears to be done on a case by case basis, depending on analysis required.

The strategic partners record awards and screenings on an *ad hoc*, continuous basis and are reliant on relationships with filmmakers to keep the information flowing. The decentralised and personalised nature of this data collection makes

it subject to loss because of staff turnover and the ending of personal ties. This applies to the collection of career development information as well.

### **Career development tracking**

Lifesize Pictures has recently acquired a Microsoft Access database which it commissioned for the purposes of talent tracking. Although the database will allow talent's future projects, film sales and awards information to be tracked, it is far from complete. It does not collect screening information, broadcast data or personal data, which might allow the cross checking of talent development by diversity measures, for instance. It would be a good idea to commission a database designed to record data which would measure specific agreed objectives of the UK Film Council and its strategic partners.

### **Distribution and exhibition**

Information on distribution deals is derived from revenue reporting and individual contract negotiations. No information on broadcast or online distribution is held by the UK Film Council or Lifesize Pictures, and there is wide variation in what data are collected by individual National and Regional Screen Agencies. The collection is not systematic and is not transferred upstream. There is seemingly no way to gauge the audience of the short films produced by the public schemes.

The BBC Film Network was unable to provide Lifesize with online viewing figures for the UK Film Council's films. On request, Lifesize was able to obtain viewing data from Shooting People, but this does not appear to be a regular practice.

Individual strategic partners were able to give broadcast figures for their films, but these figures do not appear to be collected or totalled by either the UK Film Council or Lifesize Pictures.

### **Filmmaker diversity and screenings**

UK Film Council partners deliver quarterly reports which now provide a fairly comprehensive assessment of diversity key performance indicators for the schemes. Although in some cases the data are incomplete, with only the awardee or applicant data being available (as opposed to both), at least a system is in place to capture it.

Screenings information is included in the quarterly reports, but this data are anecdotal and written. The ongoing collection of information on screenings is

interlinked with obtaining career development information, a process which relies on continued relationships between National and Regional Screen Agencies and filmmakers.

Despite the quarterly reporting of screenings and diversity key performance indicators together, very few strategic partners are able to cross-reference the diversity of their filmmakers with career progression data. The fact that strategic partners are able to provide quarterly reports including these data sets, might indicate their ability to update a database quarterly with all relevant data sets.

### **Revenue reporting and accounting: sales and distribution data**

Commission statements are collected from strategic partners by Lifesize Pictures and the UK Film Council. These data are far from comprehensive or complete for all National and Regional Screen Agencies; only Digital Shorts information is collated, and at present the data available are often not even discriminated by year. The information often bypasses Lifesize Pictures and goes straight to the UK Film Council, as its Legal and Business Affairs department is involved with individual contracts.



## Appendix XIII Platforms and audiences for short films

The stakeholders consulted clearly view film festivals in the UK and internationally as the most important means of obtaining exposure and recognition for short films.

"Festivals are THE audience for short films. It is here that the filmmaker needs to be successful to build reputation and career."

*View expressed at filmmakers' focus group during the Edinburgh International Film Festival*

Interviewees cited the Clermont-Ferrand short film festival in France as an example of a short film event with mass appeal, demonstrating the potential audience value in short film; Onedotzero, an international festival of cutting edge audiovisual content, is also rated.

Festivals such as the Encounters Short Film Festival, Edinburgh International Film Festival and the BFI London Film Festival, and short film distributors Dazzle Films and Shorts International were also named as key supporters of short film in the UK. However, some interviewees expressed frustration at the overall level of interest in short film in the UK.

"The general public has forgotten – or never knew – that shorts existed and are of interest."

*Liz Harkman, Encounters Short Film Festival*

Online platforms were generally viewed as poor substitutes for festival representation.

"The short film audience is at festivals. There is also an audience via the internet, but these films are more fun things and games, rather than representing the work of future filmmakers."

*Maggie Ellis, Head of Production, Film London*

A range of organisations, including the BBC Film Network,<sup>93</sup> Babelgum and YouTube, are experimenting with different strategies of showcasing short films via the internet. Online filmmakers' community Shooting People was also frequently mentioned by interviewees.

The emergence of user-friendly online video streaming sites – Bebo, YouTube *et al* – has led to a higher number of shorts being viewed (streaming site Bebo alone

---

<sup>93</sup> The BBC Film Network, first trialled in 2005, now has 550 films available, with 20,000 members and approximately 60-80,000 unique users per month.

facilitated over one billion downloads of short 'films' each month<sup>94</sup>), with other new technologies and platforms (3G mobile, iPlayer) adding to that number.

Although the stakeholders consulted agreed that the internet provides potential for growing and expanding the audiences for short film, the consensus appears to be that, so far, online showcases either fail to differentiate user-generated content from professionally made short films, or have not yet developed a valuable audience.

The following quote is typical of many of the views of the stakeholders consulted.

"Online viewing platforms [for short films] are specialist and have not obtained mainstream exposure. The current reality is that the majority of people do not know how or where to access this content."

*Mary Davis, Head of Industry, Edinburgh International Film Festival*

It is implicit in the consensus view represented above that most interviewees strike a complex and perhaps unconscious divide between the mass audiences watching a wide range of moving image material online (pop videos, humorous animals, vlogs and captured footage of real life, but also authored shorts of all levels of competence and genesis), and the much smaller audiences choosing to watch shorts via outlets such as Animate or the BBC Film Network. It also seems that interviewees regard the broader range of online short form content as in essence televisual, whereas those who participate or invest in short film regard it as essentially cinematic.

Whether because of a failure of online audiences to understand short film, or a failure of filmmakers to understand online audiences, the promise of the internet is seen as largely unfulfilled. Filmmakers tended to view traditional means of distribution as still the best route to reach the public.

DVD compilations are perceived as a good way of showcasing short films, especially labels such as Cinema 16, that specialise in curating compilations of short films. Such compilations are, however, regarded as niche rather than mass-market in nature. There was widespread concern that UK broadcasters now rarely programme short films, apart from occasional one-offs and the strands that they have financed themselves (see Appendix X for more detail on broadcasters views on short film).

---

<sup>94</sup> Source: Anthony Lilley, *Arts Broadcasting Towards Arts Media* (2007), Arts Council England.

“There isn’t much of an audience on television, not because people wouldn’t watch shorts, but because television isn’t programming them... In France, Canal Plus, TV5 and Arte programme shorts, and there is an audience appetite for them – but this doesn’t happen overnight. There needs to be consistent, long-term support.”  
*Claire Cook, BBC Film Network*

Despite these frustrations, the consensus among the filmmakers interviewed was that the general public was not the primary audience for short film in the UK. The main target audience consists of the various stakeholders in the film industry – agents, talent scouts, producers, financiers and filmmakers themselves.

“There is an audience for short films. At present it is dominated by those connected to film, filmmakers, people who know filmmakers, those connected to the arts. This is because the availability of short films is generally known only to this sector.”

*Mary Davies, Head of Industry, Edinburgh International Film Festival*

The audience for short film may broaden, especially when a younger, born digital generation comes to maturity, but for most filmmakers this is of secondary importance to reaching out to the people who can help them make their next film, be it short or feature length.

## Appendix XIV

### Short film versus other media as preparation for feature filmmaking

There is a strong perception among the stakeholders that while music videos and commercials allow filmmakers to practise technique and visual flair, they do not fully prepare filmmakers for narrative filmmaking.

"The UK has produced great filmmakers from different visual arts. From the commercials world, directors ranging from Sir Alan Parker to Jonathan Glazer; from theatre, Sam Mendes and Stephen Daldry." *Alexandra Stone, CMP*

"Shorts cannot be seen in a vacuum – they co-exist with, and there is a lot of cross-over between, music videos, commercials and art film."

*Rebecca Mark-Lawson, Lifesize Pictures*

"Directing a mobile phone commercial and conveying a dramatic narrative are hugely different, but a practitioner's involvement in one is not mutually exclusive to the other."

*Mary Davies, Head of Industry, Edinburgh International Film Festival*

"Ads, promos and so on all tend to have a fixed format – only shorts allow filmmakers to tell their own story and experiment and find their own way with content and format." *Mark Cosgrove, Encounters Short Film Festival*

"Some audiovisual disciplines, such as music videos and commercials, allow filmmakers to practice technical styles, but they do not prepare filmmakers in narrative filmmaking. On the other hand, directors coming from theatre risk the danger of over-relying on technicians if they rush into long-form filmmaking too soon." *Mia Bays, Producer and Creative Executive, Film London's Microwave*

"Shorts are not necessarily useful – it depends. For example, so far, the teams that have been selected to train via feature film production through Film London's Microwave scheme have come from a variety of backgrounds. The director and producers of *Shifty* came from a background of music videos and commercials; the director of feature documentary *The British Guide to Showing Off* comes from an art and documentary background, while the director of *Mum & Dad* came from shorts and its producer from commercials. We are interested in people with a range of experience."

*Maggie Ellis, Head of Production, Film London*

## Appendix XV      Access and diversity

Part of the public value of short filmmaking is its ability to be more diverse than feature length filmmaking has tended to be. A commonly held belief among interviewees was that the writers, directors and producers of short films are likely to come from a broader cross-section of the population than those of feature films. Some stakeholders observed that the lower cost, coupled with the ability to undertake proactive diversity selection procedures in short film schemes, ensure that people from diverse backgrounds are given opportunities to gain filmmaking experience and tell their own stories.

While there is general consensus among stakeholders that short film schemes contribute to access and diversity objectives, opinion amongst those consulted tended to fall into two broad camps:

1. Those who feel that access and diversity are at the very heart of the work that short film schemes should be delivering;
2. Those who do not talk in terms of access and diversity, but focus almost exclusively on talent. When prompted, access and diversity are described as “implicit” or, as one focus group respondent stated, “we are running a talent scheme... we would be foolish not to look everywhere for talent.”

“Diversity is in your head the whole time – it is ‘just what we do’. Diversity is implicit in our remit to find talent.”

*Regional Screen Agency Digital Shorts, Production Executive*

There is some sensitivity about collecting diversity data alongside creative information; according to one strategic partner executive, “these are not issues that should be driven by monitoring, ie a need to tick boxes. This could result in turning away better filmmakers to meet diversity objectives.”

In some genres, without shorts there would be very little opportunity in the UK for cinematic presentation. For example, animation intended for the cinema in the UK is dominated by shorts, and formal experiment and artists’ film is largely confined to short formats. However, there is disquiet at the limited diversity still evident in short films and among their makers, and that both latitudinal and longitudinal constraints exist.

“You have to address the diversity issues in feature filmmaking at the same time as opening up short filmmaking to minorities. You won’t make the feature film industry more diverse just by making short filmmaking diverse.”

*Julie Baines, Dan Films*

Despite concerns that more could be done in areas such as diversity, there was widespread appreciation of the public value of short filmmaking in developing talent to refresh and sustain the UK film industry and the UK’s film culture.

“Short filmmaking is part of the fabric of UK film.”

*Alexandra Stone, CMP*

Short film contracts, terms and conditions, accounts, recoupment and reporting

### Key issues

- Reporting on money made from sales of short films is inefficient; policing and reporting costs too much time and money when returns are so minimal;
- Contracting is too inflexible, and the area of business affairs requires more funding to ensure more appropriate deals.

### Background and questions arising

The UK Film Council issues contracts for individual short films, their terms and conditions, reporting obligations and recoupment and accounting procedures, are currently in the same style as contracts for full feature films:

**Table 18:** A comparison of short film schemes' current contracts

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Commission</b>	<b>Expenses</b>	<b>Accounting and reporting</b>	<b>Recoupment</b>
<b>Cinema Extreme</b>	Up to 35%	The lower of £200 p.a. or 15% of sales	Separate trust account, annual reporting (£6m for two years)	Net of commission and expenses, 100% to UKFC & C4 until 50% recoupment, 50% thereafter
<b>Completion Fund</b>	Reasonable	Annual reporting for five years	Net of commission and expenses, 50% to UKFC until recouped, then 100% to producer	
<b>Digital Shorts/Digital Nation</b>	Up to 20% (available to filmmakers, strategic partner's decision)	Reasonable	Strategic partner to act as collection agent, annual reporting	Net of commission and expenses, 100% to UKFC and strategic partner until 50% recoupment, 50% thereafter

To date no short film has fully recouped its UK Film Council Investment.<sup>95</sup>

### **Reporting**

Lifeseize Pictures has a system for dealing with revenue reporting and relies on obtaining information from national and regional screen agencies and filmmakers.

**Cinema Extreme:** Producers account for revenues and send annual statements to the UK Film Council's Business Affairs and Production Finance departments.

**Completion Fund:** Mayavision reports to the UK Film Council's Business Affairs and Production Finance departments.

**Digital Shorts:** Each National and Regional Screen Agency is required to account to Lifeseize Pictures annually on the performance of films and sales, however there has been inconsistency in receiving this reporting.

### **Background to current practice**

#### **Contract logic**

There are several reasons why current short films contracts are a cut-down version of the feature film contracts, rather than being a more simple grant agreement:

- Part of the UK Film Council's mission has been to professionalise short filmmaking, and just as filmmakers use shorts to gain experience of the process of making films and developing their creativity, they also need to gain an insight into professional business practices in order to prepare them for moving on to making a feature film;
- The short film contracts have been drafted to reflect:
  - (a) the fact that the UK Film Council distributes Lottery money and is therefore responsible for ensuring accountability and value for money in its use. Over time, provisions have been added to some of the templates to reflect best practice and to address issues that have arisen at partner level to do with openness and transparency of processes; and

---

<sup>95</sup>

Source: UK Film Council Business Affairs department.



- (b) VAT is paid on awards and provisions need to be included to ensure that the UK Film Council acquires a share of copyright, a credit and is entitled to recoup and share in net profits from short films. Note: the recoupment provisions on short films have been softened so that the UK Film Council only seeks to recoup half its investment;
- Exploitation/distribution of short films may not be the primary reason for making the films, but there are still some distribution/exhibition opportunities and sales available. In order to maximise those opportunities the films have to be fully cleared, and the UK Film Council contracting process provides for this.

### **Role of the UK Film Council's Business Affairs Department**

The fact that UK Film Council takes a share of copyright in the films puts it at risk of legal action in the event that a filmmaker infringes third party copyright or fails to fully clear the film. Therefore, the UK Film Council has provided all short filmmakers (whether directly, on Completion Fund and Cinema Extreme films, or indirectly through its partners on Digital Shorts) with template clearance agreements for cast and crew, including director, producer, music composer and writer. This is to ensure that good standard documentation is used and that all short films produced through UK Film Council funding are fully cleared. This procedure was adopted in response to many problems in the early years of the shorts programmes, where films were not properly cleared and could not be licensed for use, or where the filmmakers got into disagreements with each other or with the Digital Shorts partner. The use of music is also subject to stringent rules, because experience has shown that obtaining music rights can be prohibitively expensive for short films, as well as being time-consuming to clear.

The provision of the clearance pack has therefore reduced the number of problems brought to Lifesize Pictures and the UK Film Council's Business Affairs department. Nevertheless, issues continue to arise such as where the Business Affairs team discover late into the process that a filmmaker has used, and failed to clear, another party's copyright – for example, based the script on a short story or poem, or filmed someone's trademark or artwork. Often these issues are not spotted at the outset, and Lifesize or the Business Affairs team have to intervene. Also, the UK Film Council's partners/agents may have limited knowledge of legal and compliance issues, so they naturally seek advice from Lifesize and, where Lifesize cannot help, from the UK Film Council's Business Affairs department. In general, agents/partners do try to field the majority of queries.

The Business Affairs department, together with Lifesize or Mayavision as appropriate, are directly involved in training and advising short filmmakers on the business side of production for the Completion Fund and Cinema Extreme. In

both cases, the Business Affairs team has found it easier to hold training sessions with the filmmakers at the beginning of the commissioning process to explain budgeting and scheduling; how to clear film; broadcasting compliance issues; and the overarching process, from greenlighting the films via the Production Finance Committee, to receiving the Lottery funds in the bank account. The Business Affairs team has also written a step-by-step guide for filmmakers when they need to draw down funding from the UK Film Council. The combination of this training and the guide have reduced the number of queries coming from filmmakers. The training sessions also flag up problems that might arise in the production, such as broadcasting compliance issues or use of music, and allow filmmakers to hear about issues that other filmmakers may be facing. The Digital Shorts partners also run their own training sessions which may touch upon some of the same issues.

### **Sales and distribution: rights and recoupment**

The UK Film Council's Business Affairs department is also often asked to look at sales agency/distribution agreements on behalf of the filmmakers (for Completion Fund or Cinema Extreme), or for the partners (on Digital Shorts) in order for them to avoid seeking and paying for external legal advice.

The distribution rights to Cinema Extreme and Completion Fund films are held by the producers, but they can appoint a sales agent if one is interested. After experimenting with a third party sales agent for Digital Shorts (Short Circuit), the distribution rights in Digital Shorts are now held by the National and Regional Screen Agencies for two reasons. Firstly, to ensure transparency on any income: the fact that the UK Film Council has the contractual right to recoup means that, in order to comply with Lottery Financial Directions, it has to exercise a level of diligence in enforcing that right. Secondly, in terms of the legacy of short films, it is assumed that, for third parties seeking a licence to show a film in ten-20 years time, it would be easier to approach the National and Regional Screen Agencies or their successor bodies for permission, than to try to track down a defunct production company.

In addition, not all Digital Shorts are produced through production companies. Often the individual producer, writer and director enter into an agreement directly with the relevant National or Regional Screen Agency which effectively acts as a production company, and therefore needs to hold all rights centrally.

Despite the fact that short films do not generally recoup their investment, some films do generate income. Certain shorts have been sold to HBO, Arte France and the MTV Network, for example. However, data on distribution/sales are patchy. Data should be provided directly from producers to the UK Film Council for the

Completion Fund, and from the National and Regional Screen Agencies on Digital Shorts films, every 12 months. Completion Fund data comes from Mayavision to the UK Film Council and is copied to Lifesize Pictures; this is the least problematic of the schemes. In other cases, Lifesize has helped the UK Film Council to chase producers and strategic partners, but results have not been comprehensive.

Note that the UK Film Council logo/credit on a film can be perceived as a mark of authority and it therefore has brand value for filmmakers. This can generate its own problems if used inappropriately in negotiations with third parties.

The principal training schemes<sup>96</sup> (with Skillset's contribution in brackets) are:

- The Digital Shorts scheme training provided by the Script Factory, which has a core programme covering the essentials of digital production and distribution, as well as specialist training modules in directing, producing, animation and documentary filmmaking. Designed to empower filmmakers to get the best and most appropriate training (approximately £120,000 a year);
- Cinema Extreme training across the scheme's development and production process and, to achieve the scheme's overall goal, in how to bridge the gap between shorts and features (approximately £50,000 a year);
- The Blank Slate scheme focusing on the progression route from shorts to features (approximately £50,000 a year).

Below is a summary of the evaluation of the training provided to date in conjunction with the UK Film Council's programmes and supported by Skillset. Please note, all evaluations were performed by third parties, and varying methodologies and formats were adopted.

### **Cinema Extreme training scheme 2006/07**

Training is run in conjunction with the production scheme, and was noted as successful, as indicated by the commissioning of five films instead of the intended four, due to the high standard of developed projects. Training of staff was noted to be highly successful, as measured by career progression and credits. A project manager was trained successfully to become an executive producer, and the project coordinator was offered a post at the NCF.

Feedback from participants and partners was noted as consistently positive. Participant targets were met. Some filmmakers whose films were not commissioned as part of the scheme have been brought into other schemes at the UK Film Council or Film4.

---

<sup>96</sup> Also relevant to the makers of short film is Skillset's funding of the Bridging the Gap scheme run by the Scottish Documentary Institute (based at the Edinburgh College of Art, part of Screen Academy Scotland), which aims to make seven short documentary films a year, each ten minutes long.

The training scheme is best known for developing directors and producers, but also benefits editors, directors of photography, camera operators and production accountants. Both the film production and the training scheme have strong track records in terms of their output which gives them crucial industry credibility.

Regarding future recommendations: changes have been proposed to the administration of hardship support and bespoke elements of training, to reduce labour intensive bureaucratic work and increase efficiency of delivery.

### **Digital Shorts Script Factory training programme, Sept 2007-July 2008 and Sept 2008-March 2009**

Collated information taken from 117 feedback forms, relating to six workshops with 153 attendees, revealed the following:

- The location and length of the training courses was almost universally approved of, though importantly one disabled participant noted difficulty with access at the Soho Theatre. The majority of respondents found each of the general training sessions useful, but with variation in participants' prior experience/preparation noted as a problem in some cases. 10% of respondents highlighted "not enough notice" as an issue; some participants were only able to be contacted two days before the course so a lot of preparatory work had to be done at short notice.
- Producer, documentary and animation specific sessions also obtained very positive feedback with one exception. The art of storyboards and animation, which received 42% "not useful" responses.
- In general, it appears that the Digital Shorts training is well-received and regarded as comprehensive, with few suggestions for anything else needing to be covered by the courses.

The evaluation process itself consists of informal discussions during the programme, formal feedback questionnaires after each workshop, a formal debrief with workshop tutors, dialogue between Digital Shorts partners and their selected filmmakers, an annual report upon completion and long-term filmmaker tracking.

Tracking is proposed to be conducted via email questionnaire to analyse the value of training as a filmmaker's career develops. However, no results were available at the time of writing this report.

### **FeatureLab 2007/08**

FeatureLab is a feature film scriptwriting and development training scheme with a BME focus, run by B3 Media, Film4, Binger Filmlab and Skillset. From 121 applicants, 14 were chosen. Training was delivered in London and Amsterdam via Skype and through one-to-one interviews with Film4. It was supported by Cannes attendance, and culminated in a pitching weekend during which seven participants pitched to a panel from the industry.

Out of the 14 participants, one is in development with Film4, two have had scripts optioned, three have been signposted to Powerlab, and four are still in talks with Film4 and B3 Media about their futures.

### **4mations Digital Shorts Training 2009**

A one-day workshop was attended by 22 selected filmmakers across the nations and regions from the Digital Shorts scheme. The feedback from participants and tutors was noted as: "incredibly positive throughout, with only minor changes made along the way in terms of the type and amount of information given to the participants."

International festivals are crucial for the development of filmmakers and the gathering of influential supporters, potential funders and peers.

**UK film festivals**

Stakeholders deemed selection for festivals and festival awards as important measures of success for short films.

The two key UK film festivals, the Edinburgh International Film Festival and the BFI London Film Festival are, not surprisingly, the two festivals that were mentioned most frequently as key short film players in the UK.

The Encounters Short Film Festival in Bristol is also a desirable showcase and networking opportunity for short filmmakers and industry talent spotters.

Other, more niche festivals that carry some kudos with stakeholders include:

- Animate
- Onedotzero
- Rushes Soho Shorts

Flatpack Festival and 7inch Cinema also get some recognition, although these are arguably less industry targeted and more enthusiast focused.

Out of a plethora of festivals celebrating diversity and minority groups, Birds Eye View, BFM (Black Filmmaker) International Film Festival, Oskar Bright, and Wolverhampton Disability Film Festival hold national recognition.

The Birds Eye View opening night is always a programme of shorts, and to date has always sold out. This programming is both a strategic decision given the challenges of finding a headline film made by a woman, but more positively, the organisers feel that a well-programmed selection of shorts can act a taster menu for the festival to follow.

**International film festivals**

Many stakeholders interviewed showed knowledge and enthusiasm for international festivals, notably the Clermont Ferrand International Short Film Festival and the Toronto International Film Festival.

*Short Film Export*, a study commissioned by the UK Film Council's Export Development team in 2008, found that, "UK short films perform very well on the international stage, with a consistently strong presence at major festivals and at the Academy Awards®."

Filmmakers interviewed for the study considered the international circuit to be of huge importance to their careers, citing, "skills development, confidence-building and the opportunity to test their work out on an audience," as some of the benefits.



Appendix XIX

List of interviewees

	Organisation	Interviewee
1	104 Films/ Magic Hour	Justin Edgar
2	Animate	Gary Thomas
3	B3	Marc Boothe
4	BBC Film Network	Claire Cook
5	BBC Films	Jack Arbuthnott
6	Birds Eye View	Rachel Millward
7	Channel 4	Peter Carlton
8	Creative Management and Productions (CMP)	Alexandra Stone
9	Dan Films	Julie Baines
10	DigiCult/ Scotland	Paul Welch
11	Edinburgh International Film Festival	Mary Davies
12	Encounters Short Film Festival	Mark Cosgrove, Liz Harkman
13	Filmmaker	Rene Mohandas
14	Lifesize Pictures	Rebecca Mark-Lawson, Julia Caithness, Jude Goldrei
15	London Film School	Ben Gibson
16	Mayavision	Sally Thomas, Aaron Young
17	MIA Films and Microwave	Mia Bays
18	National Film and Television School	Lynda Miles
19	Producer	Kevin Loader
20	Skillset	Neil Peplow, Helen North & Paul Green
21	The Bureau	Matthieu de Braconier
22	UK Film Council	Lenny Crooks & Emily Anderton
23	UK Film Council Business Affairs department	Jodie Orme
24	UK Film Council Development Fund	Chris Collins & Lizzie Francke
25	UK Film Council Distribution and Exhibition department	Pete Buckingham
26	UK Film Council Diversity team	Marcia Williams
27	UK Film Council/UK Partnerships department	Tim Cagney, Nikki Christie & Dee Davison
28	United Agents	Sean Gascoine

National and Regional Screen Agency focus group and/or interviews:

	Organisation	Interviewee
1	EM Media	Anna Seifert & Suzanne Alizart
2	Film Agency Wales	Pauline Burt
3	Film London	Maggie Ellis & Jo Cadoret
4	North West Vision and Media	Tara Cook & Will Massa
5	Northern Film and Media	Helen Ross
6	Northern Ireland Screen	Andrew Reid
7	Scottish Screen	Becky Lloyd & Robbie Allen
8	Screen East	Sam Burton
9	Screen South	Miranda Robinson
10	Screen West Midlands	Dan Lawson
11	Screen Yorkshire	Hugo Heppell & Tony Dixon
12	South West Screen	Sarah Jane Meredith

## Appendix XX      Sample survey questionnaire

Appropriate amendments were made to the filmmaker questionnaire, so that it asked the same/similar questions of individuals.

### SHORT FILM IN THE UK: STAKEHOLDER QUESTIONNAIRE

The UK Film Council has commissioned Northern Alliance to produce a report on short film in the UK, including a detailed review of the UK Film Council's support for shorts over the last nine years and recommendations for future action.

The report's findings will principally be used to feed into UK Film Council Board's 2010-2012 Scenario Planning exercise, and to inform the UK Film Council's future approach to the support of short film in the UK.

A key part of the research process is to capture the views of the UK Film Council's strategic partners, co-financiers and other stakeholders in the UK's short film arena. We would therefore be grateful if you took the time to complete this questionnaire, thus helping shape the future for short films in the UK.

For the purposes of this report the working definition of a short film is a film to a maximum of 60 minutes in length; including fiction, animation and documentary.

Please fill in this questionnaire and return to [michael.franklin@northern-alliance.co.uk](mailto:michael.franklin@northern-alliance.co.uk) by May 20, 2009.

---

#### 1. About your organisation and short film initiative/scheme

<b>Name of organisation</b>	
<b>Name of initiative/scheme</b> (if your organisation runs more than one, please fill a separate questionnaire for each)	
<b>Start date of initiative/scheme</b>	
<b>Initiative/scheme budget per year, between years 2006-2009</b>	
<b>Contact individual</b>	
<b>Telephone</b>	
<b>Email</b>	

## 2. Objectives of short filmmaking

For your organisation/scheme, what are the objectives of short filmmaking?

Please rank your priorities on a scale of 1 to 10, using each rank only once

(1=Higher priority, 10=Lower priority)

Objective	Rank
Discovering new talent	
Developing exceptional talent	
Helping key talent move to feature films	
Training all crew	
Producing critically acclaimed short films	
Producing short films for a wide public audience	
Encouraging use of digital and new technologies	
Encouraging creative experimentation	
Encouraging diversity in the film industry	
Something else (please specify in the additional comments box below)	
<i>Additional comments:</i>	

### 3. Measuring success

*How does your organisation measure the success of its short filmmaking activities, scheme or initiative? Please indicate with an "X".*

Measure	Yes	No	If yes, please give details here (eg, which awards would indicate success, or how would reaching audiences be measured)
Excellence (eg awards won)			
Discovery (eg new talent)			
Diversity (eg talent)			
Career development			
Reaching audiences			
Other (please specify)			
<i>Additional comments:</i>			

### 4. Data collected by your organisation

*For the films made through your scheme/initiative, what data has your organisation collected between the years 2006 and 2009?*

Please fill in the following six sections to indicate the data you have collected on Production, Festival Screenings, Awards & Nominations, Distribution & Exhibition, Revenue and Career Development.

**For all questions: if you have not collected data on some of the categories, please indicate with an 'X' in the 'no data collected' column.**

**4A. Production of short films:**

	<b>06/07</b>	<b>07/08</b>	<b>08/09</b>	<b>No data collected</b>
<b>Number of short films made:</b> please insert numbers made each year				
<b>Short film production budget:</b> please provide total expenditure on short film production by your scheme each year				
<b>Duration of short films:</b> please provide average duration per film for each year				
<b>Number of short films shot on film</b>				
<b>Number of short films shot on a digital format</b>				
<i>Additional comments:</i>				

**4B. Festival screenings of short films:**

Of all the films made through your scheme, please list the number of films screened at the following festivals during the years 2006, 2007 and 2008:

	2006	2007	2008	No data collected
Edinburgh				
Times BFI London				
Encounters				
Cannes				
Berlin				
Venice				
Toronto				
Clermont-Ferrand				
Rushes Soho				
Other				
<i>Additional comments:</i>				

#### 4C. Awards and Award Nominations:

Of all the films made through your scheme, how many have received awards and/or award nominations during the years 2006, 2007 and 2008?

	2006	2007	2008	No data collected
BAFTA				
BIFA				
Academy Award® (Oscar®)				
Other awards				
<i>Additional comments:</i>				

#### 4D. Distribution and Exhibition:

Of all the films made through your scheme...

	2006	2007	2008	No data collected
How many films have been picked up by a film distributor eg Shorts International or Dazzle Films?				
How many films have been broadcast?				
How many films have been included on a reputable DVD label?				
How many films are available for viewing online?				
How many times have the films been viewed online?				
<i>Additional comments:</i>				



**4E. Revenue generated:**

*Please provide total figures for each of the below categories in pounds sterling.*

Of all the films made through your scheme, how much revenue has been generated through:

	06/07	07/08	08/09	No data collected
Distribution deals				
Broadcast deals				
DVD labels				
Online				
Other				
<i>Additional comments:</i>				

**4F. Career development of short filmmakers:**

How many short filmmakers has your scheme supported?

	06/07	07/08	08/09	No data collected
Directors				
Producers				
Writers				
Other				
<i>Additional comments:</i>				

Of the above short filmmakers, how many have subsequently...

	Please give number here:	No data collected
Made a short film		
Made a feature film		
Received development funding for a feature film		
Got a related industry job (eg TV, new media, cross-disciplinary)		
Received industry recognition: eg, coverage in Screen International and other "trades"		
Received public recognition: eg, coverage in the Guardian		
<i>Additional comments:</i>		

#### 4G. Diversity

Of all the short filmmakers in 4F, please give the following breakdown:

	06/07			07/08			08/09			No data collected
	Women	BME	Disabled	Women	BME	Disabled	Women	BME	Disabled	
Directors										
Producers										
Writers										
Other										
<i>Additional comments</i>										

4H.Of the above, how many have subsequently...

	Please give number here:			No data collected
	Women	BME	Disabled	
Made a short film				
Made a feature film				
Received development funding for a feature film				
Got a related industry job (eg TV, new media, cross-disciplinary)				
Received industry recognition: eg, coverage in Screen International and other trade publications				
Received national public recognition: eg, coverage in a national newspaper such as the Guardian				
Additional comments:				

Thank you very much for your time.

## 1. Strategic partners' questionnaire

### Methodology

Northern Alliance drafted and sent a questionnaire to the following strategic partners of the UK Film Council's short film schemes:

- Nine Regional Screen Agencies (EM Media, Film London, Northern Film and Media, North West Vision, Screen East, Screen South, South West Screen, Screen West Midlands, Screen Yorkshire)
- Three National Screen Agencies (Film Agency for Wales, Northern Ireland Screen, Scottish Screen)
- Four other strategic partners: B3 Media, Mayavision, The Bureau and 104 films.

Of these, only Film Agency for Wales was unable to respond because it was not running a UK Film Council short scheme during the period of review. All the other strategic partners responded, though there was a wide variation in the amount of information available. In total, 25 individual responses were collected, each scheme being treated separately as a distinct respondent. The following summary is an analysis of what data are recorded, as opposed to a completely accurate picture of all short film activity. The most useful conclusion from the survey is as evidence of the patchwork nature of data collection and the problems this causes in attempting to measure short film activity in any quantitative way.

### Strategic partner objectives

- Overall the objectives for the UK Film Council's Strategic Partner's short film schemes are:
  1. Developing exceptional talent;
  2. Discovering new talent;
  3. Helping key talent move to feature films;
  4. Producing critically acclaimed short films;
  5. Encouraging creative experimentation;
  6. Encouraging diversity in the film industry;
  7. Producing short films for a wide public audience;
  8. Encouraging use of digital and new technologies;
  9. Training all crew.

- 'Developing exceptional talent' and 'discovering new talent' also had the highest number of votes as first and second priorities.

### Measures of success

- Career development: 100% of respondents cited career development as their organisation's measure for success of short film. Yet five respondents do not collect career tracking data at all,<sup>97</sup> and 11 of all 25 respondents did not track all of the categories which they agreed, as part of the questionnaire, were key career tracking data.
- Diversity: The joint second most popular measure of success for an organisation was diversity with 95.5% approval. The UK Film Council has a rigorous and well-run monitoring system for measuring diversity key performance indicators, which has resulted in most strategic partners being able to provide diversity information. However only nine out of 25 respondents are able to cross-reference their two most popular measures of success: diversity and career development. In other words, strategic partners may regard hitting diversity targets as a key measure of success, but do not look to see how the people representing these figures develop in their careers.
- Those that do not track career development of filmmakers cite lack of resources or contractual obligation as the reason.

---

<sup>97</sup> This total includes strategic partners not able to provide separate career tracking information for the Digital Shorts and Digital Nation schemes; and a UK Film Council strategic partner which is also supporting Arts Council England (ACE) funded short films, and not tracking the resulting career data.

## Number and type of short films<sup>98</sup>

- The total number of UK Film Council supported short films made each year decreased from 131 to 108. The average duration of the films produced has increased yearly, rising from nine to 11 minutes over the period.
- Shorts shot on digital formats fell from 89% in 2006 to 90% in 2008.

## Awards and festivals<sup>99</sup>

- Festivals screening the highest number of strategic partner-produced shorts were: Edinburgh (53 films), Encounters (50), Clermont Ferrand (39), Cannes (35) and London (31);
- The 364 short films made by the strategic partners over the period reviewed received ten BAFTA awards or nominations, and seven BIFA awards or nominations between them.<sup>100</sup>

## Distribution

Because of the fact that not all respondents collect data on distribution deals, the following averages do not include results for all the films made by strategic partners. It is also important to note that across the board figures for 2008 were noticeably lower than for 2006 or 2007, possibly indicating that the timeframe

---

<sup>98</sup> Strategic partners were asked to give film totals for years 2006/07, 2007/08 etc as opposed to calendar years. Only one of them noted a variance to regular UK Film Council years stating scheme starts had been variable. In addition, the response for schemes in Scotland has been excluded from all following results due to lack of sufficient data available to differentiate the schemes. These two factors may have resulted in strategic partner totals and UK Film Council totals not precisely matching for the years 2006-09. On this basis, strategic partner data give a total number of Digital Shorts of 281, whereas Lifesize Pictures data give 282 (including 19 Scottish shorts). This would indicate that strategic partners use different year starts to the UK Film Council (intentional and acknowledged or otherwise).

<sup>99</sup> Awards and festivals recorded by strategic partners in the questionnaire and labelled as A-list or high profile do not correlate completely with those given the same label by the UK Film Council; for a list of the festivals awards referred to in this section, see the original questionnaire, Appendix XX.

<sup>100</sup> Excluding the response from the ACE-funded partner reduces this to 356 films with nine BAFTA nominations.

for making and reporting distribution deals is longer than allowed for by this survey.

- The percentage of short films that were picked up by distributors remained relatively steady, at around 24% between 2006/07, as did the percentage of short films that were broadcast (24%);
- The percentage of films distributed on DVD rose slightly from 8% to 10% for the same time period; the percentage of films available for viewing online fell from 51% to 39% 2006/07.<sup>101</sup>

## Revenue

Regarding revenue generated from the distribution of short films, eight strategic partners noted that they do not collect this data, or do so only for certain distribution windows. Six of the strategic partners are Regional Screen Agencies which are supposed to report all deals and recoupment to the UK Film Council. Lifesize recoupment reports show that four of these partners have collected such data, although they stated on their questionnaires that they do not collect the data. From those strategic partners that do collect distribution data:

- The average yearly revenue derived from short film distribution deals has increased from £103 in 2006/07 to £336 in 2008/09;
- The average yearly revenue derived from short film broadcast deals has decreased from £847 in 2006/07 to £511 in 2008/09.

No strategic partner was able to report any revenue from DVD deals during the period of review. Only two respondents were able to report online revenues: one recorded an annual revenue of £1,065 from online deals, which compares favourably with any other exploitation window.

---

<sup>101</sup> The time period excludes 2008, as the drop off in results shows these recent films have not had sufficient time to secure distribution. Results also exclude ACE funded films from the calculation, though no trends would be altered by their inclusion. Assuming that respondents haven't collected the relevant data because no deals have been done, and averages are recalculated to show results as a proportion of all films made, then: the proportion of films with distribution deals falls to 2%; films that were broadcast falls to 1%; films included on DVD labels drops to between 4% and 6%; and films available online fall to between 24%- 20%.

## Filmmaker support

The total numbers of directors, producers and writers supported by strategic partners' schemes all declined over the period of review. The average number of directors supported per respondent each year fell from six to five, the number of producers held relatively stable at around five, and the number of writers decreased from six to five.

## Career development

Of the 1,048 filmmakers<sup>102</sup> supported by the UK Film Council during the period 368 are directors, 332 are producers and 348 are writers (these may include a small overlap between roles, eg writer/directors, and between schemes).

The available recorded data show that at least:

- 20% have made another short film;
- 8% have a job in the industry;
- 4% have gained recognition in industry press; and
- 2% have been recognised in public press.

In terms of conversion to feature film, the majority of respondents say that three years is much too short a time to see this transformation: ten years is posited as more appropriate. However, from available figures, of the filmmakers supported by the strategic partners over the last three years:

- 4% have received feature film development funding; and
- 2% have made a feature film.

## Diversity

Despite providing diversity key performance indicators directly to the UK Film Council, four strategic partners were unable to provide the diversity data requested in the questionnaire: two of them provided the key performance indicators rather than inputting; one said they believed that the key performance indicator data and questionnaire data were incompatible; and one was unable to obtain data from a new strategic partner.

---

<sup>102</sup> This totals 987, when Virgin Shorts and a strategic partner Completion Fund contribution are excluded.



Of the filmmakers supported by respondents that provided diversity data over the period reviewed:

- Women directors increased as a proportion of all directors from 18% to 22%, women producers decreased from 37% to 31%, and women writers rose from 22% to 24%;
- Black and minority ethnic (BME) directors fell as a proportion of directors from 12% to 10%, BME producers decreased from 9% to 2%, and BME writers fell from 9% to 8%; Disabled directors increased as a proportion of all directors from 1% to 6%, disabled producers rose from 0% to 3%, and disabled writers increased from 2% to 7%, probably due to the advent of The Magic Hour in the last year of review.

### **Diversity career development**

Those respondents that collected diversity data show a total of 362 women, BME and disabled filmmakers were supported by strategic partners over the three years reviewed. However, career tracking data that can be cross-referenced only exists for 241 of the filmmakers, and of these:

- 29 women filmmakers and 14 BME filmmakers have made another short film;
- Five women filmmakers and three BME filmmakers have made a feature film;
- 17 women filmmakers and five BME filmmakers have received feature development funding;
- 24 women filmmakers and ten BME filmmakers have got an industry related job;
- 23 women filmmakers and 21 BME filmmakers have received industry recognition;
- Eight women filmmakers and five BME filmmakers have received public recognition

## 2. Filmmaker questionnaire

A separate questionnaire, with similar questions to that of the stakeholder questionnaire, was sent to filmmakers invited to the three focus groups. The respondents included eight Sheffield focus group members, four diversity focus group members and nine Edinburgh International Film Festival focus group members/invitees, making 21 filmmakers in all.

The selection process for the focus groups was as follows:

- Sheffield - Lifesize Pictures was asked to invite local (ie within commuting distance of the city) filmmakers - writers, directors and producers - both men and women, as diverse as possible, from their contacts database;
- Edinburgh - Edinburgh International Film Festival was asked to invite all short filmmakers with a short film in the festival programme as well as all short filmmakers attending the festival on the focus group date (which was the screening date of UK shorts compilation Vol1 and GMAC shorts).
- Diversity - focus group participants were recruited via contact from B3 Media, 104 Films and the UK Film Council's Diversity team.

During the focus groups, discussions were structured around points in the questionnaire and related issues.

### Filmmaker priorities

Overall ranking of filmmakers' priorities:

1. Produce critically acclaimed shorts;
2. Develop my skills/talent;
3. Help me move to feature films;
4. Be discovered as new talent;
5. Produce films for a wide public audience;
6. Experiment creatively;
7. Use digital and new technologies;
8. Get trained in working as part of a crew.

However, the priority ranked most often as number 1 is "Help me move to features".

## Filmmaker activity

On average, each filmmaker produced:

- One film a year 2006-2008, rising to two a year in 2008/09, with
- Expenditure of approximately £9,000 in the first film, rising to £16,000;
- The average duration of these films increased from nine to 12 minutes;
- 84% of these films were shot digitally.

## Exhibition and distribution

Of all of the 101 films in the sample, for the entire period reviewed:

- 32 screenings at A-list festivals were achieved;
- Two high profile awards were won;
- Six films were picked up for distribution;
- 15 were broadcast;
- Two were included on reputable DVD labels;
- 11 are available online;
- Only two respondents recorded any revenue from distribution deals, and the average of these yearly amounts was £550;
- Only two respondents recorded revenue from broadcast deals from shorts, and the average of these yearly amounts was £863.

## Career development

- One respondent had *previously* made a feature;
- Four have received feature development funding;
- Seven have an industry related job;
- Ten have received industry recognition;
- Five have received public recognition.

## Filmmaker interaction with the UK Film Council

Eight of the 21 respondents had received shorts funding from the UK Film Council. This included:

- Six Digital Shorts;
- Two Digital Shorts Plus (One Digital Short and Digital Short Plus overlap);
- One Completion Fund.

Those that had obtained funding appeared to have done so over a number of years:

- Five respondents who had received Digital Shorts funding received it over more than one year;
- One respondent received funding from Digital Shorts for two years and Digital Shorts Plus for two years within the 2006-2009 period.

Loose correlations showed that the UK Film Council-funded filmmakers were those reporting the majority of revenues, though not a majority proportion of distribution deals. UK Film Council backing also correlates with filmmakers making feature films, receiving development funding, getting a job in the industry and having films screened at A-list festivals. However, filmmakers without UK Film Council backing were those that tended to win the high profile awards.

## Appendix XXII

## Northern Alliance

Northern Alliance is a chartered accountancy firm that provides accounting, tax, financial, management and business consulting services to private and public sector organisations and individuals, especially to those operating in the media, entertainment and creative industries.

We have substantial practical knowledge of, and expertise in, how the private and public sectors work. The range of our experience extends throughout Europe, Asia and North America.

The Northern Alliance team that undertook this review of short film consisted of Catherine O'Shea, Chris Chandler, Laura Hypponen, Michael Franklin and Mike Kelly.

Northern Alliance Limited is a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants Practice Assurance Scheme, which has been designed to demonstrate to the business community and the wider public the Institute's commitment to upholding and developing public standards that command public confidence. Further details can be obtained from [www.icaew.com](http://www.icaew.com).