

Channel 4 and British Film Culture Conference

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VERTIGO MAGAZINE -Tracking the Independent Voices of C4 in UK Film Culture

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Vertigo Magazine grew up with Channel 4. Although it first published a decade after the start of the new channel, its inspiration came from the need to promote, articulate and defend the spirit of independent production which those years had released. Most of the editorial board were producing films for Channel 4 and many of us had been actively involved in groups such as the Independent Filmmakers Association and the Channel Four Campaign Group, which played a key role in ensuring the channel enfranchised a new generation of filmmakers, and faced the challenge of broadcasting new forms to make visible the invisible.

Sponsored by Channel Four's Cultural Fund, our first issue reflected on the state of public service broadcasting with Stuart Hood, former BBC Controller, explored the aesthetics of the pop promo with Rod Stoneman, C4 Independent Film and Video Department, revisited the regional Workshops and gave a comic reflection on 10 years of service to Channel 4 in a column entitled "Dear Commissioning Editor". For the next 15 years, *Vertigo* remained unique as a publication of both defence and advocacy, untied to commercial dictates of what constitutes so-called 'cinema.' Partisan, polemical, and politically engaged in its examination of both form, content, and industry infrastructure it continued to document the work of the most independently-minded filmmakers evolving the radical spirit which marked Channel 4's beginnings.

In this paper I would like to go back into the archive, and with reference to questions of aesthetic, political and structural independence trace some of the developments linked to Channel 4 and the changing broadcasting environment and cultural politics in which it existed. It was a guiding principle of *Vertigo* that its visual presentation should reflect the spirit of the groundbreaking work we were writing about, and I would accompany this paper with a projection of some of the stills and

image compositions from its 4 volumes, together with my own personal reflections as a founder member, and managing editor from 2000.