

**Channel 4 and British Film Culture Conference**

**BFI Southbank, London, 1–2 November 2012**

**Channel Four and the Emergence of Independent Black British Filmmaking**

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This paper offers a retrospective analysis of the role Channel Four played in developing black British filmmaking. This paper offers a critical examination of the particular impacts of the Channel Four workshops, and critically evaluates its cultural and socio-political significance and legacy

Programmes devised specifically for black and ethnic minority filmmaking development emerged in the 1980s via Channel Four's regional workshops, with Sue Woodford placed as the first Commissioning Editor for multi-cultural programming. Channel Four continued the policies of the Greater London Council's Ethnic Arts Unit, through its own Multicultural Unit, in developing an independent sector as this involved investing money in a wide range of independent companies. This paper offers a case study of the creative, socio-political work in film production, work characterized by these independent film collectives such as Black Audio, Sankofa, Cheddar and Retake.

This paper aims to analyse some of the filmic ideas introduced in these workshops in the 1980's, examining the position and role of Channel Four in developing ethnic minority filmmakers within the broader social struggles of this time. The focus is on the development of an independent Black British film culture in Britain, and how the filmic products of those workshops and their counter-hegemonic themes came to be so strongly rooted within them. The various ways in which Channel Four came to facilitate this strand of British filmmaking, its continuation in the form of their Independent Film and Video Unit led by Alan Fountain, and its influence on contemporary black British film culture are also explored.