Succès de plume? Female Screenwriters and Directors of UK Films, 2010-2012

1. Executive Summary

- After many years of under-representation, female screenwriters appear to have made a
 breakthrough over the last three years, with an unusually high representation in the top 20
 UK independent films (37%) and profitable UK independent films (30%).
- This contrasts with continued under-representation of women among directors of UK independent films, although the proportion of female directors in the top 20 UK independent films (18%) was slightly higher than in the whole population of UK independent films (11%).
- Successful female writers and directors over this period included Dania Pasquini and Jane English (StreetDance and StreetDance 2), Phyllida Lloyd and Abi Morgan (The Iron Lady), Debbie Isitt (Nativity 2), Jane Goldman (The Woman in Black and Kick-Ass), Lucinda Whiteley (Horrid Henry), Moira Buffini (Jane Eyre) and Poppy Dixon (The Imposter).
- In addition to UK independent films, a number of female writers and directors have had success over the same period working on UK-USA studio titles. Examples include: Sarah Smith (*Arthur Christmas*), Susanna White and Emma Thompson (*Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang*), Jane Goldman (*X-Men: First Class*) and Lone Scherfig (*One Day*).
- A feature of the above results is the number of successful female writers and directors attached to more than one project over the period. This suggests the development of consolidated writing and directing careers and on-going relationships with producers and funders of films, the same factors shown by research to be present in the careers of successful male screenwriters and directors.
- There is a genre difference between male and female written/directed films, with women more likely than men to be associated with biopic, drama, music/dance and romance. In 2010-12, women had greater box office success compared to men in the genres animation, family, horror, music/dance, romance and thrillers.
- There is evidence of audience discrimination, with female written/directed films over-rating with women, children and older people, while male written/directed films had a broader audience demographic, reflecting male numeric dominance among top UK-USA titles.
- There is evidence of female writers and directors benefiting from association with female producers and executive producers and public sector sources of film investment (BBC Films, Film4 and Lottery funding).

2. Background

Under-representation of women in key decision-making and creative roles has been a feature of the film industry for many years. In the specific areas of writing and directing, the female percentage of screenwriters in the UK over the period 1999 to 2007 was found to be 12-15%, while for directors the proportion was under $10\%^1$, a situation paralleled in the USA, where such research has also been undertaken.²

As to the reasons for this inequality, two pertinent findings from UK research into screenwriting are that:

- The problem does not lie primarily in education, as female representation on screenwriting degrees/courses and other courses relevant to screenwriting is much higher than the percentage of female writers and directors associated with released UK films³
- The problem seems to lie in the commissioning process, where producers of UK films turn to mid-career writers and screenwriters often already known to them, the majority of whom in the past have been male⁴

To make progress, therefore, an institutional shift is required, in which female writers and directors form better links with producers and funders of films, while producers and funders take a more positive approach to finding and commissioning women to write and direct films.

One aspect of the commissioning process is the desire to reduce risk.⁵ Film production carries a multitude of risks, not least the difficulty of predicting audience appreciation of any particular story or approach. If there is an avenue to reduce risk, producers and funders are likely to take it, and one of these is to commission writers and directors who are a known "pair of safe hands". In an environment where most established writers and directors are male, this desire to reduce risk will therefore lead to a continuation of the under-representation of women.

The findings reported below, showing the increased proportion of female writers (and some directors) among the top UK independent films of 2010-2012 and among <u>profitable</u> UK independent films of the same period, should help shift the perception of risk and make the business case for commissioning a larger proportion of women in key creative roles.

¹ IES (2006) p ix, UK Film Council (2008) p 164.

² For example, Smith et al (2013), accessed at:

 $http://annenberg.usc.edu/News\%20 and\%20 Events/News/~/media/PDFs/Smith_GenderInequality 500 Films. as hx$

³ IES (2006) p ix.

⁴ Rogers (2007) p 7.

⁵ IES (2006) p xii.

3. The data for this report

In order to produce statistics on UK films the BFI Research and Statistics Unit maintains a database of UK films drawn from a variety of sources including official UK film certification records. For each film a variety of information is recorded including the identity and gender of screenwriters and directors. This database is used to produce the annual statistics on the gender of writers and directors of UK films published in the BFI Statistical Yearbook.⁶

For the purposes of this report the database was queried for all UK films released during the period 2010-2012 (the three most recent complete calendar years), adding fields for the identity and gender of writers and directors, the budget of each film (where known), the UK box office and the twelve-territory international box office.⁷

As well as looking at the dataset as a whole, we are therefore able to look at several sub-sets of UK films over the three year period to see whether the gender results are consistent or different for different categories of film.

4. Findings

4.1 All UK independent films 2010-2012

There were 372 UK independent films released in the UK territory over the three-year period, with 413 directors and 441 writers. Women made up 11.4% of directors and 16.1% of writers, similar to levels that have been observed over the past fifteen years.

Table 1: Gender of writers and directors of all UK independent films released in 2010-2012 (n=372)

	Directors		Writers			
	Number % of total		Number % o		Number	% of total
Male	366	88.6	370	83.9		
Female	47	11.4	71	16.1		
Total	413	100.0	441	100.0		

Source: BFI RSU

4.2 UK independent films with budgets of £1 million plus

It may be argued that the full dataset can give a misleading picture because of its inclusion of ultralow budget films, re-releases, films on very narrow release etc. Therefore Table 2 focuses on films with budgets of £1 million plus – the more substantial end of the spectrum. There were 163 films in this group with 175 directors and 244 writers. The female director percentage was 12.6% and the female writer percentage 18.0%, slightly higher than in the full dataset, but not significantly different.

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⁶ See for example, BFI Statistical Yearbook 2013, pp 234-235.

⁷ See section 4.4.

Table 2: Gender of writers and directors of UK independent films with budgets £1m+ (n=163)

	Directors		Writers		
	Number	% of total	Number	% of total	
Male	153	87.4	200	82.0	
Female	22	12.6	44	18.0	
Total	175	100.0	244	100.0	

4.3 Top 20 UK independent films 2010-2012

It is among the top 20 UK independent films for 2010-2012 that we see a big difference. Of the 27 screenwriters attached to these films, 10 were female (37%). This is a significant difference from the average for the whole dataset and suggests the possibility of a breakthrough by female writers into the top ranks of UK feature film screenwriting. In addition, four out of 22 director credits of the top 20 UK independent films were female: Dania Pasquini (*StreetDance* and *StreetDance* 2), Phyllida Lloyd (*The Iron Lady*) and Debbie Isitt (*Nativity* 2). All these directors have had success with more than one feature film (most notably Phyllida Lloyd with *Mamma Mia!* in 2008), and have directing credits in other dramatic media (TV, theatre).

Table 3: Gender of writers and directors of the top 20 UK independent films 2010-2012 (n=20)

	Dire	ectors	Writers		
	Number	% of total	Number	% of total	
Male	18	81.8	17	63.0	
Female	4	18.2	10	37.0	
Total	22	100.0	27	100.0	

Source: BFI RSU

Table 4 shows the female writers associated with the top 20 UK independent films in 2010-2012:

Table 4: Female writers associated with the top 20 UK independent films 2010-2012

Rank of film	Title	Female writer
#3	The Woman in Black	Jane Goldman
#4	The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel	Deborah Moggach
#5	Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy	Bridget O'Connor
#6	StreetDance3D	Jane English
#7	Kick-Ass	Jane Goldman
#8	The Iron Lady	Abi Morgan
#9	Nativity 2	Debbie Isitt
#10	Horrid Henry	Lucinda Whiteley
#12	Jane Eyre	Moira Buffini
#20	StreetDance 2	Jane English

Source: BFI RSU

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⁸ Mamma Mia! (UK box office £69.2 million) is the third-highest grossing UK film ever at the UK box office, after Skyfall and Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part2.

As can be seen from Table 4, not only were these writers in the top 20, they were concentrated toward the top of the UK independent film box office rankings: nine of the top 12 films were either exclusively female-written or had a female writer attached.

As with the successful female directors, these are all women who have previous feature film credits and/or credits in other dramatic media (particularly TV).

4.4 Profitable UK independent films 2010-2012

Being among the top 20 films is clearly a success, but it does not automatically make a film profitable, as profitability depends on the relationship between total film revenues (from all windows) and the budget of the film, including costs of distribution and exhibition. Similarly, a film outside the top 20 can be profitable, if its budget and other costs are low enough in relation to revenues.

Table 5 looks at the record of female writers and directors in relation to *profitable* UK independent films, with profitability estimated from an indicator developed by the BFI Research and Statistics Unit. We see here that while the female director percentage (9.4%) is similar to the full dataset of UK independent films, among writers the female percentage (30.3%) is substantially higher, and similar to the female percentage in the top 20 UK independent films.

Table 5: Gender of writers and directors of profitable UK independent films 2010-2012 (n=27)

	Directors		Writers		
	Number	% of total	Number	% of total	
Male	29	90.6	23	69.7	
Female	3	9.4	10	30.3	
Total	32	100.0	33	100.0	

Source: BFI RSU

Table 6 shows the female writers and directors associated with profitable UK independent films in 2010-2012. There is considerable overlap with the top 20 table, but some interesting additions as well:

Table 6: Female writers and directors of profitable UK independent films 2010-2012

Profitability	Title	Female director	Female writer
rank			
#2	The Imposter		Poppy Dixon
#6	The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel		Deborah Moggach
#7	The Woman in Black		Jane Goldman
#9	StreetDance3D	Dania Pasquini	Jane English
#11	The Iron Lady	Phyllida Lloyd	Abi Morgan
#12	Nativity 2	Debbie Isitt	Debbie Isitt
#17	Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy		Bridget O'Connor
#19	Shame		Abi Morgan
#21	Kick-Ass		Jane Goldman

⁹ See Appendix 1 for explanation of the profitability measure.

#23 Jane Ey	e		Moira Buffini
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Note: Profitability is ranked in relation to budget (rate of profit) not by absolute size.

As with the top 20 table, the female writers and directors are concentrated toward the top of the profitability table, accounting for six out of the top 12 UK independent films on the profitability scale.

4.5 UK-USA studio titles 2010-2012

Table 7 shows the results for UK-USA studio titles in 2010-2012. In this category of films, women remained particularly under-represented as both directors and writers, significantly more so than in the full dataset of UK independent films. Clearly this remains a difficult segment of the market for women to break into:

Table 7: Gender of writers and directors of UK-USA studio titles 2010-2012 (n=42)

	Directors		Writers		
	Number	% of total	Number	% of total	
Male	42	93.3	77	95.1	
Female	3	6.7	4	4.9	
Total	45	100.0	81	100.0	

Source: BFI RSU

While women remained under-represented in this category of film, those women who did manage to work on UK-USA titles scored some significant successes:

Table 8: Female writers and directors working on UK-USA studio titles released in 2010-2012

Ranked by UK box office, UK-USA titles only	Title	Female director	Female writer
#9	Arthur Christmas	Sarah Smith	Sarah Smith
#14	Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang	Susanna White	Emma Thompson
#19	X Men: First Class		Jane Goldman
#24	One Day	Lone Scherfig	
#38	The Debt		Jane Goldman

Source: BFI RSU

Note: Although not credited as a screenwriter, J.K. Rowling was the originator of two UK-USA titles released during this period: *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2* (rank #2) and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1* (rank #4). The top UK-USA title released during this period was *Skyfall*.

Interestingly, two of the above titles involved female-female combinations (*Arthur Christmas* and *Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang*); such writer-director combinations have in the past been identified as a feature of women breaking into feature film writing and directing.¹⁰

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¹⁰ IES (2006), p10.

5. Genre of female written and directed films

Analysis of the genre pattern of films with female writers or directors compared with those with exclusively male writers and directors reveals some interesting gender differences in terms of projects undertaken and connection with audiences. Table 9 compares the numbers of films by gender; Table 10 the box office results.

From Table 9 we see that, in terms of the number of UK films released, women are over-represented in the genres of biopic, drama, music/dance and romance. The bias toward drama films is particularly strong for female writers/directors, with 32.2% of their films in that category.

For male writers and directors, the over-represented genres are comedy, crime and science fiction. Interestingly, the genders are more equally represented in horror, thriller and war as well as documentary, action, adventure and animation.

Table 9: Number of UK films by genre and gender of writer/director, 2010-2012

	Male writer	and director	Female write	r or director
	Number of		Number of	
Genre	titles	% of titles	titles	% of titles
Action	18	5.5%	4	4.6%
Adventure	7	2.1%	2	2.3%
Animation	7	2.1%	2	2.3%
Biopic	6	1.8%	5	5.7%
Comedy	60	18.4%	9	10.3%
Crime	15	4.6%		
Documentary	67	20.6%	16	18.4%
Drama	59	18.1%	28	32.2%
Family			1	1.1%
Fantasy	8	2.5%	1	1.1%
Horror	23	7.1%	4	4.6%
Music/Dance	1	0.3%	2	2.3%
Musical	1	0.3%		
Romance	13	4.0%	7	8.0%
Sci fi	7	2.1%	_	
Thriller	30	9.2%	5	5.7%
War	4	1.2%	1	1.1%
Grand Total	326	100.0%	87	100.0%

Source: BFI RSU

Colour coding: blue = male; yellow = female

Turning to box office performance (Table 10) the genres that over-performed for male writers and directors were action, adventure, fantasy, sci fi and war. These results reflect the male domination of the UK-USA studio film category, which included titles such as *Skyfall* (action), *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2* (fantasy), *Inception* (science fiction), *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides* (adventure) and *War Horse* (war).

For women, the over-performing box office genres were animation, family, horror, music/dance, romance and thriller. These results reflect the performance of two UK-USA studio films – *Arthur Christmas* (animation) and *One Day* (romance) – combined with successful independent films such as *The Woman in Black* (horror), *Horrid Henry* (family), *StreetDance* and *StreetDance* 2 (music/dance) and *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (thriller).

Because of the impact of a few successful titles, one must be careful in drawing genre conclusions, however these data relate to a three-year period and so are a better reflection of genre patterns than one would get from a single year.

Table 10: Box office of UK films by genre and gender of writer/director, 2010-2012

	Male writer	and director	Female write	r or director
Genre	Box office £	% box office	Box office £	% box office
Action	210,601,434	25.0%	27,432,053	14.2%
Adventure	54,008,048	6.4%	675,970	0.4%
Animation	36,163,485	4.3%	21,348,435	11.1%
Biopic	55,225,628	6.5%	10,297,477	5.3%
Comedy	138,693,965	16.4%	33,928,212	17.6%
Crime	9,860,763	1.2%		
Documentary	8,355,065	1.0%	1,564,514	0.8%
Drama	26,367,270	3.1%	9,077,647	4.7%
Family			6,638,151	3.4%
Fantasy	192,637,018	22.8%	16,525,339	8.6%
Horror	6,451,373	0.8%	21,605,003	11.2%
Music/Dance	30,888	0.0%	14,716,392	7.6%
Musical	7,559	0.0%		
Romance	4,518,489	0.5%	14,765,148	7.7%
Sci fi	68,340,501	8.1%		
Thriller	8,290,930	1.0%	14,359,335	7.4%
War	24,394,274	2.9%	20,315	0.0%
Grand Total	843,946,690	100.0%	192,953,991	100.0%

Source: BFI RSU

Colour coding: blue = male; yellow = female

6. Film audience demographics by gender of writers and directors

To test whether the audience demographics of female writer/director films differ from those of male writer/director films, we can apply the audience skew measures from the BFI Statistical Yearbook to the female and male sets of films analysed in this report. Table 11 shows the demographics for the top 20 female writer/director films and Table 12 for the top 20 male writer/director films.

The conclusion – comparing the two tables - is that the audience for female writer/director films is more strongly skewed than for male writer/director films. Eight out of 15 female writer/director

films for which data are available had a female-skewed audience¹¹ whereas only two of the top 20 male writer/director films had a male audience skew.

In terms of age, there is a female skew toward the youngest age group (7-14) and a slight skew toward the 45+ age groups. The male age pattern, on the other hand, is more randomly scattered.

In part these results reflect the male domination of the big budget UK-USA titles, many of which deliberately target broad audience demographics. At the same time, they may reflect a greater comfort on the part of women in working with films that appeal more to women and children and/or the willingness of commissioners to engage women to make such films.

It would be interesting to probe the audience demographics of lower box office male and female titles (those outside the top 20) however survey data may not be available for these titles.

Table 11: Audience skew by gender and age for the top 20 female writer/director UK films, 2010-2012

2012							
			Audience	bias by ag	e? (from Y	earbooks)	
	Female						
	audience						
Film Title	bias?	7-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
ARTHUR CHRISTMAS	у	У			у		
The Woman in Black			У				
The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel	у					у	У
Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang	У	У					
X Men: First Class			У				
Tinker, Tailer, Soldier, Spy						у	У
StreetDance		У					
Kick-Ass			У				
The Iron Lady							У
Nativity 2	у	У					
One Day	У		У				
Horrid Henry aka Horrid Henry: The Movie	у	У					
Jane Eyre	У						У
Streetdance 2	у	У					
Tamara Drewe	Data not av	ailable					
We need to talk about Kevin	Data not av	ailable					
Shame	Data not av	ailable					
The Debt	Data not av	ailable					
The Imposter	Data not av	ailable					
IT'S A WONDERFUL AFTERLIFE							

Source: BFI RSU

y = the named film has a significantly above average audience % in that audience segment

[Table 12 follows]

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 $^{^{11}}$ As a rough rule of thumb, "female-skewed audience" means an audience that is more than 60% female.

Table 12: Audience skew by gender and age for the top 20 male writer/director UK films, 2010-2012

		Audience bias by age? (from Yearbooks)					
	Male audience						
Film Title	bias?	7-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
Skyfall aka Bond 23							
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2							
Batman: The Dark Knight Rises aka Magnus Rex			у				
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1							
The King's Speech						У	У
The Inbetweeners Movie			У				
Inception aka Oliver's Arrow			У				
Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides							
Sherlock Holmes 2						У	
Prometheus	У			У			
Johnny English Reborn aka Johnny English 2		У					
Clash of the Titans	у						
War Horse aka Dartmoor						У	у
THE PIRATES! AN ADVENTURE WITH SCIENTISTS					У		
Snow White and the Huntsman							
GNOMEO AND JULIET		У			У		
Robin Hood							
Gulliver's Travels					У		
The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage Of The Dav	vn Treader						У
Paul		•	у				

y = the named film has a significantly above average audience % in that audience segment

7. The commissioning process

The RSU production database contains some information that may throw light on the commissioning process. In the following analysis, we compare the following indicators for the top 20 male writer/director films and the top 20 female writer/director films:

- Female producer
- Female executive producer
- Studio title
- Film4 title
- BBC Films title
- Lottery funded
- Women with repeat producer or executive producer credits
- Men with repeat producer or executive producer credits

Table 13 presents the count data:

Table 13: Producer, funding and company indicators for top 20 male and female writer/director UK films, 2010-2012

	At least one female producer	At least one female executive producer	Studio titles	Film4 titles	BBC Films titles	Received Lottery funding
Male writer/director top 20 films	8	3	17	1	0	1
Female writer/director top 20 films	12	8	6	4	6	9

Note: The RSU database records up to five producers and up to two executive producers for each title.

We can see from Table 13 that films with female writers or directors were more likely to have female producers or executive producers, to have been financed and produced by Film4 or BBC Films and to have received Lottery funding. Most of the top 20 male writer/director films were studio titles of which only a minority had female producer involvement.

Supplementing Table 13, Table 14 lists all the producers and executive producers who had repeat credits (at least two credits) on the forty films included in this analysis.

Table 14: Persons having repeat producer or executive producer credits on the top 20 male and female writer/director UK films, 2010-2012

	Women with repeat producer	Men with repeat producer or
	or executive producer credits	executive producer credits
Top 20 male writer or director	Emma Thomas	Chris Nolan
films	Debra Hayward	David Heyman
	Liza Chasin	Tim Bevan
		Eric Fellner
		David Barron
		Kevin de la Noy
		Lionel Wigram
		Ridley Scott
		Tim Lewis
Top 20 female writer or	Alison Owen	Allan Niblo
director films	Christine Langan	Eric Fellner
	Debra Hayward	James Richardson
	Liza Chasin	Matthew Vaughn
	Tessa Ross	Paul Trijbits
		Rupert Preston
		Tim Bevan
		KrisThykier

Source: BFI RSU

Note: The RSU database records up to five producers and up to two executive producers for each title.

There are several observations to be made from Table 14:

- There are more men than women associated with both categories of film, reflecting the continued male numeric dominance of UK and USA film production.
- More female producers are associated with the top 20 female writer or director films than with the top 20 male writer/director films.
- Four people have repeat producer credits for both male and female writer/director films
 (Debra Hayward, Liza Chasin, Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner). This reflects the activity of Working
 Title Films across a broad range of films, studio and independent, male written and/or
 directed and female written and/or directed (Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang, Tinker,
 Tailor, Soldier, Spy, Johnny English Reborn, Paul)
- Among the women with repeat producer credits, Alison Owen reflects the Ruby Films/BBC
 Films collaboration (*Tamara Drewe*, *Jane Eyre*), Christine Langan reflects the involvement of BBC Films and Tessa Ross the involvement of Film4 (*Shame*, *The Iron Lady*).

8. Conclusions

- Against a background of female under-representation in the writing and directing of UK films, there is evidence of a breakthrough by female screenwriters in the last three years (2010-2012), with female screenwriters being associated with 37% of the top 20 UK independent films and 30% of profitable UK independent films.
- 8.2 A smaller number of women have also succeeded in originating, writing or directing top UK-USA titles.
- 8.3 A feature of the results is the number of successful female writers and directors attached to more than one project over the period. This suggests the development of consolidated writing and directing careers and on-going relationships with producers and funders of films, the same factors shown by research to be present in the careers of successful male screenwriters and directors.
- 8.4 There is a genre difference between male and female written/directed films, with women more likely than men to be associated with biopic, drama, music/dance and romance. Women had greater box office success compared to men with animation, family, horror, music/dance, romance and thrillers.
- 8.5 There is evidence of audience discrimination, with female written/directed films succeeding more with women, children and older people, while male written/directed films had a broader audience demographic (reflecting male numeric dominance among the top UK-USA titles).
- 8.6 There is evidence of female writers and directors benefiting from association with female producers and executive producers and public sector sources of film investment (BBC Film, Film4 and Lottery funding).

9. Directions for further research

The findings presented here could be taken further in a number of ways, for example:

- 9.1 Repeat the analysis of sections 5, 6 and 7 above for UK independent films only (removing UK-USA titles) to make the genre, audience and commissioning analysis specific to male writer/director and female writer/director independent films.
- 9.2 Supplement section 7 with more qualitative research into the commissioning process for films involving female writers and directors.
- 9.3 Look at the awards (festival, academy, BAFTA etc) received by female writers, directors and producers over the period 2010-2012.
- 9.4 Conduct statistical analysis of the characters and content of female writer/director films compared to male writer/director films, similar to that published by Stacy Smith in the Annenberg report cited in the References (presence of male and female speaking parts, sexualisation of female and male on-screen representation etc).
- 9.5 Conduct qualitative character and content analysis of female writer/director films to see whether and how they differ in their stories and approaches, and how these stories and approaches appeal to audiences.

10. Practical follow-up activities

Some practical activities that could be undertaken include:

- 10.1 Engage a writer/researcher to extend this paper into an illustrated report on the recent successes of female-written films and the factors behind these successes.
- 10.2 Use the material presented here as part of a "business case for diversity" publication, as recommended by Reena Bhavnani in her 2007 report, *Barriers to Diversity in Film a research review*.
- 10.3 Circulate these reports widely among film producers and financiers, with supporting meetings, seminars etc.
- 10.4 Review the recommendations from Rogers (2007), IES (2006) and Bhavnani (2007) to see whether there are other strategies that could work, for example in the area of promoting cross-over of female writing and directing talent from other media such as TV and theatre.

Appendix 1: Estimating the profitability of UK independent films

The measure used in this report to estimate profitability of UK films was developed by the Research and Statistics Unit of the UK Film Council (now transferred to the BFI) in the mid-2000s and reported in the Statistical Yearbooks from 2007 onwards. It applies strictly speaking only to UK independent films, though it may have some informational value for UK-USA studio titles.

Profitability is viewed from the perspective of the investor in the film (private or public) and was derived from a dataset including all value chain revenues for UKFC co-funded films (100+ films). "All value chain" means rights revenues from all windows and territories in which the film was sold: theatrical, video, TV and international rights sales (for all windows).

The question explored by the RSU was: "can international theatrical revenues serve as a reliable indicator of film profitability?"

The reason for pursuing this question is that information on film revenues is not generally in the public domain and when the information is known (for example for Lottery-funded films) it is time-consuming to assemble and analyse the dataset. If gross box office can serve as a reliable indicator of profitability, it can serve as a short-cut, even for films whose full value chain revenues are not known.

After analysing the UKFC dataset, the RSU found that there was a reliable statistical association between the gross twelve-territory international box office for a film and its profitability. UK independent films that achieved a gross 12-territory box office twice their budget were nearly always in profit, while those that achieved a ratio less than x2 were nearly always in loss. The ratio x2 marked the break-even point. This ratio was found to be a reliable indicator in roughly 90% of cases. The exceptions were films that differed substantially from the norm for some reason, for example having a strong UK-only appeal or making a particularly big USA TV pre-sale based on a particular actor.

It is important to note that the use of this indicator does not imply that we see all profits coming from theatrical exploitation. On the contrary, the model used data from the whole value chain. The implication of the finding is that revenues from non-theatrical windows are roughly proportional on average around the world to the 12-territory theatrical gross.

The twelve territories were: UK and Republic of Ireland, USA & Canada, France, Germany, Austria, Spain, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Chile, Australia, New Zealand. These territories were chosen because they accounted for a large proportion of the global box office at the time the study was conducted and were the 12 territories then included in the RSU's theatrical database.

The BFI RSU currently purchases theatrical data for 19 territories and may increase this soon to 23 territories (including China). At that point it would be useful to repeat the profitability analysis to see if the proxy profitability ratio needs to be revised for the larger geographical coverage.

In summary, the profitability estimator used in this report is:

A UK independent film is estimated to be in profit (from the point of view of the investor) if its 12-territory box office gross is twice or more than its budget.

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