



UK Film: Digital Innovation and Creative Excellence Public Consultation

EM Media's Executive Response to the UK Film Council

Context

In November 2009 the UK Film Council, the government-backed strategic body for film, announced plans to reorganise its business following a £25m reduction in its funding over the next three years, in part to help pay for the 2012 Olympic Games. They outlined their proposals in the document *UK Film, Digital Innovation and Creative Excellence* and consulted publically on their policy and funding priorities for April 2010 to March 2013. Their proposals included the creation of a new £15m Film Production Fund with more emphasis on first and second-time filmmakers; a producer equity position in all UK Film Council-funded feature films; a minimum 25% target for non-London originated film production; and a new £5m Innovation Fund, to promote new business models and ensure UK film's successful transition into a fully digital age. You can read the proposals in full through the UK Film Council's website. (<http://www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk>.)

EM Media submitted its consultation response to the UK Film Council following conversations with a range of companies, organisations and practitioners operating across the film and digital media sector. We have summarised our response to the main points below.

Summary Consultation Response

Ten years of interventions

For almost a decade EM Media has been supporting unique and distinctive talent locally. The East Midlands is now home to a vibrant and internationally renowned filmmaking hub and is a prolific film-producing region with innovation and quality as hallmarks

Over 35 British feature films (27 from first-time feature directors) and 74 short films have been financed in the region including *Control* for which EM Media was the only British production financier. EM Media currently has 36 feature developments on its slate. Further, we have had the opportunity to unearth a volume of upcoming talent yet to make its mark internationally.

Because of East Midlands' talent, British film is the richer.

Three cinemas across the region (Phoenix Square in Leicester, Broadway in Nottingham, QUAD in Derby) joined together to form a consortium offering programme advice and marketing support to

other cinema venues – as a result, a network of 25 cinemas and venues across the region now offer a greater range of archive and specialised film, and, combined with new rural touring initiatives, the opportunities for audiences to see a greater range of specialised and archive films have increased tenfold.

Because of PBQ, East Midlands’ audiences have access to a greater range of films in more venues than ever before.

Through the unique and innovative Cine Hubs scheme over 1,000 school pupils across the region explored film for the first time within their curriculum, enhancing learning and fuelling new ambitions. Teachers reported increased motivation amongst their pupils and the schools adopted new creative teaching methods. Cine Hubs has progressed to a co-ordinated regional approach across the East Midlands, which could roll out across the UK.

Because of Cine Hubs, East Midlands’ pupils and their teachers are developing digital life and work skills to equip them to contribute to the economy of the future.

Summarised Response to questions

EM Media agreed with the UKFC’s analysis of the challenges facing film and agreed that the UK Film Council has, in the main, delivered against its priorities set out in their current three-year plan, but believes that not all interventions and structures have been successful.

EM Media believes that regional investment funds have made a significant contribution to the diversity of British film voices and product currently in the international marketplace and that with a likely reduction in the number and range of regional investment funds in operation next year there will be a noticeable impact in the range and diversity of films produced. The challenge of achieving a more culturally diverse workforce will need a greater priority and planning into the architecture of the national skills and national talent development strategies from the start.

EM Media agreed with the UK Film Council’s proposed policy priorities for the next period but felt there needs to be wider recognition of the contribution to those priorities made by Screen Agencies. Screen Agencies are the UK Film Council’s highly successful delivery network and this is the mechanism through which the UK Film Council achieves national reach. The Screen Agencies by nature are driven to be (mitigated) risk takers and thus are under-utilised experimental test-beds.

EM Media welcomed the introduction of the 25% production quota as perceived as a floor rather than a ceiling and looks forward to working with the newly appointed production staff at the UK Film Council on refining the definition and on the much needed national talent and skills

development strategies and suggested the new talent strategy is connected to the UK Film Council export strategy.

In relation to extending the UK Film Council's remit to video games EM Media believes that the UK Film Council should work with the games sector to identify areas of mutual benefit for further discussion believing this to be advantageous to the film industry. EM Media believes the UK Film Council's remit could include investments in projects that go beyond the traditional boundaries of film where the benefits to the film talent and businesses working in the film industry are clearly demonstrated. EM Media believes the UK Film Council should note that in terms of technical training at HE level there is tremendous overlap in the technological skills required for the technical production of games and film production and post production.

Through its document *UK Film, Digital Innovation and Creative Excellence* EM Media believes the UK Film Council has been clear in clarifying the level of finance that has been allocated against each priority for the coming period, but less clear in articulating its long term vision for the digital British film industry. EM Media would suggest embracing the connection between film and other digital content as such a separation will become ever more artificial and work against the successful positioning of the British film offer.

EM Media's full consultation response is available to view in the *downloads* section on our website.