

## **Channel 4 and British Film Culture Conference**

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### **Challenging Times at Channel 4 -The Lloyds Bank Film Challenge**

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In 1992 the Channel 4 Youth Department, along with sponsors Lloyds Bank, announced its intention to run a competition to find new drama and documentary writers and directors. Aimed squarely, at Lloyds' target market –young people aged 14 -25 who had yet to open their first bank account -, the scheme had guaranteed prime time slots for six short films on Channel 4 and was to be run by a fledgling independent production company, Compulsive Viewing, based in an attic in Tufnell Park. Despite this high risk approach, the Film Challenge ran for five years, attracting thousands of entries and giving thirty writer/director pairings the opportunity to have their ideas bought to the small screen by a professional crew, shooting on 16mm and backed by fairly generous production budgets.

Twenty years on this paper will offer a case history of the Film Challenge, looking at how it was run, who it involved and what its purpose was in an era where the short film business looked and felt very different. With far fewer festival opportunities, a handful of practical film and TV production courses and no internet outlets, how important was it for broadcasters to ring fence money and slots for new film making and is there still a place for similar talent finding enterprises now?

Strong links between UK broadcasters and UK film makers are often cited as a prerequisite for a sustainable film industry here, and was one of the corner stones of Jeremy Isaac's mission statement for the new channel. In this context the paper will chart the progress of significant Film Challenge alumni such as Simon Beaufoy; Coky Giedroyc; David McKenzie; and Justin Chadwick, analysing the scheme's effectiveness in giving new talent national exposure and access to significant careers in film making.