

Producing Creative Producers

A GEECT/CILECT symposium

With additional support from the Irish Film Board
and the City of Edinburgh Council



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Producing Creative Producers

- ◉ Who, why, what, when & how
- ◉ Session highlights
- ◉ Themes and conclusions

Why? Backstory...

- 2003 – CILECT Conference, Cardiff (Wales) “Beyond the Theory of Practice”
- 2009 – VGIK Conference, Moscow “Film Education: Traditions and Innovations”
- 2010 – CILECT “Symposium on Creative Production”, NFTS, UK
- ...2012 GEECT/CILECT ‘Producing Creative Producers’, Edinburgh

What...

- A two-day symposium examining the training and development of creative producers asking:
 - 1) What are the needs of creative producers and how are these changing?
 - 2) How and how well are schools addressing these needs?
 - 3) What more can and needs to be done and who should be doing what?





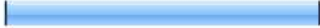
Who, where and when?

- Screen Academy Scotland at Napier University in co-production with the National Film School at IADT (Ireland)
- Edinburgh 1st-2nd March 2012



Profile of schools attending

1. Thanks for taking the time to answer this short survey, it shouldn't take more than 10 minutes. Before we ask you about the symposium itself we'd like to find out a little about your programmes for producers so that we can share this information with you and other CILECT members. Can you tell us if your institution has (Tick as many as apply):

		Response Percent	Response Count
No programmes or specialisms specifically for producers		16.7%	3
An undergraduate specialism for producers within a wider film programme		33.3%	6
An undergraduate programme for producers		33.3%	6
A postgraduate specialism for producers within a wider programme		27.8%	5
A postgraduate programme for producers		27.8%	5
		Other (please specify)	2
		answered question	18
		skipped question	2

Keynote 1: Rebecca O'Brien

'Producing in the 21st century- challenges for producers and schools'

*"For as long as there is a need for content that is entertaining, **there will always be a need for someone to wrangle it all together**"*

*"We talk about "convergence" now, but once film and TV drama were interchangeable ... We seem to be moving back in that direction because there are so many new layers available to us - **the new producer needs to know how to navigate this variety**, this potential, have a view as to what might be the best format with which to exploit their idea."*

*"It seems to me that the way forward in training our new producers is to **give them bite size courses that fit their bite size world**"*



Panel session: approaches to producer education in European film schools

○ Ana Vinuela (INA, France)

- > “Most important **ideas** are meta ideas”
- > Every school is different as national **context** is different
- > Emphasize **political** and **social** dimensions of producing
- > A critical, creative and transmedia mindset

○ Mika Ritalahti (Aalto University, Finland)

- > BA is about line producing/PM; MA is about creative
- > Its about the content
- > Focus on **strengths** not weaknesses
- > In 3 – 5 years **can't change character**/attitude, so selection is crucial



Chris Auty (NFTS, UK)

- > **Personality** big factor in selection
- > Try to cultivate personal **curatorship** – fill in gaps in skill/experience
- > Most difficult thing to teach is **'selling'**
- > Tricky to find right **balance** between physical, creative & business
- > Vital to develop **international** outlook

Best Kept Secrets - examples

- ◉ Leeds Met 2nd year BA market films of previous 3rd year
- ◉ DFFB – 3rd producers develop and pitch 2nd yr writers projects
- ◉ La Femis – Atelier Paris/Ludwigsburg students make 8 min film as part of 90 min Arte project





Keynote 2: Bruce Sheridan

The view from Chicago

- Reinventing the producer curriculum
- Antidote to line producing/film MBA
 - > *“Send new producers out into the world ready to work in the current production environment but empowered to evolve professional producer culture”*
- Introduces creative producing *before* line producing but ensures extensive hands-on experience as well
 - > *“... one of the most important things an educational experience can offer ... is the possibility for transformation, that by the end of the program you could emerge not just skilled in a new role, but holistically changed by the experience. “*

Bridging and CPD

- Collaborative projects between schools
 - > **Midpoint** (FAMU Prague, VSMU Bratislava, PWSFTViT Lodz, UNATC Bucharest, SFE Budapest, dffb Berlin)
 - > **Four Corners** (ESCAC Barcelona, LSFMP London, NATFA Sofia)
 - > **Low Budget Film Forum** (LFS London, La FEMIS Paris, DDF Copenhagen, SFE Budapest, dffb Berlin)
 - > **ENGAGE** (SAS, Edinburgh/IADT, Dublin/ BFM Tallinn/ Aalto University Helsinki)

Themes if not conclusions

- ◉ Teaching creative producers matters
- ◉ Selection as crucial as with other roles
- ◉ 'Soft' skills easily overlooked
- ◉ Empower producers to help writers/directors make better films
- ◉ Contexts vary but connection to industry especially important for producers
- ◉ A good example of why CILECT matters
- can we take collaboration(s) further?

Thank you, questions?

- ◉ www.screenacademyscotland.ac.uk/creativeproducers
- ◉ r.macpherson@napier.ac.uk

Producing Creative Producers 2012

Final Report

'Producing Creative Producers' was a symposium for film school staff organised by Screen Academy Scotland at Edinburgh Napier University in association with the National Film School at IADT Ireland. The conference chairs were Prof Robin MacPherson (Director of Screen Academy Scotland and the Institute for Creative Industries at Edinburgh Napier University) and Donald Taylor Black, (Director National Film School Ireland, IADT).

Sponsored by GEECT, CILECT, the City of Edinburgh Council and the Irish Film Board, the symposium took place in the Screen Academy Scotland production centre and the main campus of Edinburgh Napier University on Thursday 1st and Friday 2nd March 2012 and attracted over fifty delegates from thirty five institutions in twenty countries.

The symposium's main aim was to provide a forum for film school staff and industry guests to debate the training and development needs of creative producers and exchange experiences of how film schools can help ensure these are properly addressed in undergraduate or postgraduate degree programmes and, after graduation, through continuing professional development (CPD) courses or other ways of helping graduates into the industry.

Acclaimed producer Rebecca O'Brien, creative and business partner of Ken Loach, provided the opening keynote of the symposium with an industry perspective in a talk which explored her own experiences as a producer, current issues in the industry and new models for producing in the future. Noting that *"For as long as there is a need for content that is entertaining, there will always be a need for someone to wrangle it all together"* she observed that *"we can't rely on people like Andrew [MacDonald] just popping out of the woodwork"* and that in film the *"goalposts are constantly shifting... there is never only one approach to making a film."* Speaking of the future and the multiplicity of platforms and technologies on which film is being distributed O'Brien observed: *"We talk about "convergence" now, but once film and TV drama were interchangeable ... We seem to be moving back in that direction because there are so many new layers available to us - the new producer needs to know how to navigate this variety, this potential, have a view as to what might be the best format with which to exploit their idea."* Reflecting on how best to prepare young producers for this world she concluded: *"It seems to me that the way forward in training our new producers is to give them bite size courses that fit their bite size world. I think that suited me in my own learning journey and it seems to suit the apprentice producers I work with."*

The remainder of the first day saw the delegates discuss and debate the keynote, their differing approaches to the selection, training and development of creative producers and share their 'best kept secrets' by explaining how they use specific exercises or projects to nurture creative producing skills.

The second day of the symposium provided a perspective from across the Atlantic with the second keynote address being delivered by Professor Bruce Sheridan, Chair of the Film & Video Department at Columbia College in Chicago. His presentation (video highlights [here](#)) covered the background to his and Columbia College's decision to 'reinvent their producing curricula' and introduce an MFA in Creative Producing as an antidote to the traditional US emphasis on line producing/production management or, where courses have gone beyond that, their focus on *"analyzing feature film case studies, brokering traditional industry connections, and teaching financial principles and strategies in a manner closely related to MBA (Master of Business Administration) studies."* Sheridan explained that *"We decided to define for ourselves what a Creative Producer could and should be, restructure*

our approach accordingly, then through careful experimentation and adjustments send new producers out into the world ready to work in the current production environment but empowered to evolve professional producer culture. We also decided to work first within the undergraduate program and use what we discovered there to decide how to configure graduate level creative producing.” The outcome was a new curriculum in which creative producing is introduced *before* line production/production management but by the end of which the producer will have worked in at least six advanced productions.

The final panel session of the symposium looked at what film schools are doing to providing a bridge into professional practice and ongoing support for their graduates. Several MEDIA-funded collaborative projects between film schools were highlighted including the *Low Budget Film Forum*, *Midpoint*, *Four Corners*, *Atelier Ludwigsburg-Paris* and *ENGAGE*.

By the closing session of the symposium it was very clear that the place of creative producers in film schools and the importance of tailoring curricula and teaching approaches to their needs is very firmly on the development agenda for GEECT/CILECT member schools (and indeed the wider industry) and a general consensus that the discussion, debate and exchange of experiences/approaches needs to continue.