

CHANNEL 4 AND BRITISH FILM CULTURE CONFERENCE

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S4C, Channel 4 and Film

S4C, launched one day prior to Channel 4 on 1 November 1982, depended heavily in its formative years on its sister channel for content to fill the schedules around its 22 hours a week of original Welsh content broadcast at peak hours. Freed from any constraints by the 'once around the transmitters' agreement and a strong relationship between its two Chief Executives, the Welsh channel was given free rein to select and schedule Channel 4's programmes as it wished and broadcast them free of charge.

With no room for all of the Channel 4 programmes within the S4C schedules, some programmes would have to be omitted. This paper will explore how the S4C programming and scheduling staff selected which of the ground-breaking films broadcast and produced by Channel 4 would be suited to a Welsh audience and consider did they adhere to the informal promise made to Jeremy Isaacs to 'not leave out altogether what [Channel 4] were proudest of.'¹ The paper will also examine the reaction of the Welsh audience to the films broadcast and omitted from the schedules.

However, the broadcasting of films was not a one-way-street. Channel 4 also took advantage of the new and exciting film content being produced for S4C. Films such as *Aderyn Papur* (Bayley, 1983), *Wil Six* (Turner, 1985) and *Yr Alcoholig Llon* (Francis, 1985) were broadcast in Welsh with English subtitles during the mid 1980s ensuring that the Welsh voice and experience was seen as part of the new face of Britain portrayed by Channel 4. This paper will also explore the reaction to the broadcast of these films and contemplate if this exchange of film content was to continue or diminish following these early productive years.

¹ Jeremy Isaacs, *Storm Over 4 – A Personal Account* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989). p. 95.