

Channel 4 and British Film Culture Conference

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**Who Called the Shots? Making Film Programmes for Channel 4 in the
Nineties and Noughties**

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I began my career in TV in the mid 1980s, as a researcher on media programmes for Channel Four (most notably The Media Show) but by the late 1990s and early 2000s I was producing over a dozen one-off film programmes for the Channel, as well as executive producing a weekly film magazine show for them - Kiss Kiss Bang Bang. In the decade between the launch of The Media Show in 1987 and that single run of KKBB in 1998, a seismic change had happened at C4, and the film programmes I worked on provide a way of sketching that transformation. Indeed, film programmes at C4 could be seen as a kind of Trojan horse for the shift in commissioning from independents pitching ideas to commissioning editors, who then chose the best projects from those unsolicited proposals (the original process), to commissioners actively offering subjects to pre-selected production companies – a ‘white list’ of preferred suppliers. This is the way more and more commissioning at C4 is done these days – demand rather than supply led, top-down, rather than bottom-up. Film documentaries also proved to be a precedent for a kind of advertorial programming, years before the loosening of regulations about sponsorship. The heyday of these film programmes, between 1998 and 2002, reflects the much-trumpeted launch and subsequent collapse of the FilmFour subscription channel and indeed the entire subscription strategy of C4’s digital channels, of which it was the flagship. For that brief period, cinema seemed to be at the heart of C4’s identity and brand, and the channel’s Marketing department had apparently bottomless pockets for supporting the launch and profile of its film-related activities. But with the exit to Hollywood of the channel’s Chief Executive, Michael Jackson, and the retrenchment that followed, that moment ended and film programming, beyond studio-based celebrity reviewing, was essentially over for British public service broadcasting.

2001/02 - Fade to Black: The making of Pasolini’s hugely controversial SALO
for FilmFour. (Winter 2001/02 multiple screenings)
Executive Producer

2001 – Big Shots – 1 x 50’ the history of British gangster movies,
from Brighton Rock to Lock Stock, presented by Ray Winston
Producer. (C4 27/10/01) Screened at Dinard Film Festival 2002

2001 – Scenes By The Sea – 1 x 50’ profile of the Japanese filmmaker Takeshi
Kitano (October Films for C4 tx 2.1.01) Executive Producer

- 2000 – Guns for Hire: The making of The Magnificent Seven (50' for C4 13.5.00)
(October Films for C4) Producer
- 1999 - Working with Dinosaurs: The stop motion world of Ray Harryhausen
(1 x 40' documentary October Films for C4 25.12.99) Producer
- 1999 – The Man Who Would Be Kubrick (tx 4.9.99) The conman
who pretended to be Stanley Kubrick. (October Films for C4) Producer
- 1999 – Deconstructing Brad - C4 15.11.99. 1 x 30' documentary about the
star to launch Brad Pitt film season. (MBC). Executive Producer
- 1999 - Withnail and Us (the making of a cult) Executive Producer: (MBC for C4)
(August) (30') & The Drinking Game (5 mins). Executive Producer.
- 1999 - The Peculiar Memories of Bruce Robinson (45 mins) (profile of the
writer/director) MBC - C4 . Executive Producer
- 1999 - Don't Look Now & Eyes Wide Open (polemics for and against film
censorship) 20/21.2.99 MBC for C4 Executive Producer
- 1998 - What's Eating Johnny Depp? (45' C4 30.12.98) Executive Producer
- 1998 - Nothing Is What It Seems: the making of The Usual Suspects
MBC for C4 tx. 1.11.98. Executive Producer
- 1998 - Kiss Kiss Bang Bang (8 x 40' for C4 13.10-1.12.98) MBC for C4.
(Movie magazine show presented by Charlie Higson) Executive Producer
- 1998 - Actors Call the Shots (30' doc about actor-directors) MBC for C4.
30.3.98. Producer
- 1987-1990 – The Media Show (initially fortnightly and then weekly magazine
programme about the media that ran many reports on cinema)
Researcher to Series Producer