

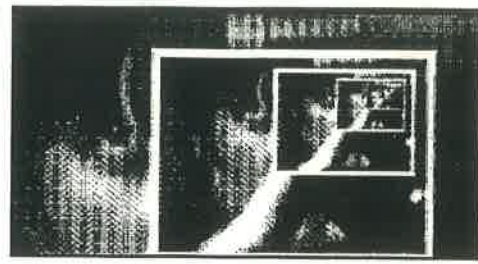
# Independent MEDIA

incorporating Independent Video

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## FESTIVAL ISSUE

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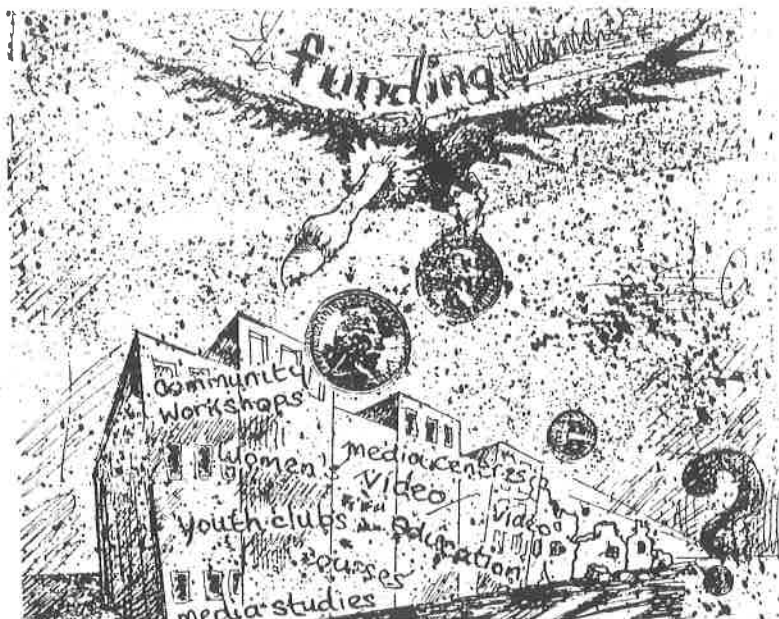
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# WORKSHOP FRANCHISES: Paper by Tony Dowmunt, Albany Video



As many will have heard by now Channel 4 have decided to cut Albany Video from its Workshop Budget in 1987/88. We are clearly too close to the event to offer any kind of objective analysis of why and how this has happened, and have not had a chance to absorb and reflect on it as a group yet. So what follows are the immediate thoughts of one of the Albany Video workers on the implications for us of the cut, and more generally on the subject of Channel 4 funding for community based workshops.

Assuming roughly the same level of grant aid from other organisations, and of earned income as we have generated this financial year, the cut will mean the loss of at least two jobs in 1987/88. It will also mean the reduction of our budgets for productions to virtually zero. The combinations of these two factors will put the maintenance of our ACTT Franchise in jeopardy, both because we will be hard-put to pay ourselves any wage increases (which are in the pipeline for 1987) without reducing staff to below the workshop minimum of four, and because we will not be able to make any substantial self-generated (i.e. non-commissioned) productions in the coming year.

Obviously, the most worrying aspect of it is that it will almost certainly mean redundancies unless we can either convince other funders to step into the large gap left by Channel 4, or generate

commissions or other commercial work to make up the difference (which would also jeopardise our Franchise).

We decided when first seeking workshop funding from the Channel to ensure that we never became totally dependent upon them; and we have had some success with this in that they have never made up more than 50% of our annual revenue budget. Even so, it seems that in the present circumstances loss of Channel 4 funding will inevitably lead to job losses.

Another resolution we made early on in our relationship with the Channel was to ensure that the demands to produce for TV did not over-shadow other aspects of our work, in particular, the maintenance of our community base and the accessibility of Albany Video as a local resource. Our original notion was that our production policy need not change at all; if the Channel wanted something we had done, fine, but we would not tailor our work to TV. In practice, we soon realised that audiences for TV were different from those we had become used to servicing in our cassette distribution, and that we had to address a whole new set of problems if we were to make use of our workshop funding and the access to broadcast that it offered. We are still in the very early stages of this process but it had meant some production practices that are new for us; for instance, hiring in professional free-lancers shooting on high band, and

working with vastly increased budgets. This has raised questions for us about the extent to which professional practices inhibit or advance community based production work.

At the same time as exploring these questions in practice, we have also been running a national cassette distribution service, operating an equipment resource, and running local workshops, training courses and consultancy services; and, in consequence, probably spreading ourselves too thin (at least in relation to the demand to produce from the Channel). One possible conclusion is that in the current Thatcherite, post GLC funding climate, maintaining both Channel 4 funding and an effective community base, is not viable. Certainly we now know that Channel 4 provides money to make programmes and nothing more; it is not a realistic source of general workshop support. For that, we will need to build effective campaigns directed at National and Local Government, in anticipation of a change in the political situation.



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