

Dear Yiannis Theodoru

I am writing to submit my views for Ofcom's consideration in the next stage of it's Channel 4/PSB Review process.

I am the Joint Managing Director of Warp X Ltd, which makes lower budget films in a scheme that is specifically targeted at supporting new talent and increasing the diversity of the British film industry. The scheme is jointly funded by Film4/Channel 4, UKFC, EM Media and Screen Yorkshire. The films are distributed by Optimum Releasing in Britain and have been sold around the world. Film4 has contributed £1.5 million to this scheme between 2005 and 2008, a critical contribution to the overall production fund of £4.5million that has generated six cost effective and well received films that are being launched at international festivals such as the Sundance Film Festival in January this year. An example of a Warp X success story which is especially significant in terms of PSB would be 'Hush', written and directed by Mark Tonderai and produced by Zoe Stewart. This BME creative team have made a film at just over a £1million budget that has had buyers from over 15 different countries around the world including the USA. The team is now working on other bigger projects, and I am sure will be a creative force who will return immense value to the British industry. Another example would be our upcoming comedy film 'Bunny and the Bull' directed by Paul King that is a technically innovative 'road movie' shot entirely in a studio in Nottingham. The production spend on this £1.25 million film was a significant boost to the regional screen economy of the East Midlands, and will be a show case for further films of this nature to be made in the region. The Warp X fund is tasked by Film4 (and its other backers) with public service objectives such as supporting new talent, encouraging production outside of London and developing BME creative talent. The level of funding provided by Film4, and the significant fact that Channel 4 agreed to revenue shares which have benefited talent, cast and crew much more than the commercial sector, has and is demonstrably promoting culturally relevant and commercially focused British film making in a way that would not be possible with most film financiers.

I have also been the co-producer of Steve McQueen's debut feature 'Hunger' that has been one of the most acclaimed British films of recent years. It won the prestigious 'Camera D'Or' at Cannes, and has so far won nearly 20 awards including 3 British Independent Film Awards on last Sunday night. The film was primarily financed by Channel 4's Arts Department and Film4. I genuinely, hand on heart, cannot imagine any other British broadcaster or funder who would have had the courage to back a film at the level of 50% of a £1.7million budget which was sensitive material to be handled by a new comer to the film industry. The film is now seen as a standard bearer for a creative resurgence in cultural British film making. But 'Hunger' would not have happened without Channel 4, to the detriment of film culture in Britain.

I have been working in the industry for over 20 years now. 10 at the BBC, and 14 in the independent sector and working at Channel 4 as a Commissioning Editor for one of the most PSB focused areas in the 1990's. I am very attached to the BBC and especially the values it represents, but if there is one thing I have learnt over this long period, it is that a healthy Channel 4 is essential not just for the independent sector but also to provide real cultural competition to the BBC. The public get a better service

from the BBC that way, and it is difficult to see how ITV can consistently challenge the BBC in some of the key PSB areas such as documentary, single drama and film, current affairs in the way Channel 4 can and mostly does. If Channel 4's current revenue decline and consequent impact on programme budgets continues without being addressed, then much of the cultural and commercial progress made of the last 25 years will begin to be reversed (I am not a subscriber to a past golden age of television and film theory). I fear that if the current very real Channel 4 public funding gap is not addressed as a matter of urgency, not only will Channel 4 not be able to deliver some of it's exciting plans (Next on 4) but even it's PSB heartland areas such as film and drama will be cut back even further and lose their critical mass and impact. That would be tragic. Public service broadcasting and film needs competition and diversity as much as any other field of life.

With thanks for this opportunity to present my views,

Yours sincerely
Robin Gutch