

Working Title Films and Transatlantic British Cinema

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Abstract

This thesis presents a business history of the London-based film production company, Working Title Films. The focus is on the creative and business structures and processes through which Working Title has operated and, in turn, the individual and collective agency of the key players responsible for developing and maintaining these institutional determinants. The same set of research questions are applied to the principal filmmaking institutions with which Working Title has collaborated, and, more particularly, examines how Working Title has negotiated creative and business relationships with various larger film businesses. By taking a chronological approach to Working Title's evolution, a detailed account of the company's years as an independent production company (1984-1990), a subsidiary of PolyGram Filmed Entertainment (1990-1998) and a subsidiary of Universal Pictures (1998-present) is provided.

The thesis also offers a historical and conceptual framework through which the business history of Working Title is analysed. In the first instance, this involves a reconsideration of the relationship between the film industries and cultures of Britain and Hollywood which combines the discourses of national cinema with more recent scholarship about transnational cinema. This conceptual reinterpretation is subsequently applied to three indicative business histories from the 1930s and 1940s: London Films, MGM-British and the Rank Organisation — and then to Working Title itself. The central concept of the thesis — 'Transatlantic British Cinema' — describes a type of cultural production that challenges orthodox accounts of British cinema as national cinema and indicates the ways in which representations of Britain and 'Britishness' function within transnational film culture.

List of Contents

Abstract	3
List of Tables	7
Acknowledgements	9
Author's Declaration	11
Introduction	13
Chapter 1: The Trans/national Divide: Towards a Typology of Transatlantic British Cinema	23
Chapter 2: The Independent Years 1984-1990	59
Chapter 3: The PolyGram Years 1990-1998	99
Chapter 4: The Universal Years 1998-Present	163
Conclusion	233
Appendix 1 – List of Interviewees (in alphabetical order)	237
Appendix 2 – Working Title Filmography	239
List of References	241

List of Tables

1: Working Title's 'social art cinema' output 1985-1988	89
2: Working Title's independent output 1988-1989	93
3: Working Title slate by genre, 1990-1992	116
4: Working Title slate by genre, 1993-1998	145
5: Transatlantic British Cinema in the Working Title slate by genre, 1990-1998	160
6: Working Title main slate by genre, 1999-2006	182
7: WT2 slate by genre 1999-2006	190
8: Working Title's Focus Features slate by genre 1999-2006	196
9: Working Title Main Slate 2007-2011	208
10: Working Title's Focus Features Slate 2007-2011	211
11: Working Title's Main Slate (Universal) 2012-2014	214
12: Working Title's Focus Features Slate 2012-2014	215
13: Working Title's StudioCanal Slate 2012-2014	216
14: Working Title's Transatlantic British Cinema by genre 1999-2014	218
15: Working Title's Transatlantic British Cinema by genre: Romantic Comedy	223
16: Working Title's Transatlantic British Cinema by genre: Comedy	225
17: Working Title's Transatlantic British Cinema by genre: Drama	227
18: Working Title's Transatlantic British Cinema by genre: Family	228
19: Working Title's Transatlantic British Cinema by genre: Action/Thriller	228
20: WT2 by genre: Action/Thriller	230

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Author's Declaration

I declare that all of the work in this this is my own, unless otherwise cited. I can also confirm that this work has been submitted only to the University of York, for the award of PhD.

Introduction

Working Title Films is the most important contemporary film production company based in Britain. In the last 30 years it has produced over 100 feature films, which have collectively generated over \$5 billion at the worldwide box-office, along with numerous awards and critical plaudits. The company's longevity, diverse and prolific output and commercial success make it unique in the context of the British film industry. During the 1980s Working Title was best known for its 'social art cinema' including films such as *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), *Caravaggio* (1986) and *Wish You Were Here* (1987). In contrast, during the 1990s the company was most closely associated with its romantic comedies written by Richard Curtis (*Four Weddings and a Funeral*, 1994; *Notting Hill*, 1999) and its family films (*Bean*, 1997; *The Borrowers*, 1997). In the 2000s this repertoire was expanded with period dramas directed by Joe Wright (*Pride & Prejudice*, 2005; and *Atonement*, 2007), more family films starring Rowan Atkinson (*Johnny English*, 2003; *Mr. Bean's Holiday*, 2007), genre comedies from the writer-director team of Simon Pegg and Edgar Wright (*Shaun of the Dead*, 2004; *Hot Fuzz*, 2007) and, of course, more romantic comedies from Richard Curtis (*Bridget Jones's Diary*, 2001; *Love Actually*, 2003). More recently, Working Title has also produced political thrillers such as *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (2011) and *Closed Circuit* (2013), and more contemporary period dramas like *Frost/Nixon* (2008) and *The Theory of Everything* (2014).

Working Title's continuing success has prompted frequent celebrations of the company, especially in terms of national achievement in the broadsheet and trade press and at award ceremonies, including the 2004 BAFTAs at which Working Title received the Michael Balcon Award for Outstanding British Contribution to Cinema. Despite its prominent and acclaimed position within the British film industry, the limited scholarly work about Working Title has focussed almost exclusively on the company's *transnational* and particularly *transatlantic* production strategy and the key films it has produced in this context. Michael Wayne (2006), for example, positions Working Title's films within what he calls the 'Atlanticist paradigm for British cinema' and argues that the company has been integrated into the Hollywood film industry and operates in a subordinate position

whereby the range of films it produces are necessarily made with the American, rather than the British, market in mind. Taking a less overtly political approach, Tobias Hochscherf and James Leggott suggest:

Working Title has been at the forefront of establishing ways of working with and according to the models of major Hollywood studios in order to produce profitable films with high production values aimed at largely middle-class, affluent audiences. As a potpourri of British and American characteristics, its films have repeatedly used an array of American and British performers in lead roles, often connected with Hollywood genres such as romantic comedy and horror, whilst also extending and exporting indigenous traditions of comedy and costume drama. Some of its most popular films also deal with Anglo-American culture clashes on both an aesthetic and narrative level, thematising cultural difference whilst adopting a formally populist approach (Hochscherf & Leggot, 2010, 9-10).

Even a cursory survey of Working Title's entire output, however, reveals a much more diverse picture. For many years Working Title has also produced a range of films that are American in settings, themes and characters, and which are every bit as diverse as its British output. During the 1990s such films included the work of American auteurs like the writer and director Tim Robbins (*Bob Roberts*, 1992; *Dead Man Walking*, 1996), the director Mario Van Peebles (*Posse*, 1993; *Panther*, 1995) and the writer-director-producer partnership of Joel and Ethan Coen (*Fargo*, 1996; *The Big Lebowski*, 1998). Working Title again produced various American-set films in the 2000s, including romantic comedies (*40 Days and 40 Nights*, 2002; *Definitely, Maybe*, 2008), political thrillers and action films directed by Paul Greengrass (*United 93*, 2006; *Green Zone*, 2010), as well as maintaining its working relationship with the Coen brothers on films like *Burn After Reading* (2008) and *A Serious Man* (2009). Working Title's sustained success in Hollywood was recognised in 2013 by the Producers Guild of America which honoured Working Title co-chairmen Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner with the David O. Selznick Achievement Award, the organisation's highest honour. There can be few filmmakers that have received both the Michael Balcon Award in the UK and the David O. Selznick Award in the US, which once again underlines the unique achievements of the Working Title team.

Even so, the range of academic writing about Working Title remains surprisingly limited and this is arguably due to some of the inherent biases of film studies as a discipline. Historically films have been grouped for study based on such criteria as authorship, genre and nationality. Given the diversity of Working Title's overall output in all of these areas there is ostensibly little to unite many of its films other than the fact they were produced by the same company. Equally, film studies has historically privileged the

study of film as it relates to both art and the agency of the various artists – particularly the writers, directors and actors – directly responsible for its creation. In contrast, the role of the producer, and by extension the production company, is less often used as an organising principle. As Eric Fellner explained when interviewed for this thesis, the role of the producer is that of the glue which binds the creative processes of filmmaking to the commercial reality of the film business:

A producer is like the chief executive of any business. He has to build the business, come up with the ideas, come up with the money to support those ideas and find the creative and technical talent to make those ideas into reality. He has to finance the business going forward, run the business to a schedule and a budget, and ensure that every single person employed is doing absolutely everything that he or she ought to be doing and support them, in all the ways that you can support them, so they can do their best work. Then, when they've made their product, he ensures that that product is as good as it possibly can be and that it gets to market, that it's properly marketed and distributed ... Every single aspect of what I just described, I see as creative. There is a creative role and a business role. In every decision I make with Stephen Daldry or Richard Curtis or the Coen brothers, or whomever it may be – Paul Greengrass, Edgar Wright, Joe Wright – I'm having to consider both sides of the equation. The trick is how to work with creative talent and at the same time run an efficient business. That's the line we straddle (Fellner, 2014).

It is precisely this balancing act of creativity and commerce which defines the role of the producer and the production company. Ultimately, the only common factor in all of Working Title's films is an imprint of the individual and collective agency of the company's producers-in-chief and its key creative and business staff. It is they who must successfully guide each project through the stages of development, green-lighting, production, post production and marketing so that the intended product – a commercially viable feature film – can emerge.

In writing about Working Title, this thesis adopts the approach of business history. In the first instance, this involves a detailed examination of the creative and business structures in place within Working Title and a consideration of the roles of the key players responsible for creating, maintaining and developing those structures. Secondly, it involves an interrelated consideration of the successive institutional relationships which Working Title has established and maintained with larger filmmaking businesses based both in Britain and Hollywood. Such relationships have not only influenced Working Title's internal structure and functioning, but have also governed the company's relationship with the wider industrial functions of distribution, marketing and exhibition. Similarly, such wider structures are also, of course, subject to the agency of secondary level of key industry

players. Thirdly, it is vital to situate the operation of Working Title and its various institutional relationships within the yet larger narrative of the British and Hollywood film industries of which it is a constituent part. Finally, an investigation of the various creative and business contexts in which Working Title has operated must be brought back to a consideration of the films which the company has produced as texts.

Approaching the study of Working Title in terms of business history thus encompasses several levels of inquiry which range in scope from the agency of key individuals within specific institutional contexts to the relationship between the film industries and cultures of Britain and Hollywood. The central research questions which these various levels of inquiry are designed to elucidate are firstly about business structure, process and agency: How has Working Title been organised, and how does it function as a filmmaking business? How have its various institutional relationships with other film businesses been organised and how do they function? And what are the roles of key players operating both within Working Title and the film businesses with which it works? Secondly, there is the question of the impact of such issues on the films Working Title had produced over the years: What are the consequences of these various structures, processes and moments of individual and collective agency for Working Title's films as texts? Thirdly, there is the question of the extent to which the ways Working Title operates as a business has historical precedents. Fourthly, there are broader theoretical issues concerning how best to conceptualise the relationship between the film industries and cultures of Britain and Hollywood, especially the transnationalism and hybridity inherent in those relationships.

Chapter 1 of this thesis addresses the major historical and conceptual questions and presents a wider contextual framework into which Working Title can be situated. In the first instance, this encompasses a reappraisal of the discourse about British cinema as a national cinema by integrating more recent scholarship about cinematic transnationalism. In doing so, I propose a conceptual space that I call 'Transatlantic British Cinema' which is defined by interaction between the film industries and cultures of Britain and Hollywood. This has involved creating a typology of the key transnational strategies that British-based studios and production companies have used in forging and maintaining relationships with Hollywood. In undertaking this task, the work of Mette Hjort (2010) has proven particularly useful in establishing the strategies of categories of economic, globalising and affiliative transnationalism. In the second part of the chapter, I examine three prominent British-based studios of the 1930s and 1940s – London Film Productions, the Rank Organisation

and MGM-British – as indicative business history case studies of the concept of Transatlantic British Cinema. This chapter demonstrates that the film industries of Britain and Hollywood should be viewed not as discrete, but rather on a continuum which extends from collaboration at one end to integration at the other. Similarly, I will argue that the films which result from such transatlantic interactions are hybrid at a textual level and engage the film cultures of both Britain and Hollywood. An abridged version of this work has recently appeared elsewhere (Townsend, 2014).

Having established the historical and conceptual framework of the thesis, Chapter 2 examines Working Title's years as an independent production company between 1984 and 1990. During this period Working Title produced low-budget films such as *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), *Caravaggio* (1986) and *Wish You Were Here* (1987), the majority of which received complete or partial funding from the British broadcaster, Channel 4. The impact of the channel's funding policy and oversight of Working Title's business operations are examined, as well the contribution of other publicly funded filmmaking institutions such as British Screen and the British Film Institute (BFI) Production Board. The collective influence of the various public service remits of these institutions upon Working Title's output is also considered within the context of what Christopher Williams (2002) calls 'social art cinema'. This narrative of independent production is also considered in relation to the company's collaboration with a number of British-based international sales agents and distribution companies which were responsible for the dissemination of Working Title's films. While examining Working Title's years as an independent is clearly important to the project of writing a business history, the company's various interrelationships with state-supported institutions and fellow independents place this period largely outside of the concept of Transatlantic British Cinema, a discussion which is returned to in chapters 3 and 4.

Chapter 3 examines Working Title's integration into PolyGram's New Business Division and later PolyGram Filmed Entertainment (PFE) and the consequent restructuring of its business practices in line with those of a multinational entertainment conglomerate. In particular, the impact of PFE's centralised creative and financial filter, the 'control sheet', will be considered. Significantly, the control sheet helped PFE determine which films would be green-lit and thus directly influenced Working Title's approach to the development and production of films at both its offices in London and Los Angeles. The subsequent reorientation of Working Title's filmmaking strategy towards the global markets which PFE sought to exploit produced transatlantic British films such as *Four Weddings and a Funeral*,

Bean, *The Borrowers* and *Notting Hill*. Crucially, Working Title's development as a production subsidiary must also be seen in the context of PolyGram's diversification into film and the ambition of its parent company, Philips, to create an entertainment conglomerate in the mould of the major Hollywood studios. In practice this meant establishing a headquarters in Los Angeles and creating PolyGram Filmed Entertainment International (PFEI) and Gramercy Pictures to respectively distribute and market its films in international territories and the US. To varying degrees such businesses collaborated and/or competed with Hollywood and thus will be considered within the conceptual framework of this thesis, and specifically in relationship to the concept of Transatlantic British Cinema.

Chapter 4 considers Working Title's integration into another entertainment conglomerate, Universal Studios, following the 1998 sale of PolyGram to Universal's former parent company, Seagram. In contrast to PFE, Universal has been a member of the Hollywood oligopoly since the silent era and had its own long-established business practices and distribution and marketing infrastructure. This chapter examines Universal's key green-lighting practices, including its own creative and financial filter, the 'ten column', and its overall 'portfolio' approach to film production. During Working Title's years as a subsidiary of Universal, the company continued to produce transatlantic British films which were targeted at a global audience, including *Bridget Jones Diary*, *Pride & Prejudice* and *Mr. Bean's Holiday*. Once again, the impact of distribution and marketing proved crucial and special attention is given to the role of Universal's two international distribution companies, United International Pictures (UIP) and Universal Pictures International (UPI). The chapter once again concludes with a consideration of Working Title during its years as a subsidiary of Universal in relation to the concept of Transatlantic British Cinema.

Foregrounding the creative and business processes at play within and without Working Title during the company's three principal phases of evolution does much to elucidate the company's position within and between the film industries and cultures of Britain and Hollywood. This thesis also foregrounds the individual and collective agency of the key players involved in determining the structures through which Working Title's films have been developed, green-lit, produced, distributed and marketed. The principal names associated with the company are those of its co-chairmen and producers-in-chief, Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner, who replaced Bevan's original partners, Sarah Radclyffe and Graham Bradstreet in 1992. Other crucial players in Working Title's set up include the former and current departmental heads: Angela Morrison, Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward,

Natascha Wharton and Michelle Wright. Outside of the confines of Working Title, the agency of key players in its successive parent companies is also examined. These include PFE's chief architects, CEO Michael Kuhn and COO Malcolm Ritchie and PFEI CEO, Stewart Till, and Universal's executives, especially its studio heads including Stacey Snider, Marc Shmuger and David Linde, and Donna Langley, as well as those in charge of Universal's international distribution operations, UIP and UPI, which were run by former PFE executives, Stewart Till and David Kosse.

A note on methodology

In their discussion of the production of media fiction, Horace Newcomb and Amanda Lotz suggest that there are five 'levels of analysis' from which such research can be pursued: national and international political economy and policy, specific industrial contexts, particular organisations, individual productions and individual agents (2002, 62-66). This thesis engages with all of these levels to varying degrees. More specifically, chapter 1 addresses the issues of national and international political economy and policy in historical and conceptual terms as it relates to the film industries of Britain and Hollywood. Subsequently, chapters 2, 3 and 4 carry this discussion forward while addressing the evolution of Working Title as a 'particular organisation' within the 'specific industrial contexts' of its successive institutional relationships with Channel 4, PolyGram and Universal. In turn, such an investigation takes the examination of both 'individual productions' and 'individual agents' within its broad sweep.

In engaging with these various levels of analysis, this thesis uses a plethora of primary and secondary material. Chapter 1 relies firstly on the wealth of academic writing about British cinema as national cinema as a means of establishing the orthodox account before using more recent scholarship about transatlantic cinema, to construct the conceptual framework of Transatlantic British Cinema as a counter-narrative. The subsequent selection of three indicative business history case studies has similarly relied on the abundance of existing academic work about British and Hollywood cinema during the 1930s and 1940s. Important sources include business histories of key institutions, biographies of key players, histories of national film legislation and more general edited volumes and monographs dedicated to the cinema of these two decades.

In contrast, chapters 2, 3 and 4 rely almost exclusively on the selection and use of primary material. As Sarah Street notes, the institutional boundaries which have separated

the study of film and history are necessarily collapsed when the two disciplines are combined insofar as the primary source material of history is also that of film history (2000, 2). The primary research material used in this thesis comes from three main extra-textual sources: the national and international trade press; previously unpublished archival material; and interviews with key industry players.

In terms of the trade press, the BFI Library's collection of specifically British discontinued trade publications such as *AIP & Co*, *Producer*, *Screen Finance* and *Monthly Film Bulletin* has been invaluable in researching Working Title's years as an independent production company for chapter 2. In contrast, chapters 3 and 4 rely more heavily on the international and Hollywood-centric publications *Screen International*, *The Hollywood Reporter* and *Variety*. Extensive use of the trade press has allowed the production of a detailed business history of Working Title and successive institutional partners, including details of significant deals, box office results, production histories and profiles of key players.

The historical detail provided by the trade press has been further enhanced by access to an unpublished archive of material about both PolyGram's New Business Division and PolyGram Filmed Entertainment, courtesy of Michael Kuhn. This has provided hard empirical detail about a number of key business events and structures relating to both Working Title's integration into PFE and its subsequent operation as a subsidiary. This material is especially valuable as it does not appear elsewhere and offers unique insights into this period of Working Title's development as a business.

Finally, this thesis makes use of 26 original interviews with 22 key players (see Appendix 1) that feature prominently in the development of Working Title and the larger film businesses with which it has been involved. These include Working Title co-chairmen Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner, and former and current Working Title departmental heads including Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward, Angela Morrison, Paul Webster, Natascha Wharton and Michelle Wright. Key PFE executives Michael Kuhn, Malcolm Ritchie and Stewart Till have also been interviewed, as well as former and current Universal executives such as Gareth Wilson, David Kosse and, once again, Stewart Till.

From *My Beautiful Laundrette* to *The Theory of Everything* via *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Bean*, *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Pride & Prejudice*, Working Title has become one of the most successful British-based film companies in the history of cinema. From modest beginnings as a small, hand-to-mouth independent to its current position as a major player within the contemporary Hollywood studio system, the history of Working Title is one that

deserves detailed investigation. The complexity of this narrative also hinges on the development of an appropriate conceptual framework through which Working Title's history can be understood. In turn, such a model must also cast light on the history of interactions between the film industries and cultures of Britain and Hollywood, a conceptual space that I am calling Transatlantic British Cinema. A clearer understanding of these contextual issues ultimately provides a sounder platform from which to approach the study of Working Title's films at a textual level, and thus better understand some of the representations of Britain and Britishness that are dominant in the global trade of images.

Chapter 1

The Trans/national Divide: Towards a Typology of Transatlantic British Cinema

National identity is by no means a fixed phenomenon, but constantly shifting, constantly in the process of becoming. The shared, collective identity which is implied always masks a whole range of internal differences and potential and actual antagonisms. The concept of national cinema is equally fluid, equally subject to ceaseless negotiations: while the discourses of film culture seek to hold it in place, it is abundantly clear that the concept is mobilised in different ways, by different commentators, for different reasons (Higson, 1995, 4).

Andrew Higson, *Waving the Flag: Constructing a National Cinema in Britain*

In its simplest guise, the transnational can be understood as the global forces that link people or institutions across nations. Key to transnationalism is the recognition of the decline of national sovereignty as a regulatory force in global coexistence. The impossibility of assigning a fixed national identity to much cinema reflects the dissolution of any stable connection between a film's place of production and/or setting and the nationality of its makers and performers. This is not in itself a new phenomenon; what is new are the conditions of financing, production, distribution and reception of cinema today (Ezra & Rowden, 2006, 1).

Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden, *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader*

Constructing conceptual categories is one of the most pervasive forms of discourse within film studies and across the arts and humanities generally. It is also among the most problematic as established, revised or new conceptual boundaries become subject to scrutiny for their inclusions, exclusions and omissions. As the quotations which open this chapter demonstrate, the categories of national and transnational cinema are no exceptions. In the first instance, 'national cinema' concedes substantive definition to its fluid, negotiable and variously mobilised nature. In the second, 'transnational cinema' identifies only the 'decline of national sovereignty as a regulatory force' and the 'impossibility of assigning a fixed national identity' as determinants – positions which

presuppose the prior existence of a definable national cinema. Despite the accuracy of these statements, however, opening any conceptual framework so wide that inclusivity becomes the means of a seamless definition minimises its usefulness as a tool of explanation or inquiry.

The possibility of imposing essentialist structures which regulate the boundaries of 'national cinema' or 'transnational cinema' have thus been met with the realisation that such monolithic categories are inherently diverse and unwieldy. This problem has typically been dealt with by processes of deconstruction. Particular mobilisations or sub-categories of national cinema, for example, can be asserted by applying the label of nation, explicitly or implicitly, alongside one or more additional criteria such as genre (e.g. drama, comedy, documentary), authorship (e.g. directors, studios, writers) or period (e.g. silent cinema, World War II, 1960s).

Discourse about British cinema has, for instance, generated various sub-national conceptual categories which use such markers. Well-known examples include the British Documentary Film Movement, Gainsborough melodrama, Ealing comedy and the British New Wave. Significantly, it is the very idea of national distinctiveness or specificity which has underpinned the conceptual construction of, and critical debate about, such film movements and cycles. They are sub-categories of national cinema defined first and foremost by their deep rooted connection to Britain (and Britons) on the screen, behind the camera and at the cinema. As Philip Rosen suggests, the conceptualisation of a 'coherent' national cinema is bound by an industrial and textual logic which identifies its subject matter and primary audience as domestic:

The discussion of national cinema assumes not only that there is a principle or principles of coherence among a large number of films; it also involves an assumption that those principles have something to do with the production and/or reception of those films within the legal borders of (or benefiting capital controlled from within) a given nation-state. That is, the inter-textual coherence is connected to the socio-political and/or socio-cultural coherence implicitly or explicitly assigned to the nation (Rosen, 2008, 18).

Other well-known cycles of British cinema, however, betray a transnational, or more specifically, transatlantic orientation. The longstanding dominance of the Hollywood film industry in the global marketplace has encouraged British studios and production companies to collaborate with Hollywood in the production and/or distribution of British films which seek to appeal to, and generate revenue from, a global audience. Well-known examples include cycles of prestige films, including the historical epics produced by London

Films during the 1930s (e.g. *The Private Life of Henry VIII*, 1933; *The Four Feathers*, 1939) or the theatrical and literary adaptations of the Rank Organisation during the 1940s (e.g. *Great Expectations*, 1946; *Hamlet*, 1948). The output of London Films was distributed by United Artists, for example, while Rank distributed in the US through both United Artists and Universal. More recent examples include well-known film series featuring James Bond (1962-present) and Harry Potter (2001-2011), respectively produced EON Productions and Heyday Films. Over the course of its long history, the Bond franchise has been financed and distributed by United Artists, MGM and Columbia, while the Harry Potter series was financed and distributed through Warner Bros.

Remarking upon this distinction is, in itself, nothing new. Academic discourse about British cinema has repeatedly acknowledged the national or transnational market strategies open to British cinema (Higson, 1989, 1995; Crofts, 1993; Hill, 1997; Street, 1997). Despite the persistence of transatlantic activity between the film industries and cultures of Britain and Hollywood, however, it is the concept of British cinema as a form of national cinema which continues to dominate. Dudley Andrew, for instance, stresses that the 'institution of film historiography' has long privileged 'the national' as 'textbooks, university courses, and museum screenings continue to praise cinematic output mainly by nation'. Foregrounding 'the national' has enshrined the belief that 'every country – the mature ones at least – was thought to have its distinct industry, style, and thematic concerns' (2010, 65). Indeed, the paradigm of 'national cinema' by definition minimises the importance of its conceptual other, 'transnational cinema'.

In this chapter, I propose a transnational cinematic space which I call 'Transatlantic British Cinema'. This space is defined, in the first instance, by collaboration or integration between the film industries of Britain and Hollywood. Secondly, Transatlantic British Cinema also entails hybridity between the film cultures of Britain and Hollywood at a textual level. Thus, unlike the 'coherent' British cinema which privileges 'the national', Transatlantic British Cinema affords primacy to 'the transatlantic'. In this way, Transatlantic British Cinema straddles the conceptual divide between national and transnational cinema by suggesting a way of understanding the transnational cinema most closely related to a particular nation – Britain – and, more specifically, a way to interpret a particular orientation of that transnationalism: the transatlantic. This conceptual reinterpretation, in turn, relies upon the burgeoning weight of scholarship in the comparatively recent field of transnational cinema studies, in particular, the work of Mette Hjort (2010), which has substantially informed what follows.

The need for a new conceptual category within the discourse of British cinema which highlights 'the transatlantic' is partly derived from the inadequacies of current approaches in explaining both Working Title as a business and the films which it produces as texts. Since 1999, for example, Working Title has been a London-based subsidiary of the major Hollywood studio, Universal Pictures. As a business, therefore, Working Title is at once a component part of both the British and Hollywood film industries. Equally, the majority of films which the company has produced since 1999 are international co-productions, which involve both the UK and US film industries. While many of the films Working Title produces are British in terms of setting and characters, they also conform to many of the conventions of Hollywood filmmaking. Take, for example, Working Title's cycle of romantic comedies, including *Notting Hill* (1999), *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001), *Love Actually* (2003) and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (2004). Each embraces the core aesthetic and cultural values of Hollywood cinema by working within a popular genre, featuring high production values and star actors, several of whom are American. Crucially, these films were distributed and marketed globally through Universal-owned companies and accrued collective worldwide box office revenues in excess of \$1 billion. To label these films as either 'British' or 'Hollywood' in any straightforward sense does not do justice to their inherently *transatlantic* characteristics.

The transatlantic status of Working Title is a fact not lost on the company's co-chairman, Tim Bevan. 'In the space of the last few years, Working Title has hit its third decade and third phase – Hollywood producer', he reflected in 2004. 'Unlike other Hollywood producers we live in London and make a vast range of films both in origin and scale; however, unlike any other British producers, our larger movies constantly make up part of a major studio's slate' (Bevan quoted in Working Title, 2004). Bevan's interchangeable description of Working Title as both a 'Hollywood' and a 'British' production company evokes the quintessential premise of transnationalism by expressing the 'decline of national sovereignty' and the 'impossibility of assigning a fixed national identity' (Ezra & Rowden, 2006, 1) to either the company or its produce. Here, Working Title is defined as much by its relationship with Hollywood as it is by its connection to Britain.

Working Title was, however, by no means the first British-based company to develop business relationships and film production strategies which involve close cooperation with Hollywood. British-based studios and production companies have long collaborated with Hollywood to produce a version of cinema which is defined by industrial,

textual and ultimately national hybridity. Indeed, it is one of the most longstanding and prominent transnational relationships in cinema history, and has long defined the dominant version of British cinema in the sense that it is the most heavily capitalised and the most widely distributed, marketed and exhibited both at home and abroad. In order to reach a fuller understanding of what I am calling Transatlantic British Cinema, this chapter will examine three key instances of this phenomenon during the 1930s and 1940s. First, however, the chapter will provide a conceptual reappraisal of British cinema which unites the discourses of 'the national' and 'the transnational'.

British cinema as national cinema

The concept of national cinema and more specifically British cinema as a form of national cinema enjoyed a significant wave of scholarly interest in the late 1980s and 1990s (Higson, 1989, 1995; Crofts, 1993; Hill, 1997; Street, 1997). Throughout this wealth of discourse, Hollywood has consistently been cited as an important determinant in the conceptual construction of British cinema. Hollywood's influence has, however, typically been understood as an external force which shapes British cinema from without, not within. In this way the broader implications of Hollywood's global presence have been acknowledged while primacy continues to be afforded to 'the national' by asserting a British film industry which remains largely **discrete** from, and **oppositional** to, Hollywood. It is this commonality in approach in the conceptual construction of national cinema which unites the above cited authors and constitutes the orthodox account of the industrial relationship between the film industries of Britain and Hollywood.

Stephen Crofts' article *Reconceptualising National Cinema/s* is, for example, typical in its construction of national cinema. He argues that most national cinemas, especially in the West, are 'defined against Hollywood' and consequently draw on strategies designed to combat the 'transnational reach' of the major studios (Crofts, 1993, 50). Drawing on Crofts, John Hill identifies three such strategies which define the British experience. Firstly, there is the 'imitating Hollywood' model in which British cinema attempts to 'beat Hollywood at its own game' (Crofts, 1993, 56) by deliberately targeting a world-wide mass audience. As an industrial approach, international competition with Hollywood is, according to Hill:

A strategy which has been tried at various junctures in the history of British cinema: by Alexander Korda in the 1930s, by Rank in the 1940s, by EMI in the 1970s, and by Goldcrest in the 1980s. Given the competitive advantage which Hollywood enjoys

over other national industries by virtue of its scale of production, size of domestic market and international distribution and exhibition networks (amongst other factors), this has proved an economically unviable strategy and, despite some success with individual films, all such attempts have resulted in financial disaster (1997, 247).

The second category identified by Crofts and Hill is the 'European Commercial Cinema' which 'competes with varying degrees of success with Hollywood product in domestic markets' (Crofts, 1993, 54). Now historically consigned to a period stretching from the 1930s to the 1970s (Hill, 1997, 246), this era saw the rise and fall of a British commercial cinema which competed with Hollywood in the British domestic market. Prominent examples include genre films from production houses such as Gainsborough Pictures, which specialised in melodramas (*The Man in Grey*, 1943; *The Wicked Lady*, 1945), Ealing Studios, famous for their comedies (*The Lavender Hill Mob*, 1951; *The Ladykillers*, 1955), and Hammer Film Production's horror films (*Dracula*, 1958; *Frankenstein Must be Destroyed*, 1969). Other notable examples include popular comedy series like the *Carry On* films (1958-1978), the *Doctor...* series (1954-1970) beginning with *Doctor in the House*, and the *Confessions...* series (1974-1977), originating with *Confessions of a Window Cleaner*.

The final model identified by Crofts and Hill is the 'European model Art Cinema' which aims to 'differentiate itself textually from Hollywood, to assert explicitly or implicitly an indigenous product, and to reach those specialist distribution channels and exhibition venues usually called "art-house"' (Crofts, 1993, 51). This model of production, however, only emerged within British cinema during the 1970s, and came to prominence during the following decade. Prior to this, histories of British cinema have typically identified the 'documentary-realist tradition', exemplified by the British Documentary Film Movement (*Drifters*, 1929; *Fires Were Started*, 1943) and the prestige or 'quality cinema' of historical, literary and theatrical adaptation (*Great Expectations* 1946; *Hamlet*, 1948) as substitutes (Hedling, 1997, 178). From the 1980s onwards, however, Hill suggests that three strands of British filmmaking can be grouped under the umbrella term 'art cinema'. These include the realist tradition, which is expressed in the work of directors like Ken Loach (*Looks and Smiles*, 1981; *Riff-Raff*, 1991), Mike Leigh (*Meantime*, 1983; *Secrets and Lies*, 1996) and Shane Meadows (*Twenty Four Seven*, 1997; *This is England*, 2006). The postmodern or avant-garde film is similarly the domain of the auteur filmmaker, with Derek Jarman (*Caravaggio*, 1986; *Wittgenstein*, 1993), Peter Greenaway (*Prospero's Books*, 1991; *8 ½ Women*, 1999) and Patrick Keiller (*Robinson in Space*, 1997; *Robinson in Ruins*, 2010) among the most notable practitioners. Finally, the 'heritage' category remains dominated

by historical films and adaptations of classic literature and theatre like *Henry V* (1989), *Howards End* (1992) and *The King's Speech* (2010).

The tendency to conceive of British cinema as a set of oppositional industrial practices defined against the transnational influence of Hollywood is further embedded by both Andrew Higson (1995) and Sarah Street (1997) in their respective monographs on the subject. Street repeats the assertion that British cinema may attempt to 'beat Hollywood at its own game', while acknowledging the 'profound impact' of Hollywood on the conception of British cinema. She suggests that domestic producers are caught in a 'perpetual bind' of market-related decision making in which they must target a national or international audience via product differentiation or direct competition in response to Hollywood's dominance (Street, 1997, 2). While Higson notes the strategies of product differentiation and direct competition, he also identifies two transnational strategies open to British filmmakers: collusion with Hollywood and other (non-US) forms of international co-operation. It is worth noting the choice of terminology here. The word 'collusion' carries connotations of secrecy or even treachery and is conceived of as the joint Anglo-American exploitation of the UK distribution and exhibition markets for the benefit of Hollywood companies. The much more conciliatory term 'co-operation' is, however, used to describe the potential European alliances which might be forged as a challenge to Hollywood's dominance (Higson, 1995, 9-13).

Significantly, the discrete and oppositional status of 'the national' has endured when the relationship between the film industries and cultures of Britain and Hollywood has been considered in a direct manner. Tom Ryall (2001), for example, examines US involvement in the British film industry, British success in the US market and the appropriation of British culture in Hollywood films. Similarly, Sarah Street (2002), explores, amongst other things, patterns of economic negotiation between the British and Hollywood film industries, issues of cultural exchange and cross-cultural reception. While both studies examine transnational exchange, they do so from the perspective of national cinema. The subtitle to Ryall's volume reads, 'Britain and the American Cinema' while Street marks an equally opaque distinction with the subtitle 'British Feature Films in the USA'. This insistence on using national markers of interpretation and enquiry, albeit in the context of transatlantic exchange, fails to capture the inherently transnational properties of what I am calling Transatlantic British Cinema.

Other than Higson's narrow interpretation of collusion with Hollywood, the dynamic which persists in governing all of these conceptions of British cinema is their

oppositional relationship to Hollywood. The claim that British cinema has intermittently competed with Hollywood in the international market place is often asserted but rarely scrutinised. In privileging the strategies of competition and differentiation, accounts of British cinema have typically misrepresented, underplayed or omitted the transnational, or more specifically the *transatlantic*, as a central and often defining element in much of British cinema. The concept of Transatlantic British Cinema inverts the oppositional and discrete status of British cinema by positioning the relationship between the British and Hollywood film industries on a scale which extends from collaboration at one end to integration at the other. Consequently, Transatlantic British Cinema is a component part of Hollywood's global operations and thus diminishes or eradicates the competitive market dynamic at the level of nation states. Rather, it is largely the major Hollywood studios which compete with one another in the trade of Transatlantic British Cinema.

To effectively examine the relationship between the film industries and cultures of Britain and Hollywood from this perspective requires a conceptual approach which integrates more recent scholarship about cinematic transnationalism. The following section considers British cinema as transnational cinema.

British cinema as transnational cinema

The preferred conceptual approach within studies of transnational cinema has been to develop broad typologies which act as matrices through which particular examples or cycles of cinema might be understood. Mette Hjort, for instance, argues that transnational cinema can and should be conceived as a number of different (and potentially overlapping) strategies which operate at both industrial and textual levels. Three of the strategies which Hjort identifies can be seen as relevant to my discussion of Transatlantic British Cinema, namely opportunistic, globalising and affinitive transnationalism. 'Opportunistic transnationalism' entails simply 'responding to available economic opportunities at a given moment in time' (Hjort, 2010, 19). For the purposes of this chapter, however, Hjort's term will be substituted for the more general category 'economic transnationalism', to acknowledge the prioritisation of economic matters without necessarily implying the expediency or short term gain suggested by the word 'opportunistic'. Secondly, 'globalising transnationalism', involves making films which have 'spectacular production values secured through transnational capital flows' and which operate in tandem with 'many of the genre- and star-based vehicles of transnational appeal' (Hjort 2010, 21). Finally, 'affinitive

transnationalism' is epitomised by efforts to communicate across borders with similar nations and peoples. In this case similarity or 'affinity' is understood in terms of 'ethnicity, partially overlapping or mutually intelligible languages, a history of interaction giving rise to shared core values, common practices and comparable institutions' (Hjort, 2010, 17).

Taken together, the strategies of economic, globalising and affinitive transnationalism seek to reduce the industrial, aesthetic and cultural distance between Transatlantic British Cinema and Hollywood cinema. It is worth asserting here that combining the strategies of economic, globalising and affinitive transnationalism do not, of course, constitute a fool-proof recipe for transnational success, whether commercial or critical. Equally, any given example of Transatlantic British Cinema may display a greater or lesser degree of orientation towards each or any of the three inclinations. Accordingly, the strongest examples will explicitly embrace economic, affinitive and globalising strategies, whereas weaker cases will do so at a more implicit level, or foreground one strategy while another recedes.

In the sections that follow, the consolidation of Transatlantic British Cinema as a production strategy will be examined during the 1930s and 1940s by considering the histories of three British-based studios of the period – London Films, MGM-British and the Rank Organisation – from the perspectives of economic, globalising and affinitive transnationalism. The case studies have been chosen because of their long and prominent places within the history of the British film industry, but also because they represent three discrete modes of economic transnationalism. In the first instance, London Films was an independently owned and operated production company which acted as a **subcontractor** to Hollywood studios by supplying United Artists (UA) with films. In contrast, MGM-British was a directly owned **subsidiary** of the Hollywood studio which lent the company its name. Finally Rank, like London Films, initially acted as a subcontractor for UA, before using its position as an equity **stakeholder** in Universal to distribute its films through the studio.

The deals which link film production to distribution, exhibition and more recent ancillary markets are typically complex and often unique in their intricacies. However, the fundamental industrial modes which underpin Transatlantic British Cinema – subcontractor, subsidiary and stakeholder – have remained constant over time. It is the pervasive nature of these modes which makes them integral to an understanding of Transatlantic British Cinema. While accounts of London Films, the Rank Organisation and MGM-British appear in several histories of British cinema, what follows casts new light on familiar developments, and in particular on the genesis of transatlantic activity at the point

of production. It is worth examining the historical circumstances surrounding the consolidation of Transatlantic British Cinema in some detail as the industrial modes they exemplify continue to define the strategy in the twenty-first century. The following section thereby briefly outlines the context of the British and Hollywood industries during the 1930s and 1940s, before exploring these companies and their industrial strategies in more detail.

Economic transnationalism: the subcontractor, subsidiary and stakeholder modes of Transatlantic British Cinema

There are numerous examples of British-based producers adopting strategies that can be described in terms of economic transnationalism, whereby economic issues are prioritised when partners based in other nations are selected. The transnational orientation here is transatlantic because the major Hollywood studios have historically been the gatekeepers of the US and global distribution and exhibition industries and, in many cases, also the source of production finance. For high-budget productions, reaching audiences outside the British market was not merely desirable but necessary. During the 1930s, the American theatrical market was the largest in the world and the British was the second largest. Despite similar per capita attendance in both countries, the disparity in population ensured that the American theatrical market was still approximately three times the size of the British. As John Sedgwick and Michael Pokorny explain:

This disparity in size marks a fundamental asymmetry that is crucial to understanding film relations between the two countries. To compete effectively with Hollywood — to present films of a comparable quality and expense so as to match the production and storytelling values common to the products of the ‘major’ studios — British films needed to be as popular in the US market as Hollywood’s own product: they needed to generate comparable revenue streams (2005, 82)

The major Hollywood studios were, of course, able to consistently produce films with high production values, and thus high unit costs, precisely because of their domination of the vast North American market. By the mid-1930s the eight major Hollywood studios had formed a mature oligopoly. By operating vertically integrated production, distribution and exhibition businesses, the so-called ‘big five’ studios—MGM, Paramount, Fox, Warner Bros and RKO—were able to control their product at every stage of its life cycle. However, none of the majors were self-sufficient in terms of production, distribution and exhibition capacity and therefore depended on the collusive practices of horizontal integration to

jointly launch nation-wide releases. The 'little three' studios, which lacked theatre chains of their own—Universal, Columbia and United Artists—were thus invaluable in keeping the first-run screens of the 'big five' fully occupied. David A. Cook's description of the collusive practices of the 'studio system' is worth quoting at length as it highlights the strategic market domination enforced by the majors:

The five majors owned some 2,600 first-run theatres between them, only 16 per cent of the national total of theatres, but they were the ones that generated 75 per cent of the box office revenue because they held their films for the longest and charged the highest prices. They colluded with the three minors who owned no theatres and were dependent on the majors for first-run bookings to set rental rates, ticket prices and release patterns uniformly across the nation. Together, they operated a run-zone-clearance system of distribution that divided the country into thirty markets, each subdivided into zones whose theatres were classified as first run, second-run and subsequent-run; clearances of fourteen to forty-two days were required before a film could move from one zone to the next, enabling the Big Five to wring maximum profit from each release, regardless of its quality or popularity (Cook, 2006, 163).

Gaining access to the first-run cinema screens of the major Hollywood studios was therefore essential to commercial success in the American market as well as many of the global markets in which the majors operated distribution arms. The means by which London Films, MGM-British and the Rank Organisation gained such access was largely induced by the legal framework imposed on the British film industry. The legislative response to Hollywood's longstanding economic and cultural domination of the British film industry was the Cinematographic Films Act of 1927. The ten year Act stipulated that distributors were obliged to offer a proportion or quota of British films to exhibitors who, in turn, were obliged to show a slightly smaller proportion of them. The quota would rise incrementally from 5% in the first year (7.5% for distributors to afford exhibitors a degree of selectivity) to 20% by 1936 (Dickinson & Street, 1985, 5). American interests were principally interested in generating revenue by distributing their own films to British cinemas but were now forced to source and distribute British films in return for that right.

For the burgeoning Hollywood film studios, one response to meeting quota requirements was to subcontract an independently owned British production company to make films on the studio's behalf; the other was to establish a British-based production subsidiary to perform the same function. While the Act created an artificial market for British films and had the desired effect on the quantity of indigenous films produced, distributed and exhibited nationally, it is generally argued that the effect on their average quality was highly detrimental. The most common result from both modes of production

was the 'quota quickie', a film designed to meet the quota criteria as quickly and cheaply as possible. As a film-maker of the day, George Pearson, explained, with budgets as low as £6,000 per feature and filming schedules as short as twelve days, many quickies typically required 'a Spartan economy and a slave-driving effort' for completion, let alone any ambition of quality (Pearson, 1957, 192-3). While the cultural value and niche popularity of the quickies have been subject to favourable reassessment (Chibnall, 2007; Napper, 2009) there is no doubt that their export potential was virtually non-existent for an American (and global) audience typically used to Hollywood's high production values, star actors and American characters, settings and storylines. Indeed, despite the economic transnationalism which supported the production of at least some of the quota quickies, such films remain examples of Britain's 'European Commercial Cinema' as they lacked the characteristics of globalising and affinitive transnationalism associated with Transatlantic British Cinema.

London Films: the subcontractor

An alternative approach to the subcontracted quota quickie is demonstrated by the collaboration between the British-based production company, London Film Productions (LFP), and the Hollywood studio, United Artists. The industrial model developed by UA during the 1920s was a reaction against the Hollywood 'studio system' which pursued vertical integration and the central control of financial and creative processes. Formed in 1919 by four of the most prominent creative talents of the silent era – Charles Chaplin, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks and D.W. Griffith – UA initially had the intention of securing creative freedom and increased earning power for its founders by releasing their films through a jointly owned distribution company. Indeed, describing UA as a 'Hollywood studio' maintains the established semantic convention but is ultimately a misnomer because unlike its Hollywood rivals, the company never owned a studio. This strategic lack of integration resulted in a shortage of new films with which to supply its expanding distribution business. To meet the shortfall, UA began subcontracting independent production companies to fill the void.

London Films was owned and managed by Alexander Korda, a Hungarian-born producer and director, who settled in Britain in 1931 after spells of filmmaking in central Europe and Hollywood. Working initially on quota pictures for Paramount British Productions, he established London Films the following year. Driven by a desire to make

major motion pictures, Korda secured a partial finance and distribution deal with United Artists. More than merely fulfilling UA's quota requirements, LFP was now sub-contracted to produce five films, two of which were scheduled as 'first features', with the remit of enhancing the studio's reputation for quality and prestige (Drazin, 2002, 99-100). While the economic transnationalism which had supported quota quickies resulted in inexpensive product intended for a national audience, Korda's films now represented a complete reversal in approach: supplying a Hollywood studio with expensive films intended for US and global audiences. Through this collaboration London Films essentially circumnavigated the issue of international distribution by ensuring, in theory at least, that their films were exposed to the same box office potential as the rest of the United Artists line.

The first collaboration between London Film Productions and United Artists was the lavish historical film, *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933) starring Charles Laughton as the eponymous king. Successfully blending the biographical and historical elements of the prestige picture with high production values, the film's critical and commercial success set a high bench mark and would become the paradigmatic example of what a British film could achieve in the international marketplace. It secured Laughton the Academy Award for Best Actor and earned world-wide box-office receipts of £214,360 on a budget of £93,710 (Drazin, 2007, 54). By sourcing and developing new material and directing a team of creative personnel under the banner of London Films, Korda was fast emerging as an important 'creative producer' who had proven he could combine the required blend of critical acclaim and commercial appeal. Convinced that he was an asset worth keeping, UA agreed to extend his contract for a further sixteen films, all of which were guaranteed world-wide distribution. By 1935 Korda's stock had risen even further as UA lost some of their most valued producers to rivals. The studio responded by making him a stake-holding partner or 'owner-producer' in exchange for committing his services to the studio for ten years and increasing his output to twenty films within the first five years (Drazin, 2002, 106, 138-9). For the next ten years Korda would find himself in the anomalous position of being both a subcontractor for, and stakeholder in, a major Hollywood studio.

In keeping with other independently owned subcontractors on UA's books, London Films had agreed potentially lucrative terms under which UA claimed only a 25 per cent distribution fee on a given film's income in the US market (Balio 1976, 134). This ostensibly ideal situation was, however, hindered by some sobering realities. Unlike the other Hollywood majors, UA rarely provided production finance and thus the risk of investment typically lay with the independent producer. Equally, without a theatre chain of its own, UA

could not guarantee a US release on the major circuits. Instead, UA relied on its reputation for producing highly marketable “prestige” films with popular stars and rented individual titles to exhibitors rather than block-booking (selling a package of films of variable quality to exhibitors) (Balio 1976, 35). In turn, Korda’s contractual obligations to United Artists both enabled and necessitated the expansion of London Films. In the midst of a brief period of optimism about the possibilities of British film production, the Prudential Assurance Company became the major shareholder in Korda’s company and bankrolled the construction of Denham Studios, the largest and most technically advanced facility in Britain (Warren, 1995, 30).

As the 1930s progressed, London Films gradually fell victim to the British film industry’s perennial disease: overextension. Unfortunately for Korda, his subsequent films – *Catherine the Great* (1934), *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1934), *The Ghost Goes West* (1935), *Drums* (1938) and *The Four Feathers* (1939) – provided only modest returns (Street 2002, 55) and his relationship with UA deteriorated, largely because of the perceived mishandling of his films and the poor returns they generated (Balio 1976, 144). By the end of the decade Korda had lost Denham to his creditors as the studio became amalgamated with Pinewood, adopting the name D & P Studios Ltd., and was brought under the control of the Rank Organisation. Still bound by his contract, he formed a new company, Alexander Korda Films, Inc., to produce the pictures he still owed UA. Using a new line of American finance, he moved his new venture to Hollywood during the War. Without the resources to mount another major production drive on his own terms, Korda accepted a position to manage MGM-British, a decision which in turn triggered a conflict of interest due to his stake in United Artists. His hand prompted rather than forced, he sold his interest back to UA in 1944 (Balio, 1978, 172, 201), ending his association with the studio after more than a decade.

MGM-British: the subsidiary

Some seven years before Korda took the helm at MGM-British, the Hollywood subsidiary had, like London Films before it, been shaped by the prevailing film legislation. After the 1927 Act, the majority of Hollywood studios established production subsidiaries in Britain, including Warner Bros. First-National Productions and Paramount British Productions in 1931, Fox British Pictures the following year and MGM-British in 1936. While all of these companies invested in the British industry’s infrastructure by purchasing or leasing studio

facilities in and around London, their focus until the late 1930s remained almost exclusively on the production of quota quickies (Low, 1985, 186-197). According to Rachael Low, MGM-British abused the initial Act to a greater extent than any of their contemporaries by refusing to produce their own films in Britain, instead 'scouring the market for bargains' to act as quota (Low, 1985, 196-7). While Mark Glancy suggests that Low overstates her argument about the quality of the early MGM-British films, they were nonetheless typically produced at a rate of ten a year for between £7,000 and £10,000 – a similar budget level as the 'B' films of Hollywood's poverty row studios (2000, 64).

In an attempt to re-instate the intention of the original Act and effectively legislate the quickie out of existence, a new Act in 1938 introduced a number of changes which promoted higher quality production and transnational distribution. Key changes included raising the minimum cost of qualifying productions and allowing producers to register more expensive films as double and even triple footage. A reciprocity clause permitted a distributor acquiring the foreign rights of a British film to count its footage as quota, with more costly acquisitions counting as double. Finally the quota itself was revised downwards to 15% for distributors and 12% for exhibitors (Dickinson & Street, 1985, 98-100). MGM's response to the 1938 Act was swift and decisive. The studio employed Michael Balcon, a leading British producer since the mid-1920s, as head of production at its new British subsidiary and refocused the production agenda on to prestige films. Balcon brought to the table his experience of managing production at Gainsborough and Lime Grove studios for the Gaumont-British Picture Corporation (G-B), Britain's largest vertically integrated film business of the 1930s (Sedgwick, 1996, 345). Dealing directly with the most powerful enterprise of Hollywood's golden age meant he could rely on substantial financial backing for production, first rate facilities and ready access to first-run theatres through MGM's world-wide distribution and exhibition network. As part of his initiation into the Hollywood fold, he was required to spend time at MGM's Hollywood studios to observe its working practices and forge relationships with its personnel (Glancy, 2000, 66-67).

Behind the scenes, however, the relationship between Balcon and Louis B. Mayer, MGM's autocratic and mercurial head of production, was turbulent. The autonomy Balcon had been promised as head of production soon evaporated, with Balcon explaining that his new employer 'could not accept the idea that anybody was capable of making pictures 6,000 miles away from him' (Balcon, 1969, 112). In short, MGM operated their subsidiary in the same manner as their US operations by exercising financial and creative control from their headquarters in Los Angeles. Balcon resigned after completing the subsidiary's debut

film, *A Yank at Oxford* (1938), concluding that his ambition to make 'Anglo-American films for the world market, blending the best of both sides, was dust and ashes' (Balcon, 1969, 113). The vacancy at MGM-British was promptly filled by Victor Saville, also a former producer at G-B and Gainsborough. MGM-British went on to produce two further prestige films – *The Citadel* (1938) and *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* (1939) – which became both commercially and critically successful, receiving multiple Academy Awards nominations. As Glancy points out, MGM considered MGM-British an 'unqualified success' prior to the outbreak of World War II, which temporarily halted the subsidiary's operations (Glancy, 1999, 87-88).

The lack of rentable studio space available to MGM-British as a result of wartime requisitioning resulted in just two modest wartime releases, *Busman's Honeymoon* (1940) and *The Adventures of Tartu* (1943). In 1943, however, MGM formed an amalgamated company with Korda, MGM-British-London Films, and purchased its own studio building at Elstree. In a case of history repeating itself, Korda produced only one film, *Perfect Strangers* (1945), before resigning his post the following year (Kulik, 1990, 276-285). It would seem that creative autonomy was an asset prized by the creative producer above what were otherwise the most advantageous industrial conditions. Reverting to its original name, MGM-British resumed production at Elstree at the end of the decade with films like *Edward, My Son* (1949) and *Conspirator* (1949). It is no doubt the degree of Hollywood influence in the creative process itself which led Sarah Street to label the films of MGM-British as 'British', in inverted commas, while the efforts of London Films and the Rank Organisation escaped without such a caveat (Street, 2002, 87; Dickinson & Street, 1985, 96).

The intertwining transatlantic relationships of the period were equally matched by the mesh of internal relations between major British film producers and their respective studios and production companies. Balcon left MGM-British to begin his celebrated tenure managing production at Ealing Studios. In 1944 he struck a deal with the Rank Organisation, by this time Britain's largest vertically integrated film corporation, which guaranteed production finance, national distribution for the studio's entire output and, most importantly for the man at the top, creative autonomy (Barr, 1993, 6-7). As previously noted Ealing's films, like those of Gainsborough (another studio that operated under the auspices of the Rank Organisation from 1941), were largely conceived and produced as popular cinema for the national audience (Macnab, 1993, 115). By the time the Rank

Organisation had secured Ealing as a subcontractor, however, the company had already been producing Transatlantic British Cinema for a number of years.

The Rank Organisation: the stakeholder

J. Arthur Rank was an independently wealthy industrialist who had derived his fortune from a flour milling empire. A devout Methodist, he initially became interested in the film business as a means of promoting Christianity in local communities. Frustrated with the lack of commercial distribution available for his early projects, he purchased General Film Distributors in March 1936, a business which would become the dominant British film distributor in due course (Macnab, 1993, 23). Rank's initial intention was soon eclipsed by a succession of acquisitions, investments and mergers from the mid-1930s to the early 1940s. He used his capital and business acumen to build a vertically integrated film business, explaining some years later that 'the trouble really was that I didn't know anything about producing films. I only took it on because there was nobody else to do the job' (Rank quoted in Wood, 1952, 124). By the early 1940s the Rank Organisation was an unparalleled force within the British film industry. As Robert Murphy explains:

In 1937 Gaumont-British closed down its distribution company and arranged for General Film Distributors to handle its films. In 1938 Korda, no longer able to keep the wolf from the door, lost control of Denham Studios to Rank. In 1939, pre-empting the emergence of any possible rival, Rank brought up the as yet unused Elstree-Amalgamated Studios. Finally, late in 1941 he acquired the modern and profitable Odeon chain of cinemas and the ramshackle Gaumont-British organisation (Murphy, 1983, 165-66).

Having consolidated his interests at home, Rank began to look towards the America market for further expansion. He realised that if competition with Hollywood was possible, it could only be achieved by studios which, like their Hollywood rivals, were not only vertically integrated but also had a transnational production agenda and distribution capacity. Rank began to pursue such a programme, firstly by commissioning films which sought to emulate the prestige productions of the Hollywood majors. Unlike Korda and Balcon, Rank was first and foremost a businessman. Accepting his own limitations, he delegated the day-to-day activity of filmmaking to a number of production companies and their affiliated personnel, each based at one or more of his studios. At the opposite end of the budgetary scale to Ealing and Gainsborough were Two Cities Films and a loose affiliation of production companies collectively known as Independent Producers Ltd. (IPL).

During the 1940s these companies made some of the most celebrated films in the history of British cinema. Two Cities, for example, produced the topical dramas *In Which We Serve* (1942) and *This Happy Breed* (1944), which combined the writing, producing and directing talents of Noel Coward, David Lean, Anthony Havelock-Allan and Ronald Neame. Two Cities would later produce Laurence Olivier's *Henry V* (1945) and *Hamlet* (1948), by which time Lean, Havelock-Allan and Neame had formed Cineguild, the company behind *Brief Encounter* (1945), *Great Expectations* (1946) and *Oliver Twist* (1948)

Also central to the IPL fold were two established writer-producer-director partnerships which assumed the names The Archers and Individual Pictures. The former combined the talents of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, who had first worked together on *The Spy in Black* (1939), a film produced by Alexander Korda for Columbia. Their most notable films as members of IPL included *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943), *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946), *Black Narcissus* (1947) and *The Red Shoes* (1948). Individual Pictures continued the partnership of Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat, who had worked together at Gainsborough Studios during the Gaumont-British years. Under the Rank Organisation they contributed *I see a Dark Stranger* (1945), *Green for Danger* (1946) and *The Blue Lagoon* (1949). Geoffrey Macnab suggests that the companies operating under the IPL banner 'came as close to complete artistic and economic freedom as British filmmakers have been'. Unlike the United Artists model, Rank provided studio facilities and finance for his trusted producers, with only the submission of a 'tentative name, story idea, proposed stars and proposed maximum cost' required for approval (Macnab, 1993, 93).

Rank was only able to create this temporary haven for his producers by developing a series of transatlantic collaborations that would propel their films around the globe. The international success of Korda's early films still loomed large in the psyche of British producers, his reputation more recently enhanced since securing the US release of Rank's *One of Our Aircraft is Missing* (1942) and *In Which We Serve* through his contacts at United Artists (Drazin, 2002, 237). Rank subsequently agreed a two year pact with UA for the US distribution of their prestige releases, a period which included the US box office hits *Henry V* and *Caesar and Cleopatra*. The arrangement was soured, however, by the handling of Rank product in America, which included re-cutting some titles and a lack of enthusiasm in marketing others. Both actions highlighted the perception that British films generally lacked audience appeal in the US, although ironically this situation was equally true of UA's overall slate in 1944, which made a loss (Murphy, 1983, 168). In point of fact, the typical US

box office receipts for a Rank film distributed by UA were less than Hollywood 'B' pictures in circulation at the time (Macnab, 1993, 163-4).

In addition to disappointing international returns, the rate of output from D & P Studios required more regular distribution than UA could offer. The next route Rank tried was through his longest standing transatlantic partner, Universal Pictures. Rank had bought a 25 percent stake in the Hollywood studio in 1936 and had subsequently absorbed Universal's UK distribution company into General Film Distributors (Macnab, 1993, 19-23). In 1945 Rank and Universal jointly financed a world-wide distribution venture called United World Pictures. Intended to give both partner's films parity on a global scale, the enterprise relied on block-booking. Unfortunately for the new partnership, block-booking was made illegal in the US the following year and the enterprise was dismantled as a result (Macnab, 1993, 176).

Despite their foiled plan, Rank and Universal continued to distribute in partnership; however, Universal's capacity was continually compromised by the distribution and marketing of their own films. Consequently, Universal selected only the most prestigious 'quality' films from the Rank line (Balio, 1987, 19-21), including such titles as *Great Expectations*, *Hamlet* and *Brief Encounter*. As a minority partner in the studio, Rank lacked executive privileges and was left with only the power of negotiation on behalf of his output. The Rank films which were distributed by United Artists or Universal did not, however, necessarily find a mass-audience as a consequence of their association with a Hollywood major. Instead road-show and selective releasing strategies were used for films like *Henry V*, *Brief Encounter*, *Great Expectations* and *Hamlet* which were initially targeted at the "art" markets of metropolitan areas and college towns (Street 2002, 96-115). As Paul Swann points out, while the American audience became increasingly receptive to films as a legitimate form of art after World War II, "a British film could become a really significant dollar earner only as a major American release and after being sold as a mass-market product" (2009, 31). Unfortunately, the migration from niche to wider release only occurred in a few cases with Rank films, including *Henry V*, and *Hamlet* (Street, 2002, 96-110).

In need of still greater international distribution to keep his empire afloat, Rank undertook the audacious task of establishing a worldwide distribution operation from scratch. In early 1944 Eagle-Lion Distributors Ltd. was founded in London, its name and logo fusing the national emblems of the United States and Britain as if to underpin its intent. Taken at face value, the Rank Organisation was waging a war of cultural colonisation

in the midst of a very real war and against the gathering momentum of British decolonisation. In truth, Eagle-Lion soon became a collaborative venture with a conspicuously transatlantic orientation. Just as Rank had bought his way into the British film industry, a young American industrialist was doing the same in Hollywood. Robert Young was a rail-road tycoon whose interest in the film business led to his purchase of Producers Releasing Corporation (PRC), a 'poverty row' studio which specialised in low budget B-movies. Seeking to expand his business, Young acquired Eagle-Lion's fledgling US operation from Rank in December 1945 (Murphy, 1983, 169). He subsequently folded PRC into a re-branded production company, Eagle-Lion Studios Inc., and a nation-wide distribution business, Eagle-Lion Films Inc. (Balio, 1987, 21). As Tino Balio explains, 'the two men reached a reciprocal agreement whereby Eagle-Lion would distribute Rank's pictures in the US and other markets in the Western Hemisphere and, in return, Rank would handle Eagle-Lion product in Britain, Europe and other markets in the Eastern Hemisphere' (Balio, 1987, 17).

In practice, however, Eagle-Lion only had access to the screens of second-run and independent cinemas in an American exhibition landscape dominated by the major studios. Accordingly, the outfit was left to distribute the Rank films which Universal rejected, including a number of Ealing and Gainsborough pictures, as well as occasional IPL productions like *The Red Shoes* (ironically a major hit in the US) and *A Canterbury Tale*. At the height of his empire and influence, Rank's access to the American market was mediated through either one of the 'little three' Hollywood majors (with the discretionary power to select or reject his films) or a new independent with access to only marginal exhibition venues. The overheads involved in supporting his share of Eagle-Lion combined with continuing high production costs and low box-office returns was beginning to take its toll.

The transatlantic ambitions of the Rank Organisation were already waning when government intervention dealt a decisive blow. The war effort had brought the nation's economy to its knees, with Britain deeply in debt to America. In an attempt to stem the flow of dollars out of the country and make the austerity of the situation abundantly clear to the US, the Atlee government imposed a 75% *ad valorem* duty on film imports in August 1947. The response from the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) was to boycott the British market, suspending any film exports until the duty was reconsidered (Dickinson & Street, 1985, 186). While exhibitors were denied new Hollywood films, the embargo ostensibly afforded British producers a golden opportunity by assuring a captive audience for their output. As the leading producer in Britain, Rank set about increasing production

both as a patriotic statement and an attempt to capitalise on the new circumstances. In October he announced a major production drive to include forty-three feature films at a combined cost of £9.24m (Macnab, 1993, 182), a decision which drastically backfired when the government reached a truce with the MPAA the following March which saw the abolition of the levy in favour of the Anglo-American film agreement. In line with the broader objectives of the Marshall Plan, the agreement would block the level of US remittances. As Jonathan Stubbs explains:

A maximum \$17m could be remitted to America per year, plus the sum in dollars equal to the earnings of British films in America. The remaining earnings, which the board estimated to be around \$20m a year, were 'blocked' or 'frozen': they remained the property of the companies who earned them but they could not be converted into dollars and removed from the country. The Board of Trade's intention was that the money would be invested in the film industry of Britain... above all, the Board of Trade directed this money towards investment in British film production (2008, 338-9)

The production incentives now available to Hollywood studios did nothing to help Rank, while the abolition of the embargo actively hindered the company's prospects. With Hollywood's back catalogue arriving in theatres just as the new Rank films were hitting the nation's screens, any potential advantage was lost. Indeed, his existing problems were compounded by overextension (Macnab, 1993, 182-3). Having failed to produce transatlantic British films on a profitable basis, Rank had now been foiled in his hasty attempt to cater for the domestic market on a large scale. The economic consequences were dire and led to a wholesale change in production and distribution strategy. The accountants were brought in to deal with the overdraft which, at the end of the decade, stood at £16 million. The raft of cutbacks included, amongst other measures, setting the upper limit for feature film budgets at £150,000. As Geoffrey Macnab concluded, this economy drive made producers at the Rank Organisation 'little more than a servicing arm, whose primary function was to provide Odeon and Gaumont Theatres with enough pictures to fulfil their quota obligations' (Macnab, 1993, 199). As if to underline the retrenchment of the Rank Organisation, the Eagle-Lion pact in the US was terminated in 1951 (Balio, 1987, 37) and the company's stake in Universal sold the following year (Street, 2002, 148). A fundamental shift in strategy had occurred at the Rank Organisation: the company was no longer a stakeholder in a major Hollywood studio and had withdrawn from the production of Transatlantic British Cinema.

Economic Transnationalism and Transatlantic British Cinema

Examining the case studies of London Films, MGM-British and the Rank Organisation through the lens of economic transnationalism reveals a number of truths which are worth recounting. For the British-based producer, an economic relationship with Hollywood ensures that distribution and exhibition in the US and international markets is attainable, along with the potential revenues that go with them. Consequently, while 'transatlantic' accurately describes the orientation of Transatlantic British Cinema in terms of both operational management and production strategy, the conceptual category is, like the Hollywood industry, global in terms of distribution, exhibition, reception and ultimately revenue generation. Conversely, Hollywood involvement in Transatlantic British Cinema was motivated by a number of factors including legislative necessity or inducement and the availability of appropriate production capital, whether in the form of finance, facilities and/or personnel. The Hollywood studios which finance and/or distribute transatlantic British films, however, stand to benefit from commercially successful examples, rather than having to contend with direct competition. Prominent association with prestige production also encompasses Hollywood's other leading (and interconnected) imperatives: critical acclaim and industry recognition through the mass media and awards ceremonies. The well-documented struggle and ultimate failure of the British film industry to create and maintain its own presence in the global market, and thus compete with Hollywood, stands in marked contrast to these examples of collaboration or integration.

Using the words 'collaboration' and 'integration' does not necessarily imply harmonious relations or a level playing field of economic transnationalism. The commercial success, or lack thereof, experienced by many examples of Transatlantic British Cinema was at least partly attributable to the relative strength or weakness of the industrial modes – subcontractor, subsidiary and stakeholder – under which they were produced, distributed and exhibited. The unique conditions at play within each institutional relationship and, in many cases with the handling of individual films, make it difficult to generalise about the merits of each approach per se. Nonetheless, it is worth sketching some of the broad differences between the three modes as they were experienced by London Films, the Rank Organisation and MGM-British during the 1930s and 1940s.

The subcontractor and stakeholder modes of Transatlantic British Cinema represent different forms of (variously vested) collaboration in contrast to the integration of the subsidiary mode. While London Films and the Rank Organisation were independent

from Hollywood in terms of ownership and operational management at the point of production (and so retained high levels of creative autonomy), their comparative disadvantage in terms of access to US and worldwide distribution and exhibition was marked. In the first instance, their Hollywood partners – UA and Universal – were members of the ‘little three’ which lacked vertical integration and thus ultimate authority in matters of exhibition. Secondly, the output of London Films and the Rank Organisation was subject to the distribution and marketing agendas of UA and Universal which, at different times, lacked the capacity or motivation to effectively sell their films. Such disadvantages were compounded by the prevailing ‘portfolio’ model, which the Hollywood majors used during the period. Individual films typically had a short lifespan as commodities and thus the majors each released over 50 films annually. Amongst these releases, ‘hit’ films took a disproportionate stake of the revenue. As Sedgwick and Pokorny point out:

Film producers attempted to resolve this dilemma by constructing annual portfolios of films that were diversified in terms of the variation in production budgets, genre composition, and the distribution of star and directorial inputs. Thus, low and medium budget production provided a reliable source of profits (given the relatively low box office revenues that were required to cover costs), and in many cases resulted fortuitously in hit films, but essentially it played the role of cross-subsidising the risky activity of high budget production (2005, 80)

For London Films and Rank, the portfolio approach of the Hollywood majors presented two problems. Firstly, both companies produced a high proportion of expensive prestige films and were, for different reasons, afforded inadequate or irregular access to the most valuable ‘first run’ exhibition venues. Consequently, the chances of converting a prestige release into a ‘hit’ were significantly reduced. Secondly, the overall quantity of medium and low budget films released in the US market (Rank’s releases through Eagle-Lion, for example) was insufficient to cross-subsidise the risks of the high-budget prestige titles. In contrast, the films of MGM-British were given regular access to the first run screens of the major studio’s circuits and, importantly, represented only a small percentage of MGM’s overall portfolio. As an integrated subsidiary, MGM-British was not, therefore, exposed to the same risk as the subcontractor and stakeholder operations of London Films and the Rank Organisation.

Finally, the size of the British theatrical market itself inspired a form of economic transnationalism in the opposite direction from the Hollywood majors. The British market accounted for more than one third of Hollywood’s foreign revenues in the mid-1920s and became increasingly important in the two decades that followed (Miskell 2006, 751-2). To

exploit their largest overseas market, all of the Hollywood majors except Universal (which distributed through Rank in the UK) established distribution subsidiaries in Britain (Miskell, 2009, 436). By the late 1930s, trade restrictions in several major European territories including Germany and Italy placed yet greater importance on the British market. Indeed, the British market was the source of \$35 million in annual revenues for Hollywood during this period, a figure which represented over 50 percent of the major studio's combined foreign earnings (Glancy, 2000, 66).

Globalising transnationalism

Moving away from purely economic concerns, Hjort suggests that certain forms of transnationalism combine both industrial and textual practices. What I am calling Transatlantic British Cinema also encompasses what Hjort calls 'globalising transnationalism'. This is in effect a production strategy designed to make films attractive to American as well as British audiences, and in turn to global audiences already attuned to Hollywood films. The key characteristics of this strategy relate to film **form** and include high production values, internationally known star actors and Hollywood genre conventions (Hjort 2010, 21). During the 1930s and 1940s the creative agendas of London Films, MGM-British and the Rank Organisation incorporated all of these impulses, broadly united under the banner of 'prestige' cinema. In Britain there was often an overlap between the notion of 'prestige' cinema which, for the industry, meant 'an expensive film with which we can finally break into the mainstream American market' and the 'quality' cinema which, for the critics, meant films worthy of artistic appreciation (Ellis 1996, 67). In the US, the prestige film had been an important production trend since the earliest days of the feature film and had since been continued with zeal by the major Hollywood studios. Using trade press coverage from the 1930s, Tino Balio describes the category as follows:

The prestige picture is not a genre; rather, the term designates production values and promotion treatment. A prestige picture is typically a big-budget special based on a presold property, often as not a 'classic' and tailored for top stars. *Motion Picture Herald* identified four types of properties used for these pictures: (1) nineteenth century European literature such as the novels of Charles Dickens, Leo Tolstoy, Alexander Dumas ... (2) Shakespearian Plays... (3) Best-selling novels and hit Broadway plays written by Nobel and prize-winning authors ... and (4) biographical and historical subjects ... especially biographies of European and American "great men" ... natural disasters ... folklore ... and war (Balio, 1993, 179-80).

The key imperatives of globalising transnationalism — high production values, certain genre conventions and stars — are thus also at the core of the prestige picture. Following such a strategy clearly prioritises the US and more broadly the global market rather than national or niche audiences and thus aligns Transatlantic British Cinema with the commercial imperatives of Hollywood. Indeed, producing prestige films represented an investment reliant upon the existence of established flows of economic transnationalism: the subcontractor, subsidiary and stakeholder modes of Transatlantic British Cinema. What Hjort calls globalising transnationalism has been implicitly noted in other accounts of British cinema. Sarah Street, for example, notes that British producers learned that ‘successful exportation depended on presenting a combination of “local” representations with “international” elements, something that was a little different but not alienating or incomprehensible to overseas audiences’ (Street, 2002, 2).

High production values had long been streamlined and unified by Hollywood majors to give each studio’s output a consistent appearance and technical quality which audiences would recognise and expect. For London Film Productions, MGM-British and later the Rank Organisation, aesthetic alignment with Hollywood was achieved with the extensive production infrastructure at Denham Studios, which were considered to be the most technically advanced in Europe (Warren, 1995, 30). Originally built by Korda for London Films, MGM-British also began producing at Denham by 1937, importing key creative personnel from Hollywood, such as the experienced directors Jack Conway, King Vidor and Sam Wood, to ensure a polished Hollywood-style product. From 1939 onwards, Denham and Pinewood studios were consolidated under the banner of D & P Studios and continued the same trend under the control of the Rank Organisation. The number of technical honours achieved by the two flagship studios at the Academy Awards is testament to the parity with which the quality of production was viewed. The Oscar for art direction was awarded to *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940), *Great Expectations*, *Black Narcissus* (1947), *Hamlet* and *The Red Shoes*, for instance, while the first three also won the award for best cinematography and the final two took best costume design and best music respectively.

The transnational reach afforded to Korda’s early films was instrumental in raising the profile of a generation of British actors including Charles Laughton, Leslie Howard, Robert Donat, Laurence Olivier, Vivien Leigh and Merle Oberon. The partnership between London Films and United Artists promoted the exchange of actors, with other UA-affiliated producers like Samuel Goldwyn and David O. Selznick casting British stars in several

Hollywood films. The performances of Leigh in *Gone with the Wind* (1939), Olivier in *Rebecca* (1940), Oberon in *Dark Angel* (1935) and the latter two in *Wuthering Heights* (1939) propelled them to international stardom. This established global appeal was at least temporarily harnessed by London Films releases such as *The Divorce of Lady X* (1938), *That Hamilton Woman* and *Lydia* (1941), before the company's decline. MGM shipped talent in the opposite direction by pairing the American star Robert Taylor with a then little-known Vivien Leigh in *A Yank at Oxford*. Repeating the same tactic, Robert Donat appeared opposite MGM's Rosalind Russell in *The Citadel*. While Donat was a recognisable face after roles in Gaumont-British thrillers and Korda's *The Private Life of Henry VIII* and *The Ghost Goes West* (1935), it was the back-to-back successes of *The Citadel* and *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* which established him as an international star. Absorbing local talent through their British operation, Greer Garson was signed to an MGM contract before *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* went into production and later became one of the studio's brightest stars in the 1940s. Following the war, MGM stars such as Spencer Tracy and Robert Taylor appear in films like *Edward, My Son* and *Conspirator*, opposite British actresses Deborah Kerr and Elizabeth Taylor.

Rank too bought into the strategy of globalising transnationalism by employing or developing star personalities among its roster of contract actors. A loose two tier system was established to complement the various national and transnational agendas of the company's studios. Gainsborough's contract stars like James Mason, Patricia Roc, Stewart Granger and Margaret Lockwood became widely known to audiences in Britain due to the success of their melodramas, as did Stanley Holloway and Alec Guinness for their performances in Ealing comedies. A greater degree of exposure was, however, typically afforded to the stars of the transatlantic British films produced by IPL and Two Cities. Such names included Deborah Kerr, David Niven, Laurence Olivier, John Mills and Jean Simmons. After the decline of Transatlantic British Cinema at the Rank Organisation, many of these actors, including Mason, Granger, Kerr, Simmons, Niven and Olivier, established or continued successful careers in Hollywood.

Despite the use of globalising transnationalism as a production strategy, the transatlantic British films produced by London Film and the Rank Organisation achieved only occasional success in the US and international markets. A revealing indicator of the textual differences between a typical example of Transatlantic British Cinema and a Hollywood film was noted during J. Arthur Rank's 1945 tour of the US. Having asked American producers what British films lacked in popular appeal compared to their Hollywood counterparts, five perceived deficiencies were highlighted. These included: slow

action, too much dialogue, difficulty with accent and dialogue comprehension, physically unsuitable or unappealing actors and comparatively diminished production values (Macnab, 1993, 73). It seems that despite Rank's best efforts to meet the aesthetic and generic standards of Hollywood, there often remained a lot to be desired for an American audience. In contrast, MGM-British largely avoided such pitfalls by exporting key creative personnel raised in the Hollywood studio system who were able to accurately replicate its storytelling and production values.

Finally, it is worth noting that in pursuing the prestige model, companies involved in producing Transatlantic British Cinema often played to the strengths of British literature, theatre and history but failed to engage with many of the genres most popular with American audiences. John Sedgwick's extensive survey of Hollywood product differentiation between 1946 and 1965 proves enlightening in this respect. While this sample largely examines a later period than that covered in this chapter, many of the observations about genre and star popularity can be seen as broadly indicative of the situation in the 1930s and 1940s, not least because of the persistence of key genres within a period still considered by many as 'classical Hollywood' and the length of many acting careers. He notes that the most popular genres in the US market were drama, comedy, musical, western and action-adventure. While the hybridity of many genres presents the problem of succinct classification, it is apparent that London Films, MGM-British and the Rank Organisation offered few or no examples of the comedy, musical or western. While many examples of Transatlantic British Cinema may be categorised in the popular categories of drama and action-adventure, many more could equally fall under considerably less popular categories such as war, historical, biography or period (Sedgwick 2002, 693). A similar story emerges when the most popular stars of the same period are considered. The most popular British stars like Elizabeth Taylor, Cary Grant, Richard Burton, Audrey Hepburn and Julie Andrews (Sedgwick 2002, 700) found fame in Hollywood films and had little or no connection with Transatlantic British Cinema. While the majority of actors used by London Films and the Rank Organisation during the 1930s and 1940s were home-grown, the most successful stars such as Robert Donat, David Niven, Deborah Kerr, Laurence Olivier and Jean Simmons all left Britain to work for the Hollywood majors.

Affinitive transnationalism

Transatlantic British Cinema can also be understood in terms of another of Hjort's categories, 'affinitive transnationalism', which is concerned with film **content** and is defined by efforts to communicate across borders by using those historical and cultural elements which are shared between the people of both nations (Hjort 2010, 17). As Sarah Street notes, affinitive inclinations in British films are often centred upon the assumed 'special relationship' between Britain and America, which implies that a 'shared transnational identity might exist, to be understood and absorbed by audiences in both countries' (Street, 2002, 2). The most significant cultural affinity between Britain and America is of course the shared use of the English language. This factor alone ensures that films and other works of performance and literature are more readily accessible to the residents of each country than those in other languages.

Beyond the commonality of a shared language, however, Transatlantic British Cinema is characterised by two further forms of affinitive transnationalism. The first involves the explicit combination of different national elements – typically the inclusion of American characters in British settings, or occasionally, British characters in American settings. The second is the inclusion of signifiers of Britain or Britishness that are already well established in American culture and create an implicit sense of transnational affinity, for instance through the adaptation of famous works of English literature or theatre or the depiction of well-known eras, myths or figures from English history. The long shadow cast by such representations ensures that affinitive transnationalism can also be achieved by simply reproducing aspects of the dominant representations which derive from such sources. In the broadest sense, this includes archetypal or stereotypical representations which privilege elements such as white, southern, middle or upper class characters and British (and particularly English) settings, which are either metropolitan or idyllic in their depiction of the rural.

During the 1930s and 1940s, London Films, MGM-British and the Rank Organisation used both these forms of affinitive transnationalism in their films. Explicit affinitive transnationalism was, however, a comparatively rare strategy when compared to the virtually ubiquitous presence of implicit forms. Perhaps unsurprisingly, MGM used their stable of contract stars to insert American characters into several films produced by MGM-British. This approach was, for example, used in *A Yank at Oxford*, in which an American varsity athlete (Robert Taylor) received a scholarship to the titular University before falling

for an English woman (Vivien Leigh). *Conspirator* sees a young American woman fall in love with a British Army officer (Robert Taylor) in post-war London, only to discover he may be a Soviet Spy. The sweeping narrative of *Edward, My Son* sees a Canadian (Spencer Tracy) settle in London with his English wife (Deborah Kerr), allowing a family drama to unfold. This strategy was also used, albeit less frequently, by London Films and the Rank Organisation. In London Films' *The Ghost Goes West* (1935), a wealthy American woman (Jean Parker) attempts to relocate a Scottish castle, and its ghost (Robert Donat) to Florida. In contrast, the Rank Organisation used the Allied cause during World War II as a vehicle for explicit affiliative transnationalism in several films including *49th Parallel* (1941), *A Canterbury Tale* (1944) and *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946), all of which featured a combination of British and American characters.

A much more common strategy involved more implicit forms of affiliative transnationalism, especially the adaptation of canonical works of English literature and theatre. Rank, for example, adapted some of the most famous and revered texts in the English language, with Laurence Olivier producing, directing and starring in Shakespeare's *Henry V* and *Hamlet*, while David Lean's productions of *Great Expectations* and *Oliver Twist* brought Dickens' novels to the screen for the second time in the sound era. True to form, Korda took a more populist route by adapting internationally successful works of literature like Rudyard Kipling's adventure tales set in British India, *The Elephant Boy*, (1937) and *The Jungle Book*, (1942); Baroness Orczy's *The Scarlet Pimpernel* and *Return of the Scarlet Pimpernel* (1937); and H.G. Wells' science fiction novels *The Man Who Could Work Miracles* and *Things to Come*. Taking a more contemporary approach to adaptation, MGM-British nonetheless adapted popular British novels such as *Goodbye Mr. Chips*, *The Citadel* and *Busman's Honeymoon*.

As Korda demonstrated from his earliest days with London Films, the pre-existing fame or notoriety of British (and more usually English) historical figures, events and eras could be drawn upon with or without the help of a prominent theatrical or literary association. This process in itself can be considered a means of enhancing affiliative appeal. As James Chapman notes, the British historical film has typically privileged certain aspects of British history:

The British historical film offers a popular version of the past that promotes dominant myths about the British historical experience ... The use of the word 'myths' in this context should not imply that historical films have no basis in fact, but rather that they tend to endorse narratives that accord with popular views of history ... The favourite periods for producers of historical films, moreover, have

tended to be those which give rise to narratives of national greatness: The Tudor period, which saw the emergence of England as a great power; the Victorian period which saw industrial progress and imperial expansion; and the Second World War, which in the popular imagination remains 'our finest hour'. (Chapman, 2005, 6-7).

Korda built a transatlantic brand identity for many of his films by combining the cultural specificity of English heritage with the production values and genre conventions associated with globalising transnationalism. For example, both *The Private Life of Henry VIII* and *That Hamilton Woman* (1941) concentrated on the romantic, the salacious and the comedic in the private lives of the titular monarch and Emma Hamilton, the mistress of Admiral Horatio Nelson. Similarly, *Fire Over England* (1937) combines action, mystery and romance by weaving a plot around England's battle with the Spanish Armada, an assassination plot to murder Elizabeth I and the courtship of its two leading characters. Again foregrounding action and adventure, *Sanders of the River* (1935), *The Drum* and *The Four Feathers* use the exoticism of 19th century colonial Britain as a backdrop for their tales of chivalry and heroism. In these ways, many of Korda's films actively straddle the middle brow and popular markets by combining spectacular historical recreation and popular genre.

Producers of Transatlantic British Cinema are far from alone in pursuing strategies of affinitive transnationalism. Hollywood studios have long made films which draw on the literature, theatre, history and myths of Britain. During the 1930s and 1940s, the range of representations of Britain in Hollywood films betrays many similarities to those produced by British-based studios. For example, the Tudor period was evoked in films like *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* (1939) and *The Sea Hawk* (1940) while the Victorian era was recreated in films like *Cavalcade* (1933) and *How Green Was My Valley* (1941). During the 1940s World War II was, of course, not an historical subject but rather the most significant contemporary narrative, and Hollywood produced a number of films about the British war experience including MGM's *Mrs Miniver* (1942) and *Random Harvest* (1942). As H. Mark Glancy notes, over 150 such 'Hollywood "British" films' were made between 1930 and 1945, a period in which 'no other foreign country was portrayed by Hollywood so often and with so much apparent admiration' (Glancy, 1999, 1-6). Adding inverted commas in the same manner as Sarah Street, Glancy uses the phrase 'Hollywood "British" film' to indicate Hollywood films which appropriate British settings, source material and/or creative personnel yet are solely the products of the Hollywood industry. Such films were not, however, produced in the subcontractor, subsidiary or stakeholder modes and are thus not examples of Transatlantic British Cinema.

The early films of MGM-British typically focussed on contemporary narratives. Significantly, modern Britain is portrayed as having a close and continuing relationship with its past, a theme which is expressed by the centrality of antiquated institutions, traditions and mores. *A Yank at Oxford* achieves this by locating the action at Britain's most famous, ancient and arguably class-based university. *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* treads a similar line using the setting of a prestigious public school which re-runs much of the same class-based and romanticised imagery. In contrast, *The Citadel* treads a somewhat more social-realist line by addressing the plight of Welsh miners afflicted by ill health and poor working conditions. This gritty milieu is, however, tempered by the idealistic struggle of the film's protagonist, who temporarily relocates to London to treat wealthy hypochondriacs at a Harley Street clinic. *Busman's Honeymoon*, is an adaptation of a Dorothy L. Sayers novel in the Lord Peter Wimsey series, a character who exemplifies the aristocratic 'gentleman detective' subgenre. In keeping with the established class-bound representations, *The Adventures of Tartu* sees a dashing British Army officer involved in a World War II spy drama, whilst *Edward, My Son* is a drama which explores relationships within a powerful and titled British family.

Towards a typology of Transatlantic British Cinema

Adapting and applying three of Hjort's transnational strategies - opportunistic, globalising and affinitive transnationalism - has elucidated the interrelated industrial and textual determinants of Transatlantic British Cinema. Positioning given examples using these markers reveals a necessarily broad conceptual category which transcends criteria such as genre, period and authorship. Transatlantic British Cinema also embraces a diversity of creative conditions which range from high levels of autonomy to similar degrees of constraint. Equally, marketing, distribution and exhibition practices may vary from a general release on a global scale to more selective practices such as niche marketing and road-show distribution. Forgoing a strict essentialism in favour of a malleable conceptual matrix, Transatlantic British Cinema nonetheless adheres, in varying degrees, to a number of interrelated concepts. Firstly, at an industrial level, the subcontractor, subsidiary and stakeholder modes privilege economic transnationalism and ultimately collaboration and/or integration with Hollywood in favour of competition. Secondly, at a textual level, Transatlantic British Cinema is defined by globalising transnationalism and an implicit and/or explicit mix of affinitive transnationalism. These textual strategies serve to narrow

the aesthetic and cultural distance between Transatlantic British Cinema and Hollywood cinema.

It is worth pointing out that the strategies of economic, globalising and affinitive transnationalism associated with Transatlantic British Cinema are, in the first instance, transatlantic and in the second, global. Explicit forms of transnational affinity, such as the inclusion of American characters in British settings, for example, typically involve the casting of Hollywood stars. Stars are, of course, one of the central components of globalising transnationalism. Similarly, the archetypal or stereotypical representations of Britain and Britishness exemplified by implicit affinitive transnationalism are so pervasive that they approach the status of a genre in their own right. Genre is, once again, a key ingredient of globalising transnationalism. Such strategies offer representations that are more likely to be understood and accepted by an American mass audience. Hollywood's global distribution and marketing businesses have, however, ensured that Transatlantic British Cinema is also the global face of British cinema.

Transatlantic British Cinema, Working Title Films and the British film industry in the 1980s

In this chapter, the concept of Transatlantic British Cinema has been developed in order to provide a historical context into which Working Title can be situated, and a conceptual perspective from which Working Title can be examined. Many of the transnational strategies which Working Title has adopted rework those developed by companies such as London Films, MGM-British and Rank during the 1930s and 1940s. Indeed, since the early 1990s, Working Title's business and production agenda has been dominated by a commitment to what I am calling Transatlantic British Cinema. This approach to filmmaking began in earnest with Working Title's integration into PolyGram's New Business Division in 1990 and later PolyGram Filmed Entertainment (PFE). Operating in the subsidiary mode of Transatlantic British Cinema throughout the 1990s, Working Title actively embraced the strategies of globalising and affinitive transnationalism when producing films like *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994), *Bean* (1997) and *Elizabeth* (1998). The sale of PolyGram to Seagram in 1998 saw many of PFE's assets, including Working Title, integrated into Seagram's existing film division, Universal Pictures. As a subsidiary of Universal, Working Title continued the established trend towards Transatlantic British Cinema by producing films like *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001), *Pride and Prejudice* (2005) and *About Time* (2013).

At the time of Working Title's incorporation in 1984 the production of Transatlantic British Cinema was, however, the preserve of other companies working within the British film industry, most notably Thorn EMI Screen Entertainment (TESE) and Goldcrest. TESE had been created by the 1979 merger of EMI and Thorn Electronics, and was the only British-based institution which could be considered an active film studio. By the 1980s its major distribution and production assets included the 287-screen ABC cinema circuit, a UK theatrical distribution company, Elstree Studios, an international film sales company, and a 2,000 title film library (Watkins, 1986, 5). Production at TESE was routed through a revolving fund which could be accessed by affiliated producers and production companies who were under 'first look' contracts with the studio. By far the most prolific and successful in securing TESE backing was the producing partnership of John Brabourne and Richard Goodwin who produced a series of Agatha Christie adaptations including *Death on the Nile* (1978), *The Mirror Crack'd* (1980) and *Evil Under the Sun* (1982) and the E.M. Forster adaptation, *A Passage to India* (1984). Other affiliated production companies included Jeremy Thomas' Recorded Picture Company and Peter Shaw and Richard Johnson's United British Artists (UBA) (Park, 1986, 10).

By the early 1980s media attention had switched to a new British-based film company: Goldcrest. Founded in 1977 by the Canadian investment banker Jake Eberts, Goldcrest was successful in securing private finance from outside the film industry from numerous sources. At the first board meeting of the new venture, Eberts and his shareholders 'formulated a policy of investing only in films that were both of high quality and identifiably British'. Moreover, Eberts asserted his personal vision that 'we would invest in proven talent, spread the risk and minimise our exposure – and I emphasised that the films in which we made investments should appeal to the international market and have a long shelf life: topical subject matter, which dates very quickly, was out' (Eberts & Illott, 1990, 54-8). The 'proven talent' which became the backbone of Goldcrest's early success was already present in the boardroom in the shape of producer, David Puttnam, and director and producer, Richard Attenborough. The first two Goldcrest films to successfully meet Eberts' criteria were the Putnam-produced *Chariots of Fire* (1981) and the Attenborough-produced and directed, *Gandhi* (1982). Both films were substantial critical and commercial successes, each winning the Academy Award for Best Picture in their year of release. By the mid-1980s, Goldcrest had first-look agreements with Allied Film-makers (Alan Marshall, Alan Parker, Richard Attenborough and John Boorman), David Puttnam and Sanford Lieberson (Park, 1986, 10).

While instances of independent production were relatively rare in the 1930s and 1940s, from the 1950s onwards, Hollywood made the transition from mass production and centralised control to independent production through sub-contracted companies, typically arranged on a short term or film-by-film basis (Staiger, 1982). Hollywood's dominant mode of production also became the dominant mode of Transatlantic British Cinema in the same period. TESE and Goldcrest operated as subcontractors for the major studios by remaining independent from Hollywood in terms of ownership and operational management, but reliant on the major Hollywood studios for distribution and marketing in the US, and in many cases, global markets. Films such as *Death on the Nile* (Paramount), *Evil Under the Sun* (Universal), *Chariots of Fire* (Fox/Warner Bros.) and *Ghandi* (Columbia) were, for example, all distributed by different studios. Despite a bright start to the decade, the output of both companies substantially reduced or ceased after 1986. TESE was sold to the American mini-major, Cannon, which subsequently divided its assets for re-sale and Goldcrest teetered on the edge of bankruptcy after a period of overextension which included the box-office flops *Absolute Beginners* (1986) and *Revolution* (1986).

The early 1980s also witnessed the death of Britain's domestic commercial cinema after a long period of decline which had begun in the 1950s. TESE's predecessor, EMI Films had been largely responsible for supporting this type of cinema during the 1970s by producing and distributing feature films based on the domestic popularity of television programmes. While television programmes had occasionally inspired theatrically released spin offs since the 1950s, this approach was adopted at least 30 times during the 1970s (Garvey, 2010, 179). Amongst the most popular source material were feature film versions of shows such as *On the Buses* (1971, 1972, 1973), *Up Pompeii!* (1971, 1971, 1972), *Steptoe and Son* (1972, 1973) and *The Sweeney* (1977, 1978). The production of television spin offs, however, proved to be the last gasps of Britain's domestic commercial cinema. As John Hill explains:

The basis for this cinema, however, was an audience of a sufficient size to sustain its economic viability. In the 1980s, this viability became increasingly threatened by falling audience figures. Since their peak of 163.5 million in 1946, cinema admissions fell steadily until they reached an all-time low of 54 million in 1984 ... Although gross box-office levels were in part maintained through increases in ticket prices, it was clear that the returns which a British film could expect from the domestic market were considerably lower than in previous decades. Thus, whereas it was once possible for a British film to recoup its cost on the home market this proved virtually impossible for the vast majority of British movies during the 1980s (Hill, 1999, 48).

The relationship between television and film was, however, consolidated in rather different ways during the early 1980s. The launch of Channel 4 in 1982 had a profound impact on the British film industry by closing the gap between the made-for-television film and the theatrically released feature film. Significantly, Channel 4 only supported films which met with its public service mandates to promote, amongst other things, experimentation and innovation in form and content. In its first year of operation Channel 4 partly financed such theatrically released films as *The Draughtsman's Contract* (1982), *Angel* (1982) and *The Ploughman's Lunch* (1983). In the years that followed, Channel 4's continued commitment to funding feature films was instrumental in creating a visible profile of a British art cinema which was, for the first time, prominent enough to be acknowledged as such. As Christopher Williams explains, prior to the establishment of Channel 4, the notion of a British 'art cinema' was, at best, limited:

The British, traditionally, had no art cinema, and later no specific equivalent of the European art cinema, no medium in which the leading issues of subjectivity (individual identity, sexuality, personal relations) or of socio-cultural developments and consciousness (history, community and national relationships) could be directly addressed in image related forms. The nearest substitute was the documentary; but it could not convince in these capacities because (with a few exceptions which tended to demonstrate the main rule) it had downplayed the individual in its first flowering, lost prestige in its local decline between the 1940s and 1970s and only developed an explicit interface with fiction from the 1970s onwards (Williams, 1996, 194)

Like most of its contemporaries, Working Title developed a strong relationship with Channel 4 and, in turn, a production strategy that was markedly different from Transatlantic British Cinema of TESE and Goldcrest. Between 1984 and 1990, Working Title was an independently owned and operated company which raised production finance for low-budget films on a film-by-film basis from Channel 4, other state-supported sources such as British Screen and the BFI Production Board and other independent production and distribution companies. In this period, Working Title added considerably to the profile of British art cinema by producing some of the most acclaimed British films of the decade including *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), *Caravaggio* (1986) and *Wish You Were Here* (1987). The following chapter explores this period of Working Title's history in more detail.

Chapter 2

The Independent Years: 1984-1990

Working Title Films was incorporated in 1984 as a small independent production company in the wake of the establishment of Channel 4, two years earlier. In his study of British filmmaking during the mid to late 1980s, Duncan Petrie uses the term 'independent' to indicate the work of 'producers and directors who do not have access to a regular source of finance; who are not under contract to a major studio'. While this definition fits Working Title's situation during the 1980s, it is an ambiguous label, Petrie explains, because it 'effectively extends the description "independent" to cover practically all indigenous filmmaking in this country' (1991,63). This chapter navigates a course through such imprecision by offering an account of what being an independent production company meant for Working Title Films between 1984 and 1990. The word 'independent' is, of course, used advisedly here. While using it maintains the semantic convention of the film industry, a literal interpretation is nonetheless unhelpful. As Simon Blanchard and Sylvia Harvey explain, an 'independent' film business is, in fact, always *dependent* on, or *interdependent* with, other film businesses:

It is obviously essential to look, not only at the slides and stresses in the use of the word as a matter of self-description by organisations, individuals, groups, but also at the actual practices of independence as they develop and interact with the contradictions of such a rhetoric ... it is a question not of in-dependence but – as has often been remarked – of dependence and inter-dependence; of an assessment of the determinants structuring and organising both what happens and how this is understood (1983, 227)

In keeping with these observations, it is the network of creative and industrial interrelationships of which Working Title was a part that provide the most salient account of the company's years as an independent production company. Due to the inherently collaborative nature of filmmaking, Working Title forged, and continues to forge, myriad relationships with writers, directors, actors and producers, amongst many other creative and technical personnel. Many of these collaborations were based upon a single project, while others have endured for decades. When viewed over a longer period and across the

company's entire output, however, it is Working Title's institutional relationships which have most profoundly shaped the company's grand narrative. In this respect, Working Title's years as an independent production company were dominated by its relationship with Channel 4. In the period between 1984 and 1989, the British broadcaster committed complete or partial production finance to six Working Title productions, including *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), *Caravaggio* (1986), *Wish You Were Here* (1987), *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987), *A World Apart* (1988) and *Diamond Skulls* (1989). Indeed, it was the company's ability to consistently secure production funding on a film-by-film basis, alongside the critical acclaim which greeted many of its films, which has ensured that Working Title is remembered as one of the most successful British independents of the 1980s.

As a small independent without the backing of a major media conglomerate, Working Title lacked the development and production resources and the wider industrial infrastructure of worldwide distribution and marketing to produce Transatlantic British Cinema. Working Title would, however, begin to embrace the strategies of economic, globalising and affinitive transnationalism by the end of the 1980s as a new institutional relationship. From 1988 onwards, PolyGram, a multinational record company headquartered in London, gradually began to assume Channel 4's position through its recently established New Business Division. PolyGram's initial investment in Working Title's activities resulted in the incorporation of Working Title Television (WTTV) in July 1988. The new venture was jointly owned by PolyGram, which assumed a 49 per cent interest, and Working Title Films, which owned the remaining 51 per cent. By August 1990, the same proportion of joint ownership was applied to Working Title Films itself. Following a strict legal interpretation one could argue that Working Title maintained its independence by a single percentage point of equity. If independence is to be judged by examining the conditions under which Working Title produced films, however, a different conclusion arises. Indeed, the industrial structures which PolyGram's New Business Division built around Working Title from 1990 onwards directly altered how the company financed, developed and produced films. In turn, the PolyGram regime profoundly affected the way in which Working Title's directors worked and understood the status of their company. PolyGram's initial acquisition of a 49 percent stake in Working Title Films should then be seen as the most meaningful point of delineation between the states of 'independent' and 'subsidiary'.

While an examination of Working Title's creative and industrial interrelationships can illuminate the many intricacies of independent British filmmaking during the 1980s, there is no denying the fact that at the heart of the company were two aspiring feature film producers who, in those formative years, *were* Working Title Films. Tim Bevan and Sarah Radclyffe were subsequently joined by a third partner, Graham Bradstreet, who assumed the role of Finance Director in 1986. The individual and collective agency of the company's three directors is thus equally essential to understanding Working Title during this period. It may be a truism to say that the film industry is personality-driven, and as Working Title evolved it was, of course, the personalities at the helm which influenced the company's trajectory.

The influence which Bevan, Bradstreet and Radclyffe were able to wield over the films which Working Title produced during the 1980s was, however, often closely linked to the institutional remit of Channel 4. The channel's primary role was nonetheless complemented by a number of other filmmaking institutions. These included public bodies such as the British Film Institute (BFI) Production Board and British Screen Finance Consortium (subsequently British Screen Finance Limited). Thus, to understand the way in which Working Title operated as an independent, it is first vital to understand the role of state support for the British film industry within the broader social, political and economic contexts of the 1980s. The following section therefore considers the British film industry within the prevailing ideology of the decade, namely Thatcherism, and more particularly its impact on the film and television industries.

The context of independent production during the 1980s

Britain was governed by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative administration from May 1979 to November 1990. With the possible exception of the reforms to welfare and healthcare made during the Atlee government of the 1940s, Thatcher's premiership witnessed the most profound social, political and economic changes to British life in the 20th century. Prior to her ascendancy, the post-war period had been defined by 'consensus politics', a term which indicates high levels of agreement between the major political parties on a number of core issues. The consensus era can be broadly defined as a period of social democracy which was heavily influenced by Keynesian economics. According to Dennis Kavanagh, four interrelated principles came to define social democracy in Britain: a mixed economy managed by the state for social ends; deference to the interests of trade unions

and the working class; the representation of these interests by political parties, particularly Labour; and the pursuit of certain policies including full employment and the maintenance of the welfare state (1987, 4). In the closing years of the 1970s, however, there was an increasing belief across the political spectrum that social democracy was no longer governable. The nation's longstanding low rates of economic growth, high levels of inflation and trade union power culminated in the so-called 'winter of discontent' of 1978-9. The apparent failure of James Callaghan's Labour government to deal with these issues contributed to a vote of no confidence in the House of Commons and, in turn, the General Election of 1979, which saw Thatcher come to power.

Over the course of the next decade, the British political landscape would be dominated by Thatcher's personal brand of 'conviction politics', which would become known as Thatcherism. The profound impact of Thatcherism stems from its largely antithetical position in relation to the tenets of social democracy. Indeed, the image of society which Thatcher imposed on Britain was not only at odds with the politics of the outgoing Labour government but with the politics of the entire post-war era. As Martin Holmes explains, 'the essence of Thatcherism is the advocacy of a market economy, where the state fulfils strictly limited functions such as monetary control, the upholding of the rule of law, and the provision of defence of the realm'. From this basic definition, Holmes identifies two fundamental consequences for Britain during the 1980s. Firstly, Thatcherism's ideological rejection of social democracy paved the way for the socialist functions of the state to be rolled back and replaced with the forces of the free market. Such policies led to a raft of reforms including the control of inflation, reductions in public spending and taxation and the privatisation of state-owned assets such as industry and housing. Simultaneously, a wave of deregulation was applied to both the trade unions and the financial markets, actions which were rhetorically supported by the ideals of competition and meritocracy. Secondly, Thatcherism had to promote the free market and free enterprise as electorally appealing in an age of mass democracy and rising social and economic expectations (Holmes, 1989, 9-10). Indeed, for Thatcher's most ardent supporters, a corresponding Thatcherite worldview began to take shape. As Eric Evans explains:

Thatcherites have no difficulty identifying what they are *against*: state interference with individual freedom; state initiatives which encourage an ethos of 'dependency'; woolly consensuality; high levels of taxation; the propensity of both organised labour and entrenched professional interests to distort market forces; and a reluctance to be 'pushed around', either personally or as a nation state. In

one sense, being 'against' all these implies that their obvious antithesis will guide policy: individual rights; private enterprise within a free market; firm, perhaps authoritarian, leadership; low levels of personal taxation; union-and-vested-interest-bashing; simple patriotism (1997, 2).

The contrast between the politics of the left and right were thus thrown into sharp relief during the 1980s. Indeed, a series of high profile social, political, industrial and military events such as the inner city race riots of 1981, the Falklands War of 1982, the 1984-5 miners' strike, the continuing troubles in Northern Ireland and the 1986 'big bang' on the London Stock Exchange punctuated the decade and served as reminders of the divisive nature of Thatcherism. Thatcherism also had a profound impact on the media industries. The establishment of Channel 4, so vital to the success of Working Title's early years, can be seen as a product of the transition between the eras of consensus politics and Thatcherism. Indeed, the mix of cultural, political and economic ideals which the Channel came to represent, are intimately wed to its particular term of gestation. At the time of its launch in November 1982, Channel 4 was Britain's first new television channel since the creation of BBC2 in 1964. Prior to 1982, the televisual landscape in Britain had been dominated by the BBC/ITV duopoly. The relationship between the two broadcasters was, and remains, largely dichotomous. The BBC is state owned and operates under a public service mandate which requires it to 'inform, educate and entertain' the nation. In contrast, ITV privileges popular entertainment programming and is funded directly through advertising revenue. Political debate about the creation of a fourth channel stalled on the issue of which broadcasting model to adopt, a choice hitherto confined to only two options.

During the 1970s, advocates of media reform championed various alternative models, and a public committee on the future of broadcasting was established under the leadership of Lord Annan. The Committee's final report of 1977 recommended the establishment of a new regulatory body called the Open Broadcast Authority (OBA). The OBA, it was envisaged, would oversee the establishment of a fourth channel funded through a variety of public and private sources, commission independently produced programming and demonstrate a commitment to plurality of content. The recommendations of the Annan Committee formed the basis of a White Paper in 1978 and a Broadcasting Bill which commenced the physical construction of a new transmission network one month before Labour's election defeat (Lambert, 1982, 70-84). The ultimate decisions about the complexion of Channel 4 would, however, rest with the incoming Conservative government. The basic ideals of the OBA were appealing to the economic

principles of Thatcher's government because independent production promoted entrepreneurialism and competition while also suggesting a long term means of weakening trade union power in the media industries. The creation of the OBA would, however, also require a significant increase in public spending which the government was not prepared to stomach. A compromise position was reached whereby Channel 4 would operate as an autonomous and non-profit subsidiary of Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), the government body which also regulated the ITV network (Lambert, 1982, 84-94)

Ultimately, the political success of Channel 4 rested on its ability to blend public service and commercial broadcasting models. The channel's public service responsibilities, as detailed in the 1980 Broadcasting Act, covered four principal areas. Firstly, it had to broadcast a 'suitable proportion of matter calculated to appeal to tastes not generally catered for by ITV'. Secondly, a 'suitable proportion' of programmes had to be of an 'educational nature'. Thirdly, the channel was required to 'encourage innovation and experiment in the form and content of programmes' (Blanchard, 1982, 22). The finances available to realise this public service remit would, however, be entirely derived from advertising revenue. Crucially, the existing ITV companies were responsible for selling Channel 4's advertising air time and in return paid Channel 4 an annual subscription determined by the IBA. Thus, Channel 4 could afford to pursue its public service obligations without the direct commercial pressure to deliver audiences to advertisers. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, Channel 4 would not produce programmes in-house, but rather act as a 'publishing house' by commissioning independent producers or the existing ITV companies (Harvey, 1989, 63-5).

The creation of Channel 4 thus represented the first substantial departure from the concentrated power of the BBC/ITV duopoly towards multiple smaller-scale producers operating as subcontractors for a major broadcaster. In this respect, it took the launch of Channel 4 to induce a structure within the British television industry which resembled the longstanding production structure of the British film industry. Independent film production had become so pronounced by the 1980s that 342 companies were involved in the making of just 454 films by the end of the decade. Many of these companies were established to produce a single film, and were often dissolved thereafter. The launch of Channel 4 had a similar impact on the British television industry, which could count over 500 independent production companies by 1990 (Paterson, 1992, 43-47). The increasing structural alignment of the two industries suggested that they might complement one another, a possibility which was permitted by the Broadcasting Act.

In his successful application for the post of CEO of Channel 4, Jeremy Isaacs had stated his desire to produce or help produce 'films of feature length for television here, for the cinema abroad' (Isaacs, 1989, 146). His reluctance to fund theatrically released cinema in Britain was in part due to rules imposed by the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association (CEA) which insisted on a three year gap between theatrical release and television broadcast. Channel 4, however, negotiated with the CEA, who agreed to waive the clause to allow limited theatrical releases for some of the first films which the channel funded such as *Angel* (1982) and *The Draughtsman's Contract* (1982). A more formal agreement would be reached in 1986 permitting theatrical exhibition and a broadcast delay waiver to films with production budgets under £1.25 million, a figure which was raised to £4 million in 1988 (Hill, 1996, 157). In this respect, Channel 4's 'novel achievement' in British filmmaking was to close the gap between the made-for-television film and the theatrically released film by offering 'the chance (if a distributor could be found) to exhibit their work in the cinema, where it might gain a reputation and identity, before its television transmission' (Pym, 1992, 8).

In addition to the budgetary constraints imposed by the CEA waivers on theatrically released films, Channel 4's involvement in filmmaking was limited by its own budget. Its first annual filmmaking budget was £6 million, a figure which, along with co-investment from other sources, produced 23 films with an average cost of £400,000 (Kent, 1987, 263). As a sobering point of comparison, it is worth noting that the entire annual resources of Channel 4's filmmaking programme amounted to approximately \$9.6 million, the average cost of a single film produced by the major Hollywood studios (Park, 1982, 8). Over the decade that followed, however, the startling rise of production costs ensured that an increased annual budget of £9.5 million in the 1987/88 financial year would yield only 17 or 18 films, with an average cost of £1.2 million. With over 2,000 speculative scripts submitted annually, the Channel was thus able to provide finance for less than 1 per cent of potential projects (Kent, 1987, 263).

Beyond the material considerations of individual production budgets and the Channel's overall output of original programming, came editorial selection. David Rose, the channel's first Senior Commissioning Editor for Fiction, was responsible for *Film on Four*, a title applied to both the filmmaking sub-section of his department and the slot in the broadcasting schedule which would host its produce. Rose and his editorial colleagues, Walter Donohue and Karin Bamborough, thus played a crucial role in determining the content of Channel 4's original programming. Rose had joined the channel after a long

career at the BBC as a producer of innovative drama series like *Z-Cars* (1962-78) and *Softly, Softly* (1966-69) and later as Head of Regional Drama at the BBC's Pebble Mill studios in Birmingham. Steeped in the public service tradition, Rose had used the creative autonomy granted to him at the BBC to help realise the work of young dramatists like Mike Leigh, Willie Russell, Alan Bleasdale and David Hare for the BBC's drama anthologies *Play for Today* and *Second City Firsts*. In line with Channel 4's public service responsibility towards innovation and experimentation, Rose described his new editorial priorities at the channel as follows:

If you pick up a script and you immediately feel you have been there before, that it's derivative, then I would rather find something else. Frankly, I just want a script that makes me keep turning the pages. I certainly favour original work ... I have reservations about adaptations from the novel. I think you start with a burden and that it's only a very clever writer who can successfully shed that burden. And I favour contemporary work. That is partly because I see quite a few period pieces on the other channels. I think the audience responds extremely well to contemporary drama. On occasion, it can illuminate a subject more clearly and with more effect than current affairs programmes (Rose quoted in Kent, 1987, 262-3).

Channel 4's unprecedented contribution to British filmmaking coincided with sweeping legislative changes elsewhere in the industry. Unsurprisingly, the Thatcher administration looked to the free-market for an answer to the problems they perceived in the film business. Kenneth Baker, the Minister of State for Industry and Information Technology declared, 'Our policy is to free the film industry from government intervention and from an intrusive regulatory regime dating from the days of the silent films. Our policy will clear the way for the industry to operate in a more confident framework and to consolidate upon its success' (Stanbrook, 1984b, 241). The broad brush of Thatcherite reform was applied to the three longstanding support mechanisms for the film industry, the quota system, the Eady Levy and the National Film Finance Corporation (NFFC). In line with the broader objectives of reducing public expenditure and the scope of the public sector, all three measures would be dismantled over the course of Thatcher's first two terms. The quota was reduced from 30 to 15 per cent in January 1982 before being suspended the following year. The publication of a white paper entitled *Film Policy* in July 1984 recommended that the Eady Levy and the NFFC should be abolished, a process which was given the official seal of approval by the 1985 Films Act (Hill, 1993, 205). Taken together, the removal of the quota, the Levy and the NFFC severed the state-supported connection between domestic production, distribution and exhibition.

The 1985 Act would, however, replace the NFFC with the British Screen Finance Consortium. The government provided British Screen with an initial sum of £1.5 million per annum over a five year period and gave the company an explicit mandate to achieve self-sustainability thereafter. This figure was then supplemented by annual subventions from three private investors in the form of loans. Thus, Channel 4, Cannon and Rank respectively contributed £300,000 per annum for 5 years, £300,000 per annum for three years and £250,000 per annum for three years. Thereafter, Channel 4 would remain the only consistent supporter of British Screen (Hill, 1993, 206-7). Like the NFFC before it, British Screen would support British film production by providing loans to independent production companies. Despite its provision of direct government aid to the film industry, the consortium had to orient its activities towards the free-market. As Simon Relph, an independent producer and British Screen's first Chief Executive, explained:

The NFFC set out in a fairly catholic way to support the work of young producers and directors who needed and deserved a start but could not get it from the majors here or in the States. I'm very anxious to continue that tradition. But projects must make sense financially: how much they are going to cost must be balanced against how much they are likely to bring in. I'm not in favour of subsidising a filmmaker to do something which is uncommercial but I am keen on taking risks that a more purely commercial entity might not be prepared to take (Relph quoted in Petley, 1985a, 14-15).

The only state-sponsored mechanism for filmmaking to survive Thatcherism unscathed was the BFI Production Board. The Board was established in 1966 to replace the Experimental Film Fund, funded, like the Production Board through the Eady Levy. The alliance between the culturally and politically Independent Filmmakers' Association (IFA) and the Board, which had begun in the mid-1970s, remained strong. The Board's annual budget of just £125,000 was thus typically used to support the production of a number of short films which reflected the IFA's interests in non-commercial filmmaking with an emphasis on the avant-garde (Brown, 1982, 255). By the end of the 1970s, however, a 'Code of Practice' had been agreed with the leading film industry trade union, the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians (ACTT), which permitted the BFI to make feature films at rates traditionally applied to short films and documentaries. The result was an increased emphasis on funding the development and production of low-budget feature films intended for theatrical distribution (Pole, 1986, 25). The Board was, however, largely funded by the Eady Levy, which had been abolished by the 1985 Film Act. Channel 4 promptly stepped into the breach by providing an annual

subvention of £500,000, which was matched by a government grant. In return for their contribution, Channel 4 would receive the UK television rights for all of the BFI's output (Petrie, 1991, 98).

While the particular mandates of Channel 4, British Screen and the BFI Production Board were somewhat disparate, it quickly became apparent that they could not operate in a mutually exclusive manner. Indeed, already bound by their partial economic dependence on Channel 4, British Screen and the Production Board were in regular dialogue with their patron and often coordinated their efforts. Taken together, these three institutions would maintain a state-supported interest in filmmaking which, to varying degrees, opposed the free-market doctrine of Thatcherism. Indeed, the 'independence' which they collectively helped to provide to production companies like Working Title was in effect independence from the need to compete directly with the dominant force of the free market, namely Hollywood. This hallowed space was, however, governed by its own set of institutional remits. As Petrie argues, the function of institutions such as Channel 4, British Screen and the BFI Production Board, can be characterised as forms of 'gatekeeping'. Such gatekeepers, he argues, 'effectively determine what British cinema is; what subjects are worth producing and even what the final product will look like'. In turn, the filmmakers – writers, directors and producers - directly responsible for producing 'British cinema' must 'initiate and develop their ideas in relation to existing patterns of funding and production' (1991, 107).

This contextual backdrop was also influenced by the involvement of commercial interests from ITV-affiliated companies such as Zenith Entertainment and London Weekend Television. The picture was complicated still further at the point of distribution. Working Title's films were typically sold to distribution companies via British-based sales agents, including Film Four International, BFI Distribution, Gavin Film and The Sales Company. Ultimately, Working Title's films were sold to independent distributors worldwide, including the US-based Orion Classics, Cinecom, Atlantic Entertainment, Vestron and Miramax. This underlines the fact that the defining feature of independent production is the fundamental disconnection between funding, development, production, distribution and marketing. The following section considers Working Title's years as an independent production company through an examination of these myriad interrelationships. As with subsequent chapters, much of is presented here depends upon original interviews with some of the key players, along with information gleaned from the trade and specialist press.

Working Title Films and Independent Production

Prior to their first encounter in 1983, Tim Bevan and Sarah Radclyffe shared some broad similarities in their family backgrounds and meandering routes into the film industry. Sarah Radclyffe was born in 1950 into an upper class family in rural Oxfordshire. The young Sarah followed her parent's passion for all things equestrian. As she explained, 'I'm not one of those film producers who avidly went to the cinema from the age of three onwards. I was always much more interested in my pony'. After formative years spent at Heathfield School and a finishing school in Paris, she took a job in artists' relations management at WEA Records where she was responsible for 'nannying' a number of the label's acts around Europe (Moir, 1993, 8). Her first exposure to filmmaking came while working at Kendon Films as Don Boyd's assistant. During her time at Kendon, the company produced Derek Jarman's third feature film, an unconventional adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1979). As she recalled, the film was 'a hippy production if ever there was one. Inevitably we all got kicked out of our hotel and had to move into the location, Stoneleigh Abbey, where we got snowed in. The whole cast helped build the set, we never had call sheets, there was no production manager ... How it got made I shudder to think' (Radclyffe quoted in Rampton, 1988, 11).

Tim Bevan was born in 1957 in Queenstown, New Zealand, the location to which his parents had emigrated from England, and where his father continued to practice medicine. At the age of 10, Bevan and his family moved back to England, settling in Somerset and later Wiltshire. He attended Sidcot School, an independent school situated close to his family home. Postponing a decision about university, he chose to travel, landing back in New Zealand, where his interest in filmmaking began to take shape. His first break came as a runner in the props department of Television One, working on the soap opera *Close to Home* (1975-1983) amongst other shows. Eventually winding his way back to England, Bevan spent his twenty-second year caught between a journalism course and an uninspiring office job until he moved back into filmmaking at the end of 1979 with a position in the art department of Video Arts, a production company which specialised in corporate training videos.

For Bevan and Radclyffe, the early 1980s were spent working in television production, Bevan at Video Arts and Radclyffe at Michael White Productions. The pair first met in 1982 while Radclyffe was working as a production manager, and later producer, on

The Comic Strip Presents... (1982-2012), the Channel 4 alternative comedy show which introduced the nation to the likes of Adrian Edmondson, Dawn French, Rik Mayall and Jennifer Saunders. Bevan had unsuccessfully applied for a job on the show, but the seeds of friendship and common interest had already been sown. Over the months that followed, the pair discussed their mutual ambition to produce feature films, and the ways in which that ambition might be realised. As Bevan recalled, 'I was thinking "Oh my God", at Video Arts. There were these five or six guys that were running it and that job didn't look too difficult. Why don't I try doing that, rather than work my way up through the system?' (Bevan, 2013). Teaming up with Radclyffe seemed like a sensible option, but the most immediate obstacle to be overcome was their own inexperience as producers. Their start came not from Channel 4, but from the timely arrival of the music video.

The impact of the 24-hour music video channel, MTV, had pushed the demand for music 'promos' through the roof since its launch in 1981. The prospect of producing a music video was, of course, far less daunting than attempting to produce a feature film. The new medium not only embodied the flexible entrepreneurialism of the Thatcher era but also allowed would-be producers to bypass the time-honoured route of a unionised apprenticeship. In a move to capitalise on such opportunities, Radclyffe and Bevan incorporated a production company, Aldabra Ltd., in May 1983. At 32, Radclyffe was the elder member of the new partnership, while Bevan had just turned 25. Aldabra would join an expanding list of similar music video production companies such as Jump Productions, Midnight Films, MGMM and Fugitive Films, which were all seeking a slice of what quickly became a £30 million a year industry with its own trade body, the Music Film and Video Producers' Association (Screen Int'l, 1985a, 34). From its small office on New Oxford Street, Aldabra would begin to produce music videos for a host of British pop acts including Bryan Ferry, Marc Almond, Madness, Simple Minds and Frankie Goes to Hollywood. As Bevan recalled:

It was a cowboy business then. It was one, personality; two, directors; three, concept; four, connections; and five, anything you could make sexy. Aldabra was by no means the biggest of these companies ... There were a group of people running around town taking meetings with the five or six record companies trying to get work. It was a pretty good precursor to what one had to do as a film producer ... We started Aldabra as a way to make money and learn how to run a company, but we decided to have a different label [Working Title], for our film activities. They were concurrent for quite a while because there was no real business going through Working Title in the early years (Bevan, 2013).

Working Title Ltd. was incorporated in early 1984 and set up shop in a one room office in Little Russell Street, just minutes away from the Aldabra office. Perched between Holborn and Soho in London's West End, the location was apt for a new filmmaking enterprise in the 1980s. The historical epicentre of the British film industry had converged on Wardour Street, a road which connects the theatres of Shaftsbury Avenue with Oxford Street. While restaurants, bars and a gaudy array of sex shops had replaced many of the more obvious markers of a film industry, the centripetal pull of Soho remained powerful for independent production companies, not least because of its proximity to Channel 4's headquarters on Charlotte Street. Working Title's first commission was an NFFC-funded short, *The Man Who Shot Christmas* (1984), which went on release with Woody Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985). This was shortly followed by *Lubo's World* (1984), a four part comedy series for Channel 4. Working Title's first feature film project would, however, come from a cross-pollination of personnel between Aldabra and Working Title, as Radclyffe explained:

What we did, which was new at the time, was entice film directors into the world of making videos, because where we were coming from it was one thing to phone up Nic Roeg, Stephen Frears or whoever, and say "would you do music videos?" - and they, rather misguidedly, thought this would be fun and easy - but we couldn't exactly ring up and say "we're two new, young producers and we'd really like to produce your next film" (Radclyffe quoted in Seaton, 2000, 59).

As would so often be the case in later years, it was knowing the right people that really got the ball rolling. The genesis of Working Title's first feature film, *My Beautiful Laundrette*, began at Channel 4 and eventually wound its way to Working Title through the hands of its writer Hanif Kureishi and its director-to-be, Stephen Frears. Karin Bamborough, an assistant commissioning editor to David Rose at Channel 4, had commissioned an original screenplay from Kureishi in the early summer of 1984. Kureishi, who had previously worked exclusively in the theatre, completed the screenplay in November that year and began considering directors. Acting on the advice of a friend, he delivered the script to Frears at his home in Notting Hill (Kureishi, 1986, 41-44). At the time, Frears was affiliated with Greenpoint Films, a production collective which had been established to capitalise on Channel 4 funding and had already produced *The Ploughman's Lunch* (1983) and *Laughterhouse* (1984) for the Channel (Petley, 1985, 14). While Frears was convinced by the script, his working relationships at Greenpoint had become less than satisfactory. Having worked on music videos with Aldabra, Frears entrusted the project to Bevan and

Radclyffe while a meeting with David Rose and his team was scheduled at Channel 4's headquarters in Charlotte Street.

My Beautiful Laundrette began shooting on location in South London in February 1985 with a schedule of six weeks and a budget of £650,000 (Pym, 1992, 170). Working Title was in business. The extent to which Rose and his team were involved in the production process in the case of fully or majority funded projects was remarkable and the extent to which so-called 'independent' production actually involved a great deal of dependence on other companies. As well as having final approval on all key appointments – director, line producer, cameraman, editor, designer, composer and leading players – the editorial team at Channel 4 viewed rushes and appointed an accountant to monitor cost returns (Kent, 1987, 263). The experience for Bevan was, however, one of relative autonomy once the production process had begun:

What David Rose and Karin Bambrough at Channel 4, and Simon Relph who was at British Screen did, was give producers a lot of string. The reason that we learned so quickly was that they weren't micromanaging what we were doing ... Obviously they monitored what we were doing creatively. They watched dailies and made sure we were shooting the script, but how we spent the money, as long as we did it to budget, and as long as their production people were happy with what our production people were doing, they left us to get on with it (Bevan, 2013).

My Beautiful Laundrette is arguably the most iconic Film on Four production of the 1980s. Set in an impoverished and crime-stricken south London, the film tells the story of Omar (Gordon Warnecke), a British Pakistani, and Johnny (Daniel Day-Lewis), his white former school friend. Omar lives with his alcoholic father (Roshan Seth), but is given the job of managing the titular laundrette by his prosperous and decidedly Thatcherite uncle, Nasser (Saeed Jaffrey). In turn, Omar recruits Johnny who is a peripheral member of a racist skinhead gang. Johnny and Omar begin a sexual relationship which remains a secret from both Omar's extended family and Johnny's friends. Omar steals money from his drug-dealing cousin, Salim (Derrick Branche), to provide capital for the refurbishment of the laundrette. Conflict soon arises from almost every direction: Omar's father demands that he returns to education, Omar is pushed in the direction of an arranged marriage, Salim threatens to take revenge for the robbery and the skinhead gang attack both Johnny and the laundrette. In these many ways, *My Beautiful Laundrette* addresses a multitude of personal, political and social issues which are intimately wed to the British Pakistani immigrant experience and the apparent disenfranchisement of the white working class during the 1980s.

Recalling the production of *My Beautiful Laundrette*, David Rose said, 'I don't think anyone at Channel 4 or on the production team doubted that this was a film for television and that's why we shot it on 16mm' (Kent, 1987, 262). Screenings of an early cut, however, began to convince both Channel 4 and Working Title otherwise. What leapt off the screen was both original and provocative, and seemed to embody the nascent creative ethos of Film on Four. Prompted by the film's early reception, *My Beautiful Laundrette* would subsequently be sold for distribution by Channel 4's in-house film sales company, Film Four International (FFI). Since its establishment in May 1984, FFI had grown to include two dedicated film sales executives, Joy Pereths and Carole Myer. Pereths would sell Film on Four product to distributors in the US via her company, International Film Exchange (IFEX), while Myer sold to the international (non-US) markets. For *My Beautiful Laundrette*, Myer secured distribution in the UK in September through Mainline Pictures, a small independent distributor which was owned by the same business group as the London-based Screen Cinema chain. At the Toronto Film Festival later that month, Pereths sold the US distribution rights to Orion Classics, the 'speciality' division of Orion Pictures, which acquired foreign and independent films for US distribution (Gold, 1986, 24).

Myer was already a key name within the British film industry, and had spent eight years working in film sales at the BFI prior to her appointment at FFI. Working for two companies involved in producing state-supported art cinema had proved to be an incongruous experience at film markets. 'All of the facilities at markets at that time were run by the British Film Producers' Association, which was all the people who make commercial movies', she recalled. 'They did not want the BFI on any of their stands. Channel 4, of course, had more money than sense so they took their own stuff, but when I was at the BFI I had to force my way on to everything' (Myer, 2013). The wider industry's lack of familiarity with Film on Four was a factor which *My Beautiful Laundrette*, more than any other film, would begin to change. It made its first market appearance at MIFED in October alongside a Film on Four line-up which included *Letter to Brezhnev* (1985), *She'll Be Wearing Pink Pyjamas* (1985) and *Wetherby* (1985). As Myer explained, 'slowly but surely I started placing this film. I kept dragging it everywhere and screening it and it kept doing sales ... I did Milan, Berlin and I also went to Cannes' (Myer, 2013). This steadily expanding international exposure combined with the mounting critical acclaim proved to be a major breakthrough for Film on Four's reputation. As Myer explained:

Once you have something that appears in major film festivals, some people are going to want to buy it from you. Your whole credibility changes, you're somebody

they're not going to want to miss when they're at a market ... Film distribution makes the film production business look completely kosher. Film distribution is really a nightmare of people doing nothing but suing each other and hoping that they won't have to pay. So, I learned on the job, and I learned that there are also some good people doing film festivals (Myer, 2013).

For Christine Geraghty, the importance of *My Beautiful Laundrette* lies in its status as a 'cross over' film, crossing from television to the cinema and from a niche market to a popular audience (2005, 5). By March 1986, 15 prints of *My Beautiful Laundrette* were in circulation at art-house cinemas across the UK, with a mounting box-office in excess of £500,000 (Screen Int'l, 1986, 38). The exposure *My Beautiful Laundrette* had received from film festivals and international distribution subsequently led to awards from the New York Film Critics Circle and the National Society of Film Critics as well as an Academy Award nomination for Kureishi's screenplay. The special status afforded to *Laundrette* in establishing the Film Four brand was echoed by Jeremy Isaacs, who later described it as 'the archetypal Film on Four' (1989, 160). The film's elevated position within Channel 4's canon is perhaps less surprising when the film's route to the screen is considered: Kureishi's screenplay was commissioned in-house, the entire production budget was supplied in-house, and the film's distribution was arranged in-house. Indeed, in a candid moment some years later Radclyffe would concede, 'we got a lot of creative credit for that film which we honestly didn't deserve' (Moir, 1993, 8).

The success which *My Beautiful Laundrette* enjoyed provided Bevan and Radclyffe with an early opportunity to observe at close quarters how the independent film industry worked. Indeed, linking funding to production and production to distribution proved to be the model which the company pursued for the remainder of the 1980s. At Working Title, it quickly became clear that Bevan had just the kind of entrepreneurial character that could thrive in Thatcher's Britain. Despite the ostensible meeting of minds between Channel 4 and Working Title, he offered a largely antithetical account of the broadcaster's cultural and economic values in a 1985 article provocatively entitled 'Charity or Business?'. Written in the form of a manifesto, it is worth quoting at length, not least because it prefigures Working Title's later trajectory under his leadership. Having identified the role of a British-based producer as providing a visible platform for native talent, the 27 year old Bevan went on to suggest:

The next question must be what should producers be doing in order to provide for and guide this talent into film production? They should start by ensuring that we are regarded as a business rather than a charity. Film production is too readily associated with people bemoaning the fact that government or taxation incentives

are being removed. We must show an optimistic and healthy structure of film production so that the business of filmmaking can attract the financial stimulus it needs.

In order to achieve a healthy business, producers should be guiding the creativity in the film world into making films that are of a broad interest and entertaining. It should be spelt out that filmmaking, because of its inherent expense, has to appeal to a wide audience. If there is a statement to be made of limited appeal then writing a book or painting a picture costs a great deal less. This need not mean that the product is overtly 'commercial' – the beauty of film production is that the canvas is extremely broad.

In order to justify finance for films at the moment it is necessary that they should cross over to the US. This guarantee of American distribution is sufficient in the eyes of many to make a film commercially viable. If *My Beautiful Laundrette*, a film about a gay Pakistani laundrette owner, can find US distribution the area for commercial success is very wide.

Existing sources of finance must be provided with product which is at least going to make its money back. Further to this, if we are to attract healthy and realistic production investment from the city then we must prove that we are in the business of film – which, like any other business, means making a profit (Bevan, 1985, 32).

By nailing his colours to the mast in such a public way, Bevan appeared to be biting the hand that had fed Working Title until that point. His declared prioritisation of films which cater for 'broad interest' and 'appeal to a wide audience' sits uneasily next to the example of *My Beautiful Laundrette* and the ethos of Channel 4 as an institution. There is, of course, an underlying irony in the disjuncture between the subtle critique of Thatcherism expressed in *My Beautiful Laundrette* on the one hand, and Bevan's support for Thatcher's free-market on the other. Despite the film's critical and commercial success on the art-house circuit, the production was entirely reliant on public funds which were guided by non-profit and public-service mandates. The relationship between Britain's emerging social art cinema and Working Title was, for Bevan, largely based on accepting the practical possibilities of producing independent cinema within a low-budget industry dominated by Channel 4. As he recalled:

I knew that I was making films, and knew that I was making films with people that I found interesting and telling stories that I found interesting ... We were pretty apolitical, but nobody liked Thatcher very much. There was rub in the air and there was change afoot, there was no doubt about that, but when you're in the middle of something you don't take too much time to consider it ... It just so happens that the *Laundrette* was the film that came out of that era which happens to be the one that now historically represents that era (Bevan, 2013).

Bevan's latent desire to work on films of genuinely broad appeal would not begin to take shape until the end of the decade. The breakthrough success of *My Beautiful Laundrette* was, however, the starting point of a sustained period of activity for Working Title predicated largely on the wider ascent of Channel 4. Within a week of *My Beautiful Laundrette's* appearance at the Edinburgh Film Festival, Radclyffe reunited with Derek Jarman to begin production on *Caravaggio*. The director had attempted to raise the funds for *Caravaggio* since the late 1970s without success. Significantly, *Caravaggio* was also not a film produced directly by Working Title, and was instead prefaced by the BFI logo, with only a note in the closing credits reading 'With Thanks to Working Title'. Indeed, the film remained firmly in the territory of publically funded art cinema with its £475,000 budget coming from only two sources - £250,000 from Channel 4 and £225,000 from the BFI Production Board (Pym, 1992, 130).

Caravaggio is a semi-fictionalised retelling of the Baroque painter's life, infused with many of Jarman's preoccupations including avant-garde aesthetics and sexual identity. Without the budget to recreate 16th and 17th century Italy, *Caravaggio* is filmed entirely within the confines of a sparse studio sets arranged with anachronistic props and artificial light. Caravaggio (Dexter Fletcher/Nigel Terry) is followed through his youth as a street painter and his artistic development under the patronage of Cardinal Del Monte (Michael Gough). A bi-sexual love triangle evolves between Caravaggio, Ranuccio (Sean Bean) and Lena (Tilda Swinton), two impoverished street workers he employs as models. The arrangement erupts as Ranuccio murders Lena in a fit of jealousy. Upon his admission of guilt, Caravaggio avenges Lena's death by killing Runuccio. Accused of both homosexual acts and murder, Caravaggio flees Rome to live out his remaining years as a fugitive. The film enhanced Jarman's reputation as a leading figure in 'queer' cinema and served as an aesthetic and narrative blueprint to which he would return in a later Working Title film, *Edward II* (1991).

Bevan's developing commercial instincts also resulted in a hiatus from Working Title during which he produced *Personal Services* (1987) for Zenith Entertainment. Zenith had been established in 1984 by Charles Denton and Margaret Matheson as a television and film production subsidiary of Central Independent Television, the ITV franchise holder for the Midlands. 'Tim and Sarah were obviously flavour of the month after *My Beautiful Laundrette*', Matheson explained. 'They were movers and shakers, they would have probably made it their business to meet me because we [Zenith] were thought of as money, we were money' (Matheson, 2013). While Zenith had followed in the wake of

independent production companies clamouring for commissions at Channel 4, their alignment with Central afforded the company a greater degree of stability than most of their contemporaries. An on-going output deal with Central guaranteed the new subsidiary ten hours of programming a year, which included the long-running *Inspector Morse* (1987-2000). Crucially, the fees from Zenith's television output provided the company's overhead at their offices on Great Titchfield Street. The decision to set up Zenith as 'independent' from Central was, according to Matheson, both pragmatic and strategic:

By making television and, of course, feature film, through a company which was not the main broadcast company, you could avail yourself of infinitely more suitable union agreements for production purposes. The second and more governing reason for forming Zenith was that there was a tax structure whereby ITV companies paid a levy on profits, but some income was excluded from that calculation. The excluded income was essentially overseas pre-sales, so you could structure an agreement whereby you maximised the overseas pre-sale element of a project, thereby saving a significant amount of levy and making production good value for money (Matheson, 2013).

Working from a commercial model which prioritised international sales positioned Zenith at a tangent to the non-profit, public service and domestically focussed remit of Channel 4. Rather, the commissioning process at Zenith was based on a combination of personal and commercial factors. As Matheson recalled, 'It was partly collaborators that I either knew or had already worked with, like David Leland and Stephen Frears, it was partly the kind of things I liked and it was partly what the market would bear' (Matheson, 2013). Prior to the establishment of Zenith, Matheson had been Controller of Programmes at Central. One of her most frequent collaborators during the early 1980s was David Leland, the writer of a quartet of acclaimed made-for-television films which included *Made in Britain* (1982), *Birth of a Nation* (1983), *Flying into the Wind* (1983) and *R.H.I.N.O* (1983). Like much of Leland's early work, the quartet dealt with social and political issues, particularly the effects of poverty, education, violence and crime on young people. In a lateral move, Matheson had commissioned Leland to write *Personal Services* (1986), a film inspired by the later life of Cynthia Payne, Britain's most notorious brothel owner. Struggling with the screenplay, Leland went on to produce a second screenplay based on Payne's earlier life called *Wish You Were Here*, before submitting the original commission.

While the script for *Wish You Were Here* collected dust in Zenith's office, *Personal Services* was put into production. The inherently salacious nature of the material combined

with its often comedic tone placed it partially within the popular genre boundary of the sex comedy. Many of the more sobering representations of life within the sex industry, however, served to temper this impulse. The widespread media coverage of Payne's real life activities during the 1970s and 1980s lent the project a 'pre-sold' status. The project had a timely blend of originality and potential cross-over commercial appeal for British Screen, and became the first film in which the new company made a substantial investment. Almost half of the £2m budget came from British Screen, a figure which represented the single largest commitment from its first £3m annual budget (North, 1986, 10). To complete the funding package, Zenith had appointed the film sales agency, Gavin Film, to presell the international rights to their slate which also included *Sid and Nancy* (1986) and *Prick up Your Ears* (1986) (Screen Int'l, 1985b, 1). Thus, after just 18 months in business, Bevan and Radclyffe had worked with Channel 4, the BFI Production Board and British Screen: in sum, every British institution involved in state-supported filmmaking. As Tony Smith, the director of the BFI, observed, the on-going debates about the balance of commercial and public funding within the independent sector, and its impact on creative practice, were misleading:

Is Channel 4 by virtue of its decision at Board level to allocate some of its really rather uncommercial money, IBA money in fact, to filmmaking, taking a 'commercial' decision or a 'subsidy' decision? ... All this talk about the market place is really camouflage for various forms of cross subsidy and, in the case of television, various forms of direct subsidy. We are all in the subsidy business. Furthermore, what people completely fail to understand is that the bigger and shinier full length features often consume less public money than the highly experimental films because they have far greater access to co-production, pre-finance and pre-purchase monies (Smith quoted in Petley, 1985b, 17).

By the mid-1980s it was typical for Channel 4 to contribute only a proportion of the necessary finance to produce a given film. This strategy allowed the broadcaster to spread its Film on Four budget across a greater number of films but also stimulate entrepreneurialism by making co-financing a necessary feature of most productions. The commissioning decisions which David Rose and his team made were subsequently routed through the channel's acquisitions and sales departments. Thus, the level of financial commitment to a given film reflected the combination of media platforms (television, video and cinema) and territories for which rights were acquired and/or the level of equity which was invested. While Channel 4 prioritised the acquisition of domestic television rights which could be exploited directly during its scheduled Film on Four seasons, any additional

rights which were purchased could be sold to third parties via Film Four International or Channel Four International (*Producer*, 1988, 25).

With *Caravaggio* and *Personal Services* in production through the BFI and Zenith respectively, Working Title began tentatively to expand. The administrative workload of filmmaking had begun to pile up as the number of projects in development began to multiply and finance had to be sought from an increasing range of places. Within the close-knit world of the British film industry it was not long before one association led to another. Nic Roeg had known Tim Bevan since the early days of *Aldabra* and had suggested that he make contact with Graham Bradstreet, an accountant with whom he had recently worked. Bradstreet had settled in London in 1977, having moved from his native New Zealand to take a position at KMG, the forerunner to multinational professional services company, KPMG. Embracing the entrepreneurial spirit of the 1980s, he had established his own accountancy practice in 1983. Working from a base in the Home Counties, he became involved in the film industry by happenstance. One of his clients was employed as a production co-ordinator by UBA, which was about to embark on its second feature film, *Turtle Diary* (1985). Bradstreet was drafted in when the film's original accountant had been dismissed and seized the opportunity to begin learning about the particulars of accountancy within the film industry. His association with UBA led to his involvement in raising finance for the company's next film, *Castaway* (1986), which Roeg was scheduled to direct.

With Roeg's recommendation, Bevan sought out Bradstreet as someone who might be able to assist Working Title with financial management. 'I got a call out of the blue from Tim, along the lines of, "I gather you're an accountant, we should meet". "Ok, when?" and that was it', Bradstreet recalled. 'I met Tim, we had a chat. Over a period of a couple of months we met several times and in the end he said, I think you should meet my partner' (Bradstreet, 2013). Bevan, Bradstreet and Radclyffe gelled quickly and in July 1986 a new company, Working Title Films Ltd., was incorporated. Each assumed a directorship at board level and an even one third stake of equity in the company, which now comprised two producers and a finance director. 'It proved the logic that one plus one plus one, made more than three. Each of Tim and Sarah and I had particular skills that the others didn't have', Bradstreet explained. 'We all specialised in what we did best and that's what made it work' (Bradstreet, 2013).

The first film to go into production through the new company was *Wish You Were Here* in September 1986. Like *Personal Services*, the film had been developed at Zenith,

which contributed 25 percent of the budget, with the remaining 75 percent of its £1,132,000 budget coming from Channel 4 (Pym, 1992, 205). This time, however, the film would be credited as a co-production between the two companies, with Radclyffe assuming duties as producer. As Matheson explained, 'it seemed quite wrong for people in fully paid jobs to be credited. I'm not personally credited on most of those Zenith films ... I was both happy and keen to credit Working Title because they were clearly a growing force and credits helped them' (Matheson, 2013). *Wish You Were Here* offered a semi-fictionalised portrait of Cynthia Payne as Lynda (Emily Lloyd), a teenage girl growing up in a sedate seaside town during the 1950s. Mixing elements of social and magical realism, Lynda's failure at a series of menial jobs and boredom with her surroundings is counterbalanced by her feisty and precocious nature. Her desire to experience new things in life leads to a fling with Eric (Tom Bell), a middle aged friend of her father. Falling pregnant, Lynda decides to defy her stiff and repressed milieu by keeping her baby and forging ahead with her own life.

Working Title's office on Great Russell Street was soon traded for larger premises on Livonia Street, an unassuming alley jutting off Berwick Street in the heart of Soho. Realising that filmmaking was a lonely and potentially defeatist enterprise, Bevan, Bradstreet and Radclyffe cultivated a lively and collective ethos. The long corridor which connected a series of large offices to a communal kitchen promoted a regular and informal exchange of ideas and information. There was a deliberate blurring of the boundary between employees and those given free desk space to develop projects which might, in time, add to the Working Title slate. The four films which Bevan and Radclyffe had produced by the summer of 1986 – *My Beautiful Laundrette*, *Caravaggio*, *Personal Services* and *Wish You Were Here* – had all initially been developed by others. Working Title's success in its first two years of existence thus owed a great deal to Radclyffe and Bevan's ability to successfully align their company with projects already in development within the wider industry. The barrier to becoming a fully-fledged production company capable of bringing the full repertoire of development and production functions in-house was, however, within touching distance. Since his arrival at Working Title, Bradstreet had made it his business to raise a development fund, setting up numerous meetings with potential investors in his first six months. As he recalled:

We had a pretty good business plan, we had a pretty good track record and we needed development money. Tim and Sarah and I took the view that we wanted to own the projects that we had going forward. Previously they had pretty much

worked as guns for hire on projects. We wanted to own the projects ourselves, develop them ourselves and fund them ourselves. That was a real seed change ... It was immediately post-Goldcrest so it wasn't easy to raise money ... We tried everything from advertising companies, to private individuals, to corporates, to people who had previously invested in Goldcrest and other film companies. We had spoken to our lawyers, who were then Marriott Harrison and, in fact, it was through Marriott Harrison that we found the Frye brothers (Bradstreet, 2013).

The Frye brothers were independently wealthy businessmen who had an interest in filmmaking. The result was the incorporation of a sister company, Working Title (Developments) Ltd., which was capitalised with £250,000 in August 1986. 'They [the Frye brothers] had a right to invest in any film we were developing', Bradstreet explained. 'That company was repaid on the first day of principal photography with a premium on the amount of development money that had been spent on that production and a back-end net profit position in the movie' (Bradstreet, 2013b). The capital now at Working Title's disposal would go some way to underpinning their development and production activities in the years to come. The first opportunity to develop a film in-house came with the arrival of Kureishi's next script, *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*, in November 1986.

As Bradstreet explained, the two months which it took to raise production finance for the film proved to be an exceptionally short period of time, which was not repeated during Working Title's years as an independent. The speed with which the deal was put together was at least partly due to the established critical acclaim and commercial success of *My Beautiful Laundrette*. Working Title offered investors the same creative package by once more teaming Kureishi with Frears. The production also represented Working Title's first tentative steps towards the strategy of economic transnationalism, since securing US pre-sales proved to be crucial in setting up the financing of the film. Bradstreet provided a blow-by-blow account of the fundraising in a 1988 trade press article. The process began with the appointment of an independent sales agent, Gavin Film, which had previously worked on *Personal Services*. The article is worth quoting at length because it provides a unique insight into the realities of independent production during the 1980s:

Gavin Film was retained to sell North American and foreign territories, and made initial contacts in the US with several mini-major distributors. Bevan immediately flew to follow up and concluded the sale to Cinecom of all North American rights for an advance of \$1.1 million, supported by a letter of credit payable upon delivery of the film. The dollar then stood 1.56 to the pound, realising £705,000 (\$1.3 million) on paper. Channel 4, which had fully funded *Laundrette*, was offered a stake and committed a total of £475,000 (\$890,500) split between licence fee and

equity. The monies would be payable in accordance with cash-flow requirements, with the equity recoupable from foreign sales.

British Screen Finance was then approached. Simon Relph was keen to be involved and agreed to guarantee the balance of £325,000 (\$609,300), such guarantee being discharged in second position, behind banking fees and interest but prior to Channel 4's equity recoupment. He was effectively providing security to enable foreign sales estimates to be banked. Paper funding now fully supported the budget. While the funding was being finalised, crewing had begun. By this stage only a very small portion had been contributed by way of equity and, accordingly, we had indeed retained a disproportionately significant level of profit participation.

Continuing the philosophy of extending the *Laundrette* spirit, all members of the crew were offered profit participation points. Each, without exception, accepted. *Sammy and Rosie* was now genuinely a product of all those involved, with everyone participating in its potential success. The commitment was intense. The problem was that, of the £1.5 million (\$2.8 million) paper funding, only £475,000 (£890,500) [from Channel 4] was being contributed in cash. A bank was required to cash flow the other contracts and guarantees. Four merchant banks were approached, with varying amounts of pounds of flesh required to convince them to bank the paper.

Finally, through a bizarre series of events, we contacted Alexander Gelderman at Pierson, Heldring and Pierson. Within 24 hours, Bevan and I were in pinstripes at a rather noble bank in Amsterdam. Gelderman understood the deal we were trying to achieve – minimal bank fees and interest, while taking advantage of the lower interest rates in the US, and without disproportionate security of profit participation. He was very happy to loan against the Cinecom letter of credit and further agreed that, given the weakening of the dollar, we should sell the \$1.1 million under a forward contract. That saved us £87,000 (\$163,000) as the letter of credit was drawn upon on delivery of the film, by which time the dollar had weakened to 1.78 so we also took advantage of the lower US investment rates. He was similarly happy to loan against foreign sales estimates, with the British Screen guarantee as security.

By January, the budget was now fully cash-funded against an agreed cash flow draw down. The original sense of commitment had enabled the film to be funded and made. Whether or not one likes the finished product (we do) the intensity of that commitment derived from the whole production and creative team can be appreciated on the screen (Bradstreet, 1988, 50).

Sammy and Rosie Get Laid reprised much of the thematic ground covered in *My Beautiful Laundrette*, including its depiction of contemporary London as the site of antagonism along the lines of social class, poverty and ethnicity. The film begins with a voice over of Margaret Thatcher praising the nation's newly found prosperity before an armed police unit enter a house, killing the mother of a black man they are pursuing. The act appears to provoke a series of urban riots which underscore the rest of the film. Sammy (Ayub Khan-Din) and Rosie (Frances Barber) are a bohemian couple who lead a relatively prosperous life surrounded by an ethnically and sexually diverse group of friends. Their life is complicated, however, by the arrival of Sammy's father, Raffi (Shashi Kapoor), a politician

from an unidentified Asian country. While Sammy, Rosie and Rafi pursue various lovers, Raffi is haunted by an apparition as revelations about his corrupt and abusive career in politics comes to light. The film presents a vision of London caught between the extreme liberalism of Sammy and Rosie's life and the authoritarian state which appears to suppress the freedoms of those lacking the same class position.

Raising the production finance for *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* demonstrated not only the continued importance of Channel 4 and British Screen to Working Title's films but, moreover, the vital importance of securing a US presale. The steadily growing interest in British independent cinema in the US was reflective of the health of the independent industry on the other side of the Atlantic. The major studios had, it seemed, turned towards big budget blockbusters, leaving a gap in the market for smaller, more serious and risky films. An unprecedented number of 'mini-major' independents involved in production and distribution – Miramax, Cinecom Pictures, Skouras Pictures, Atlantic Entertainment, Island Pictures, Orion Classics and Vestron Pictures – were beginning to fill the vacuum with 'quality cinema', a term intended to differentiate their product from the limited appeal stigma of 'art' films (Harmetz, 1987). The limitations of domestically available finance meant that looking towards independent US distributors for pre-sale investments became an increasingly common and, in most cases, vital part of the funding process. As Radclyffe explained in a 1988 interview, attempting to deal with the major Hollywood studios had proven futile as any production budget below \$5m was automatically considered 'television material'. Indeed, the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) estimated that the average studio film cost \$16 million in 1986 and typically required a further \$7 million for marketing (Harmetz, 1987). The scale and subject matter of Working Title's output was, however, better suited to the new breed of US distributors working below the radar of Hollywood. As Radclyffe explained:

There has grown up in the States a whole collection of smaller distribution companies or mini-majors as they are known ... who know how to handle and place our sort of films and how to distribute them. Whereas, if we'd just been left dealing with the majors there is a very large risk that if they don't angle it right, if it doesn't work to begin with, if they open it too wide, they will pull it after a couple of weeks ... If you are in with the big companies, you don't have a personal relationship with the people who are handling the project, so you just don't have any control over the film's future. (Radclyffe, 1988)

Developing this understanding of the American market and its potential for British-based producers was an important part of the learning process for Working Title. Distribution in the UK, on the other hand was inevitably built on relationships much closer

to home. By the mid-1980s the largest and most diversified of all the independents was Palace. Co-owned by Nik Powell and Steve Woolley, the company was based in Wardour Mews, just a stone's throw from Working Title's offices in Livonia Street. Under Powell and Woolley's leadership, a group of companies, including Palace Video, Palace Pictures and Palace Productions, evolved to cover the bases of video distribution, theatrical distribution and film production. By the mid-1980s, Palace Pictures had a growing reputation for distributing European and American art-house films, including titles like *Querelle* (1982), *Diva* (1983), *Blood Simple* (1984) and *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1985), as well as independently produced horror films like *Evil Dead* (1983) and *Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984). As Paul Webster, Palace's Head of Theatrical Distribution explained, 'we were the first [UK] company to actively pre-buy at an early stage, so Tim or Graham would be talking to us and we'd be reading the scripts'. While Palace negotiated the UK theatrical and video rights for *Wish You Were Here* and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* with Film Four International directly, their relationship with Working Title would resume at the point of distribution and marketing. 'With all filmmakers our credo was that you involve the filmmaker as much as they wanted', Webster recalled. 'We had very clear ideas and we were market leaders at the time in terms of trying out new, innovative stuff in the market place, so people would trust us but we always involved the filmmakers' (Webster, 2013).

The mainstream exhibition sector in Britain was, however, resolutely opposed to showing low-budget British films which offered little box-office potential compared to the endless stream of Hollywood product. In 1985, for example, the two largest circuits were still owned and controlled by Rank and EMI (later Cannon), which respectively operated 76 and 115 cinemas, while the smaller chains, Cannon-Classic and Star Group, operated 54 and 40 cinemas respectively. In turn, the supply of films to these circuits was dominated by just three distribution consortia representing the interests of the major Hollywood studios – United International Pictures (Paramount, Universal and MGM/UA), UK Film Distributors (Fox and Disney) and Columbia-EMI-Warner (Warner and Columbia). Outside the established circuits, London was home to 22 independent cinemas, most of which were attached to independent distribution companies (Tait, 1985, 76-7), as well as several others dotted around the country, especially the BFI-supported Regional Film Theatres. The ambition which Palace and Working Title had for their films would not, however, be restricted to marginal venues. As Webster explained:

We made it one of the central tenets of what we did to work within the existing structures. The independent cinema circuit, as such, didn't really exist. There was

the Curzon Mayfair, there were the Academy cinemas on Oxford Street, a few independents in London – Phoenix East Finchley, Screen on the Green, Screen on the Hill – but outside of London it was basically the Regional Film Theatres, so you had to work with the main chains ... It was our idea to do a belt and braces, root and branch approach. We would work very assiduously to court the attentions and affections of the cinema bookers (Webster, 2013).

Working Title's access to the international market was mediated through various sales agents who typically conducted their business at the major film markets of the calendar. The three 'must attend' markets were considered the Los Angeles-based American Film Market (AFM) in February, the Cannes Film Market in May and the Milan-based MIFED market in October. The business conducted on behalf of Working Title at the 1987 Cannes Film Market, for instance, not only concluded the sales process for films which had already been produced but also initiated presales for those in development. Thus Gavin Film completed international sales on *Personal Services*, which was already on theatrical release in the UK, and began international presales on *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*, which was in post-production (Screen Int'l, 1987a, 61). Simultaneously, Film Four International (FFI) sold the US distribution rights to *Wish You Were Here* to Atlantic Entertainment for a figure reported to be the largest in Channel 4's history. As part of a separate deal, the US distributor also agreed a two picture co-production deal with British Screen which included US distribution and a significant equity stake in *A World Apart*, a film which Working Title had had in development since the previous summer (Screen Int'l, 1987b, 2).

The 1987 Cannes Film Festival proved to be a moment of affirmation for the Film on Four project at large. FFI had *Wish You Were Here* and *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (1987) in the Director's Fortnight and *A Month in the Country* (1987) in the Un Certain Regard competition. Simultaneously, Gavin Film was selling *Prick Up Your Ears* (1987) and *The Belly of the Architect* (1987), two films in competition for the Palme d'Or which also had financial input from Channel 4. This success was further underlined when David Rose received the Roberto Rossellini Award for his contribution to cinema at the climax of the festival. The nature of Film on Four's contribution to British cinema was, of course, guided by a public service remit which encouraged innovation in content and form, rather than commercial success. Nonetheless, in the four years since its establishment FFI had sold 30 of Channel 4's films internationally, about 25 per cent of the total output. While FFI's sales were minute by Hollywood standards, the company doubled its revenue every year, reaching £6 million in sales by the close of 1987 (Henry, 1987, 24)

Operating as an independent production company during the 1980s meant working within tight financial parameters. The ability to do so consistently was, of course, paramount for the survival of an independent with few underlying assets. Out of necessity, filmmaking at Working Title took on cultural and economic dimensions which were actively promoted by the company's directors and at the very least accepted by its collaborators. 'I think it is incredibly important that budgets should be fair with no producers, directors or stars taking vast amounts off the top' Radclyffe explained at the time. 'I am quite happy for any of the crew to see my budget at any stage. It is usually quite a useful weapon. It shuts them up if you can prove to them that you are making far less than they are' (quoted in Byrnes, 1988). As she pointed out elsewhere:

Our above-the-line costs are considerably lower than many companies. Directors, writers and actors would certainly agree with this. It all comes back down to the script. If the script is good enough, people will want to work on it. If you don't believe in the script then it's very hard to persuade people to work on it for less than the normal rate ... If it's a director's first film, their friends in the industry will charge far less. There's a limit to the amount of money you can raise and technicians are aware of that ... As often as possible we try to compensate our heads of department or people with a lot of creative involvement with profit participation because there is some chance of seeing it back (Radclyffe quoted in Pearson, 1988, 22).

The flexibility which Channel 4 was able to wield in funding feature films was a perpetual problem for the independent production companies which supplied the broadcaster. The Channel commissioned on a 'cost-plus' basis which entailed calculating the producer's fee based on a percentage of the total production budget. A sliding scale permitted fees of 25 per cent on projects with budgets of £50,000 or under, for example, while projects budgeted between £500,000 and £1 million were eligible for a fee of just 12.5 per cent (*Producer*, 1988, 25). The majority of Working Title's Channel 4 funded films, however, had budgets in excess of £1 million, a factor which affected the company's cut accordingly. The preselling of distribution rights as a means of financing production also limited the potential for any further remuneration based on box-office performance. For example, after fundraising was complete, Working Title retained a net profit share of only five per cent for *My Beautiful Laundrette*, and four per cent for *Wish You Were Here*. In each case recoupment typically occurred only when the original distribution contracts had lapsed, a term which could be as much as 10 years (PolyGram, 1995). As Bevan explained:

On those early films you'd start at 10 per cent but get whittled down to five by the

time you'd got it made. You'd try to run your business off the budget so that all these lovely people you'd have around the place, you'd make one of them the assistant accountant, you'd make another one of them assistant production manager ... It was very much a hand to mouth existence, basically. One of the problems in that period of time was that we had to be in production all the time in order to stay afloat. We were trying to finance a little bit of development and that's why we kept the music video business going because we were robbing that to pay for our film overhead. That classic independent model is not a very good one, is the long and short of it (Bevan, 2013).

The first film to push Working Title's financial and logistical capacities to the limit was *A World Apart*. The screenplay was an anti-apartheid drama written by Shawn Slovo during her time at the National Film and Television School. The film turned into a passion project for Radclyffe, who won over both Slovo and Chris Menges, an Academy Award winning cinematographer who would make his directorial debut with the film. For the first time Working Title were faced with the prospect of producing a film with a foreign setting and location, a Hollywood star in the form of Barbara Hershey and a projected budget over £2 million. The project had been in various stages of development and pre-production until principal photography commenced in Zimbabwe in June 1987. As they were inclined to do, Channel 4 committed the smallest amount of finance to the projects it deemed to have the greatest prospect for co-investment. In the case of *A World Apart*, this amounted to the purchase of the television rights for £275,000, approximately 10 per cent of the £2,675,000 budget (Pym, 1992, 206). The majority of the remaining finance came from a presale to the US distributor Atlantic Entertainment for £1,320,000, £500,000 from British Screen and finally a further £500,000 from private investors in Zimbabwe (Romer, 1992, 71-2).

A World Apart centres on the political and personal life of Diana Roth (Hershey) following the exile of her husband, Gus (Jeroen Krabbe) for his membership of the South African Communist Party. In particular, the film centres on the relationship between Diana and her teenage daughter, Molly (Jodhi May). As Diana pursues the political ambitions of her absent husband, Molly can only see the impact of her actions on their otherwise comfortable home life in 1960s suburban Johannesburg. A family crisis ensues when First is arrested for treason by the South African government, effectively leaving Molly and her siblings orphans. As Diana's activities are gradually understood by Molly, however, she ultimately recognises their importance and offers her support. The film is a thinly veiled autobiographical drama about Slovo's own mother, the anti-apartheid activist Ruth First. Released several years before the end of apartheid, the film also served as a reminder of

the South Africa's ongoing struggles and proved to be a critical hit, winning the Grand Prix award upon its premiere at the Cannes Film Festival in May 1988.

Given the success of Working Title's association with Channel 4 and the company's prominence as a source of production finance, it is unsurprising that Bevan and Radclyffe often aligned their creative ethos with that of Channel 4 during the 1980s. Bevan, for example, declared his commitment to 'socio-economic and political movies with a strong narrative' (Pearson, 1988, 23), while the trade press summarised the company's remit as the production of 'British films with new and radical directors who will take up themes, treatments and acting that are on the edge of film convention' (Mackie, 1986, 22). This image of the company as innovative, left-leaning, low-budget, oppositional and committed was developed on the back of the creative wave which Channel 4 inspired while also contributing to its very substance. The following section examines Working Title's output during its first four years as an independent in the context of Channel 4's contribution to British cinema. Central to this discussion is Christopher Williams' concept of 'social art cinema' (1996).

Working Title Films and Social Art Cinema

In his examination of the output of Film on Four during the 1980s, Williams suggests that Channel 4 was central to the development of an art cinema in Britain which was, for the first time, prominent enough to be acknowledged as such. More specifically, he describes Channel 4's contribution to British cinema as 'social art cinema'. For Williams, this particular manifestation demonstrates many of the tropes of European art cinema – 'individual identity, sexuality, psychological complexity, anomie, episodicness, interiority, ambiguity, style' – combined with other prominent themes in British cinema, including the depiction of social issues and the use of realism as a representational mode (1996, 198-200). By the end of the decade, Working Title had earned a position at the forefront of this wave of creativity by working largely within a filmmaking landscape defined by the influence of Channel 4 and, to a lesser extent, its public sector contemporaries. Table 1 lists the six feature films which were produced by Working Title between 1984 and the spring of 1988 which contributed to the burgeoning social art cinema.

Table 1 – Working Title’s ‘social art cinema’ output 1985-1988

Title	Year	UK Funding	US Distribution	UK Distribution	Intl. Sales
<i>My Beautiful Laundrette</i>	1985	Channel 4	Orion Classics	Mainline	Film Four Intl.
<i>Caravaggio</i>	1986	Channel 4 / BFI	Cinevista	BFI	BFI
<i>Personal Services</i>	1987	British Screen / Zenith	Vestron	UIP	Gavin Film
<i>Wish You Were Here</i>	1987	Channel 4 / Zenith	Atlantic Releasing	Palace	Film Four Intl.
<i>Sammy and Rosie Get Laid</i>	1987	Channel 4 / British Screen	Cinecom	Palace	Gavin Film
<i>A World Apart</i>	1988	Channel 4 / British Screen	Atlantic Releasing	Palace	The Sales Company

By the summer of 1988, Working Title was at the vanguard of social art cinema. If the work of art is to inspire profound emotional responses, then Britain’s nascent social art cinema was succeeding in divergent ways. The most notorious and barbed criticism came from Norman Stone, a professor of history at Oxford University and sometime columnist for *The Times*. Pointing to the Channel 4-funded work of Jarman and Kureishi as examples of a ‘worthless and insulting’ movement, Stone went on to claim:

Their visual world has been dominated by a left-wing orthodoxy: the done thing is to run down Mrs Thatcher, to assume that capitalism is parasitism, that the established order in this country is imperialist, racist, profiteering, oppressive to women and other minorities... It is paranoia bred of isolation from the real market. Semi-educated ambitious mediocrities over-competing in a declining market, suffering from bouts of muddled creativity, waiting in line to catch public or semi-public money while dreaming of revolting sensationalism (Stone, 1988, 1-2)

The article prompted a spat in the broadsheet press in the weeks that followed, including personal responses from both Jarman and Kureishi castigating Stone’s outburst as ill-informed, reductive and riddled with populist nostalgia for a bygone golden age of British cinema (Kureishi, 1988; Jarman, 1988). Stone’s critique of social art cinema is, of course, intimately wed to the way in which the nation is represented, with some representations praised as desirable, while others are castigated as undesirable. In his assessment of British cinema during the 1980s, Thomas Elsaesser draws a similar parallel by suggesting that ‘we must differentiate between the projection of what one could call a “social imaginary” of Britain and the projection of “national imaginary”, one for “us” and one for “them”’ (2006, 50). For Elsaesser, there is an outward and inward looking binary within British cinema which equates to an ‘official cinema’ populated by myth – ‘home counties, country house,

public school, sports, white flannel, rules and games, Edwardian England, Decline of Empire, Privilege and Treason; male bonding female hysteria' and an 'unofficial cinema' populated with 'counter myths' – 'Scotland, Liverpool, London; dockland, clubland, disco, football, punk, race riots, National Front; working class males, violent and articulate; working class-women, sexy and confident' (2006,54). Paradoxically, the 'unofficial' social art cinema of the 1980s was the result of a largely state supported film industry during a period in which the political zeitgeist headed in the opposite direction. Considering the situation, John Caughie explained:

The paradox is that a Channel which was seen as unruly, sexually licentious, and unorthodox almost to the point of subversion introduced an economic system that became the orthodoxy. The answer to the paradox is that while Channel 4 may have been anathema to conservative ideologists it was music to the ears of conservative market-oriented economists. What it did was to transform unruly film producers into small business men and women, sensitive to the market and responsive to its conditions. If the market was strong production could expand; if it was weak, Channel 4 could cut its commissions and the sector would retract (Caughie, 1997, 35).

The social art cinema which Working Title produced was markedly different in form, content and market orientation to Hollywood cinema and, by extension, Transatlantic British Cinema. In many ways the tenets of Transatlantic British Cinema – economic, globalising and affinitive transnationalism – are diametrically opposed impulses to those embodied by social art cinema. While collaboration with US-based distribution companies represents a form of economic transnationalism with a conspicuously transatlantic orientation, Working Title's collaborators were also independent companies which sought a niche, rather than mass audience. Working Title's output also eschewed globalising transnationalism by working against the conventions of popular genres, featuring actors who were typically not stars and working within a budget range ensured production values well below Hollywood standards. Finally, Working Title's early films also avoided the strategy of affinitive transnationalism by offering a range of representations of Britain and Britishness which are far removed from the archetypes or stereotypes of Transatlantic British Cinema.

PolyGram's New Business Division, Working Title Television and the emergence of a prototype Transatlantic British Cinema

Working Title's first step away from the vagaries of independent production began with a chance encounter between Tim Bevan and Michael Kuhn at LA's Sunset Marquis Hotel in early 1988. At the time, Kuhn was Senior Vice President at PolyGram, and had recently been appointed CEO and President of the company's New Business Division. The division had been created the previous year to provide a vehicle through which PolyGram could tentatively explore the potential for diversification into filmed entertainment. Kuhn had been at a meeting with Steve Golin and Sigurjon 'Joni' Sighvatsson, the directors of the LA-based music video production company, Propaganda Films. Kuhn's first substantial investment on behalf of the New Business Division was a 49 per cent interest in Propaganda in January of that year, worth \$3.25 million (Kuhn, 2002, 37). On paper, Propaganda's flourishing success as a producer of music videos represented a natural fit with PolyGram's existing business interests. Like Kuhn, however, Propaganda were more interested in the feature film business and were midway through producing a slate which consisted of *The Blue Iguana* (1988), *Fear, Anxiety and Depression* (1989) and *Kill Me Again* (1989). As it turned out, one of the company's principal assets was an impressive roster of talented young directors including David Fincher, Dominic Sena, Michael Bay and Spike Jonze, who would continue their affiliation with Propaganda by directing feature films in the years to come.

The day after meeting in LA, Bevan and Kuhn boarded the same flight back to London and discussed the ambitions they harboured for their respective companies. Kuhn explained that he was considering a number of controlled investments which might lead to a more substantial diversification into film in the years to come. In turn, Bevan described the capricious nature of independent production in Britain and his attendant desire to transform Working Title into a more stable and better resourced company. The conversations which followed resulted in the creation of a new company, Working Title Television (WTTV), in July 1988. For Kuhn, the decision to create a television company represented an opportunity to expand PolyGram's interest in filmed entertainment without stirring unwanted protest from the PolyGram hierarchy (Kuhn 2013a). PolyGram had experienced a financially disastrous foray into filmmaking in the early 1980s which had lived long in the memory of the company's directors. For Bevan, a television company offered a means of providing Working Title with a more stable and regular means of

income. For both, of course, it was also an opportunity to test run a new working relationship. The scale of the enterprise was not vast. PolyGram would invest £500,000 in development funds over a five year period and fund any shortfall in production finance. The suggested output at this early stage would be two mini-series and two made-for-television films a year. In return for their investment, PolyGram assumed a 49 per cent stake in the company, while Working Title retained the controlling 51 per cent interest (*Screen Int'l*, 1988, 1).

Working Title also entered into a long term relationship with a newly established sales agent, The Sales Company, which had been jointly established by British Screen, Palace and Zenith in July the previous year (*Screen Int'l*, 1987c, 441). It was envisaged that the new company would give its three shareholders greater control of not only how much their films were sold for, but also which distributors their films were sold to (Ilott, 1986, 1-2). The lean sales team was led by Carole Myer, who had left FFI to establish the company. As she explained, The Sales Company would operate on a break-even basis by charging its parent companies a considerably lower percentage of commission on completed sales. The rate of 7.5 percent which was set for international (non-US) sales and 5 percent for US sales was less than half the open market rate of external sales agents. Working Title's involvement with the new sales venture was a natural progression given the company's established links with British Screen, Palace and Zenith. 'Working Title got offered percentages that were lower and they agreed that everything, if it was available, would go through me', Myer explained. 'Like almost all the agreements I had that weren't with film distributors it was just letters that stated we agree to be responsible human beings together' (Myer, 2013). As she went on to explain:

Sarah and Tim really valued what I did, which was not true for everyone. They were people who understood that I never did a deal without them knowing what's involved and what the distributor can do for them. It wasn't like they were appointing me and I was out there doing things without them knowing about it, which is how most producers experience it. They just feel as though their sales agent is ripping them off, basically. I also paid them every month any money that came in. That was unheard of in the film business. If you're lucky, you get statements every six months (Myer, 2013)

The creative profile which Working Title had developed by producing films in the mould of social art cinema, however, became more diffuse almost as soon as it was established. Table 2, below, shows the independent films which Working Title produced and released in 1988 and 1989. These films transcended the loosely defined model of social

art cinema by adhering to definable popular genres and embracing other commercial impulses such as the casting of stars. *For Queen and Country* (1988) and *Diamond Skulls* (1989), for example, are both crime dramas. The former was developed by Working Title but funded by Zenith and proved to be the final co-production between the two companies. The film was an uneven mix of a drama and a thriller about a black British soldier's re-integration into civilian society. While the poverty-stricken East London setting was reminiscent of their earlier films, the heavy handed use of generic markers – guns, gangsters, drug dealing and violence – as well as the casting of a young Denzel Washington signalled a move into more commercial territory. *Diamond Skulls*, on the other hand, starred Gabriel Byrne as an aristocratic army officer who murders his wife in a fit of jealousy and subsequently attempts to cover up his crime. Staying within the boundaries of popular genre, *Paperhouse* is a fantasy/horror film which focusses on the frighteningly real consequences of a young girl's dreams. Finally, *The Tall Guy* (1989) is a romantic comedy starring Jeff Goldblum as an American actor struggling to make a living in the West End.

Table 2 – Working Title's independent output 1988-1989

Title	Year	UK Funding	US Distribution	UK Distribution	Intl. Sales
<i>Paperhouse</i>	1988	-	Vestron	Vestron	Vestron
<i>For Queen and Country</i>	1988	Zenith	Atlantic Releasing	-	The Sales Company
<i>The Tall Guy</i>	1989	LWT	Miramax	Virgin Vision	The Sales Company
<i>Diamond Skulls</i>	1989	Channel 4 / British Screen	Circle Films	Virgin Vision	The Sales Company

The shift in approach was the result of Bevan's desire to push Working Title into more commercial territory. Significantly, only *Diamond Skulls* relied on funding from Channel 4 and British Screen, while the others were funded by commercial production and distribution companies in the independent sector. In practice, none of the films were commercially successful, but the slate nonetheless added to Bevan's growing prowess as a deal-maker. Bevan's desire for change was not shared by Radclyffe, however. In a revealing moment of faint praise, she explained that Working Title's projects fell into two categories in the late 1980s: 'those that I care passionately about, which I want to line produce myself and those that I think are great but I just won't be line producing myself' (Radclyffe, 1988). Considering suitable subject matter after *A World Apart*, Radclyffe explained that she was 'looking for things that are more than just a flippant comedy ... for me it's got to be

something that I'm prepared to spend a minimum of a year of my life working on' (Radclyffe, 1988). Elaborating on the difference in approach which had developed between Working Title's producers-in-chief, she commented:

I can only work on one film at a time and get totally involved in it. I'm inclined to live it. Last year was Zimbabwe [*A World Apart*] and the year before that was Worthing [*Wish You Were Here*]. I get involved in the script all the way through preproduction, I'm there every single day at the shoot, and all the way through post production ... Tim when he line produces, is slightly more 'executive producer' than I am. In other words, he oversaw both *Queen and Country* and *Paperhouse* last year. I get far more involved it's fair to say. I really only do one film at a time and I'm completely involved in it to the exclusion of everything else (Radclyffe, 1988).

Bevan underlined the disparity in their working practices and creative outlook by acting as executive producer on *The Tall Guy* (1989), a film which, by any estimation, warrants the label 'flippant comedy'. *The Tall Guy* proved to be watershed moment in Working Title's history for several reasons. Most significantly, it marked the beginning of Working Title's most enduring and commercially successful creative partnership with Richard Curtis, who wrote the screenplay. Already a successful comedy writer for television shows like *Not the Nine O'clock News* (BBC, 1979-1982) and *Blackadder* (BBC, 1983-1989), Curtis had been introduced to Bevan through his agent, Anthony Jones, with the intention of discussing his first feature film script. The project was a romantic-comedy set in London which re-teamed Curtis with Mel Smith and Rowan Atkinson, two of his collaborators on *Not the Nine O'clock News*. Smith made his directorial debut, and Atkinson was cast as one of the lead actors.

The Tall Guy also marked Paul Webster's initiation into the Working Title fold, having started the transition from distribution to production while still at Palace. The film was largely funded by London Weekend Television (LWT), the ITV company which broadcast to London and the Home counties. LWT's contribution to the budget amounted to £840,000, a figure which reflected the ITV tariff for a two hour theatrical or television film (Wolfson, 1989, 11). Unlike Channel 4, ITV did not have a full public service mandate and LWT, unlike Zenith, had not invested strategically in feature film production. For Working Title, LWT's large contribution to the budget (Channel 4 typically paid £250,000 for UK television rights) and lack of equity investment meant that the film could be pre-sold in all other territories with a more realistic chance of seeing a return to the producer. This atypical financial structure had important consequences for the continuation of Working Title's relationship with Curtis. As Paul Webster explained:

It was financed almost entirely by London Weekend Television, who brought the TV licence. It was made for £1.2m and was in profit before it was finished. London Weekend Television paid for the UK television rights and they paid £850,000 for it. The bulk of the money was paid up front by Nick Elliot who was head of LWT at the time, and it was a brilliant deal that Tim did. The business reason that Richard stayed loyal to Working Title was that within a few months of that film being finished, a substantial cheque was on Anthony Jones's desk. He said, 'ok, these people must be straight, this doesn't happen'. Working Title was straight and made the best decision of its history (Webster, 2013).

In many ways, *The Tall Guy* proved to be the prototypical example of the Transatlantic British Cinema which Working Title went on to produce in the 1990s. Despite its modest budget, the film capitalised on the globalising features of popular genre and the established star power of Jeff Goldblum in the leading role. *The Tall Guy* was also the first Working Title film to embrace the strategy of explicit affiliative transnationalism by inserting an American character, Dexter King (Goldblum), in a British setting. The balance of cultural familiarity and difference was mediated through his blossoming romance with the English Kate Lemmon (Emma Thompson), a trope that would be used to greater effect in Working Title's *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994) and *Notting Hill* (1999) in the years to come. Unlike the latter two films, however, *The Tall Guy* was produced in the familiar independent mode and did not benefit from the distribution and marketing power of a substantial entertainment conglomerate. While Miramax, the largest of the remaining independents, distributed the film in the US, the film failed to find a mass audience.

The stability WTTV may have been able to offer its parent company in the long term was overshadowed by a building crisis in the US distribution sector. In the autumn of 1988 Channel 4 publically announced the difficulties it was experiencing in attracting US finance to its productions. According to the broadcaster, almost any British film with a budget of £1.5m or over required a US presale, a goal which had been achieved by 50 per cent fewer films in 1988 compared with the previous year. The situation presented a conundrum for British producers as pre-selling distribution rights to territories outside the US frequently depended on having already secured a US-presale (Dawtre, 1988, 1). The change in the US market was attributed to a more cautious approach to acquisitions in the independent sector, amongst other things. The following year, low-budget British films also found difficulty gaining distribution in the UK, a situation which prompted British Screen and Channel 4 to begin investing directly in distribution on behalf of their films (Dawtre, 1989, 1). On the other side of the Atlantic, several leading independent distributors, including Cinecom, Atlantic and Vestron, slid towards administration. It was apparent to

everyone at Working Title that the Channel 4 model of funding was becoming increasingly untenable.

I realised that in order to produce movies you need to run an overhead and you also need to develop material and that all costs money ... you need to get to a point when developing material where, if you've spent quite a lot on it but if it's not going to turn itself into a film, you need to be able to write it off. No independent company can really afford to do that ... The only way to get your money back was to get the film made, by charm and brute force and by all the rest of it. We got a number of films financed which should have probably never been made in order to get our fees out and in order to get the development money out. That was not a sustainable or a sensible model (Bevan, 2013).

Swimming against the tide of recession, Working Title was determined to develop a more sophisticated way of financing its films. In May 1989 the company secured a US distribution deal which afforded a degree of longer term stability. A three-year agreement was struck with US mini-major New Line Cinema, which covered theatrical and television distribution for eight Working Title films in the US and Canada. A separate deal would eventually be agreed for US video rights, while Palace agreed a four film theatrical deal in the UK (Groves, 1989, 3). The objective of building a sustainable production company by linking production with distribution was something that Working Title had been attempting to achieve for some time. In early 1988, Wendy Palmer had approached Working Title and a second potential partner, Initial Film and Television, with a proposal to establish a film sales company with a structure that broadly mirrored that of The Sales Company. Palmer had risen through the ranks at Handmade Films to become the Director of Marketing and Distribution for the company's in-house sales division before being made redundant. As she recalled:

I realised during my years at Handmade that having only one production entity meant that you really didn't have enough films, with the ebb and flow of film production. Sometimes you'd have three or four films on the go and sometimes you'd have none. The idea of having more than one film producing entity seemed to solve that problem ... [Working Title and Initial] were both seriously undercapitalised was the basic problem. That was a more pressing issue for them than independent sales at that point. Tim felt quite strongly that they needed an American production company and the problem with Initial was that they were basically producing in the same area. We started looking around for an American company but finding an ideal marriage – a company in the States which was at the same stage of evolution as Working Title – was quite tricky (Palmer, 2013).

The plan for an in-house film sales company was rekindled the following summer when Bevan relayed the plan to Kuhn, and Palmer was once again brought into the picture,

with Propaganda Films now on board as the US-based producing partner. The result was the establishment of Manifesto Film Sales in June 1989 (Groves, 1989, 3). Operating as a wholly owned subsidiary of PolyGram, the venture offered a systematic method of raising production finance through pre-selling the distribution rights to the films in development at Propaganda and Working Title. The initial incarnation of Manifesto was run by Wendy Palmer and two executives who handled sales and marketing. The new company's first home was in a shared room at Working Title's Livonia Street offices, before the cramped conditions were traded for a two room office on Wardour Street. While the method of raising production finance through presales had not changed for Working Title, the expertise and personnel available to do so had increased significantly. Manifesto inherited the distribution deals which Working Title and Propaganda already had in place and subsequently set about dividing the distribution rights to their respective slates and selling them on a territory-by-territory basis and across different media platforms. PolyGram's investment in Propaganda Films, Working Title Television and Manifesto Film Sales pointed in only one direction – an investment in Working Title Films.

Chapter 3

The PolyGram Years: 1990-1998

In August 1990, PolyGram's New Business Division acquired a 49 percent stake in Working Title Films. The investment meant that the company was substantially capitalised for the first time in its history, and stood to benefit from the business infrastructure and expertise of a major multinational record company. More important in the long term, however, was the position that Working Title would come to assume within PolyGram Filmed Entertainment (PFE), the PolyGram division which co-ordinated the conglomerate's diversification into film during the 1990s. Working Title's growth was, of course, inextricably linked to the industrial and creative agenda of its parent company. In this respect, the early years of Working Title's affiliation with the New Business Division, and later PFE, proved to be a period of profound transition for both the subsidiary and its parent company. The plethora of industrial relationships which Working Title had forged as an independent, both with publicly owned British-based institutions such as Channel 4, British Screen and the BFI and with other independent companies was replaced by a singular relationship with a multinational entertainment conglomerate. This new relationship fundamentally altered the ways in which Working Title's films were developed, financed, produced, distributed and marketed.

PolyGram's diversification into film signalled the ambition of its parent company, Philips, to create a multinational entertainment conglomerate. This was an objective shared (and in some cases already realised) by the major Hollywood studios by the turn of 1990. During their long histories, all of the Hollywood studios had created or acquired other businesses and, in turn, been acquired by various parent companies. Unlike the business dealings of previous decades, however, the nature of Hollywood acquisitions and mergers during the 1980s and 1990s was, according to Thomas Schatz, underscored by the strategies of 'tight diversification' and 'synergy' (2008, 25). Tight diversification entails expansion into media and entertainment businesses outside the film industry which are, nonetheless, closely related to the film industry. Synergy, on the other hand, involves exploiting the relationships of tight diversification to sell both film and film-related products across a range of media and ancillary markets. Crucially these strategies are not

ultimately enacted by the studios, but by the parent companies which own them. Schatz traces these business strategies back to the mid-1980s:

This tectonic shift in the structure and economics of Hollywood actually began ... when News Corporation bought 20th Century Fox and launched the Fox Broadcasting Network. That created a paradigm for the global media giants to come, as the burgeoning New Hollywood steadily morphed into Conglomerate Hollywood, and the studios' role in the industry drastically changed. The studios were vital to their parent companies' media empires, of course, since Hollywood-produced blockbusters have been the driving force in the global entertainment industry. But the movie studios, along with the conglomerates' "indie film" divisions, television and cable networks, and myriad other holdings, have become players in a game they no longer control (Schatz, 1997, 14).

By the turn of 1990, Paramount (owned by Paramount Communications) and Disney (owned by The Walt Disney Company) were the only Hollywood studios which were not subsidiaries of other conglomerates. Warner Bros., for example, was a subsidiary of Time Warner, a media giant which also included the publishing house, Time Inc. Similarly, Twentieth Century Fox was a subsidiary of News Corporation, another vast company which had started in publishing, while Columbia and Universal were respectively subsidiaries of Sony and Matsushita, two multinational electronics manufacturers headquartered in Japan.

The expansion of 'Conglomerate Hollywood' gathered pace in tandem with the wider forces of globalisation. During the 1980s and 1990s the demand for filmed entertainment increased at an unprecedented rate due to several interlocking developments. The fundamental drivers were economic, political and technological. Economic growth in Western Europe, the Pacific Rim and Latin America combined with the decline of the Soviet Union and the expansion of markets in Eastern Europe to vastly increase the international market for film. Simultaneously, neo-liberal policies ensured a wave of media deregulation which expanded the scope of commercial broadcasting in many other Western nations. Finally, new delivery systems such as video, satellite and cable provided an increased capacity at the point of reception. As Tino Balio points out, the major Hollywood studios took advantage of this perfect storm by expanding both horizontally and vertically. Horizontal expansion involved the studios upgrading their international operations to exploit the expanding and emerging markets. Vertical expansion, on the other hand, included partnering with both independent producers and sources of capital (Balio, 1998, 58). The major Hollywood studios had essentially become financiers and distributors of films, outsourcing the vast majority of production to independently owned companies.

Within the conceptual framework of this thesis, Working Title's integration into PFE entailed the company operating in the subsidiary mode of Transatlantic British Cinema, and applying the strategies of economic, globalising and affinitive transnationalism to its activities. A discussion of Working Title in these terms is, however, reserved for the conclusion of this chapter. What follows is a detailed business history of Working Title between 1990 and 1998 which is, inevitably, also concerned with the development of PFE. To understand the evolution of Working Title during the 1990s, it is necessary to step back and examine the context of PolyGram's entry into the film industry and the development of PFE over the course of the decade. The following section briefly examines the history of PolyGram, from its incorporation in 1972 to the establishment of its New Business Division in 1987. PolyGram's attempts at diversification into the film industry during the 1970s and 1980s provide an important backdrop to understanding the ways in which PFE took the shape it did during the 1990s. The following section explores this history in more detail.

A brief history of PolyGram (1972-1987)

Philips, PolyGram's eventual parent company, was founded in 1891 by the Dutch industrialists Frederik and Gerard Philips to manufacture electric lamps and light bulbs. Over the next half century Philips evolved into a large multinational corporation producing a range of consumer electronics including radios, gramophones, electric shavers and television sets. By the 1940s the company saw diversification into consumer 'software' as an increasingly important strategy in enhancing their market presence. The acquisition of several companies which manufactured, recorded and distributed gramophone records soon followed. The post-war boom in recorded music sales led to the establishment of an umbrella company, Philips Phonografische Industrie, into which Philips consolidated its music assets. Siemens, Europe's other leading electronics manufacturer, found itself in a similar position and established its own consolidated record company, Deutsche Gramophon. Seeing the potential advantages of collaboration, the two conglomerates merged their music interests in 1962 by exchanging a 50 per cent share in one another's record companies and renaming the combined venture Gramophon-Philips Group. The amalgamated record company was merged at an operational level in 1972, and renamed PolyGram (Bakker, 2006).

PolyGram expanded its assets in the record industry by acquiring artists-and-repertoire (A&R) companies, or record 'labels', with the financial leverage derived from the

other business interests of Philips and Siemens. A&R companies were valuable not only for the exploitation of their back catalogues, but for the artists which they had under contract. As Gerben Bakker explains, 'PolyGram managed most acquired labels as semi-independent organisations. It kept them creatively autonomous but integrated generic functions – such as manufacturing, recording, finance, and music publishing – into specialised divisions' (2006, 105). PolyGram undertook a period of rapid expansion during the 1970s by purchasing several prominent British and American labels such as Mercury, Decca, RSO and Casablanca. RSO was the first PolyGram label to diversify into films with strong musical connections such as *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1973), *Tommy* (1975), *Saturday Night Fever* (1977) and *Grease* (1978), all of which were released through major Hollywood studios and, more importantly for PolyGram, produced extremely successful soundtrack albums.

A similar situation evolved at the Los Angeles-based Casablanca Records and FilmWorks, another record company which had diversified into film. By 1980 PolyGram folded the film assets and production slate of the label into a new company, PolyGram Pictures, which was run by Peter Guber, and his business partner, Jon Peters. Over the course of the next two years, the PolyGram Pictures experiment would prove to be a financial disaster for its parent company. The reasons for new company's failure were partly structural. Unlike the conglomerate's activities in music, PolyGram did not invest in film distribution and marketing. Rather, the films of PolyGram Pictures would be handled by third parties. Of the company's original slate, for example, *Endless Love* (1981), *An American Werewolf in London* (1981), *The Pursuit of D.B. Cooper* (1981), *Six Weeks* (1982) and *Missing* (1982) were released through Universal in the US while *Deadly Blessing* (1981) and *Split Image* (1982) went out through UA and Orion respectively. In contrast, international distribution rights were presold via a sales agent, Producers Sales Organisation (PSO). Thus, despite its status as a subsidiary of a major entertainment conglomerate, PolyGram Pictures still operated in the manner of an 'independent' production company which had no direct involvement in the marketing and distribution of its films (*Screen Intl.*, 1981, 6). As a PolyGram business overview explained a decade later:

The venture, which produced a total of 7 motion pictures ... was ill fated from the start and suffered as a result of significant PolyGram losses elsewhere in the record business. In addition, high interest rates, the absence of any significant ancillary markets (video being still a largely new product) and various management failings combined to bringing an early end to these film activities and the operations effectively shut down in 1982 ... Although the operational losses of PolyGram Pictures were high – somewhere in the region of \$60 million for the period 1979 to 1983, the company still receives significant residual income and has received

approximately \$10 million in the last three years alone (a significant part of this income has been in respect of a continuing PolyGram interest in *Batman*, which was initially developed at PolyGram) (Polygram, 1993).

A management exodus ensued, which saw the appointment of the Dutchman, Jan Timmer, as President and CEO of PolyGram in January 1983. The mercurial nature of the entertainment industry convinced Siemens to refocus on its core electronic manufacturing businesses. In transactions in 1985 and 1987, Siemens sold its stake in PolyGram to Philips, which continued without a corporate partner despite attempts to find one (Hoos, 1989, 4 & 61). For Timmer, however, maintaining a strong foothold in the record industry was essential for his long term strategy. Philips had been developing a new technology, the Compact Disc (CD), since the early 1970s. Subsequent refinement of the CD and its associated hardware technology had, however, been undertaken in collaboration with Sony. The two media conglomerates subsequently staged a series of industrial negotiations which ensured that the CD became the new industry-wide standard for recorded music, a situation which allowed Philips and Sony to licence the technology to their competitors (McGahan, 1993, 179). In turn, Philips' ownership of the first CD pressing plants gave PolyGram a head start in re-issuing their extensive back catalogues.

The strategy drastically improved PolyGram's fortunes and the company's net profit margin soared by 60 per cent between the mid-1980s and early 1990s. Phasing out production of the LP record also paved the way for a raft of downsizing policies. During Timmer's tenure, PolyGram's workforce was cut from 13 thousand to seven thousand and the number of record factories reduced from 18 to five (Bakker, 2006, 116). By the end of the decade, the success of the CD boom prompted an aggressive expansion of PolyGram's US-based music assets, including the acquisition of Island and A&M Records in 1989 for \$272 million and \$460 million respectively (Jeffery, 1989, 10). To help fund the expansion, PolyGram subsequently floated 20 per cent of its stock to the public, an act which raised \$400 million and revealed the company's real-market value to be \$2 billion (Bakker, 2006, 116-17). On the back of this revival, PolyGram would remain a member of the 'big six' record companies for the rest of its existence. This illustrious group, which also included Warner Music Group, EMI, Sony Music, Bertelsmann Music Group and Universal Music Group, accounted for over 90 per cent of US sales in recorded music and an estimated 70 to 80 per cent in the international market during the 1990s (Burnett, 1996, 18).

Throughout this extraordinary reversal of fortune, Michael Kuhn was working his way through the executive ranks of PolyGram at its International headquarters in Berkeley

Square, London. After training as a lawyer, Kuhn had joined PolyGram in 1975 and had subsequently risen to the position of Director of Legal and Business Affairs. Amongst his other duties, he was charged with coordinating PolyGram's response to the burgeoning MTV, and, in June 1982 established PolyGram Music Video. Over the years that followed, Kuhn gradually gained approval to make 'long-form music videos' which featured PolyGram artists and played heavily on the link between music and film. Several video releases of such material were followed by a theatrically released feature length music film, *Incident at Channel Q* (1986), which starred many of PolyGram's repertoire including Bon Jovi, Deep Purple, KISS and Rush. The same year, Kuhn had convinced PolyGram to fund a low-budget dramatic film, *Private Investigations* (1987), by developing a funding model which relied heavily on the film's potential for soundtrack and video exploitation (Hazelton 1986, 368). The following section explores PolyGram's expansion into film between 1987 and 1991 under the auspices of the 'New Business Division'.

PolyGram's New Business Division and Working Title Films

In February 1987, PolyGram's slowly reviving interest in film was given an official home with the creation of the New Business Division. Kuhn was simultaneously promoted to the position of Vice President of PolyGram and appointed CEO and President of the new company. Using the momentum derived from the establishment of the new division, Kuhn began considering the foundations of a film company which he envisaged could be modelled on the existing PolyGram 'label system'. In keeping with that philosophy, production subsidiaries would be kept creatively autonomous, while broader industrial functions, including the provision of production finance, distribution and marketing could be centralised within PolyGram. Just as the introduction of the CD had changed PolyGram's fortunes in the record business, it was hoped that home video would prove a similar spur in the film business. As Kuhn explained:

The management at PolyGram saw a time when everyone had bought a CD player and renewed their entire catalogue, and as we became a public company, albeit only 20 per cent, they were all saying, 'well, what's your next trick? What are you going to do next?'. They'd all got used to 15 per cent year on year growth in profits throughout the 80s. That's where the plan for a film division came from, simply because 50 per cent of the revenues from film came from video. Videos were bits of plastic being distributed around the world through retail shops, which is what we did on the record side. We had the infrastructure in 40 countries and we knew that we were quite good at financial control of creative business, which is what the

film industry is as well. So, what we'd have to do is get a supply line of films and then learn how to market them (Kuhn, 2013b).

In furthering the interests of the New Business Division, it was essential for Kuhn and his CFO, Malcolm Ritchie, to avoid the pitfalls of PolyGram Pictures. Over the course of the 1990s, the two men became the chief architects of PolyGram's diversification into film for the second time of asking, with Kuhn assuming responsibility for the overall vision and strategy of the company and Ritchie taking care of its practical implementation. The legacy of PolyGram Pictures, however, cast a long shadow over the development of the new venture. 'It was useful to look back and see what had been done and how it was done, and we were constantly reminded of the errors in the past. PolyGram was nervous about overextending the operations and ending with the disaster that Polygram Pictures had been', Ritchie explained. The failure of PolyGram Films was, for Ritchie, a consequence of several interlocking errors in management and business structure:

From a business point of view there was no such thing as video in those early days, as secondary revenues were really limited to television, so the whole market was changing through the 1980s with VHS and the growth of cable television, everything was different ... At that time PolyGram was effectively split between Eindhoven, London and Hamburg. It wasn't until later that PolyGram had its head office in London. It would have been incredibly difficult to manage a Hollywood venture with the structure that PolyGram had, it just wasn't set up for it. I think that the truth is as well that a lot of people took advantage of these European owners, and stretched the business - took investments, took risks - and they could have been incredibly lucky and it could have worked, some of the projects subsequently became very successful ones, notably *Batman*, but we didn't have the distribution structure to take advantage of that. It was the wrong venture at the wrong time and had not been properly planned out (Ritchie, 2014).

Making progress with such a plan was, however, dampened by personnel changes at the top of the company. Having masterminded PolyGram's revival, Jan Timmer accepted a senior position at Philips at the end of 1987. Timmer was replaced by David Fine, the former CEO of PolyGram's UK operations. 'David Fine had been, under Jan Timmer, the guy who'd had to be the nuts and bolts manager. He wasn't a visionary, but the guy who had to deliver the results and make the numbers work', Kuhn explained. 'He was a fantastic manager in that regard, but anything that looked risky and dangerous like the launch of CD in the first place and certainly films later, he inherently felt - probably quite rightly - resistant to and nervous about (Kuhn, 2013a). Accordingly, the investments made by the New Business Division had been both modest and keenly observed in its first years of

operation. The 49 percent equity interests in Propaganda Films and Working Title Television (WTTV) acquired in 1988 were complemented by the establishment of the wholly owned subsidiary, Manifesto Film Sales, in 1989 (see chapter 1).

In the two years since the establishment of WTTV, the business relationship between Working Title Films and the New Business Division had become increasingly intertwined. Indeed, an early break in extending the scope of PolyGram's interest in film came through Kuhn's association with Working Title. The lack of financial incentives for film production during the period of the Thatcher administration prompted a search for suitable fiscal opportunities further afield. 'There were no transferable tax credits or anything else like that in those early days' Graham Bradstreet pointed out. 'You had to either make a movie entirely commercially, essentially convince people to fully fund it, or alternatively find tax structures that would benefit an investor outside of the industry' (Bradstreet, 2013a). As he went on to explain:

There was a structure that I had developed under which German companies could get an accelerated write-off when investing in movies. PolyGram was one of the companies that could access this ... you had to be a corporate and you had to be in a similar business, it was something called organschaft and it meant that they could write off the cost of the movies at an accelerated rate and a high rate and get a tax advantage. We told Kuhn about this and he 'instructed me' to see their in-house tax counsel about it. We then spent a significant amount of time fine-tuning it to make it work for PolyGram (Bradstreet, 2013a).

The result was the incorporation of a new company in Germany which could take advantage of the newly engineered tax legislation and thus reduce the risk of PolyGram's investment. PolyGram Film Produktion GmbH, as it became known, was incorporated in Hamburg as a subsidiary of PolyGram Germany. As a consequence, PolyGram Film Produktion fell within the same tax group as its parent company and was able to take advantage of the tax liabilities of the profitable PolyGram Germany by reinvesting some of it in film. 'It was a timing thing, because if the film projects were fantastically successful and you end up paying tax, you'd be paying tax at 55 percent, but there was never the perception that these projects were going to break out and be massively profitable films', Ritchie explained. 'On a film costing £5 million, you were effectively getting a tax write off of 55 percent, so the actual risk for PolyGram was 45 percent of £5 million and provided you could bring in some revenues from presales that would bring the risk down to a very low position' (Ritchie, 2014). The tax legislation dovetailed with the presales finance that began flowing in from Manifesto Film Sales. As Ritchie went on to explain:

We realised fairly quickly that if, between Propaganda and Working Title, we were making six films a year, it would make sense to have our own sales company. In having our own sales company we would effectively have more control of the selling process and if we ran it efficiently we could keep the costs down and we would have the equivalent of a low sales fee. It wasn't so much about trying to run Manifesto on a break-even basis, it was trying to run a consolidated operation with the sales cost being as low as possible. If we'd have used a third party we might have paid 15 or 20 percent and if we had enough throughput the effective cost of Manifesto might have been about 5 to 7 percent. It made sense to do that, plus, an important fact that we had control of the sales process. We could go to Cannes ourselves and start meeting the buyers, and in doing that we began to get an idea of the sort of product that worked. We became much smarter about the sort of projects that we should be doing. I think both Working Tile and Propaganda felt more empowered as well because they were then closer to the ultimate distributors and began to get a better feel about how their projects might do in the marketplace (Ritchie, 2014).

Wendy Palmer and the rest of the Manifesto team set about dividing the distribution rights to projects in development and selling them on a territory-by-territory basis and across different media platforms. Sales were typically made through a combination of selling directly to distributors at the major film markets of the calendar or through Palmer's established contacts. Palmer's reputation in the industry and Manifesto's status as a subsidiary of PolyGram helped establish the company's credibility within the City, and a stable banking relationship soon emerged with Guinness Mahon & Co., an investment bank which specialised in financing film and television production. 'For a film to get green-lit we had to draw-down from a bank, so we had to have sufficient signed sales, and sufficient sales estimates for the bank to start advancing production funding', Palmer recalled. 'I had to get a certain percentage of my estimates as signed contracts and then they would advance money against the remaining countries, based on what I had estimated them being worth' (Palmer, 2013). As she went on to explain, Manifesto began to forge long term arrangements with both its bank and various distribution companies:

I eventually set up a deal where we segregated the rights, so we sold theatrical, video, pay TV and free TV separately. I had what we call output deals, I had an output deal with the BBC, and output deal with SKY, an output deal with Rank and CBS/Fox were doing video ... I set up output deals in a lot of other countries in Europe too. If you do an output deal you can get a discountable contract really quickly which was a much more efficient and effective way of getting the bank finance drawn-down. Once you had a pre-approved contract, everything was much simpler (Palmer, 2013).

An investment in Working Title Films itself had become inevitable by the beginning of 1990. Supporting the financing and selling of Working Title's films made little sense from PolyGram's perspective if Working Title continued to be the major beneficiary. The percentage of equity which PolyGram wanted to acquire amounted to a strategically determined 49 per cent. 'The reason we did that at the time was that PolyGram didn't want to consolidate a company that was showing losses. It wanted to invest money and if it lost the money, that was fine, they would write it off, but they didn't want to carry anything more' (Ritchie, 2014). From Working Title's perspective, the remaining 51 per cent equity would ensure, in theory at least, that Working Title's three directors retained overall control of the company. For Bevan, the prospect of relinquishing equity in Working Title was an acceptable price to pay to pay for the resources which PolyGram could offer his company in the longer term. The idea of ownership is, of course, inextricably wed to the idea of independent film production and, in turn, the creative and operational autonomy such a label suggests. As Bevan explained, however, the reality of Working Title's years as an independent production company had often borne little resemblance to the ideals of the 'independent' label:

If you are asking me now what the three most important things are, I'd say, the capital to run the business, to run my overhead and my development; creative freedom to be able to do whatever I want to do in terms of developing the sorts of films I want to make; and thirdly, when I get a film made, single source worldwide distribution ... In the late 1980s, we didn't have the capital and we certainly didn't have the single source worldwide distribution because every film was sold off to different companies all around the world. Arguably because of that, we didn't have the creative autonomy either, because our situation was always dictating what we did next, rather than us dictating what we did next (Bevan, 2013).

Beyond purely business considerations, the decision to invest in Working Title Films was, for Kuhn, in equal parts personal and pragmatic. In what would become a recurring theme, PolyGram's relationship with Working Title was routed first and foremost through Kuhn's relationship with Tim Bevan. 'We always hit it off from day one and we're still great friends to this day' he recalled; 'like most things in business, personality is a big part of it and if you can't get on with somebody then it's normally not a good idea'. Beyond this, he remembered a distinct lack of viable options in the British independent sector:

Tim was one of the few around who was relatively young as opposed to leftovers from the past. He had energy and go and [Working Title] ... looked like an interesting, different vibe to kitchen sink drama and social realism and all that that

had been before. So, there wasn't a lot of choice was number one. Number two was we needed to have someone here who knew their way around making low budget or relatively low budget films. So, I liked him, he'd done something, there wasn't a lot of choice. Those were the reasons (Kuhn, 2013a).

In February 1990 the legal and business affairs department of PolyGram's Media Division drafted a summary paper outlining the overall proposal for investment in Working Title. An 'in principle' agreement was subsequently reached between the two parties over the key areas and conditions of investment. The rigours of business administration were not, however, one of Working Title's strengths. Several delays in providing the necessary paperwork ensured that it was June before PolyGram's legal and financial due diligences could be applied to records of the company. Ultimately, PolyGram invested £1.5 million in a new holding company, Working Title Group Ltd. which acquired 100 per cent of the original company, Working Title Films Ltd., from its three shareholders. In return, Bevan, Bradstreet and Radclyffe received a 51 per cent stake in the holding company (through a separate vehicle company called Passport Film Services), while the remaining 49 per cent of Working Title Group was acquired by PolyGram (PolyGram, 1990, 1-2).

The business plan which accompanied the proposal outlined in some detail the particulars of PolyGram's investment. While relatively modest in scope, the breakdown of anticipated expenditure covered all the company's principal areas of activity and, for the first time, lifted Working Title out of the hand-to-mouth existence which had defined its history. Of the £1.5 million total investment, £900,000 was earmarked for four key areas of investment including £250,000 for pre-production finance, £150,000 for working capital, £100,000 towards new offices and £400,000 for development, distribution and marketing finance. Crucially for Working Title, this recapitalisation allowed the company to arrange overdraft facilities secured on the business itself, rather than the personal finances of directors. Moreover, in specified circumstances, PolyGram could make additional funding available to Working Title of up to £1m in the form of secured, interest bearing loans (PolyGram, 1990b, 1-2). Under the new regime, Bevan, Bradstreet and Radclyffe were contracted exclusively to Working Title and responsible for day-to-day running of the company. Working Title's new board of directors was, however, composed of the three original partners and three representatives from PolyGram – Michael Kuhn, Malcolm Ritchie, and Jill Tandy, PolyGram's Head of Legal and Business Affairs. The matters which would require approval at board level included major project initiation, employee hirings and firings and approval of accounts, forecasts, cashflows and loans (PolyGram, 1990, 5)

Predictably, the underlying clauses which structured the nature of PolyGram's investment entailed a firm shift towards filmmaking on an emphatically commercial basis. In line with the most basic laws of business, PolyGram expected a return on their investment. Based on a 1990-94 business plan prepared by Working Title, projected annual profit figures ranged between £2,720,000 (1991) and £3,056,000 (1992). PolyGram concluded that their annual return on investment would average 77.9 per cent over the period, based on their retention of 49 per cent of the £900,000 direct investment. Inevitably, substantial amounts of optimism had been massaged into these figures, with the report noting that a return at half the projected level would still be attractive for PolyGram (PolyGram, 1990, 4). Crucially, the new partnership was subject to an initial period of two and a half years with any extension likely to be based on performance-related criteria. As the proposal document explained:

The new venture will run for an initial period from 1-6-90 to 31-12-92, after which time PolyGram may elect to extend for at least a further 2 years. Termination by PolyGram alone may be sought after 31-12-92 in the event that the audited results up to that period are significantly below the business plan estimates. If the agreement is terminated after 31-12-92, or at a later date, various buy-out options for PolyGram and/or Passport come into play (PolyGram, 1990, 4)

While the agreement was clearly designed to allow both parties to test run the new partnership within a defined time frame, the precise level of 'significantly below' business plan estimates was less apparent. It was, however, abundantly clear to everyone at Working Title that a new era of filmmaking had dawned. The most alarming realisation was the disparity between the operating procedures of an independent film production company and those of a multinational entertainment conglomerate. As Ritchie recalled:

They were the most disorganised shower that we'd ever come across, excluding Palace, but that's another story. Creatively they had a lot of talent but their finance and business affairs were almost non-existent. The way we had been brought up within the PolyGram ethos was to run things in a fairly organised way with monthly reporting and proper balance sheets and if we were going to invest in something, we knew what potential return we could expect. They had nothing like that at all, they were very much hand-to-mouth. I'm not necessarily blaming them because that's the way they had grown up, and clearly they had learned a lot along the way and had their successes. From a PolyGram point of view it was very clear, very quickly, that they couldn't continue with an operation like that, they would have to start preparing reports and getting their accounting system up to scratch and just operating in a more professional manner than they had previously done (Ritchie, 2014).

PolyGram insisted that Working Title appointed both in-house staff to put their historical accounts and business affairs in order, PolyGram's operating procedures began to be applied to ongoing matters. On the back of PolyGram's investment, Working Title moved into new premises on Water Lane in August 1990. The three storey office block was wedged between Regent's canal and the Stratford to Richmond train line in central Camden. The uncharacteristic move away from Soho did, at least, allow for greater office space while also side stepping the inevitable expense of the West End. Working Title was once again reunited with Manifesto under the same roof, with each business adopting a floor within the building. The Manifesto team quickly multiplied to include three dedicated sales staff and two personnel producing the marketing materials which were used to both pre-sell films and accompany the finished product when delivered to a distributor. Contracts, paralegal and accountancy personnel soon followed. The combination of international presales from Manifesto and equity investment from PolyGram Film Produktions became established as the template for funding Working Title's productions. This funding model proved to be a prototype version of the creative and financial filter which would become known as the 'control sheet', as Ritchie explained:

The control sheet came about because, not long after we set up and started making films in 1987 and 1988, Michael said to me: 'as part of this whole venture, we've got to keep the boards happy. They've got to see that we're managing the process, they've got to see that we know what the risks are and that they're manageable risks. How best can we present this?' I came up with the idea of what became the control sheet. The concept was simple, it was to try to project how well a film would do in terms of its pre-sales and ultimately, when we were in direct distribution, what the actual sales in particular territories might be. The whole goal of it was to try to come up with projects that were commercial, that would make money, or at least we wouldn't lose money. Did it help the commerciality of projects? Yes it did. Nobody is going to say, at the end of the day, that you can decide which film to make by virtue of what an accountant has come up with. That's not how it should work, and that's not how it does work. But what it did do was make you better informed when you're looking at a project as to whether or not it has commercial appeal (Ritchie, 2014).

The reorientation of Working Title's slate towards a more commercial market was, however, a divisive issue. Many of the films which Working Title had in various stages of development were low budget films supported by the familiar publicly subsidised sources and typically continued the established trend towards 'social art cinema'. Crucially, the sales estimates which Palmer and her colleagues provided for films which Working Title

had in development began to indicate the economic viability of a given project at an early stage. In turn, if the sales estimates did not support the production budget of a given film, Polygram would withhold equity from its German subsidiary. 'It put me in the very vulnerable position of being hustled by every one of those great hustlers', Palmer recalled. 'I always had one of them cross with me at any one time, if not all of them. I had to negotiate with the PolyGram financial and legal people. I was really the meat in everybody's sandwich' (Palmer, 2013). In particular, the free market realities of international film sales began rapidly to conspire against Radclyffe's preference for low budget British films with a particular creative and cultural sensibility. According to Palmer, the US market was generally estimated to be worth 40 per cent of the production budget, while the rest of the world provided the remaining 60 per cent. By the early 1990s, however, the sobering reality was that an independent British film was lucky to realise 20 per cent from the US market (Palmer, 2013). As she explained, applying a strict free market rationale to Working Title's production activities had markedly different ramifications for Working Title's producers-in-chief:

The gritty Channel 4 type of films were difficult to sell internationally, that's for sure, so they were difficult to finance under that model we had. That was a time of great frustration for Sarah because the model we had didn't suit the kind of films she wanted to make. And Tim really did want to be much more commercial. He wanted to be in the mainstream, no doubt about it. And I think that was very difficult for their working relationship, Sarah and Tim, because they were really heading off in different directions ... Sarah was a much more instinctive, creative producer while Tim was more business-oriented, more structured. Sarah would get incredibly passionate about a project, she would fall in love with a project and want to get it made at all costs and Tim would be more reflective, more analytical. I wouldn't have said less creative, but less passionate, less emotional about it (Palmer, 2013).

The free market rationale which had governed the operation of Working Title since the involvement of PolyGram's New Business Division had conspired to pull the plug on several of the projects Radclyffe had in development. As she explained in a 1993 interview, 'I had absolutely zero confidence in my own ideas. I got knocked back again and again, and I thought ... I'm never going to get a film made here'. 'As a producer, I can only work on projects I instinctively believe in', she continued. 'I'm not much good at the business side of things, constant meetings and all that. I'd much rather go off and read scripts and make movies. If you end up running a company, you might as well be selling baked beans for all the difference it makes' (Moir, 1993, 8).

If PolyGram's capitalisation of Working Title and the move to a more commercially minded production policy had challenging implications for Radclyffe, it also encouraged expansion in various directions, including a presence in Hollywood for the first time. In the summer of 1990, Paul Webster moved into a house which Working Title rented on Taft Avenue in the heart of Hollywood. In practice, developing and producing material in the US relied on the same financing model as Working Title's British-based productions. Crucially, however, the development of a US-based slate allowed Working Title to embrace more commercially oriented production from the start. The company's first two US based films — *Drop Dead Fred* (1991) and *Ruben and Ed* (1991) — were American-set comedies. As Webster explained:

Really, I was there to make *Drop Dead Fred*, I went there just to make that movie. They had an assistant there called Clarissa Troop who lived there and they kept a house there so they could stay there when they came out and we all lived there. The office was upstairs and we all lived downstairs. Gradually, I made the decision to stay in America a while and I said to Tim, 'I can build this up with you, if you like', and he said 'yes'. We then started exploring other projects ... it just kind of grew organically (Webster, 2013).

Back in Britain, Working Title also explored the possibility of expanding WTTV by entering the bidding process for one of the 15 regional ITV franchises which were up for renewal in 1991. To enhance its chances PolyGram and Working Title joined forces with Palace and Mentorn Films to form a consortium called London Independent Broadcasting (LIB). Crucially Mentorn was an established television production company which produced successful programmes for Channel 4, ITV and the BBC, while PolyGram provided the financial solidarity that might underpin a successful bid. Ultimately, however, their bid was unsuccessful and they lost out to the incumbent London Weekend Television (LWT), which retained its franchise (Davidson, 1992, 92-108). 'I remember talking to Michael Kuhn and it wasn't anticipated that we'd get anywhere with the bid. Nobody seriously thought we'd land it', Simon Wright, head of WTTV recalled. 'Life would have been very different had we got it' (Wright, 2014). As he went on to explain:

The television side was run just like any other independent company. It would rely on a commission form a broadcaster who would pay a licence fee and then the balance of the money would come from soft subsidies — in those days we had the sale and leaseback. You'd get 12 percent of the budget from that, you'd get a licence fee and then you'd get a distribution advance from a distributor and that would always be supplied by PolyGram ... very few people fund television without broadcasters attached and there's a simple reason for that. Broadcast license fees

are way above what you would require to buy a finished programme. Television only works if you've got the majority of the budget as license fee from a single broadcaster (Wright, 2014).

WTTV would take a back seat to Working Title's activities in films in the years that followed. Nonetheless, it produced miniseries for all the major British broadcasters, including *The Borrowers* (BBC, 1992-3), *Tales of the City* (Channel 4, 1993) and *The Baldy Man* (ITV, 1995-7).

Kuhn's plans for expanding PolyGram's film interest took a decisive turn in January 1991. David Fine stepped down as CEO and President of PolyGram to be replaced by the Frenchman, Alain Levy. Levy was a rising star within the Polygram executive strata and had previously managed the company's operations in France and the US. Levy had been hand-picked by Timmer, who had been appointed President and CEO of Philips the previous year. Significantly, Levy was widely believed to possess the 'visionary' status his predecessor lacked. Levy's arrival gave Kuhn and Ritchie renewed hope that the progress made under the auspices of the New Business Division would lead to a more substantial commitment to film. 'It was probably not a bad thing that there was a softly, softly, slowly, slowly period as we built up our own experience of the industry and it was just the way that the stars lined up', Ritchie explained. 'In the early days there weren't any fantastically profitable films or any great films. But what we were able to show to PolyGram and Philips is that we'd built up a business without risking a huge amount of money or investing a huge amount of money' (Ritchie, 2014). In August Kuhn and Levy, with the help of financial expertise from Malcolm Ritchie, and PolyGram's COO, Jan Cook, presented a paper entitled 'PolyGram and Films' to the board of Philips. With the support of Timmer, the board passed the proposal, and the paper effectively became the foundational document for PolyGram Filmed Entertainment. A summary of its contents was recorded in PFE's 1993 business overview:

The approach presented by PolyGram was not to acquire a studio but instead to build, over a three to five year period, a "label" system of production companies capable of producing between 8 to 15 "A" and "B" pictures a year, backed up with the establishment of a marketing and sales organisation capable of allowing the production entities to access a greater share of the distribution margin in each income inflow. In the shorter term, this would be achieved specifically by releasing the major movies in the USA through an existing major distributor on a "Rent-a-studio" basis whilst the smaller budget pictures would be distributed in the USA through a small specialised distribution organisation ... Foreign (non US) sales would be handled through PolyGram's international film sales operation, Manifesto.

PolyGram's longer term plan would be to establish its own theatrical distribution system in North America whilst developing major PolyGram territories worldwide to handle film (and particularly video) sales. Small production units would also be established in some of the key territories in order to provide the possibilities for the successful balance of local and international product – a similar concept to that enjoyed by PolyGram in the record industry.

The August '91 plan indicated a total investment cost, based on peak cash flow, of US \$200m. The plan noted that further production unit (and catalogue) acquisitions would continue to be explored in future – with any specific proposal being dealt with on a case by case basis (PolyGram, 1993).

The 1991 plan, which was set in motion immediately, would be realised over the following seven years with a remarkable degree of fidelity to its original intentions. PolyGram announced their \$200 million investment to the trade press the following month along with more immediate concerns. The media conglomerate would increase its stake in both Working Title and Propaganda from 49 to 100 per cent and escalate the combined rate of film production to a minimum of eight films per year - four in the \$15-\$25m range and four in the \$7- \$10m range (Ajax, 1991a, 4). The flourishing of PolyGram Filmed Entertainment had some immediate implications for Working Title. The first repercussion was a restructuring exercise which attempted to serve the needs of PFE without abandoning Working Title's roots. Alison Owen, a producer working for Limelight, an advertisement and music video outfit, was recruited in October 1991 to oversee the creation of a low budget division at Working Title (Ajax, 1991b, 3). The unfolding corporate vision for PFE, however, acted as a wedge which enlarged the existing gaps between the working practices and creative outlooks of Working Title's three directors.

Tim approached me saying that what they wanted to do was restructure. Tim was going to do the big budget movies, Sarah was going to do 'Rad Films' which was the medium budget movies and I was going to fly the Working Title flag on the kind of movies that they had come to prominence for, the Channel Four and British Screen movies ... Almost as soon as I arrived, the cracks in the relationship between Tim and Sarah and Graham were showing. It was a strange period, I was friends with everybody, but you could see that things were changing. Once PolyGram came in and invested 100 percent, they didn't want to do those little films anyway. The whole remit was about growing the company to make films that would appeal much more to an international market (Owen, 2013).

With the approval of Philips secured, PolyGram's New Business Division was rebranded PolyGram Filmed Entertainment in January 1992. More than merely a change in title, the funding now available to PFE enabled the company to directly invest in film

production and establish in-house distribution and marketing divisions in key international territories. The project of creating a Hollywood-style film studio was finally underway. Working Title's first two years under the PolyGram's New Business Division produced a range of films which reflected the company's roots in the social art cinema of the 1980s and the more commercial films intended to find a mass audience. The following section examines this period of mixed output in some detail.

From independent to subsidiary: Working Title's slate 1990-1992

A useful way of breaking down Working Title's slate yet further is to divide the films into genre categories. Table 3, below, presents a basic overview of the films Working Title released between 1990 and 1992, including their year of production, nation of origin, production budget and box office breakdown by domestic, international, UK and worldwide markets (where available):

Table 3 –Working Title slate by genre, 1990-1992 (all figures in \$USD million)

Genre/Title	Year	Origin	Production Budget	Domestic B.O.	Int'l B.O.	UK B.O.	Worldwide B.O.
<u>Comedy</u>							
<i>Drop Dead Fred</i>	1991	US/UK	6	13.8	-	-	13.8
<i>Rubin and Ed</i>	1991	-	2	0.01	-	-	0.01
<i>Barton Fink</i>	1991	UK/US	-	6.1	-	-	6.1
<i>Bob Roberts</i>	1992	UK/US	3	4.4	-	-	4.4
<u>Drama</u>							
<i>Fools of Fortune</i>	1990	UK	4.5	0.08	-	-	0.08
<i>Dakota Road</i>	1990	UK	0.5	-	-	-	-
<i>Edward II</i>	1991	UK	0.8	0.6	-	-	0.6
<i>London Kills Me</i>	1991	UK	2.5	0.1	-	-	0.1
<i>Map of the Human Heart</i>	1992	UK/AUS/ CAN/FR	13	2.8	-	-	2.8
<u>Thriller/Action</u>							
<i>Chicago Joe and the Showgirl</i>	1990	UK	5	0.08	-	-	0.08
<i>Robin Hood</i>	1991	UK/US/C A/GER	12	-	-	-	-

Sources: Boxofficemojo.com (box office data) imdb.com (origin) *Variety*, 1998, 102 (production budgets)

Of the three broad genres represented in Working Title's slate, the dramas bear the closest relation to the films which defined the company's years as an independent. Indeed, *Fools of Fortune* (1990), *Dakota Road* (1990) and *London Kills Me* (1991) were all low budget films which received partial funding from Channel 4. Conversely, *Edward II* (1991) was fully funded by the BBC drama department, in a move that prefigured the establishment of BBC Films. All of these films bore, to a greater or lesser extent, the imprint of the 'social art cinema'. In this respect, the two archetypal examples were *London Kills Me* and *Edward II*, Working Title's final two collaborations with Hanif Kureishi and Derek Jarman respectively. Kureishi took to the director's chair for the first and only time in his career on the former, a muddled and unconvincing portrayal of a group of homeless drug addicts in Notting Hill, which fused the writer's now familiar combination of realism and surrealism. Jarman directed a typically unconventional adaptation of Christopher Marlowe's history play, which dealt with the theme of institutionalised homophobia. In contrast, *Fools of Fortune* and *Dakota Road* were more formally conventional but similarly charged with the political and social. The former is a period drama set during the Irish War of Independence and the latter a contemporary tale of a sexual awakening set against the backdrop of family tensions. As Kuhn explained, steering Working Title away from the Channel 4 mould was a task that took a considerable period of time to achieve:

Development takes forever to turn around. It takes a minimum of three, more likely five years if you're starting off to have anything new. So, you had to exist on what you had in the pipeline, the stuff that could get made at that time which wasn't necessarily commercial stuff but could help pay your overhead. From a very early stage Tim and I agreed that we almost had to start afresh on development and aim it at a more commercial market. But in the meantime they had to do what they had to do. They didn't have anything else in the hopper except what they had from the past. (Kuhn, 2013a)

The films which Working Title pursued on the other side of the Atlantic were, however, markedly different. In 1991, Webster hired Liza Chasin as an assistant at Working Title's recently established LA office. Like the London office, the company had only informal structures. 'There were really no job descriptions or titles', she explained. 'I was the assistant, being the development person, being the office manager, you name it, we all wore several hats in those days' (Chasin, 2014). Without the long shadow of 'social art

cinema' to reform, however, the LA office concentrated on projects more in line with the emerging PFE vision. As Chasin explained:

We were trying to convince people that we weren't only making beautiful, arty films out of the UK and that we were looking to expand ... We were doing movies that were transitional. It was about convincing people who we were, that this new kind of studio called PolyGram was real and that all of us who were part of that – Working Title, Propaganda, and Interscope – were forging ahead in convincing the town that this new presence, which everybody only knew as a music company, was making a real foray into film. There was a lot of outgoings, a lot of outgoing calls. I like to joke that those were the years where we got a lot of scripts from the agents that had a thin layer of dust on them, that couldn't get made anywhere else (Chasin, 2014).

The first two films produced out of the LA office, *Drop Dead Fred* and *Rubin and Ed*, were contemporary American-set comedies which focussed on the grotesque and bizarre respectively. The most important and long lasting relationships Working Title developed in its first years in LA were with the filmmakers Joel and Ethan Coen and Tim Robbins. The Coen brothers had already established a formidable critical reputation with their first three films, *Blood Simple* (1984), *Raising Arizona* (1987) and *Miller's Crossing* (1990). During an extended period of buoyancy within the independent industry in the US, *Blood Simple* had been distributed by one of the market leaders, Circle Films Releasing. Following its success, the Coen brothers signed a four film production deal with the company's filmmaking arm, Circle Films (Attanasio, 1985). *Barton Fink* (1991) the Coen brother's fourth collaboration with Circle was, however, co-produced with Working Title and acquired by Manifesto Film Sales for international distribution. The new relationship proved productive, and Working Title became the production company of choice for the Coen brothers for the rest of the 1990s and, in several cases, well beyond. Working Title's relationship with Tim Robbins took shape with *Bob Roberts* (1992), a political satire about a Republican candidate for the senate. Working Title subsequently signed a three year deal with Robbins for a further two films (Ayscough, 1993, 1).

Finally, the capital which the New Business Division had provided to Working Title allowed the company to embrace bigger budget projects with a more commercial leaning. The most expensive and complicated production of the time was the \$13 million *Map of the Human Heart* (1992). This sprawling drama was set in several different decades and countries. 'It was incredibly complicated, by far the most complicated movie we ever did in terms of financing and in terms of production', Bradstreet explained. 'We did a three-way co-production and overlaid that on a two-way co-production, it was complicated to the

extent that no one can remember how we did it, including me' (Bradstreet, 2013). Working Title also had its first encounter with a Hollywood studio, Twentieth Century Fox, which sub-contracted the company to produce a relatively modestly budgeted, loosely realist version of *Robin Hood* (1991). Unfortunately, the film was released in the same year as Warner Bros. big-budget blockbuster version of the same story, *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (1991), and failed to make an impact at the box office.

Of the 11 films Working Title produced between 1990 and 1992, six – *Chicago Joe and the Showgirl*, *Fools of Fortune*, *Drop Dead Fred*, *London Kills Me*, *Map of the Human Heart* and *Bob Roberts*, were produced by a combination of the tax-driven finance from PolyGram Film Produktion and presales from Manifesto (PolyGram, 1995). The funding model did not, of course, preclude investment from the British-based public institutions which had defined Working Title's years as an independent. What the vast majority of Working Title's films between 1990 and 1992 had in common, however, was a lack of success in finding a popular audience, the only exception being *Drop Dead Fred*. The divide in Working Title's slate was reflective of the diverging tastes and ambitions of Bevan and Radclyffe. Bevan embraced the creative and business regime which PolyGram had imposed on Working Title and sought to lead the company into more commercial terrain. In contrast, Radclyffe resisted it, and desired the creative and operational freedoms she had enjoyed as an independent. Over the course of 1992, both Radclyffe and Bradstreet left the company to establish independent filmmaking companies. Their exits paved the way for a new chairman, Eric Fellner, to enter the Working Title fold. Fellner's arrival coincided with the integration of Working Title into the newly established PFE as a wholly owned subsidiary. The following section explores these developments in greater detail.

1992: The creation of PolyGram Filmed Entertainment and new leadership at Working Title

From the moment of its incorporation, PFE located its two operational hubs in the UK and the US, or more precisely, London and Los Angeles. Michael Kuhn was appointed President of PFE and relocated to LA and to assume responsibility for English-language production and domestic distribution and marketing. In line with the lexicon of the Hollywood majors, 'domestic' distribution meant the US market. On the other side of the Atlantic, PolyGram Filmed Entertainment International (PFEI) was simultaneously incorporated in London. Kuhn appointed Stewart Till, a former senior executive with CBS Fox Video and Sky

Television, as President of PFEI with responsibility for overseeing the development of 'international' (that is, non-US) distribution and marketing across the platforms of theatrical, video and television, and 'foreign language' (non-English) production. Working from PolyGram's International headquarters in Berkley Square, Till began to oversee the establishment of PFEI's operating companies, or 'OP COs' as they became known in all of the major international territories.

The Manifesto model of raising production finance through the presale of distribution rights was unsustainable in the long term. As Wendy Palmer explained, 'it was really important to keep the term as low as possible, seven years was ideal, because that was time to give two years theatrical, 12 months video, two to four years on TV and then the rights would revert back to Manifesto' (Palmer 2013). Amassing residual rights in this way allowed PFE to mirror PolyGram's strategy of building catalogues of titles for exploitation in perpetuity. The downside for PFE, however, was that the Manifesto model also meant that the most valuable rights in a film's product lifecycle were exploited by others. For PFE, the need to establish distribution and marketing companies in-house was paramount, as Till explained:

We said at the time, slightly tongue in cheek, if you made good films, then you should be in distribution and if you made bad films, you should be in presales ... If they turned out to be bad films, then the company who bought them bore the risk but, of course, if they were hits, then they kept all the profits and margins. The presales route was untenable in the long term because if you made a film for \$10 million, you could sell it for \$11 million, but you never sold it for \$15 million or \$20 million and occasionally you'd sell it for £7 million or \$8 million. So there was no upside, you didn't have the benefit of the hits ... We had to believe that we would make successful films and that we would have the right relationships with the right producers (Till, 2014).

In line with the objectives of PFE's 1991 plan, PFE had been actively pursuing the acquisition of another UK-based distribution company. The Palace group of businesses remained the largest and most integrated in the independent sector and acquisition discussions between the two parties had been ongoing since the failed ITV franchise bid. In November 1991 a provisional deal had been agreed under which Palace's theatrical and video distribution companies, Palace Pictures and Palace Video, would be sold to PFE for £7 million. It was envisaged that Palace's catalogue of rights and distribution and marketing arm would form the core of PFE's UK operating company. Additionally, PFE would retain the services of Steve Woolley and Nik Powell through a first look deal with Palace Productions, which would remain independent (Ajax, 1991c, 1). Palace was, however,

widely rumoured to be in financial trouble and any deal was dependent upon a satisfactory audit of the company's accounts. When the results arrived in May the following year, the news was not good. Palace's liabilities far outstripped its assets and PolyGram ultimately withdrew from the deal. Despite PFE's provision of a secured loan, Palace slipped into liquidation by August (Ilott, 1992a, 31). In the aftermath, PFE nonetheless acquired the UK theatrical and video rights to a number of films awaiting release by Palace, including *The Crying Game* (1992) and *Reservoir Dogs* (1992).

Having failed to acquire a UK distribution company, PFE would have to create one. In the end, the operation that emerged, PFE UK, grew out of the existing infrastructure of Manifesto Film Sales. In January 1992 Wendy Palmer left Manifesto and was replaced by Aline Perry who assumed the role of Director of Sales (Groves, 1992, 68). Manifesto once again separated from Working Title, moving from Water Lane to the production company's former offices in Livonia Street. One of the Manifesto team, Christopher Bailey, was appointed as Head of Theatrical Distribution, shortly followed by Julia Short as Head of Marketing and Publicity. The transition from film sales to film distribution was, however, bridged by a period in which the new operating company would handle its own marketing and PR but outsource the physical distribution of its films. The longstanding monolith of the British film industry, Rank Film Distributors, provided PFE with the mechanical and logistical services of print reproduction and distribution, cinema booking and cash collection (Short, 2014). While PFE was able to make use of an existing distribution infrastructure in the UK, the situation in other territories was rather different, and the majority of the new companies that PFE established were in territories in which there was no in-house expertise in film. As Till explained, PolyGram's existing music companies proved to be a mixed blessing in establishing PFEI:

When you arrived there was some infrastructure, some knowledge of the marketplace and some people who could perhaps set up meetings. That was the good news. The bad news was that Alain Levy's vision was to create integrated film and music companies. The reality was that none of the music companies, with the exception of Germany ... knew anything about film but they wanted to be in film. Who doesn't? The advantage of having someone there - which was not politically correct to say - was hugely outweighed by all the aggravation. I would go to the territories and say 'this is the solution I want to pursue' and the local record chief executive would say 'I want to come to the meeting to make sure of "x"'. It varied dramatically from country-to-country but in the main you had to keep quiet about it because the record company was financing everything and, obviously, we made losses so we couldn't get too feisty, but it was a major aggravation (Till, 2014).

On the other side of the Atlantic, Michael Kuhn was simultaneously concentrating on establishing PFE's US distribution and marketing capacity from offices on North Maple Drive. The US represented the single largest market in the world and was historically considered the 'shop window' which could prompt success in international territories. The expense involved in establishing a US distribution company, however, made it a high risk strategy. Kuhn was determined to proceed as cautiously as possible by soliciting a Hollywood partner. The result was the incorporation of Gramercy Pictures with Universal in May 1992. Gramercy was jointly funded by PolyGram and Universal and given the remit of distributing and marketing the medium and low budget 'specialty' releases of both of its parent companies (Farrow, 1992, 1). Gramercy was located across the street from PFE on Alden Drive, an office space which also now housed Working Title's LA office. Recalling his approach, Kuhn explained:

To open up distribution in America is a huge decision and many people, great people, had tried and failed dismally. It was perceived as a black hole money pit, so it was an extremely nervous-making beginning. We decided insofar as we had big pictures that we'd keep distributing through the studios, but the smaller ones we'd start on our own ... I wanted to have enough product guaranteed, so I needed another supplier, so that would be cast-offs from Universal. Hopefully they'd develop some of their own specialty stuff and we'd use their expertise and whatever back office we could and generally spread the risk. That was the idea, gain experience of what it means to distribute in North America before you jump in (Kuhn, 2013a).

In effect, the remit of Gramercy equated to distributing and marketing those films which fell in a commercial area somewhere between art house cinema and mainstream studio releases. Russell Schwartz, a former executive at Island and Miramax, was appointed President of Gramercy and granted day-to-day operational autonomy from both parent companies. 'It was a joint venture but PolyGram made movies and put up the P&A and completely controlled their movies and Universal did the same. There were no co-productions that were done, it was really about the individual production companies under the PolyGram banner creating product and production executives at Universal doing the same', Schwartz explained. 'All of the movies fed into a centralised marketing and distribution system which was, in-effect, Gramercy. In addition, Gramercy acquired movies on its own but that was primarily done under the PolyGram auspices' (Schwartz, 2014). Similarly, international distribution was undertaken separately by either PolyGram or Universal.

The scale of a Gramercy release would typically be in the 300 to 400 prints range, with the ability to expand to 800 prints if demand proved to be high. Within their overall marketing strategy, Gramercy hired the services of DDB Needham, the marketing agency which promoted Universal's films throughout the US (Lally, 1993, 55). The company would require a significant incubation period to prepare a slate of nine films which were scheduled for distribution from May 1993 onwards. Six of the initial crop were contributed by PFE, including Working Title's US-based productions *Posse* (1993) and *Romeo Is Bleeding* (1993) (Brennan, 1993, 1 & 40). As Schwartz explained, Gramercy's approach to distribution and marketing was significantly different to that of the major Hollywood studios:

It means that the movies don't go out wide, they go out in a smaller release pattern and reviews and publicity are very important to engaging an audience. It wasn't about a big TV spend or a big outdoor campaign, or some big commercial idea. Most of these films were not overtly commercial. We have a phrase called POW, which is 'Pay their Own Way'. If they don't work in the beginning you're able to pull back and not spend any more money, whereas with a wide release you're committed from day one and you're spending 90 to 95 percent of your advertising budget before you even open. With a platform release you can gauge how much money you want to spend to support it depending on how the previous weekend has done ... There were more individual mom and pop operations as well as a couple of art-house chains that were very dedicated to specialty movies so, the competition was more amongst companies of a similar size to Gramercy, rather than with the studios. What would happen, is if a movie from Gramercy, or anybody else for that matter, was breaking out, the exhibitors would be the one who would demand it. Exhibitors tend to eat their young if they smelt a success. If they had the room to do it, the multiplexes would certainly play it and now in the era with so many multi-screen cinemas it's even less of an issue, there's always a screen available if a movie's doing business and there's always another film right behind it if it's not (Shwartz, 2014).

To cover a greater range of market segments, PFE also required a means of both supplying and distributing bigger-budget films with more mainstream appeal through the major Hollywood studios. The 'rent-a-studio' strategy was initiated with the acquisition of an existing output deal owned by Nelson Entertainment in October 1991. The financially troubled Nelson was unable to honour its contractual commitments to Columbia, Showtime and Viacom which were respectively due theatrical, pay-television and syndicated television rights to the company's output. The various deals lasted between two and four years and required four films per year in the \$15-25 million budget range (Ilott, 1991, 5 & 29). PFE would extend its strategy of collaboration with the major Hollywood

studios in November 1993 by agreeing a four year non-exclusive deal with MGM for the US theatrical distribution of up to four big budget PFE films annually (Bateman, 1993, 1).

In August PFE acquired a 51 percent controlling interest in Interscope Communications, an LA-based production company. The price tag of \$35 million was justified on the basis of the company's track record and development slate. Since 1982 Interscope had produced over 25 films, including a series of high concept hits like *3 Men and a Baby* (1987), *Cocktail* (1988) and *Bird on a Wire* (1990). The company's founder and chairman, Ted Field, and its president, Bob Court, also brought with it an ongoing distribution deal with Disney in the US, while international distribution would go through PFE (Ilott, 1992b, 1& 52). More than any previous acquisition, PFE's investment in Interscope signalled the formation of a major filmmaking enterprise. Considering Interscope's position within PFE, Ritchie explained:

They were a different sort of vehicle. They were acquired for their capability to produce big pictures, to produce films that could be released through the studio system on a wide release which meant, at that time, over 1,000 prints in the US. It was a different model to Gramercy, which generally speaking, was looking towards no more than 500 prints in the US. Interscope was different from the outset and as it turned out, Interscope was not a success for us, but it had a good track record of producing films for Disney, particularly Disney action movies which had done some very credible business immediately prior to us acquiring them. *The Hand that Rocked the Cradle* did \$80 million or \$90 million at the US box-office, so they had bigger budget and we thought — and I think that we were right — that you can produce the type of films that Working Title and Propaganda were doing, but you also needed bigger budget films with bigger stars and Interscope presented itself as a business that had the ability to do that (Ritchie, 2014).

The rapid expansion of PFE's production and distribution operations coincided with the changes in Working Title's management. Bradstreet was the first to jump, citing the change in the culture of the company as one of the primary reasons for his exit. 'We had been used to doing whatever we liked, quite literally, and we were no longer able to do that. We had to grow up and conform to a publically traded very large corporate and their internal requirements and control and protocols', he explained. 'It was just a different culture. When you're used to being entrepreneurs and the three of us would make decisions over a beer or glass of wine. We were now having to report the decision making process extremely regularly' (Bradstreet, 2013b). By January 1992, Bradstreet had incorporated his own film finance company, Bradstreet Media, based at offices in Dean Street, although his complete disentanglement from Working Title was amicably extended over the course of the year, coinciding with the termination of the company's original

agreement PolyGram. 'For me it was a massive learning curve and we all learned on the hoof in order to survive', he recalled fondly. 'I was lucky to be part of it, and it was vibrant and fun and an enormous amount of hard work and incredible risk taking'. The experiences of his seven year term at the company also had a lasting effect on his future career and understanding of the industry:

Working Title, for me, is the template for how to create a production company and for how producers should operate within the movie business. I have advised various companies over the years ... and it was always a version of the Working Title template because it overtly worked. Independent producers still live hand-to-mouth and it's just crazy. This is a business we're in and you've got to create sustainable companies and that's what Tim and Sarah and I wanted to do (Bradstreet, 2013b).

As far as Radclyffe was concerned, as a producer she not only had to deal with the operational changes that had been imposed on the company, but also the related change in creative direction which privileged commercial filmmaking intended for an international audience. 'Sarah didn't like the formality of working with PolyGram, she felt they were interfering. She was very, very independent in spirit and I loved her for that', Bevan explained. 'She was never going to fit well with the more structured life that we were heading towards, and I was desperate for a more structured life' (Bevan, 2013). Having made an initial investment in the company, Kuhn felt it was his responsibility to find another producer to partner Bevan at the helm of Working Title. In March 1992, Kuhn approached the candidate at the top of his list, Eric Fellner, the co-director of Initial Film and Television (Ajax, 1992, 2). During their early meetings, Kuhn was also able to outline his master plan for the nascent PFE. As he recalled:

He wanted more money than we were willing to pay at the time and the argument that I used with him was that if you're an independent film producer you get one turn at bat every year to eighteen months but at Working Title he'd get three or four turns at bat every year. It was the year we got going, and if it worked he would quickly build up the most important asset, which is your name, reputation and producing skills and that would be worth far more than a short term difference between us about whatever we could afford to pay in cash (Kuhn, 2013).

The argument worked. By July 1992 Initial was sold as a going concern to Broadcast Communications, the television subsidiary of the Guardian and Manchester Evening News. Fellner's partner at Initial, Malcolm Gerrie, took sole responsibility as managing director, while Fellner continued his affiliation with Initial by overseeing drama production and acting as a non-executive director (Dawtreay, 1992, 14). This prudent half measure would be

spun out for the remainder of 1992 while Working Title's original agreement with PolyGram, and thus the contracts of Bradstreet and Radclyffe, were run down. With Fellner on board, Radclyffe's position at Working Title was rendered untenable. 'There was certainly a time when I felt Eric had been pulled in before I'd made the decision or had a chance to really discuss exactly what I wanted out of it', she explained. 'I think Tim thought that in Eric he'd found somebody who embraced that more corporate way of doing it, and had the same sort of ambitions as he had' (Seaton, 2000, 61). In August 1992, she took her share of Working Title's development slate as the basis for a new company, Sarah Radclyffe Productions (SRP). SRP took up residence in a small office on Berwick Street while a 'first look' deal was negotiated with PFE (Brennan, 1993b, 4).

The degree of synchronicity between the career paths and creative outlooks of Bevan and Fellner was already remarkable. Just two years Bevan's junior, Fellner had also started his career in music videos after graduating from Cranleigh School in Surrey and spending a solitary year at Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. His first job came as a runner at a London-based music video production company, Zoetrope, where he was able to try his hand at many of the practical areas of filmmaking. With a developing aspiration to become a producer, he took a step in the right direction while working for his next employer, Mallet, Godfrey & Mulcahy Productions (MGM), one of the largest music video companies in London. Within a few months of his arrival, one of the principal partners, Lexi Godfrey, left the company and Fellner was taken on as an in-house producer by the remaining partners, both of whom were directors. The entrepreneurial zeitgeist of the 1980s soon took hold and it was not long before Fellner branched out by establishing his own music video company, Direct Productions (Davies, 1986, 26).

An opportunity to move laterally into feature film production presented itself when Fellner rekindled his association with his former employer, which had since been rebranded MGMM (Millaney, Grant, Mallet and Mulcahy). MGMM was producing over 100 'promos' a year and was firmly established as one of the leading London-based music video companies. In attempting to raise finance for what would become his first film, *Sid and Nancy* (1986), Fellner had encountered one of MGMM's new directors, Scott Millaney, and a plan was hatched to form a feature film production company (Davies, 1986, 27). Significantly, MGMM had recently attracted \$1.5 million of venture capital investment, and created a new holding company, MGMM Communications. The holding company would house a new feature film production company, Initial Pictures, of which it owned a one third share, a post production company, Double Vision, and MGMM itself (Billboard, 1985,

9 & 67). The reality of the business relationship between the two companies, however, amounted to Initial using office space in MGMM's elaborate headquarters in Golden Square.

Unlike Working Title during the same period, Fellner's interest in filmmaking pointed across the Atlantic almost immediately. 'Rightly or wrongly, I've always been more interested in working with the American market place and started doing that at a very early point in my career', he explained. 'I didn't want to be dependent on finance out of the UK' (Fellner, 2014). Largely avoiding the Channel 4-funded social art cinema of the 1980s, Fellner had concentrated on building relationships in Hollywood. By 1989, for example, Initial had a slate which included two contemporary American-set films, *A Kiss Before Dying* (1991) and *Liebstraum* (1991), the former a thriller developed for Universal and the second a mystery film for Paramount (Groves, 1989, 14). By June the following year, however, the cost of over-expansion had taken its toll on MGMM Communications and the holding company slid into receivership. MGMM had increased its stake in the rebranded Initial Film and Television to 51 percent, and speculation about the origin of the bankruptcy oscillated between the parent company and its subsidiary. Nonetheless, a management buy-out swiftly extricated Initial from the receiver, leaving Fellner and Gerrie to run the company as an independent (Moore, 1990, 2).

Once Fellner had joined Working Title, he immediately assumed joint responsibility for the company's US-based slate by taking on executive producer duties on *Romeo is Bleeding* (1993) and *Posse* (1993) alongside Bevan. Fellner's arrival coincided with Working Title's integration into PFE and the company's subsequent internal reorganisation into discrete departments with defined operating and reporting structures. Simultaneously, the green-lighting process which had been established between Working Title and the New Business Division was reorganised into a creative and financial filter called the 'control sheet'. The following section explores these developments in greater detail.

The internal reorganisation of Working Title and the 'control sheet'

In February 1993, it was finally announced that PFE had acquired 100 percent of Working Title and Eric Fellner had been appointed as co-chair alongside Tim Bevan. The growing ambitions of PFE and Working Title were reiterated with the news that the company had an annual production fund of \$35 million, which would contribute three films a year in the \$10-20 million range to PFE's distribution and sales operations (Moore, 1993,

1). The reality of Working Title's corporate integration into PFE was, however, a little more subtle. In October the previous year, PFE had incorporated a wholly owned subsidiary company, Working Title Ltd., to which Michael Kuhn, Stewart Till and Jill Tandy were appointed as directors. Bevan and Fellner subsequently joined their colleagues at PFE on the board of the new company in March 1993. Working Title Ltd. had been formed to provide a clean slate for the production company which, from that moment onwards, would be entirely and directly funded by PolyGram Filmed Entertainment. In contrast, Working Title Films Ltd. became dormant, holding the assets of that company which had accrued between 1986 and 1993 (PolyGram, 1995). For Bevan, the relinquishment of ownership was an inevitable and unproblematic part of running a production company as a subsidiary of a media conglomerate:

In film, it's all about, who's having the ideas, who's producing them and then, how they're getting paid and how their profit margin works. What we realised was that there was a lot of capital required to be able to do the first parts, which is to develop the films and to get to a point where you're going to produce them. It was worth giving away equity in order to have that freedom as long as if those films were successful you've got a decent margin on it ... We've had a small margin, but a proper margin and a meaningful margin on films that have been very successful (Bevan, 2013).

The expense of Working Title's day-to-day operations immediately began to reflect the importance of PolyGram's continuing financial support. As a production subsidiary with only two principal functions – the development and production of feature films – Working Title was necessarily a loss making business within the PFE business group. 'They had production fee income, they had overheads, and they had development costs and that was basically their profit and loss account' Ritchie explained (Ritchie, 2014). An examination of PFE's 1994 budget for Working Title, for example, gives an indication of the anticipated output of the production label and of the cost of maintaining its overhead and development costs. A development budget of \$4.5 million allowed for up to £500,000 each for two 'larger star driven' projects and up to of up to £250,000 each for 12 'larger idea driven' projects, plus a further £500,000 for the acquisition of spec scripts. With four films a year required for the PFE distribution pipeline, this amounted to a conversion ratio of 2:1 for 'star driven' projects and 4:1 for 'idea driven' projects. In the same year, Working Title's overheads were budgeted at £2.4 million, with a projected development write-off of 1.2 million. This combined figure of £3.6 million was set against an anticipated production fee income of 1.9 million (PolyGram, 1994). Thus, excluding the yet more substantial costs of production, Working Title required over £7 million a year to maintain.

At just 35 and 33 respectively, Bevan and Fellner had both the energy and drive of relative youth and the experience of producing over 20 films between them. Crucially, Working Title's renewed alliance with PFE also meant that the company had access to a burgeoning network of distribution, marketing and sales companies. The creation of Working Title Ltd. also underlined a new approach in both the management and internal organisation. Discussing the working relationship which he and Bevan settled upon, Fellner explained:

We thought we'd do everything together, and then it was after the first film we made, *Romeo is Bleeding*, that we decided to split it because it didn't work. He'd run some films and I'd run other films and that's how it is right up until today, and it's been very successful. We work together in deciding what films to get behind and what films to make - the big decisions - but in terms of actually producing them, we run the films very separately ... I probably veer towards more mainstream material, and he probably veers more towards intellectual material or material with artistic integrity, but we can both cross over into those other areas ... We also decided to build a proper business that had departments which operated properly and efficiently and had reporting structures. Most importantly, we set up the notion of building a slate for development and production, so that each year we could deliver a substantial amount of films into the distribution entity (Fellner, 2014).

From this moment onwards, a unifying factor in every film which Working Title produced would be the collective and individual agency of Bevan and Fellner in selecting projects and successfully guiding them through the processes of development, production, post-production and marketing. The structure through which these processes were funnelled, however, changed markedly. During the course of 1993, Working Title's 22 full-time staff were organised into six lean departments: administration, accounts, development, production, the US office and legal and business affairs. In keeping with the approach of PolyGram's label system, the generic functions – administration and accounts – were reshaped to mirror PolyGram's established corporate templates. The four departments directly involved in filmmaking – development, production, the US office and legal and business affairs – would be respectively run by Debra Hayward, Jane Frazer, Liza Chasin and Angela Morrison, all of whom were promoted from within (PolyGram, 1994). The new structure proved so successful that it remains in place today with only a few minor additions at the time of writing. The company's headcount would, however, creep up to fluctuate between 30 and 40 over the years that followed. The team assembled in 1993 formed the backbone of Working Title for the remainder of the 1990s and, in most cases, well beyond. Each of the departmental heads developed a strong sense of commitment to one another and to the overall project of building Working Title with Bevan and Fellner.

Hayward had joined Working Title in 1989 as an assistant to Sarah Radclyffe. Similarly, Liza Chasin had been recruited to the US office as Paul Webster's assistant in 1991. In March 1993 the two women were jointly appointed as Vice Presidents of development/production, with Hayward overseeing the UK-based slate from the London office and Chasin doing the same for the US-based slate from Los Angeles (Marx, 1993, 3). The role of the development teams on either side of the Atlantic was to convert the raw matter of story ideas into films by developing them in collaboration with appropriate creative talent. 'If Tim or Eric want to do something, they will push it through. That's how I was schooled and that is how I've schooled all the people who worked for me', Hayward explained. 'There has to be a lot of drive and passion to get something off the ground because all the way along the chain you have to convince someone to buy the idea, convince a writer that it's a good idea, convince a director of the screenplay' (Hayward, 2013). Another compelling factor for Hayward's department would quickly become ensuring that the ongoing development slate would satisfy the requirements of PFE's burgeoning distribution pipeline. Accordingly, the slate would expand to cover projects which numbered in the dozens, ranging from the embryonic to the production ready. As Hayward noted, the enabling factor was the resources which PFE provided:

In America you have all those echelons in the studios and in major production companies – the creative and executive strata – that didn't exist here. It was very much a cottage industry and if you were a producer you did absolutely everything including pushing your film over the starting line to get it made ... Through the 1990s, I was very privileged because our films were fully financed. When it's a one stop shop like that, and you don't have to go out and piece together bits of funding, it allows you to be creative and put all your energies into making the best film possible. That obviously accounts for much of the success of Working Title. The films became much better because they were really well developed, well cast and well attended to throughout their production (Hayward, 2013).

While Working Title had created a development infrastructure in London which was beginning to resemble that of the Hollywood film industry, it was also paramount to maintain a presence in Hollywood simultaneously. 'It became very apparent, very quickly, that everything we were doing, whether it was strictly a London-based film or not was coming through LA at some point; through the agencies for talent, or writers or directors', Chasin explained. 'Everything was passing through. So having a presence and having relationships with the agencies and the community here was a necessity; we couldn't have pushed our movies into being without it' (Chasin, 2014). As the epicentre of the Hollywood

industry, having a permanent presence in LA also ensured that Working Title benefited from the creative talent resident within that community, as Chasin made clear:

When we put together a talent list, ours are endless on this end versus the London list because the London pool is so much smaller. When we're talking about bigger, more studio-minded films, there's a handful of writers you'd go to in London for things like that, but there's pages worth of names you could go to here. Debra and I worked together for twenty plus years as though we were in the next room from one another. We have an incredibly close relationship, both personally and professionally and it just meant that we could hand things back and forth easily between one another, which is still what we do now between the two offices. We could develop a project there, wind up putting a writer on it here, then it comes out of our office, then it flips back there for production. We operate the LA office of Working Title as though it's really embedded, as though we're in the same place. We just have the benefit of the eight hour time difference over here, so when everyone in London goes to bed, we keep going (Chasin, 2014).

The projects that emerged from the initial development stage were then routed through the production department, where Jane Frazer would prepare a preliminary budget and, if the film was green-lit, the project would be scaled up to a full production budget and schedule. Frazer would remain the Working Title executive in charge of production for the duration of the shoot, and assumed responsibility for ensuring the project which came out of development married with the one which was being shot on set. Maintaining a keen eye on the bottom line during production became a priority for Working Title and would remain a cornerstone of the company's approach to filmmaking throughout its history. The ability to consistently realise cost-effective productions which nonetheless met the requisite production values for an international audience was, for Bevan, a matter of the company's history in the independent sector:

It is very possible to make a film that costs 40, 50, 60, 80 or \$100 million dollars that looks exactly the same. It's about properly producing, and a lot of so-called producers in the Hollywood system don't really give a shit about budget. All they care about is what their fee is and if somebody asks for more, they shell out for more. They don't take any pride in how the money gets spent and making sure that it's done at a cost. Because we came from independent cinema where you're very conscious about every penny that you spend, that was in Eric's DNA and my DNA (Bevan, 2013).

The legal and business affairs department functioned to oil the wheels of the development and production departments. Angela Morrison joined Working Title from the ailing Palace Productions in April 1992. Prior to her arrival, Caroline Southey, an experienced executive at PolyGram, was appointed to undertake the process of operational

integration. From this moment on, the management of Working Title's legal and business affairs would extend upwards into the PFE corporate hierarchy, culminating with Jill Tandy in London, and Malcolm Ritchie, in Los Angeles. As Southey's heir apparent, Angela Morrison, became Working Title's head of legal and business affairs in November the 1993 (Sandler, 1993, 23). A trained barrister, Morrison had already amassed many years of experience in independent film production. 'Most of my work, at that stage, was the heavy lifting on the production side', she recalled. 'The talent deals: the actors, the directors, the producers, the writers. And the actual production work: all the agreements relating to production, clearances, everything that flowed from that' (Morrison, 2013). Beneath the leadership of Bevan and Fellner, all of the key executive positions at Working Title were occupied by women. Considering the prominent role of women in development of the company, Hayward reflected:

Women are good at multitasking, or so goes the cliché, but I think it's probably true. When you're doing this job, you're working with a lot of very needy people all the time. All around you there are writers, directors, producers and executives. You have to deal with a lot of personalities all the time and I think women are good at that ... at one point we used to call it Working Women, not Working Title. Women have been fundamental to the success of this company (Hayward, 2013).

While Working Title's internal structure was formalised, so too was the means by which the company would interact with PFE. The ultimate act of green-lighting a film was mediated through a centralised creative and financial filter dubbed the 'control sheet'. The control sheet was a single document which contained the necessary information to determine the risk and reward profile of each film in development at PFE's subsidiary labels. As Ritchie explained:

It was very simple, the labels would be working on the development of a project and they would eventually get to the point where they they've got a script, they've got talent interested and they've done a budget. They'd put the script and the talent package out to the sales company and the key distribution territories to see what sort of interest there was from them and how the numbers might look: they would effectively put together their control sheet. We would know they were doing it, they weren't working in isolation ... There was a lot of give and take in the process and Michael would always play an important part although he wasn't nominally the studio head green-lighting films. He was the one they'd be speaking to, saying 'we're looking at doing a deal with this talent, on that project, do you support this?' (Ritchie, 2014).

The collective revenue forecasts for the territories in which PFE distributed or sold to third parties indicated low, medium and high case scenarios which acted as a feedback

loop which directly informed the green-lighting process. In this way, the control sheet avoided a strictly hierarchical method of green-lighting, instead jointly placing the responsibility in the hands of PFE's production subsidiaries, marketing, distribution and sales divisions and senior management. When the script and creative package was sent to PFE's distribution, marketing and sales divisions, the revenue estimates which the OP COs provided were based on the particulars of national markets, not only in terms of perceived audience appeal, but also in terms of the ongoing deals in secondary windows such as pay and terrestrial television. As Julia Short, PFE UK's head of marketing and publicity, explained:

We used to do our budgets every year when we knew roughly what the next year's slate was. We used to supply the numbers that would get plugged into the control sheet. We would go through the ten to 12 films we were releasing ... and we would have to project what box office they would do and how much money we would need to spend to attain that box office. Those two figures would have to take into consideration our TV output deals, because our TV deal with Channel 4 was triggered based on a certain P&A spend. Our Sky deal was predicated on certain numbers as well. Because we were in the same space as PolyGram Video, we would also find out from them how strong a title it was for home entertainment ... It was a question of understanding all the areas of exploitation (Short, 2013).

While the control sheet presented the commercial case for a given film in black and white, the figures inevitably prompted frequent debate between the various parties. Typically the control sheet would take shape over a period of months, allowing for an exchange of views that ultimately contributed to a slate which had been roundly considered from both commercial and creative angles:

It went from 'the film will be fantastic, x will be brilliant in the lead, surely you can see how this film will work' to 'you're just fucking wrong'. So it went from coercion to aggression and sometimes neither worked and sometimes both worked. But it was good because it made us think long and hard about what we were developing and it made them think long and hard about how you can go from the written word to selling the dream. It was a very good, healthy, discourse and it has taught us right up until today - and it's probably ingrained for the rest of our careers - that you have to make a film at the right budget for the type of film that it is. If you don't, you're just asking for trouble (Fellner, 2014).

Despite the necessarily adversarial nature of the control sheet, the overall working environment at PFE was inherently collaborative and typically harmonious. 'PolyGram was great at integrating individuals into the organisation so that it never felt that it was them and us. We were colleagues, we were all working together with the same aim, which was to make films that were successful', Morrison explained. 'We used to refer to the PolyGram

family and anyone you speak to who worked at PolyGram would say the same, that it was a family of people who worked very well together... it was phone calls, it was meeting, it was daily contact, it wasn't once every so often and only around the control sheet' (Morrison, 2013). Nonetheless, the control sheet became *the* instrument of discipline which both PFE and Working Title fell behind:

It brought discipline to the company because the control sheet was revenue cost and outgoings on third party participation. What were the deals that we were making? Were they good deals? Were they bad deals? Where should we cut in? Part of the control sheet from a cost perspective wasn't just looking at the production budget itself but also what we would have to pay out if it was a success. At what point we'd have to pay out? How much we'd have to pay out, and what impact that would have on the margin that PolyGram needed for its own investment? That was the single most effective tool to bring everybody into line with the decision making process. Lessons were learnt through that that haven't been forgotten (Morrison, 2013).

With both its internal structure and relationship with PFE formalised, Working Title had, in the space of a year transformed into an efficient machine with only two principal functions, the development and production of feature films and television. For Bevan and Fellner, the filmmaking agenda of Working Title had emphatically shifted. As Bevan put it in 1993 interview:

A lot of people say 'Oh Bevan and Working Title have sold out'. Well the first thing I would say to them is that if you could have sold out in the same way that I have you would have done so long ago. I realised very quickly that the industry we are working in is a capital-intensive one that required a white knight with massive backing. It was impossible to exist, to develop material and then to produce and market those films properly as an independent... The problem here is that the old school, the Attenboroughs and the Puttnams, who still have a voice, and quite rightly, represent what was a big film concept in the Seventies and Eighties. Their attitude was always to be British, British, British. My attitude in terms of our business is to be global, global, global. We will make commercial films and quite a few of them will have to be made in America. It used to be the most important thing to get the film made; now I look to see if a film can play all over the world. I want Working Title to work on projects that have the creative integrity that our films have always had, but also greater commerciality. I would like to produce the first film out of the UK that makes \$100m (Bevan quoted in Berens, 1993, 16).

Bevan's wish came true with the release of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994) in March the following year. The film exceeded Bevan's desire by more than two-fold, grossing almost \$250 million at the worldwide box office, and becoming the most commercially successful British film of all time. The impact of the film on both Working Title

and PFE proved to be an important spur which validated both the project of producing British films for a worldwide audience and building a worldwide marketing and distribution network from scratch. The following section further explores the importance of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* within the histories of both Working Title and PFE.

The impact of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*

The script of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* landed on Working Title's desk in December 1992. It was written by Richard Curtis, who had previously worked with Bevan on *The Tall Guy*, three years earlier. Another contemporary romantic-comedy, the narrative was organised around the five events listed in the film's title, all of which involved a group of close-knit friends. The film moved through the control sheet process in a somewhat atypical fashion, passing from Working Title to Stewart Till and Michael Kuhn for initial feedback (Kuhn, 2002, 58). Since the acquisition of Palace's unreleased films earlier that year, Till had retained an annual acquisition budget with which he could acquire the distribution rights to films in development outside the label system. Seeing the commercial potential in the film, Till promptly acquired the script on behalf of PFE.

The film was cast and shot over the following summer, starring Andi MacDowell at the peak of her stardom and a relatively unknown Hugh Grant as the lead actors. By September 1993, the film was undergoing test screenings in the US market while Gramercy planned the marketing and release strategy of the film. 'The perception of the movie was that it was a small British movie with an unknown British actor and a somewhat known American actress and a whole bunch of quirky British people who were well known in their native country but not very well-known in America', Schwartz explained. 'We decided to open the movie and got an opening date and we gave it a classic platform release. It opened up quite well, and by the second weekend we realised that the movie was going up on the same number of screens and we realised how strong the word of mouth was' (Schwartz, 2014). The initial platform locations of New York and Los Angeles showed strong per screen averages, and promoted demand from other exhibitors, at which point the film was rolled out to other cities. The plan paid off in impressive fashion and *Four Weddings* reached number one at the US box office six weeks after its release in mid-April (Kuhn, 2002, 67).

It was the job of David Livingstone, Manifesto's head of International Marketing and Publicity, to oversee the production of the marketing materials for each campaign in

conjunction with PFE's production labels on one hand, and London-based marketing and PR agencies on the other. '*Four Weddings* was a hit and got to the number 1 position, which was a miracle ... That became a marketing element and a news story — 'The British film *Four Weddings and a Funeral* has become the number 1 film in the US' — and it felt very exciting', he explained. 'It was really the moment that we got it right, the moment where we said "this is how we do it". We threw everything into it and we spent loads, which we could afford to do' (Livingstone, 2014). Other than prominently declaring the film's success in the US on the marketing materials in international territories, Livingstone took inspiration from the limited pool of previously successful British films within the same genre:

The only film that I remember that had been successful for some time as a British comedy was *A Fish Called Wanda*, and there was an element of looking at the *A Fish Called Wanda* poster and campaign and knowing that at least there'll be some recognition, some familiarity for people to feel that this is in the zone of something I've enjoyed before. One of the things that became the Working Title look — and I wasn't particularly aware that I was creating a look, but it became the look that we did constantly — was a white poster campaign where a lot of the comedy posters were against white backgrounds. At the time, I was told by people that had worked in the business a lot longer than me that this was something you shouldn't do. Apparently white posters would get dirty on the underground and so nobody did white posters. The philosophy was, to a degree, not knowing the rules but also to do things differently to what had been done before (Livingstone, 2014).

The marketing campaigns in the international territories proved to be yet more successful as *Four Weddings and a Funeral* went on to make over \$52 million at the US box office and over \$193 million in international territories (see table 2). The commercial success of the film was matched by the response of critics and industry institutions, which included Academy Award, Golden Globe and BAFTA nominations. The impact of *Four Weddings* was felt across every area of Working Title and PFE. 'In 94, when we released *Four Weddings*, that was a seismic shift in terms of what the LA presence became' explained Chasin. 'It stopped being outgoing and it started becoming incoming because we'd made *Four Weddings* and suddenly there was a market for a little English movie travelling around the world and making an excessive amount of money' (Chasin, 2014). Till Reiterated a similar theme from the perspective of PFE:

In the film business, there are three types of films. There are the films that are never going to work and fail and lose lots of money, films that break even or make a little bit of money and got close to working, and there's the blow out hits. You

can't make only blow out hits, so the skill is only making films in the second two categories. It's like football - wins, draws and defeats - the skill is that you draw a load and occasionally you win a big game. It was immeasurable what *Four Weddings* did for the company. I don't know how Philips reacted, but certainly the record company went 'wow'. And more importantly, in fact, the whole industry went 'wow'. Suddenly it was easier to attract people and get attention. In the States it did \$50 million, so Gramercy had a hit, in all the territories where we released it, it was a hit. People who bought the film from us made money and so wanted to buy more films from us. Overnight we went from being an interesting player to a major player (Till, 2014).

At the time of the film's release in the US, PFEI only had direct distribution and marketing in the UK, France and the Benelux territories, while Manifesto continued to sell PFE's films in all other territories. The impact on this set of circumstances on the PFE's bottom line quickly became apparent, as Malcolm Ritchie pointed out:

Just after we did *Four Weddings* Michael and I went for lunch on the Universal lot with Tom Pollack who was then the President of Universal. It was a nice chat and he was speaking about *Four Weddings* and congratulating us on its success in regard to the box-office which he knew was well over \$200 million. He said 'you must have made \$120 million profit on this', and Michael said, 'maybe not quite as much as that'. After we left, Michael said, 'how did we get that figure?' The studio heads had a rough idea that if a film did 'x' at the worldwide box office, how that would translate by the time you took into account video and television, the cost of the release and the cost of the film. We made a good profit on *Four Weddings* but it was nowhere near that, and the difference, of course, was that Universal had a worldwide distribution system and at that time we had very few territories the rest were pre-sold, so the upside for us was limited. It was an interesting conversation that brought home to us why we had to get into as much distribution as possible.

Following the success of the film, Working Title and PFE set about capitalising on the success which it had brought them. PFEI established more operating companies at a rate of approximately one per year, and PFE resumed plans for establishing a big-budget distribution company in the US. Working Title continued its relationship with Richard Curtis, who would act as writer on the company's most commercially successful films of the 1990s, including *Bean* (1997) and *Notting Hill* (1999).

The expansion of PolyGram Filmed Entertainment (1993-1998)

Underpinning Working Title's ability to build on the achievement of *Four Weddings* and the success of the company more generally was the development of the industrial infrastructure that PFE provided. The growing sense that PFE was becoming a force within

the global film business was reflected in a final rearrangement of its UK operations into buildings which better reflected its status. During the course of 1995, PFEI moved to the new corporate headquarters of its parent company on the salubrious St. James Square, while PFE UK joined PolyGram's UK distribution and marketing team in Hammersmith. Working Title itself moved to Oxford House, an 11 storey office and retail building on the east end of Oxford Street. Situated at the shabbier end of the thoroughfare, Working Title's new home nonetheless provided Working Title with 9,000 square feet of space of the fifth floor. Finally, in a move to consolidate its corporate image, Manifesto Film Sales was rebranded PolyGram Film International (PFI) and relocated directly below Working Title on the fourth floor of Oxford House. The 30-40 staff at PFI were divided into five departments: International Sales, International Marketing and Publicity, International Distribution, Acquisitions and Servicing. As Till went on to explain:

PolyGram Film International did two things. They were the sales company which sold the rights to the territories where we didn't have distribution. Originally that was everywhere except France, then that was everywhere except France and the UK, then everywhere but France the UK and Benelux. So, as we set up more territories the sales company shrank. They also oversaw the theatrical release and the marketing ... providing the marketing materials, co-ordinating and some oversight ... The Hollywood studios had a culture that head office knew best. We had a saying that Hamburg knew best or Rome knew best, and if it didn't know best about the local market, we had the wrong person in there. PFI did more than co-ordinate, because they could challenge decisions, but they didn't control the territories (Till, 2014).

PFE's increasing prominence within the British film industry as a distributor of films began to attract collaboration with independent production companies on both a first look and ad hoc basis. Like the films emitting from PFE's production labels, potential acquisitions would be routed through the control sheet before a decision was made. In this way, PFE would distribute and market some of the most acclaimed British films of the 1990s. An association with Figment Films, for example, led to the acquisition of various distribution rights for *Shallow Grave* (1994), *Trainspotting* (1996), *Twin Town* (1997) and *A Life Less Ordinary* (1997). Similarly, a 'first look' deal with Revolution Films brought in *Jude* (1996), *I Want You* (1998) and *Wonderland* (1999), amongst other titles. While such films were ostensibly orientated towards the more 'specialty' art-house markets, several crossed over to become popular with mainstream audiences. The ability to market such material effectively was underpinned by an institutional philosophy which promoted both

collaboration and autonomy. As Julia Short, PFE's head of marketing and publicity explained:

An operational company used to host a four day conference and over those four days we'd watch the next four months' films and the following day we'd have to present our marketing and distribution plans ... The person that was doing the equivalent of my job in Germany and France, Spain, Switzerland and Austria would all be there. It was an incredibly collaborative and supportive environment and I've never had it again. There wasn't a blame culture if something didn't work, so you didn't feel stifled to not try something ... The whole PolyGram philosophy was that local knows best. We would say, for the UK, this is what we want to do with it. This is how we want to sell it because these are the selling points in our territory (Short, 2013).

While the PFE corporate machinery grew around Working Title, the company was presented with a final reminder of its roots as an independent. In February 1995 the dormant assets of Working Title Films Ltd. were valued and sold to the wholly owned PFE subsidiary, Working Title Ltd. The independent model of production had ensured that Working Title Films retained only a limited profit share in the majority of films it had produced between 1986 and 1990. While the percentage of profit shares ranged from 5 to 25 percent, each figure was, of course, only meaningful if the film was in profit in the first place. In the majority of cases future earnings were estimated to be negligible and accordingly each film was assigned only a nominal value. Similarly, the eight films produced through PolyGram Film Productions between 1990 and 1993 worked on a 'cross co-lateralisation' principle whereby the profits and losses of all eight films were considered as a whole. Despite the enormous success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (the final film to be routed through the fund), the aggregate position still indicated an estimated loss of \$295,000. This figure only related to the share of the budget generated by the tax scheme, however, so the film remained highly profitable for PFE in general. The ultimate sale price of £798,393 for Working Title Films Ltd, consisted largely of the 'work-in-progress' slate and to a lesser extent the 'movable plant and equipment'. The final twist in this game of corporate musical chairs would take place when, having acquired Working Title Films, Working Title Ltd. proceeded to adopt the original company's name, leaving it to continue as a dormant entity under the title Producer Services Ltd (PolyGram, 1995).

The mid-1990s also witnessed a change in approach from Bevan and Fellner. Since the establishment of PFE, Working Title's producers in chief had been typically taken executive producer credits on the films their company produced. 'I felt the people who were on the set probably deserved the producer credit and that I should take the executive

producer credit', Bevan recalled. 'We were doing all of the producing functions, but we might not be sitting on the set the whole time. There was a sort of inverted snobbery that if you didn't sit on the set you weren't a proper producer, and actually, we thought that was rubbish' (Bevan, 2013). From this moment onwards, Bevan and Fellner took producer credits on the vast majority of the films which Working Title produced, typically sharing the title with a third producer hired by the company to help oversee a specific project. Hayward and Chasin, on the other hand, were routinely jointly credited as 'executive producer' or 'co-producer' on Working Title's projects. As Fellner explained, he and Bevan began to focus their time and energy on the areas of production which surrounded the shoot:

The critical areas are development and putting the film into production and then post production and marketing and distribution. Everyone focusses on the shoot, but the shoot is kind of irrelevant. If you've done your job properly and hired the right camera man, the right director, if the script is perfect, and you've got the right actors — if you've got all those factors right — they should create magic. If you've got it wrong, then they won't create magic ... if you've done it right, you're just there to support it and then it's just a physical process of making sure they're on budget and on schedule and our production team are really good at doing that (Fellner, 2014).

Meanwhile, PFE was not content with exploiting the theatrical and video markets alone. Setting up a dedicated television division presented another opportunity for expansion. In January 1995, PFE bought its way into the television market by acquiring ITC Entertainment for \$156 million. The ITC catalogue comprised 10,000 hours of television programmes such as *The Saint* (1962-9), *Thunderbirds* (1962-9) and *The Muppet Show* (1976-81) and 350 feature films including the critically and commercially successful *On Golden Pond* (1981) and *Sophie's Choice* (1982). As important was ITC's international distribution business, including a North American syndication arm (Dawtre, 1995a, 1). The acquisition formed the basis of PolyGram Television, an addition to the PFE infrastructure which had ramifications for WTTV, as Simon Wright explained:

The first thing that PolyGram did was negotiate output deals around the world and they were based on the films they were producing, which had escalators tied into them, so if the box office was bigger, you'd pay more as a license fee. The value for television showings of films is directly related to how well they've performed in the box office ... The same thing applied to television. On the back of the film deals they allowed for 100 hours a year of television. Because everything was driven by Los Angeles and by the American market, to qualify for those output deals we had to have either a US network or major pay-cable broadcaster attached. We took

some direct commissions, *Zig and Zag* and things like that, where we took a license fee and made it, but most of the bigger programmes had a US element because it then qualified it for our output deals (Wright, 2014).

Simultaneously, PFE was pushing for expansion in the US theatrical market. In January 1996, PFE acquired Universal's 50 percent stake in Gramercy. During the three year partnership, Universal had, in fact, produced little 'speciality' cinema, leaving most of the Gramercy distribution slate to come from PFE (Brown, 1996, 2). Universal's withdrawal from Gramercy coincided with the departure of Tom Pollok, the long-serving studio head who had originally supported the joint venture. 'It didn't fit in the studio model, then or now. It takes as much effort and time and commitment from a production executive to make a movie that costs \$3 million as it does to make a movie that costs \$100 million', Schwartz explained. 'They just didn't feel they were good at it and didn't have a dedicated team that was doing it whereas PolyGram's business model was specifically geared to making those kinds of movies' (Schwartz, 2014).

The previous year, PolyGram had attempted to buy the ailing MGM/UA from the French bank Credit Lyonnais to service the opposite end of the PFE slate. While the studio was a shadow of its former self and had been stripped of its film library and studio buildings, it nonetheless represented an opportunity to buy a large US distribution operation. Despite being reported as the front runners, PolyGram ultimately lost to a successful \$1.3 billion bid orchestrated by the studio's management (Peters & Busch, 1996, 1). In hindsight Malcolm Ritchie looked back on PFE's failure to acquire MGM as a significant turning point in the history of the company. 'Had we been successful, and we came very, very close, PFE may still have been sold but we would have been self-contained in terms of the whole operation including distribution and a massive catalogue' he explained. 'It would have been a completely different deal. It wouldn't have been the fracturing of operations which ultimately happened' (Ritchie, 2014).

PFE's attention subsequently swung back to establishing its own big budget US distribution from scratch to coincide with the expiration of their various distribution deals with the major Hollywood studios. In May 1997 PFE announced that it would be launching its own big-budget US distribution company, PolyGram Films. Both Gramercy and PolyGram Films would be co-ordinated by the umbrella company, PolyGram Filmed Entertainment Distribution (PFED) (Lally, 1998, 8-10). PFE's presence in LA began to look complete when all of its LA-based operations, including Working Title's US office, were relocated to an elaborate office building at 100 North Crescent Drive in Beverley Hills. For many at PFE, the

launch of PolyGram Films marked the end of PFE's developmental phase and the beginning of its attempt to become a genuine rival to the major Hollywood studios. For Russell Schwartz, President of Gramercy, the move was a mistake:

All of the production entities wanted to make bigger movies, which is usually a sign of trouble, and PolyGram was very anxious to establish itself as a studio. The Gramercy model was quite successful at that point, but I think they thought they could take it to the next level. There's many opinions to what should have happen next versus what did happen next. It never made sense to me to start another distribution company when you already had Gramercy which was already established with an excellent reputation ... I think when you get into making bigger budget movies and really starting to compete with the studios, you've got to have a full slate of movies, ten to 12 titles a year and it's a very big commitment. You've got to be able to make failures, and even back then it was 50, 75, \$100 million movies (Schwartz, 2014).

The landscape of the British film industry had also changed by 1997. While the two main sources of domestic finance continued to be Channel 4 and British Screen, which respectively contributed £10 million and £4 million a year, additional funding from The National Lottery proved to be a further shot in the arm. In April 1995 it was announced that some of the proceeds from the Lottery, which had been established the previous year, would be committed to filmmaking. An initial grant of £10 million would be distributed by the Arts Council of England (ACE), with a limit of £1 million per project (Dawtre, 1995b, 21). A more elaborate plan was soon devised whereby ACE awarded grants to up to four film 'franchises' of between \$9.8 million and \$63.8 million over a period of six years. Each franchise bid came from a consortium of companies which combined production, UK distribution and international sales. The rationale of the franchise approach was to eliminate the longstanding structural weakness of the independent production sector by creating 'mini studios' which linked production with distribution. By February 1997, the shortlist of 17 franchises included Double Negative, a consortium consisting of Working Title, Revolution Films, and The Jones Company. The latter two of the three production companies had ongoing 'first look' deals with PFE, who would act as the unifying distribution and sales company for the bid (Dawtre, 1997a, 1).

By the time the results of the franchise bids were announced, yet greater changes had taken place within the industry. The general election of May 1997 ended 18 years of Conservative government in a landslide victory for Tony Blair's 'New Labour'. Almost immediately Labour rebranded the Department of National Heritage as the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and appointed Chris Smith as Secretary of State for the

new body. The department's PR agenda centred squarely on the importance of the 'creative industries', to the national economy. At the Cannes Film Festival, Smith announced that the three winning franchises were Pathe Pictures, The Film Consortium and DNA Films, which were respectively awarded £33 million, £30.25 million and £29 million. The Double Negative bid involving Working Title thus failed to win support. Collectively, the three successful franchises proposed to make 90 films over the six year lifespan of the scheme by linking 12 UK-based production companies with UK distribution and international sales. Significantly, DNA Films, the company formed by Andrew McDonald and Duncan Kenworthy, listed PolyGram as its strategic partner for distribution (Dawtre, 1997b, 1). As Angela Morrison explained, Working Title did not receive public funding for filmmaking from that moment on:

I think we were deemed to be ineligible because we had access to what was perceived by the industry as a big corporate backer ... We did on a few occasions successfully persuade the Arts Council on one or two projects that they ought to invest, but generally speaking — and the grant of that franchise money was a case in point — they weren't going to give it to us. We were already owned by PolyGram and funded by PolyGram. We were a subsidiary of a major corporation in their minds, so why would they give us the money? (Morrison, 2014)

For the UK film industry, one of the immediate consequences of the Labour government's arrival was the extension of tax write-off legislation for film production and acquisition. The new Chancellor, Gordon Brown, introduced Section 48 to the 1997 Finance Act, which allowed British films costing less than £15 million to qualify for an accelerated 100 percent tax write off (DCMS, 1998, 21). DCMS also formed the Film Policy Review Group (FPRG) with the broad objective of providing a 'logical series of interlocking proposals which will in time create a more robust and competitive industry – to the benefit of British audiences and the British economy' (DCMS, 1998, 1). Significantly, the committee was chaired by Tom Clarke MP, the newly appointed Minister of State for Film and Tourism, and Stewart Till, while both Bevan and Fellner sat on sub-groups. The recommendations of the FPRG's initial report, *A Bigger Picture*, were many and various. Among the most pertinent was the extension of both Lottery funds and tax relief to support development, production, distribution, exhibition and marketing, a new and simpler legal definition of British film and the 'rationalisation' of the various mechanisms of government support (British Screen and the BFI Production Board). The imperatives were unapologetically guided towards transforming the structure of the British film industry into something that

more closely resembled the Hollywood system. Indeed, the report contrasted the two industries as a means of highlighting the essential problem of the British case:

The US industry is dominated by *distribution-led, integrated structures*, where the processes of development, production and distribution are financed and carried out by a single company. Such firms can use the revenues from distribution to finance production; they have the critical mass to attract finance; they are thus able to make big budget films, write off failures and build up a library of rights. By contrast, the UK industry is *production-led and fragmented*. The production process is separate from the distribution process which is dominated by big US companies. Production remains a "cottage industry": most producers have no close relationship with a distributor, cannot easily reduce risk or raise finance by developing a slate of films, and have to sell their rights in order to get the films distributed (DMCS, 1998, 1-2).

In terms of business structure, PFE was emphatically modelled on the Hollywood industry. PFE's success in building a 'Hollywood-style film business' had ensured that Working Title was a production company at once within and without the British film industry. In early 1997, the company had disclosed that it had a development budget of \$10 million and a production budget of \$150 million for their slate of three to four films a year (Dawtre, 1997c, 9). The announcement provided a moment of stark contrast between Working Title and the rest of the British film industry. The financial resources available to Working Title over a single calendar year were greater than those of the three successful franchise grants combined. Of equal importance to Working Title was the growth of PFE's distribution and marketing operations worldwide. By the summer of 1998 PFE had reached its apex, as a business overview explained:

PFE has built a fully integrated worldwide distribution network through its US distribution entities, PolyGram Films and Gramercy Pictures for theatrical distribution, PolyGram Video and PolyGram Television, as well as through its operating companies which cover 13 international countries. These worldwide operations reach approximately 85% of the global entertainment market with plans to commence distribution operations in early 1999 in Latin America (Brazil, Mexico and Argentina). The company provides global distribution in every media segment, including theatrical, video rental, video sell-through, and network, pay and syndicated television. The company's control of its distribution allows it to fully maximise all distribution markets, control the release schedule of its productions, and guarantee strategic marketing uniformity (PolyGram, 1998, 4).

The growing sense of confidence in the company's distribution operations across film, video and television was underlined with the acquisition of the Epic film library of 1,051 titles at a cost of \$225 million (Peers, 1997b, 6). The ultimate success of PFE,

however, depended on the films which the company produced. Between 1993 and 1998, Working Title became the most commercially successful subsidiary within the PFE label system, producing 19 films which collectively grossed over \$960 million at the worldwide box office. The following section examines these films in some detail.

Working Title's Slate 1993-1998

Between 1993 and 1998, Working Title's output can be organised into the following genre categories: romantic comedy, comedy (other), drama, family films, and thriller/action films. Table 4, below, again provides further information about the year of production, registered nation/s of origin, production budget and box office breakdown by domestic, international, UK and worldwide (where available):

Table 4 –Working Title slate by genre, 1993-1998 (all figures in \$USD million)

Genre/Title	Year	Origin	Production Budget	Domestic B.O.	Int'l B.O.	UK B.O.	Worldwide B.O
<u>Romantic Comedy</u>							
<i>Four Weddings and a Funeral</i>	1994	UK	4.5	52.7 (21.4%)	193.0 (78.6%)	41.2 (16.7%)	245.7
<i>French Kiss</i>	1995	UK/US	40	38.8 (38.1%)	63.0 (61.9%)	4.8 (4.7%)	101.9
<i>The Matchmaker</i>	1997	UK/US/ IRE	7	3.6 (70.5%)	1.5 (29.5%)	-	5.1
<i>What Rats Won't Do</i>	1998	UK	-	-	-	-	-
<u>Comedy</u>							
<i>The Hudsucker Proxy</i>	1994	UK/US/ GER	25	2.8	-	-	2.8
<i>Fargo</i>	1996	UK/US	6	24.6 (40.6%)	36.0 (59.4%)	-	60.6
<i>Bean</i>	1997	UK/US	15	45.3 (18.0%)	205.8 (82%)	28.4 (11.3%)	251.2
<i>The Big Lebowski</i>	1998	UK/US	16	16.9 (38.2%)	27.2 (61.8%)	2.8 (6.3%)	44.2
<u>Drama</u>							
<i>That Eye, the Sky</i>	1994	AUS	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Moonlight and Valentino</i>	1995	UK/US	9	2.4	-	-	2.4
<i>Dead Man Walking</i>	1996	UK/US	11	42.8 (49.7%)	43.2 (50.3%)	4.2 (4.8%)	86.1

<i>Elizabeth</i>	1998	UK/US	25	30.0 (36.6%)	52.0 (63.4%)	9.0 (10.9%)	82.1
<i>The Hi-Lo Country</i>	1998	UK/US /GER	-	0.1	-	-	0.1
Family							
<i>Loch Ness</i>	1996	UK/US	10	-	-	-	-
<i>The Borrowers</i>	1998	UK/US	25	22.0 (43.0%)	29.0 (57%)	12.4 (24.2%)	51.1
Thriller/Action							
<i>Posse</i>	1993	UK/US	3.5	18.2	-	-	18.2
<i>Romeo is Bleeding</i>	1993	UK/US	10	3.2	-	-	3.2
<i>The Young Americans</i>	1993	UK	3.0	-	-	-	-
<i>Panther</i>	1995	UK/US	7.5	6.8	-	-	6.8

Sources: Boxofficemojo.com (box office data) imdb.com (origin) Variety, 1998, 102 (production budgets)

The commercial and critical success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and Working Title's continuing collaboration with Curtis helped to ensure that the romantic comedy became a regular feature of the Working Title slate. *French Kiss* (1995) was the most high profile film that the company had produced to date, starring the 'A list' actors Meg Ryan and Kevin Kline and directed by Lawrence Kasdan. The film also had a budget of \$40 million to match the attached talent, a huge budget by Working Title's standards and substantially larger than any of the other 18 films on this slate. While *French Kiss* underperformed compared to *Four Weddings*, it was conspicuously successful in the company of Working Title's other efforts in the same genre. *The Matchmaker* (1997), a rom-com set during a matchmaking festival in rural Ireland, for example, received only a limited theatrical release. In contrast, *What Rats Won't Do* (1998), which played out the same genre conventions between two opposing barristers during a high profile trial, was released straight to video.

Working Title's most critically successful work remained that of the Coen brothers, two of the foremost auteurs working in American cinema. Unlike many of the other writers and directors with which the company collaborated, the approach to working with the Coens was strictly hands off. 'We raise all the money, do all the marketing, do all the distribution and basically create an environment where they can do what they want to do', Fellner explained. 'With people like Joel and Ethan, the reason I want to work with them is because they're geniuses. I don't want to go around telling them how to be better

geniuses, I couldn't even begin to do that' (Fellner, 2014). The three films *Working Title* and the Coen brothers collaborated on between 1993 and 1998 – *The Hudsucker Proxy* (1994), *Fargo* (1996) and *The Big Lebowski* (1998) – were all black comedies, the sub-genre which had already become their forte. *The Hudsucker Proxy*, for example, charts the rise of an inept business school graduate who is unwittingly manipulated by the management of the Hudsucker Corporation. In contrast, *Fargo* and *The Big Lebowski* both focus on the repercussions of bungled kidnappings, the former in the titular snow-bound city, the latter in Los Angeles. While *The Hudsucker Proxy* failed to find more than a small theatrical audience, the latter two were modest commercial successes. *Fargo*, in particular, fared well with critics, gaining multiple awards, including Best Actress and Best Original Screenplay at the Oscars.

Working Title's largest box office hit of the PFE years, *Bean*, was released in 1997 and accrued an extraordinary \$251 million, even more than *Four Weddings*, although at \$15 million the budget was three times the size of the earlier film. Once again, the film came from a screenplay by Richard Curtis, this time written with his long standing writing and performance partner, Rowan Atkinson, and Robin Driscoll. *Bean* was based on the character Mr. Bean which Atkinson had used in comedy performances on the stage before graduating to an ITV television series, *Mr. Bean* (1990-95). Crucially, Atkinson's character was based almost entirely on silent, physical comedy performance. Without the barrier of language, the innocent humour of the child-like and accident prone Mr. Bean had been successfully exported as a television series to over 100 other countries and had sold over 10 million units on video (Clark, 1997, 39). Tiger Aspect Productions, the television production company responsible for the original series, was brought in as a partner on the film version, with its former CEO, Peter Bennett-Jones, acting as a producer alongside Bevan and Fellner. Significantly, the US was the only major market in which the television show had not been successful. Atkinson's stage show had lasted only three weeks on Broadway and *Mr. Bean* was broadcast only on the pay television channel, HBO (Clark, 1997, 39). As Livingstone explained, the disparate public profile of the television series in international and domestic territories dictated the distribution and marketing strategy for the theatrical release of the film:

Rowan was a big star across much of the world and he wasn't a big star in America. The plan wasn't that we wanted to do America last, it was just that America desperately wasn't interested in it, and so we had no choice. It was one of those occasions where people just really liked what they saw. It was a slightly bigger, longer version of the TV show and the TV show hadn't exhausted itself and people

absolutely adored it. It gave us a bit of confidence with some of our other films and we released some of them first internationally on a lot of occasions and did extremely well out of it ... It was very useful because the rest of the world always looked to America to assess how a film was going to do. Working Title began to change that when films like *Bean* went to America already having grossed \$200 million and suddenly the tables were turned. The onus was on the US to have a hit. Prior to that, it was always, how has it done in the US? How many screens has it got? Who's the distributor? (Livingstone, 2014).

Working Title's endeavours in drama were as mixed as the romantic comedies. *That Eye, The Sky* (1994) was an incongruous film, recounting a 13 year old boy's rites-of-passage tale set in the Australian outback. Produced with a much larger budget and stars, *Moonlight and Valentino* (1995), an ensemble family melodrama, also failed to find an audience. Equally, *The Hi-Lo Country* (1998), a Western set during the 1940s, proved to be a commercial failure upon release. Working Title's relationship with Tim Robbins came to fruition, however, with *Dead Man Walking* (1995). The drama was based on the real events of an inmate on death row and a nun who becomes his confidante, starring Sean Penn and Susan Sarandon in the lead roles. The film was nominated for four Academy Awards, with Sarandon winning for Best Actress. Such critical and box-office success was mirrored in a worldwide box office exceeding \$80 million. Closer to home, Working Title produced another resounding critical success with *Elizabeth* (1998), a biographical drama about Elizabeth I. Despite its status as one of the staple genres of British cinema, Working Title had to date entirely avoided the period drama. Alison Owen, who had remained under various contracts with Working Title since joining as a producer in 1991, explained the company's approach to the film:

The idea was to do a period movie in the style of *Trainspotting*, that was the brief that we gave to ourselves ... We looked at a list of subjects to see what would best fit that mould. Of all the things we talked about, the two that came down the line were Boudicca and Elizabeth I. In the end we decided to go with Elizabeth I because we felt that it had a real resonance with modern women. The choice between the public life and the personal life we felt was a real modern woman's dilemma. That also informed the choice of Shekhar as director because we thought he'd be able to give that chaotic modern style. I don't think that's necessarily what we ended up with – a period movie in the style of *Trainspotting* – but that's how we got to where we got to (Owen, 2013).

The film received six BAFTA Awards, including Best Actress for Cate Blanchett, and as many Academy Award nominations. 'Fundamentally it was a very good film that was very well reviewed and that people wanted', Livingstone explained. 'We tried to sell it in a modern way rather than in a stuffy old way and I think that was the case most of the way

down the line, which was to say let's not just appeal to that older audience, but try to make it feel vital and exciting. Otherwise it would look like TV and it's not BBC TV, we were trying to sell the excitement behind it' (Livingstone, 2014).

The action/thriller contingent of Working Title's slate was largely populated with American-set crime films. *Posse* (1993) and *Panther* (1995) both came through Working Title's relationship with the writer and director Mario Van Peebles. The two films have a common a focus on African American characters, a pre-occupation which continues to define Van Peebles' career. The former was a black Western set in the late nineteenth century and the latter a crime drama about the Black Panther Party in the 1960s and 1970s. In contrast, *Romeo is Bleeding* (1993) and *The Young Americans* (1993) pursued more conventional genre territory, the former about a corrupt New York cop, and the latter about the pursuit of an American gangster in London by a determined American policeman. While all but *Posse* missed the mark upon theatrical release, such films demonstrated the range of genres and creative directions which Working Title embraced.

Finally, Working Title also made two family-oriented films, *Loch Ness* (1996) and *The Borrowers* (1998). The former revived the famous Scottish legend by telling the story of a scientist's efforts to once and for all disprove the monster's existence, before encountering a local 9-year-old girl who provides new insights. Unfortunately, despite its pre-sold premise, *Loch Ness* received a direct-to-video release in most territories. In contrast, *The Borrowers* was a big screen version of Mary Norton's fantasy novel which reworked Working Title's television adaptations of the same property with appropriately up-scaled production values. The film was the first and ultimately the only Working Title film to be distributed in the US through the newly formed PolyGram Films. Considering its budget of \$29 million, it proved only a modest success, however, grossing \$51.1 million worldwide.

The divide between the international and domestic (US) share of the box office for Working Title's films (where data is available) shows a 60.5 percent / 39.5 percent split in favour of international revenue. However, the company's two most commercially successful films – *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *Bean* – fared even better in international markets, making 78.6 percent (\$205.8 million) and 82 percent (\$193 million) of their revenue respectively from outside the US. Significantly, within the takings for international revenue, the UK market performed particularly strongly with *Four Weddings*, which took an incredible \$41.2 million (16.7 percent), and *Bean* which took \$28.4 million (11.3 percent). While the worldwide box office for two of Working Title's other British-

based films – *The Borrowers* and *Elizabeth* – was less impressive at \$51 million and \$82.1 million respectively, the international and UK take remained comparatively strong. *Four Weddings* and *Bean* marked the beginning of a basic revenue distribution pattern for Working Title's most successful films which extended into the following decade. Considering the relative performance of Working Title's British films in international and domestic territories during the PFE years, Stewart Till explained:

It's uphill. America has a very inward looking culture – notwithstanding Miami and LA and New York and Chicago – but mainstream America. The number of successful foreign films you can count on one hand. But every now and again something breaks out like *Slumdog Millionaire* and pushes through. British films are on a gradient, there isn't so much a ceiling, but they have to run uphill ... In the US the studios also conspired to stop us. They would say to exhibitors at one stage, if you give PolyGram screens you won't get our next film, they really tried to stop us. It was illegal, so they couldn't do it in the open and therefore it wasn't so effective. Internationally we didn't have that resistance at all. It was also harder domestically because there were huge P&A budgets ... Obviously it's the biggest market, but even pro rata they'll spend two or three times the marketing money domestically, so it's a much scarier market place (Till, 2014).

In the wider context of PFE's production labels, Working Title proved to be the most commercially successful by some margin. PFE had, of course, put the majority of its efforts into US-based filmmaking through its LA-based subsidiaries Interscope and Propaganda. Interscope produced a long series of forgettable high-concept action and comedy films, including *Terminal Velocity* (1994), *Two Much* (1995), *The Associate* (1996) and *Kazaam* (1996). Such films were typically more expensive than those produced by Working Title and Propaganda, and regularly failed to recoup their negative costs at the box office. Propaganda, on the other hand, produced several dark and edgy dramas and thrillers like *Sleepers* (1996) *The Game* (1997) and *Your Friends and Neighbours* (1998), which often met with critical approval and occasionally crossed over into a mainstream hit. 'Interscope made films that didn't work anywhere on a very regular basis and Propaganda made films that were more domestic-friendly. They didn't have the success of Working Title but had some hits', Till summarised. 'Propaganda did films with American writers and American directors, still independent, not mainstream Hollywood, but their films had a much better domestic to international ratio' (Till, 2014). Till's assessment of Working Title's contribution to PFE as a whole, was much more upbeat:

They are the only production company outside the US that has consistently made successful films. They're not intimidated by America and they understand international and there aren't many companies that's true of. Most of the

European producers are intimidated by America and a lot of American producers don't understand international. There are a lot of not so little skills they have. They work very hard, they get this industry, they've got good contacts and they've formed very important relationships with Richard Curtis, the Coen brothers and others. There is probably a shopping list of 20 things they do very well, but the one thing that's made them successful is not being intimidated by America and understanding international (Till, 2014).

Working Title's ascent to become the most valuable production asset within PFE coincided with the decline of PFE itself. By the close of 1997, the senior management at both PolyGram and PFE had felt a growing sense of disjuncture between their ongoing efforts to build an entertainment conglomerate and the long-term strategic vision of Philips. In time honoured fashion, the change in outlook was due to a change in management. Jan Timmer, the saviour of PolyGram during the 1980s and advocate of the company's diversification into film, had retired as President and Chairman of Philips the previous October. His replacement, Cornelius 'Cor' Boonstra, was the former Chairman of the food and beverage company Sara Lee, and had no experience of working in the entertainment industry. The senior management of PolyGram and PFE scheduled a meeting with their opposite numbers at Philips, only to have their suspicions confirmed: the hardware company wanted to sell its software subsidiaries. As Boonstra explained:

How can you stimulate and grow a movie business based on creativity and one-offs, if you are based in the Netherlands and making televisions? That's a different breed of people...I didn't see the potential heaven of the movie business and I saw a potential disaster in the music business and that was one of the reasons why I started to feel uncomfortable. If you release a movie which costs \$60 million on the Friday and on Monday morning you know that the movie flopped, it's not my cup of tea. It's not a business, it's a gamble (Boonstra quoted in McNamara, 2007)

The two parties agreed that they would collectively explore various scenarios under which PolyGram could be extricated from Philips and continue as a going concern. Thus, when it was publically announced that PolyGram was on the market at the beginning of May 1998, the news came as something of a shock to Alain Levy, President of PolyGram, and Michael Kuhn (Kuhn, 2002, 92). In reality, Philips had been in sale negotiations for some time and had found a buyer in the form of Seagram. Edgar Bronfman Jr., Seagram's Chairman and CEO, had initiated the diversification of his family's beverage business with the 1995 acquisition of Music Corporation of America (MCA). MCA's major subsidiaries included MCA Music Entertainment Group - subsequently rebranded Universal Music Group (UMG) - and Universal Pictures. The story of PolyGram's sale to Seagram dominated the front pages of the trade press for weeks until an agreement was announced at the end

of May, when a \$10.6 billion deal was agreed. The acquisition of PolyGram comprised 80 percent cash and 20 percent stock, a situation which both weakened the Bronfman family's equity position in Seagram to just 29 percent and increased the company's debt load to \$8.5-9 billion. The deal would, it was envisaged, be paid for by selling other Seagram assets (Peers, 1998, 1). The following section examines the implications of the acquisition for both PFE and Working Title.

1998: The final year of PolyGram Filmed Entertainment

PolyGram's enormous price tag primarily represented the value of the music company, which had become the largest in the world over the course of the 1990s. While PolyGram was integrated into Universal Music Group (UMG), the fate of PolyGram Filmed Entertainment was not so clear cut. Kuhn negotiated with PolyGram and Seagram to form a divestiture committee, which would allow PFE to continue as a going concern if a buyer could be found. If successful, the plan would also help Seagram's cash position in its acquisition of PolyGram. Over the next six months, PFE's bid for survival would be carried out in an ungainly and public fashion. Initial speculation in the trade press suggested Seagram would seek a sale price of \$1 billion for PFE, but the figure quickly dropped to \$750 million. After two rounds of bidding, the shortlisted contenders were entitled to review PFE's books. The exercise demonstrated the risks of acquiring a company which had yet to reach profitability in its own right. PolyGram had invested a total of \$1.2 billion in PFE over the previous seven years and its business plan called for further injections of \$376 million in 1999 and \$118 million in 2000 to cover its cash flow losses. The tipping point towards profitability was, however, anticipated between 1999 and 2002 as projected income from new releases flowed in (Kelly & Carver, 1998, 9).

The unflattering results of the final tender ensured that PFE would not be sold as a stand-alone entity. It was reported that the US independent, Artisan Entertainment, and the French media conglomerate, Canal Plus, offered a joint bid of \$500 million. The British-based ITV company, Carlton Communications, also offered \$500 million, while MGM offered just \$300 million for the PFE catalogue (Frater, 1998, 14). Over the course of the months that followed, it fell to Chris McGurk, the incumbent President and COO of Universal Pictures to resolve the fate of PFE's various assets. The most saleable asset, the PFE catalogue, was divided and sold almost immediately. MGM acquired PFE's pre-1996 film library of over 1,500 titles for \$235 million in October. Shortly thereafter Carlton paid

\$130 million for PFE's ITC film and television catalogue. Canal Plus re-entered negotiations with Universal for the purchase of PFEI and Working Title for a combined price of \$280 million. By November, however, the talks had ended with Seagram holding out for a price closer to \$400 million (Williams & Carver, 1998, 7). With no prospect of extricating any part of the company he had built, Michael Kuhn stood down as President and CEO of PFE on the 10th December 1998, the date on which Seagram completed its acquisition of PolyGram and thus effectively closed the company (Carver & Petrikin, 1998, 1). The remaining assets of PFE, including Working Title, were subsequently retained by Universal while their long term future was considered. Contemplating the demise of PolyGram Filmed Entertainment, Kuhn reflected:

On the one hand it's not given to many people to have the opportunity to effectively start up a studio from scratch and it was a bloody good ride for ten years. We're all grown up and we know that these things happen in big companies, so you have to go with the flow. But it doesn't stop it being annoying at the time, which it was, particularly in those circumstances. It wasn't as though the management at PolyGram were opposed to Philips getting out or cashing in. It was done behind our backs for no good reason. There could have been a whole other story. We could have disassembled from PolyGram in a way that would have allowed all those companies to continue. More importantly, the next step would have been the building up of a European media group, a merger with a Studio Canal or something like that. That would have made a fantastic powerhouse which there has never been in Europe (Kuhn, 2013b).

Looking back on the history of PFE, both Kuhn and Till were ultimately unequivocal in ascribing a European and more particularly British character to the company, which, despite its global reach, separated it culturally from the Hollywood majors. Indeed, what any assessment of the transnational dimensions of a company's industrial structure or output fails to acknowledge is the sense of cohesion which a shared nationality can produce amongst its staff. 'We cheated. We tried very hard to be American when we were in America, and European when we were in Europe and British when we were in Britain', Till explained. 'But, and this is very self-serving, the two most senior executives, Michael and I, are British and our most successful production company was British and lots of key executives were British. So, we were absolutely British because I think you take it from your management that your ownership' (Till, 2014). Significantly, Kuhn was presented with the Outstanding British Contribution to Cinema Award at the BAFTA ceremony in May 1999 to mark PFE's eight year contribution to the industry. Yet more emphatic on the subject, Kuhn went on to argue:

What's a British picture? I think so much fuss is made about that and it's just rubbish. No one asks whether ICI or something like that is a British company because most of the share-holders are in America, it never occurs to people. If its heart and soul and mind and everything are here, who owns it is irrelevant. All the time through PolyGram we had this question – 'are we British?' – and it's rubbish. There was a door in London which you could knock on and get an answer about whether you could make your film with any budget up to \$70 million. In my mind that was a British operation and the fact of who owned it, Philips or their shareholders, or who knows, was irrelevant (Kuhn, 2013).

Working Title, PolyGram Filmed Entertainment and Transatlantic British Cinema

British? European? American? As a subsidiary of PFE between 1990 and 1998, Working Title clearly muddied the national waters by operating as a transnational, and in some ways, global business. Given the ways in which PolyGram, PFE and Working Title were organised and operated, and given the interaction between the film industries and cultures of Britain and Hollywood that was involved, this is a prime instance of Transatlantic British Cinema and the economic, globalising and affinitive strategies that define it. Economic transnationalism is evident in the industrial infrastructure of the businesses described above – the development, production, post production, distribution and marketing arrangements. In contrast, the concepts of globalising and affinitive transnationalism relate to the way the films work as text. Globalising transnationalism involves using textual strategies of global appeal – high production values, star actors and popular genre conventions – which are synonymous with Hollywood filmmaking. Affinitive transnationalism, on the other hand, involves using textual strategies which enhance the sense of transnational affinity between the cultures of Britain and America.

It is also worth reasserting that the concept of Transatlantic British Cinema does not necessarily function in a uniform or discrete manner. Any given example may display a greater or lesser degree of orientation to each or any of the three identified forms of transnationalism. Consequently, strong examples will explicitly embrace economic, globalising and affinitive transnationalism, while weaker cases may do so at an implicit level or foreground one strategy while the others recede. Equally, there is often a degree of overlap between the three forms, particularly globalising and affinitive transnationalism. For the sake of clarity, table 5, below, lists all of the examples of Transatlantic British Cinema produced by Working Title during the company's years as a subsidiary of PFE. The following sections examine the industrial context of Working Title's activities through the

lens of economic transnationalism and the transatlantic British films the company produced through the conceptual tenets of globalising and affinitive transnationalism.

Economic transnationalism

Any discussion of Working Title in terms of economic transnationalism must also focus on the activities of its parent company which effectively determined the industrial infrastructure under which it operated. Working Title's integration into PFE positioned the company in a chain of industrial interrelationships which were inherently transnational in nature. The electronics manufacturer, Philips, was headquartered in Eindhoven, in the Netherlands, while its record subsidiary, PolyGram, was headquartered in London. In contrast, PolyGram's film subsidiary, PFE, was headquartered in Los Angeles, while its international distribution and marketing division, PFEI, was based in London. In turn, PFEI oversaw the establishment of operating companies which directly handled PFE's films in 13 national territories. Beginning with the UK/Ireland and France in 1992, PFEI successively founded operating companies in the Netherlands, Spain, Belgium, Canada, Australia/New Zealand, Germany/Austria, Switzerland and Italy. PFE also exploited the films which Working Title produced through its PolyGram Video and PolyGram Television subsidiaries in each territory. A second London-based division, PFI, acted as a sales company which licenced PFE's films to third party distributors in most of the world's remaining territories.

Within this undeniably global enterprise, however, the dominant transnational orientation in terms of both operational management and production strategy was transatlantic. The locations of PFE's major operational headquarters – PFE in Los Angeles and PFEI and PFI in London – were also the locations of the company's principal production subsidiaries. The majority of PFE's production 'labels' were based in the US and typically produced films with American settings, narratives and characters. These companies ranged from wholly owned subsidiaries like Propaganda Films and Interscope Communications to 'first look' or output deals with ventures such as Egg Pictures and Havoc Inc. PFE's major contribution to non-US filmmaking was largely mediated through Working Title and various production deals with other British-based production companies like Revolution Films and Figment Films. Approximately 75 per cent of the films distributed and marketed by PFE were produced by companies operating within the label system, while the remaining 25 per cent were acquired from third parties. Within this mix, the English language content contributed by US and British-based production companies accounted for 95 per cent of all

the films released (Kuhn, 2002, 85). Explaining PFE's decision to base its major production subsidiaries in Britain and the US and concentrate on output from those two nations, Till explained:

The only films that travel, really, are Hollywood or American films and British films: English language films. The great irony is that if you make a film in France, when you take it to Germany, it's dubbed into German from French. If you take a film from Britain, it's dubbed into German from English, so they're both dubbed into German. So, it's not about the language, it's more about the culture and the storytelling and the filmmaking. We had some success in France, particularly with a project called *Le Huitième Jour*, but in the main we didn't spend a lot of time or money on local language films because they didn't travel (Till, 2014).

The decision to base PFE's headquarters and the majority of its production activities in Los Angeles was not, of course, arbitrary. Hollywood was, and remains, the epicentre of the global film industry and building working relationships with both the major studios and the talent agencies was an essential strategy. Indeed, the development of PFE in the US was, for most of the company's existence, based upon the strategy of collaboration with the major Hollywood studios. In 1992 PFE became an equal stakeholder in Gramercy Pictures, the US distribution company which it jointly operated with Universal. Gramercy distributed the low and medium budget 'specialty' films of both its parent companies until PFE acquired the venture outright in 1996. In contrast, PFE's larger budget films were distributed in the US via sub-contractual agreements with other major Hollywood studios, most notably Columbia, Disney and MGM. PFE, however, eventually transcended this position in 1997 by establishing its own big-budget US distribution company, PolyGram Films. Thus, in its final years of operation, PFE competed directly with Hollywood in both international and domestic territories, and briefly emulated the global distribution capacity of the major Hollywood studios. This extraordinary achievement was, nonetheless, only briefly realised and came to an abrupt end when PolyGram was sold to Seagram in December 1998.

Within the wider production, distribution and marketing infrastructure of PFE, Working Title also adopted a conspicuously transatlantic orientation. From 1991 onwards, the company maintained offices in both London and Los Angeles. A permanent presence in LA was a necessary feature of producing films intended for a global audience because it allowed access to the talent agencies which continue to act as the gatekeepers for the above-the-line personnel of the Hollywood industry. Ironically, the one way in which the economic transnationalism associated with PFE and, more particularly, Working Title did

not have a transatlantic orientation was in terms of revenue. The transatlantic British films produced by Working Title typically performed better in international territories, with a particularly strong presence in the UK market, rather than the US domestic market. A partial explanation comes from the fact that the International market responded particularly strongly to the European – or perhaps more accurately, British – sensibility present within Working Title’s most popular films. A second explanation can be found in the relative strengths and weaknesses of PFE’s distribution and marketing infrastructure. The 13 territories which comprised PFEI consistently generated the greater proportion of revenue when compared with PFE’s US operations, Gramercy and PolyGram Films. As Till recalled:

What we did brilliantly was the culture we had of empowering everyone. We empowered the territories, we empowered executives, and we empowered the producers to make the films. It’s a management style I’ve taken and I still apply many of the PolyGram cultures. We were very internationally focussed at a time when the studios, even though they knew International was at least 50 percent of the world in terms of box office, were still very domestically driven and we were aggressively international. The two smart things we did were empowering people, good people, and being internationally focussed (Till, 2014).

The development of a film studio with a global distribution and marketing infrastructure required its production subsidiaries to supply films with of an equally global appeal. The following section examines the examples of Transatlantic British Cinema produced by Working Title through the prism of the second tenet of Transatlantic British Cinema, globalising transnationalism.

Globalising transnationalism

As a British-based production label positioned within PFE’s burgeoning distribution and marketing empire, Working Title had to reorient its filmmaking activities towards the global mass markets which PFE sought to exploit. Considering some of the implications of Working Title’s transition from an independent production company to a subsidiary of a multinational entertainment conglomerate, Bevan explained:

One of the issues with being a British producer is that, unlike being a French producer or an Italian producer or a German producer, you share your native language with the biggest producer of motion pictures in the world. That brings a set of advantages and a set of disadvantages. The set of advantages it brings is that you will probably get your films distributed around the world easier than your

French, Italian or German equivalent. The disadvantage is that you're going to be compared to Hollywood. If you're making movies for a living, the frustration quickly becomes not about getting your film made, but about getting your film seen by as many people as you possibly can. It seemed obvious to me when I was making independent films that the things audiences liked were production values, famous actors and genre – stories that they could relate to. Eric and I decided to apply that to the sorts of films that we made. A piece of luck was that we got our foot in the door, and the door we got our foot into was the international marketplace ... The only single source distributors in the world are the Hollywood studios and in recent years, PolyGram was the one that came closest to emulating that (Bevan, 2013).

The vocabularies of the film industry and of film studies do not, of course, necessarily mirror one another. The former is typically concerned with the processes of production, distribution and exhibition while the latter tends to be preoccupied with historical, critical and/or conceptual engagement. Nonetheless, Bevan's observations about Working Title's integration into PFE provide a number of instances of implicit and explicit cross-over in both vocabulary and meaning with the concept of Transatlantic British Cinema. In identifying 'production values, famous actors and genre' as the key ingredients of popular audience appeal, Bevan is effectively describing the strategy of globalising transnationalism. In the context of Transatlantic British Cinema, the strategy of globalising transnationalism has come to terms with the tendency for British cinema to be 'compared to Hollywood' in the global marketplace by adopting many of the aesthetic and cultural values of Hollywood cinema, principally, high production values, star actors and genre.

In the first instance, if production budgets are taken as a de facto indicator of production values, then Working Title's films demonstrate an upward trajectory during the 1990s. The production budgets of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Bean*, *The Borrowers* and *Elizabeth*, for example, respectively amounted to \$4.5 million, \$15 million, \$25 million and \$25 million (Variety, 1998, 102). At the same time, these figures also convey the success of the financial disciplines of the control sheet. The average cost of a film produced by the Hollywood studios, for example, rose from \$26.8 million in 1990 to \$51.5 million in 1999 (MPAA, 2000). The star power of the actors cast in Working Title's transatlantic British films, broadly coincided with the budgets, with the notable exception of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. At the lower end of the scale, for example, are *Chicago Joe and the Showgirl* (Kiefer Sutherland), *Robin Hood* (Patrick Bergin) and *Loch Ness* (Ted Danson). In contrast, at the high end are films such as *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (Andi MacDowell) and *Bean* (Rowan Atkinson). Conversely, some stars in the making rose to fame through their involvement in Working Title's most successful films, most notably Hugh Grant (*Four Weddings and a Funeral*) and Cate Blanchett (*Elizabeth*). Finally, the slate is divided almost

evenly between three of the most popular and enduring genres: the action/thriller, the comedy (particularly the romantic comedy), and the family film (see table 3). This was completed by a solitary example of the drama.

Affinitive transnationalism

The Transatlantic British Cinema which Working Title produced under PFE can be characterised by two forms of affinitive transnationalism, one explicit and the other implicit. In the case of Transatlantic British Cinema, the former involves the inclusion of American characters (typically played by American stars) in British settings, or less frequently, British characters in American settings. In contrast, implicit affinitive transnationalism involves the inclusion of British textual elements which are archetypal (or stereotypical) in their representation of Britain or 'Britishness'. This can be achieved in several ways, including recourse to famous works of British literature, famous 'periods of greatness' or figures British history. In a yet more implicit way, this sense of affinity can be invoked simply by reproducing aspects of the dominant representations which derive from such sources. In the broadest sense, this entails privileging elements such as white, middle or upper class characters and British (and particularly English) settings, which are either metropolitan or idyllic in their depiction of the rural.

The most common affinitive strategy Working Title was the marked insertion of American characters in a British setting, typically played by a Hollywood stars. *Chicago Joe and the Showgirl*, for example, dramatized the real life events of the infamous 'Cleft Chin Murder' in which an American GI (Kiefer Sutherland), and an English stripper (Emily Lloyd) committed a series of crimes in World War II-era London. Similarly, *The Young Americans* follows an American cop (Harvey Keitel) to London where he pursues a criminal king pin (Viggo Mortensen) who is turning local youths on to a life of crime and drugs inspired by American gang culture. The same strategy is also common to all of Working Title's romantic comedies of the era. The most famous example of all is, of course, *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, in which a romance is played out between an American woman (Andi MacDowell) and an English man (Hugh Grant) during the course of the titular events. On the other hand, while *The Matchmaker* relocates somewhat westwards to Ireland, the orientation of the on-screen affinity remains firmly transatlantic. A young political aide (Janeane Garofalo) flies from Boston to rural Ireland to research a US senator's ancestry in an attempt to win the Irish-American vote, only to find love during with a local man (David O'Hara) during a

matchmaking festival. Similarly, in *What Rats Won't Do*, an ambitious barrister (Natascha McElhone) falls in love with the opposing lawyer (James Frain) during a high profile trial in which a young American widow (Parker Posey) attempts to disinherit her step son.

Table 5 – Transatlantic British Cinema in the Working Title slate by genre, 1990-1998 (all figures in \$USD millions)

Title	Year	Genre	Budget	Worldwide B.O
<i>Chicago Joe and the Showgirl</i>	1990	Thriller/ Action	5	0.08
<i>Robin Hood</i>	1991	Thriller/ Action	12	-
<i>The Young Americans</i>	1993	Thriller/ Action	3	-
<i>Four Weddings and a Funeral</i>	1994	Romantic Comedy	4.5	245.7
<i>Loch Ness</i>	1996	Family	10	-
<i>The Matchmaker</i>	1997	Romantic Comedy	7	5.1
<i>Bean</i>	1997	Comedy	15	251.2
<i>The Borrowers</i>	1997	Family	25	51.1
<i>What Rats Won't Do</i>	1998	Romantic Comedy	-	-
<i>Elizabeth</i>	1998	Drama	25	82.1

Sources: Boxofficemojo.com (box office data) imdb.com (origin) Variety, 1998, 102 (production budgets)

As a strategy, the insertion of an American character and actor proved just as pervasive across family films and comedy. *Loch Ness* tells the story of an American zoologist (Ted Danson) who attempts to reverse his professional reputation by definitively proving that the Loch Ness monster does not exist. During his stay in Scotland, he befriends a local girl and her mother (Joely Richardson) with whom he discovers the mythical creature. Similarly, in *The Borrowers* Pod Clock (Jim Broadbent) and his diminutive family have to fight off the attempts of a brash American property developer (John Goodman) in order to save their home. In contrast, *Bean* transports its titular character from London to Los Angeles at the behest of his employer, The National Gallery. A case of mistaken identity ensues which sees the hapless Mr. Bean pose as an eminent art historian while staying with the family of an American gallery curator (Peter MacNicol). Taking a different approach, *Robin Hood* and *Elizabeth* use the pre-established fame of British myth and history respectively to mobilise a sense of transnational affinity.

It is also worth noting that there are some persistent themes in the representation of Britain and British characters throughout many of Working Title's films which also relates to affinitive transnationalism, albeit the implicit variety. 'One thing that works well in terms of British film is when you're culturally specific' Bevan explained. 'There's something honest about those films and people connect with them' (Bevan, 2013). In particular, Bevan singles out those Working Title films written by Richard Curtis as examples of this strategy:

People would hate to admit this but there is cultural specificity in Richard's movies as well. They are about a particular class of British society that does reflect Britain. I remember reading an editorial that some Labour politician had written after the success of *Four Weddings*, being absolutely furious that this was a reflection of British culture. I thought, 'well, actually mate, it is, and there's nothing you can do about it' and \$250 million worth of people around the world would agree with me on that. It's all very well writing that in the *Guardian*, but it's sort of meaningless. It's *a strand* of British society, it's not British society ... you may like it, you may hate it, but it is a strand of Britishness (Bevan, 2013).

The version of Britain and Britishness on display in Curtis's films has, as Bevan points out, come in for criticism from various quarters, including the academic Michael Wayne, who positions such films within what he calls the 'Atlanticist paradigm for British cinema'. He argues that, 'from the time of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, the Working Title film developed a definite brand identity: neo-heritage locations, white middle class characters and films with a geographical awareness that points firmly across the Atlantic, a celluloid example of the so-called 'special relationship' between the United Kingdom and the United States' (Wayne, 2006, 59). Wayne's argument is, of course, myopic given the diversity of Working Title's overall output, but is nonetheless revealing in the context of the company's production of Transatlantic British Cinema. The suggestion here is that the British cultural specificity on display in Working Title's films is limited to those representations – in terms of social class, ethnicity and locale – which are most recognisable to and accepted by, an American audience. This creates a situation in which the strategy of affinitive transnationalism leans towards archetype, or perhaps more accurately, stereotype. For Wayne, the root of the Atlanticist paradigm is to be found within the power dynamics at play between the British and Hollywood film industries:

It is my contention that the integration and subordination of British cinema into Hollywood and the American market provides massively diminished conditions within which British filmmakers could explore the diversity and complexity of life within the United Kingdom ... Hollywood dominates British cinema at every level of the industry: production, distribution and exhibition. However, it is the dominance of Hollywood in distribution and exhibition that is crucial. It means effectively that for British filmmakers to get decent access to their own home market, the films have to take a *detour* through the American market and indeed are made with that market primarily in mind (Wayne, 2006, 63).

Given the abundance textual evidence which points to the strategy of explicit and implicit affinitive transnationalism, Wayne's conclusion is ostensibly unproblematic.

Reviewing the box office data for the same films, however, demonstrates that the principal audience for Working Title's brand of Transatlantic British Cinema is, in fact, predominantly found in the International market. Despite the transatlantic orientation of PFE's production agenda and operational management, the conglomerate was not part of the established Hollywood oligopoly, as Wayne implies. It was precisely PFE's position as an entertainment conglomerate operating both within and without the contemporary Hollywood studio system which underlined the company's willingness to finance Transatlantic British Cinema and guided the company's focus on the International marketplace. Once again, the dividing line between different forms of transnationalism becomes blurred. The examples of explicit affiliative transnationalism tend also to employ the star power of globalising transnationalism, while the implicit forms border on the representation of Britain and Britishness as a genre, and thus equally encroach upon globalising transnationalism.

The conclusion which Wayne draws from his argument is also problematic when he asserts that the situation 'provides massively diminished conditions' for British filmmakers to 'explore the diversity and complexity of life' within their native country. While the cited examples of Transatlantic British cinema are undoubtedly produced within an industrial and textual framework which privileges, economic, globalising and affiliative transnationalism, Wayne fails to look beyond the activities of Working Title within the broader context of PFE. PFE, of course, also financed and distributed many independent British films which often eschewed the tenets of Transatlantic British Cinema. Examples include *Shallow Grave*, *Jude*, *Trainspotting* and *Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (1998). Moreover, to suggest that the very existence of Transatlantic British Cinema has a detrimental impact on British cinema culture at large overstates the case. The independent sector, while perennially undercapitalised by its own estimation, still manages to produce myriad representations which do not on any level conform to the tenets of Transatlantic British Cinema. By the end of the 1990s, however, Working Title had effectively created a house style of Transatlantic British Cinema best exemplified by – but not limited to – the films written by Richard Curtis. Indeed, at the point of Working Title's integration into Universal the following year, Curtis' next film, *Notting Hill* (1999) awaited release.

Chapter 4

The Universal Years: 1998-Present

The eight years which Working Title had spent under PolyGram's New Business Division and later PolyGram Filmed Entertainment (PFE) saw the evolution of the company in line with the ambitions of its parent conglomerate. PFE's objective of directly competing with the major Hollywood studios was, however, only fleetingly realised. Seagram's \$10.6 billion acquisition of PolyGram, and with it PFE, ensured that the established Hollywood order remained intact. Many of PFE's assets, including Working Title, were integrated into Seagram's existing film division, Universal Pictures. The acquisition also contributed an instalment to the wider narrative of Hollywood conglomeration during the 1980s and 1990s. At the time of closure, the deal was the third largest in Hollywood history, behind only the \$11 billion merger of Time Inc. and Warner Communications in 1990 and the \$19 billion merger of Disney-Capital Cities and ABC in 1996 (DiOrio, 1998, 1). Working Title was now a component part of the Hollywood oligopoly which had controlled the global film industry for almost a century.

Immediately prior to Seagram's acquisition of PolyGram, six of the ten largest media conglomerates in the world owned a major Hollywood studio. Ranked in order of their previous year's revenue, these included Time Warner (Warner Bros.) \$24.62 billion, The Walt Disney Company (Disney), \$22.47 billion; Viacom (Paramount), 13.2 billion; News Corporation (Twentieth Century Fox), \$12.8 billion; Sony (Columbia), \$10 billion and Seagram (Universal) \$6.4 billion (*Variety*, 1998, 35). Despite being the smallest of the Hollywood studios, Universal's assets remained vast. Beneath its ultimate parent company, Seagram, Universal Studios was divided between three major corporate divisions: Universal Pictures, Universal Music Group (UMG) and Universal Parks and Resorts. Seagram was, however, an incongruous player within the narrative of conglomerate Hollywood. Under the leadership of Seagram Chairman and CEO, Edgar Bronfman, Universal had bucked the trend towards tight diversification by shedding some of its media assets. In 1997, for example, Universal sold the cable and satellite channel USA Network and the US-based production and distribution assets of Universal Television. The \$4.075 billion sale to Barry Diller, the CEO and Chairman of the Home Shopping Network (HSN) included the majority

of Universal's TV assets, but excluded its international production and distribution operations and library. Nonetheless, as part of the sale Universal assumed a 45 percent stake in Diller's combined company (Peers, 1997a, 1).

What Seagram had lost in television, it had gained in music. PolyGram's price tag largely represented the value of the music company, which had become the largest in the world over the course of the 1990s. Music related activities represented 84 percent of PolyGram's \$5.49 billion revenue the previous year. Significantly, this figure was derived from a 13 percent share of the US domestic music market and 17 percent of international. While Universal Music Group (UMG) was the smallest member of the 'big six' record companies, it had a comparatively large 12 percent share of the US market but only 6 percent internationally (Sandler, 1998, 10). Merging the two operations, and thus combining their respective markets strengths, was the natural conclusion to reach. Over the course of 1999, PolyGram ceased to exist as the 'big six' became the 'big five', of which UMG was the new worldwide market leader. In contrast, Universal's failure to find a buyer for PFE meant that its production and distribution assets would have to be closed, sold or integrated into Universal. Ultimately, Working Title was one of the few elements of PFE which Universal retained.

Working Title's transition from PFE to Universal entailed a continuation of the company's status and production strategy. That is to say, the company remained in the subsidiary mode of Transatlantic British Cinema, and continued to apply the strategies of economic, globalising and affinitive transnationalism to its filmmaking activities. What follows is a detailed business history of Working Title between 1999 and 2014 which is, inevitably, also concerned with the intertwining business history of Universal in the same period. At the end of this chapter, these details will be once again considered in terms of the broader conceptual framework of Transatlantic British Cinema. Each phase of Working Title's ownership is inevitably defined by a particular combination of creative and commercial imperatives which are, in turn, shaped by the incumbent management of the production company, its corporate parent, and the wider industry. By the time Universal acquired PolyGram in December 1998, the Hollywood studio had itself been owned successively by six different parent companies in its 86 year history. It is worth briefly surveying this history as a means of contextualising the development of Universal, before situating Working Title within that broader narrative.

A very brief history of Universal (1912-1998)

Universal Film Manufacturing Company was incorporated in June 1912, and is the oldest of the major Hollywood studios. It was comprised from the merger of six early film distribution and production companies, which included the Independent Moving Picture Company (IMP), owned by Carl Laemmle. Laemmle was a German immigrant who had briefly dabbled in exhibition before building the Laemmle Film Service and its successor, IMP, into the largest film exchange in the US. In 1915, Universal established Universal City, a vast film studio complex in Southern California, the location which remains the studio's headquarters to this day (Dick, 1997, 22-37). By 1920 Laemmle had gained control of Universal, rebranding the company Universal Pictures Corporation two years later. While Universal was the most prolific of all the early Hollywood studios, the company had an aversion to spending significant amounts on individual feature films and instead applied a 'programme' approach to its slate. Universal's programme favoured large quantities of low budget and relatively formulaic films which comprised approximately 250 shorts, newsreels, serials and modest feature films annually (Schatz, 2010, 16-28).

Under the leadership of Laemmle's son, Carl Jr, who became head of production in 1928, Universal made its first foray into the big budget 'prestige' film market for the first time. But if the studio was now competing in the prestige market, it was not competing on level terms. Like Columbia and United Artists, Universal had to negotiate its access to the 'first run' exhibition venues of the vertically integrated 'big five' – Fox, MGM, RKO, Paramount, Warner Bros. By 1936 Universal's prestige production strategy had generated heavy losses and forced a sale to the Standard Capital Corporation, a New York based finance company. The consortium of companies which now owned Universal included ERPI (the film sound division of Western Electric), Eastman Kodak and the Rank Organisation (see chapter 1). Standard Capital's President John Cheever Cowdin became Universal Chairman and replaced the Laemmles (Dick, 1997, 102-9).

Over the next thirty years, the inclusion or exclusion of prestige films within Universal's slate became the dynamic around which the studio revolved under a variety of corporate owners and studio heads. Under Standard Capital and for most of the 1940s, the low-budget and high volume programme approach dominated, with the exclusion of a small number of independently produced prestige films which Universal distributed (Schatz, 2010, 340). The drive for increased numbers of prestige films led to the 1946 integration of a production company, International Pictures, after which the studio was renamed Universal-International. The increased number of independent productions in the

late 1940s steadily shifted the power dynamic towards the star actors of the day and the agencies which represented them, the most powerful of which was rapidly becoming the Music Corporation of America (MCA). 1952 saw another change in ownership for Universal as Decca Records acquired a majority stake in the studio, in turn appointing Decca's Milton Rackmil as Chairman of the combined company (Dick, 1997, 145-6). For the first time, Universal had become a subsidiary within a media conglomerate which stood to gain from the strategy of synergy long before it entered the business lexicon.

The marriage between Decca and Universal did not last long. Under the leadership of Lew Wasserman, MCA bought Universal City from its parent company, Universal Pictures in 1959. MCA acquired Universal's premises as a means of advancing its diversification into radio and television production, a strategy which directly benefitted many of the stars on the company's books. By 1962 MCA had also acquired Decca and with it Universal Pictures, and thus became the leading Hollywood studio across the media of film, music and television. MCA was, however, forced to divest its talent agency due to anti-trust legislation (Schatz, 2010, 481). In the decades that followed, Wasserman turned his attention to investing heavily in film and television production. He also earned a reputation as the chief architect of the 'New Hollywood' because of MCA/Universal's role in the development of the modern blockbuster, exemplified by the summer release and saturation marketing associated with films like *Jaws* (1975) and later *E.T. the Extra Terrestrial* (1982).

The MCA era proved to be the longest and most successful of Universal's history. It was not until 1990 that MCA was sold again, this time to Matsushita, the Japanese electronics manufacturer for \$6.6 billion (Dick, 1997, 189). Wasserman was retained and granted authority over the studio's creative direction. It was also the first time that Universal had been owned by a parent company outside the US. The pairing proved to be a poor match as the business cultures and geographical distance between Japan and Hollywood proved too great. In 1995, MCA was once again offloaded, this time to Seagram. Seagram paid \$5.7 billion for 80 percent of MCA, and replaced Wasserman with Ron Meyer, the former head of the CAA talent agency. Meyer was given the title of President and Chief Operating Officer of MCA, before the parent company was simply renamed Universal Studios (Dick, 1997, 214). At the time of Meyer's appointment, he assumed overall responsibility for Universal's three major divisions. He also proved to be one of the most durable executives in Hollywood history and is still in post at the time of writing, despite no less than three further changes of ownership in the intervening years.

Working Title's integration into Universal

Unlike most of PFE's production assets, Bronfman was keen to ensure that Working Title continue as part of Universal. In particular, Working Title's success in the expanding international market, combined with the company's economy in production, proved to be considerable draws. The particular contractual circumstances surrounding Working Title's integration into Universal also ensured the company was in a seller's market. As Fellner explained:

We were very fortunate because our service contracts had expired and so Tim and I were free agents. Working Title had no value outside Tim and I running it, so we were lucky in being able to steer the company towards where we wanted it to go, regardless of its asset value, whatever that was perceived to be. Wherever we went, the Working Title name and brand would have gone. We did a separate negotiation with Universal, it just so happened that it was the same place the PolyGram assets ended up ... There were a lot of reasons to go to Universal but primarily it was the staff there and the promise that Edgar Bronfman, who owned the studio then, made us. He wanted to set up a company that was additional to the core slate and that meant that we could make films that the studio wouldn't normally have made. Everyone else would have tried to subsume us into the main slate and we'd have never have got any films made (Fellner, 2014).

Working Title's special status of being at once within and without the studio perfectly mirrored the company's relationship with the British film industry. While Working Title's head office was in London and its films benefited from UK tax legislation, the company also remained a component part of a multinational media conglomerate headquartered in Los Angeles. The negotiations which followed saw the terms of Working Title's new contract hammered out over a period of several months. Concurrently, the fate of PFE's other former assets would also be decided. Universal's President and CEO, Chris McGurk, was faced with the prospect of integrating or once again attempting to sell PFE's remaining assets. Of all the opportunities for integration, PFE's US-based assets represented the poorest fit. Universal had a long-established and highly efficient distribution company in the US to which Gramercy and PolyGram Films could add little. PolyGram Films was closed and Gramercy, along with Universal's speciality US distributor, October Films, was sold to Barry Diller for \$300 million. Diller subsequently merged Gramercy and October to form a short lived mini-major studio, USA Films, into which Propaganda and Interscope were also folded. In reality, the sale did not move PFE's former assets far outside the Universal empire as the studio still owned a 45 percent stake in the parent company, USA Networks (Brown, 1999, 1-2).

In contrast, integrating PolyGram Filmed Entertainment International (PFEI) presented quite a different proposition. Universal had distributed its films in international territories through United International Pictures (UIP) since 1981. UIP had been established to handle the theatrical distribution and marketing of the films produced by its three parent companies – MGM/UA, Paramount and Universal – in international territories. Universal and Paramount also shared an international home entertainment distribution company, Cinema International Corporation (CIC) which, alongside UIP, was headquartered in London. Crucially, Universal's contractual commitment to UIP was scheduled for renewal in 2001 and MGM had already indicated it would be leaving the consortium. The prospect of operating a stand-alone international distribution company by integrating PFEI into Universal represented a unique and attractive prospect. McGurk retained the services of Stewart Till and the two men jointly convinced Bronfman of the plan. PFEI was renamed Universal Pictures International (UPI) in February 1999 and given the remit of distributing the remaining films which the PFE labels had completed. Simultaneously, Universal announced that it was leaving CIC and would transfer its home entertainment distribution to PFEI's former video operations (Carver, 1999, 1 & 77). Till was placed under a five year contract and it was envisaged that UPI would replace UIP as the theatrical distributor of Universal's films within two years.

Working Title's *Notting Hill* was among UPI's first releases in May 1999. The film was another romantic comedy written by Richard Curtis and starring Hugh Grant and Julia Roberts. It proved to be a major hit, breaking all of PFE's box office records and going on to gross \$247.8 million internationally via UPI and \$116.8 million in the US via Universal (see table 5). Despite this success, the integration of UPI into Universal was not to be. As had so often been the case in previous years, a change in management proved to be the decisive factor. Chris McGurk accepted an offer to run MGM at the end of April, and was replaced in June by co-chairmen Brian Mulligan and Stacey Snider. Mulligan had been at Universal almost a decade and was promoted from the finance and operations department, while Snider had previously been head of production since joining the studio in 1996. Unlike McGurk, Mulligan was not convinced by the plan to replace UIP with UPI, believing that the cost of building the capacity of the former to match the current level of UIP could not be justified. By October Universal had negotiated an extension of the UIP contract until 2006 and put the plans for the expansion of UPI in reverse. Having dispensed with the last vestiges of PFE, Mulligan took the position of CFO at Seagram the following month, leaving Snider as the sole Chairman of Universal Pictures. Ultimately UPI's theatrical distribution

operations were wound down by the end of the year, and Till finally stepped down as Chairman of the company in January 2000 (Dawtre, 1999f, 22).

During the months of contract negotiations between Working Title and Universal, Angela Morrison, who now assumed the title of Working Title COO, took a leading role alongside Bevan and Fellner. Indeed, her role became increasingly strategic as Working Title's relationship with Universal developed. 'I never had the sense that we weren't going to be there because Universal had been very clear that they wanted to make a deal with Working Title', she recalled. 'All the day-to-day efforts were going into making that deal work, and making sure it made sense for everybody, which it ultimately did'. As one of the most commercially successful and critically acclaimed production companies of the 1990s, Working Title was in a seller's market and able to negotiate favourable terms. Considering the company's priorities in brokering a deal with the studio, she explained:

We wanted to maintain the degree of autonomy that we had managed to get to with PolyGram. We'd learned the lessons, we'd been through the rigours of the control sheet and green-lighting and we thought that we were at the point in our collective company career that we could make some of our own decisions without having to get approval from LA. We were successful in negotiating a lot of things along those lines to do with what we spent on our overhead, how we managed the business, the staffing, how we managed production, how much we could spend on production without a full green-light decision being made by the studio (Morrison, 2014).

In March 1999, Working Title committed to a 5 year deal which would see the company continue life as a subsidiary of Universal. Within the terms of the new agreement, Bevan and Fellner were permitted to green-light up to five films a year with individual production budgets of up to \$25 million without approval from Universal. Films with budgets over \$25 million would be considered on a case-by-case basis with the studio's involvement (Dawtre, 1999a, 1). The combination of financial backing and creative autonomy which Working Title had achieved made the company an unrivalled force not only within the British film industry, but within Europe at large. This unprecedented display of confidence in a British-based company was, of course, predicated on the commercial success of Working Title's films during the PolyGram years and the expectation that such success would continue or even increase.

The magnitude of the deal was yet more unusual given Universal's policy of retrenchment during the late 1990s and early 2000s. By 2000, for example, Universal's annual operating budget had been reduced from \$1 billion to \$600 million, with a

corresponding drop in the number of deals with independent production companies, which fell from 30 to 20 (McNary, 2000, 1). Since Studio Plus's unsuccessful bid for PFEI and Working Title the previous November, the French media conglomerate had maintained a keen interest in the company. For Canal Plus, Working Title's strong box office performance in European territories represented a promising pipeline of product for its pay television service, and the ambitions it harboured for expanding its theatrical distribution business. For Working Title, an alliance with Canal Plus also appeared to present several advantages, as Morrison explained:

It was part of the strive to maintain autonomy, it was some sort of in-built sense that having a European partner for us was really key because we were based here and there is a different sensibility between the European market and the US market. Ultimately it was driven by, if we cost the studio less, that's got to be good for us in the long term. The studio responded to having a partner and they responded to having a European partner. Partners were, and still are, hard to find and because we'd opened that door the studio were very open to it (Morrison, 2013).

Since the demise of PolyGram, Canal Plus had become the largest media company in Europe directly involved in film production. Canal Plus was established in 1984 as a subsidiary of the diversified construction and water management conglomerate Compagnie Generale des Eaux (CGE), which was renamed Vivendi in 1998. With the backing of CGE, Canal Plus was able to capitalise on its status as the first pay television broadcaster in France and accrued 3 million subscribers by the end of the 1980s. To supply its expanding range of channels, the company began to invest heavily in European (and particularly French) film production through Le Studio Canal Plus, a filmmaking subsidiary created in 1990. Substantial investments were simultaneously made in Hollywood filmmaking via co-production agreements with, amongst others, Carolco Pictures (*Total Recall*, 1990; *Basic Instinct*, 1992) and New Regency Productions (*JFK*, 1991; *Free Willy*, 1993). By the late 1990s, Canal Plus was the largest pay television company in Europe with 10 million customers spread across every major European territory (excluding the UK), a film library of over 4,000 titles and long term output deals with every major Hollywood studio (*Variety*, 1999, 44-52).

In May 1999 Universal and Canal Plus agreed to co-finance the operational, development and production costs of Working Title on a 50-50 basis. In return for their contribution, Canal Plus received television rights to all Working Title's films in continental Europe (excluding the UK and Ireland) and French theatrical and video rights for every

second film for the first three years of the deal. In the fourth and final year of the agreement, Canal Plus would receive theatrical and video rights in all territories in continental Europe. Working Title's films would, of course, be exploited by Universal in the US and by UIP in all other territories (Dawtre, 1999c, 8). The acquisition of video and theatrical distribution rights in the later stages of the agreement reflected the ambitious expansion plans which Canal Plus harboured. The following year, the company rebranded its film production and distribution subsidiary StudioCanal and announced its status as a 'European major' with direct theatrical distribution companies in France, Germany and Spain and a two fold increase in its annual filmmaking budget to \$348 million (James, 2000a, 1).

The Universal/StudioCanal co-financing deal which supported Working Title proved to be prescient. Seagram's plans to transform its beverage business into a media conglomerate were beginning to wane under the weight of the debt caused by its acquisition of PolyGram. The answer was to be found in the form of a three way merger of Seagram, Canal Plus and Vivendi, which owned 49 percent of Canal Plus. As part of the \$33.7 billion reshuffle, Seagram and Vivendi would sell their remaining non-media assets, acquire Canal Plus outright and form a new parent company, Vivendi Universal (Goldsmith & James, 2000, 1). The deal, which was announced in the summer of 2000 and completed before the end of the year, would see the headquarters of Universal's parent company move from Montreal to Paris, while Bronfman was replaced at the top of the conglomerate by the former Vivendi Chairman and CEO, Jean-Marie Messier. The transition in ownership, however, changed little for Universal, and by extension Working Title. Despite speculation that Canal Plus CEO, Pierre Lescure, would be reassigned to Hollywood, Ron Meyer remained the President and COO of Universal Studios and Stacey Snider Chairman at Universal Pictures (James, 2000b, 1). In turn, Working Title's established contractual relationships with Universal and StudioCanal ensured not only an extended period of stability for the production company, but also prescribed the creative and industrial routes through which it worked. The following section examines Working Title's position within this new regime.

Inside the new regime: Universal and United International Pictures

The influence of PFE had cast a long shadow over the internal structure and operation of Working Title. The four integrated filmmaking departments which the company had

established at the start of the PFE era – development, production, US office and legal and business affairs – remained in place, but were populated by a greater number of staff, which fluctuated between 30 and 40 in total. Beneath Bevan and Fellner, Debra Hayward remained in post as head of development in London, while Liza Chasin would continue to be her opposite number in Los Angeles. Similarly, Morrison continued to manage the legal and business affairs department, which not only serviced development and production internally, but also mediated Working Title's relationship with Universal and StudioCanal at a strategic level. Jane Frazer, however, stepped down as head of production to be replaced by Michelle Wright, who was recruited from Interscope Communications (Dawtre, 1999e, 27). Nonetheless, Frazer continued her long association with Working Title in the coming years, this time by acting in a freelance capacity.

A broad sense of continuity was felt in most areas of Working Title's relationship with its new parent company. In developing new material, for example, Working Title stuck with the principles that had promoted their greatest successes during the PFE years. 'We've always gone for a good story with good characters, with emotions that people can connect to, that make people jump or thrilled or laugh - whatever they're meant to do in terms of the genre of the movie', Bevan explained, 'and we've always been very screenplay conscious ... when we've deviated from that we haven't had much success' (Bevan, 2013). For Hayward, the transition was largely about the increased resources which Universal bestowed, and the increased volume which was expected:

It'll always just keep coming back to material and resources for me, which was, all of a sudden there were more resources to develop more material. You have a number of films hanging over these possible slots, and you've got production financing which allows you to make the films. You're in a cycle, when you're posting one you're prepping another. You can keep the machine rolling along when you're capitalised like that ... When you're lucky enough to see a film all the way through from its inception to its execution, everybody learns that way, everybody is involved. If you are able to do that over and over again, which is what we were able to do at Working Title, then you hone your skills and become better and better (Hayward, 2013).

While the bulk of Working Title's infrastructure was based in London, the company's LA office continued to prove a vital. 'I always refer to the LA office as a strictly creative outpost' Chasin noted. 'We don't house any of our business affairs or accounting or physical production team' (Chasin, 2014). As she went on to explain:

I view my role as the front man to the business on this end. I have very close twenty plus year relationships with the industry this end and I do a lot of

interfacing with the studio, with Universal, and a lot of the day-to-day with the community at large, whether that be directly with the talent that lives here or with the agents, lawyers and managers who represent the talent. We run, not half the slate, but half the active projects out of LA office with a view to making one to two films a year on this end. There's a lot of managing the actual slate and, we can't make a film over there [the UK] without it taking a lot of space over here, it's the nature of the business. It's really just liaising with the talent on pushing these things forward and getting new material and getting people to want to come and work here (Chasin, 2014).

As it had done under Jane Frazer, the production department maintained its reputation as lavish by the standards of the independent British film industry, but highly cost effective by the standards of Hollywood. For Wright, a major reason for Working Title's ability to consistently realise cost-effective production was the company's position on either side of the Atlantic. 'We stay out of the studio system and try to keep them at arm's length. Once people in Hollywood think you're associated with a major studio, they think you've got all the money in the world', she explained. 'Being over here we're able to say, yes we are, they're our distributor, but we're still we're still a UK production company' (Wright, 2014b). The adage that 'it's the film business not the film art' continued to apply to all of Working Title's activities. As Wright explained, her job was to interrogate all of the production decisions from a logistical and economic perspective, in collaboration with the principal filmmakers:

Once we have a script that everybody likes, that may be in re-writes, but we know pretty much what the structure of the script is going to be, and we have filmmakers attached, we have the starting package. We go in and we break it down. We take the script and we turn it into a fine science by breaking it down into a schedule and a budget. It's a management tool, it's the only way to organise something that's creative like that. How many days do we shoot it? Where do we shoot it? How much will it cost? Once we have that, normally, we realise that it's too much and we have to figure out how to make it for less ... If a movie is worth so much money to the producers and to the financiers, and the distributors, then how do we make that work? That's the challenge of it and the fun of it (Wright, 2014b).

Since the advent of Section 42 and 48 tax relief for UK film production, Working Title had, like many other production companies, benefitted from the fertile economic climate which the legislation promoted over the course of the 1990s. In 1990, for example, 60 films were produced in the UK at a combined cost of £217.4 million. In the final year of the same decade 100 films had been produced at a combined cost of £549.2 million (Dyja, 2000, 23). In Wright's view:

It's the best tax credit in the world and that's why every major is over here. It's straight forward, it's well organised, it delivers in six weeks and pays on above-the-

line. Very seldom do we go anywhere that doesn't have tax credit. Studios demand it and it becomes part of your financing plan now. It's huge, it's 25 percent with certain exclusions, and so it's a big number to get a movie green lit. That's why you've got all the major Warner Bros. movies over here, that's why you have Disney and Lucasfilm. A lot of places in the States do below the line, the UK does above the line, which is all the big actor, producer and director fees, so it's a huge deal (Wright, 2014a).

According to reports in the trade press, the nature of Working Title's relationship with Universal was based upon a high degree of creative and financial autonomy. Where Working Title had been subject to the rigours of the control sheet under PFE, the company now appeared to have free rein to develop and produce any film with a budget under \$25 million. The reality of the working relationship between Working Title and Universal was, however, more accurately characterised by constant dialogue and negotiation. As Fellner explained, Working Title's transition from PFE to Universal did not alter the fundamental premise of the subsidiary/parent company dynamic:

The bottom line is that it didn't mean an awful lot in terms of day-to-day operation, because you can green-light a film but you don't want to green-light it unless the studio wants to distribute it. Otherwise it gets dumped and there is nothing more depressing than that. If you understand the power of distribution and marketing, you understand that equation. We didn't just immediately go, 'we're making this, we're making that, we're making the other'. We developed a relationship with the studio to make sure that everything we wanted to make, they also wanted, and that UIP would distribute it properly so that it would get a real life in the marketplace (Fellner, 2014).

In the parlance of the film industry, Working Title's legal prerogative to green-light films within a specified budget range without the approval of Universal was called 'the puts'. As Morrison explained, with such films, Working Title could 'put them to the studio, we could force them to green-light them' (Morrison, 2013). The dialogue between Working Title and Universal was, however, based on the premise that the production company would never have to exercise its autonomy in this manner. In practice, all green-light decisions on Working Title films were directed through a centralised creative and financial filter, just as it had been during the PFE years. This process was initially undertaken within Universal's Business Development and Strategic Planning Group in Los Angeles. Gareth Wilson, who began working within the group in 2003, was responsible for generating revenue forecasts for all of the films in development at the various production companies under contact to Universal. 'Working Title films would come through Universal, so I'd work on Working Title films alongside 20 other films and we'd run numbers for 50 plus movies a

year at Universal because, obviously, not everything gets made' he explained. As Wilson went on to explain:

When it was a young project at Universal we'd run a set of numbers that were effectively driven by a model that has been built up over time. The model aggregates historical film performances and uses that data to forecast future performance at various box office levels. That helps formulate the initial view as to the film's profitability and helps inform decisions about participations, as key creative players often get paid based on film performance. As the project takes shape over time, that's when you start going to all the different distribution departments saying 'what do you think this film will do?' so you have figures for box office, home video in all its various forms, and TV with corresponding marketing and distribution costs. By the time you get a green-lit film you have, as PolyGram would call it a 'control sheet' or what Universal calls a 'ten column'. The ten column is ten scenarios from a low performance scenario to a high performance scenario and one of those scenarios will be a green-light case where you have a set of numbers that everyone thinks they can deliver on. That case will build in a return on investment based on various metrics, which differed depending on the owner (Wilson, 2014a).

The 'ten column' also examined the studio's return on investment over the course of a film's lifecycle. Universal's various parent companies applied different formulas to create an 'ultimate', which included a projection of all the costs and revenues associated with a film over an initial period of exploitation. As Wilson went on to explain:

In business you typically attach your revenue to your costs from an accounting perspective, so you'll have your production costs amortised over the lifecycle of eight years, which is how long the studios are required to forecast how much their films will make. That's what we're really looking at when we're looking at a 'control sheet' or a 'ten column'. You're estimating the first life-cycle, the first eight years of a picture ... what they're looking at is a time-value analysis of money. Instead of looking at it from an accounting perspective and saying, 'for a big blockbuster, I'm spending \$200 million a year before I even see \$1 of income, then I'm spending another \$75 million to market that, again before I see \$1 of income', we roll forward as the revenue drips in over the course of eight years. Obviously most of it in the first two years as your theatrical, video and TV revenues come in. At the end of the day, make sure on an annualised basis you have made a 7 to 10 percent return, which seems to be the going rate around the industry (Wilson, 2014a)

Maintaining a green-lighting relationship with Universal that was collectively considered and underpinned by the financial rigour of the ten column was, of course, a prudent measure for a production company bound to a contract intermittently subject to renewal. The green-lighting process within Universal acted as an extension and reiteration of the processes undertaken by Working Title during development. The discussions leading to a green-light decision would almost invariably take place over a period of months.

During this time, the entire package of the film – screenplay, cast, crew, budget and revenue projections – would be discussed in a collective and iterative fashion as the various elements meshed or disintegrated. In 2006, Wilson moved from Universal’s LA headquarters to Working Title’s head office in London to begin producing ten columns exclusively for the Working Title’s development slate. ‘It was wanting the capability to look a little bit more closely and having the flexibility to run your own models as opposed to relying on Universal where you might not be getting the full information, simply because there is a bit of negation there’, he explained. ‘For us to get films made at Universal we have to sell them on the film. Even though we’re partners with them in many ways, they’re still across the table in some other ways’ (Wilson, 2014b).

While the projections in the ten column were an important consideration in the green-lighting process, they were not the only factor at play. Beneath the ultimate authority of Snider, joint Presidents of Production at Universal, Mary Parent and Scott Stuber, were the most senior staff involved in the green-lighting process. Snider herself had been President of Production at Universal between 1996 and 1999, before her elevation to Chairman. Pointing to some of the subtleties of the green-lighting process upon Working Title’s arrival at Universal, Chasin observed:

The PolyGram formula was quite simple and straightforward. The upside didn’t have to be huge, it just had to be a marginal profit in a moderate case scenario, whereas Universal’s green-light control sheet approach was a little more stringent. There was a time in the business – which has changed a lot I would say – when the head of the studio could bypass it. If they fell in love with something and the numbers didn’t add up they could still say, ‘I don’t care that the numbers don’t add up, I still want to make this film, I believe in this film’. There was a creative gut that Stacey Snider certainly had when she was running Universal. That was very beneficial to us and we had certainly had that experience in the PolyGram years, because if there was enough belief, we could make those numbers work, because the hurdles weren’t as high (Chasin, 2014)

For Working Title, some of the most profound changes were experienced as a consequence of the distribution and marketing infrastructure which its new parent company provided. Universal’s decision to remain with the UIP consortium meant that Working Title’s films were channelled through a company which had long since reached maturity as a global force in marketing and distribution. Like PFE, Universal and Paramount had chosen to base its international headquarters in London. The imposing UIP House was located on Beadon Road in Hammersmith. Alongside the international distribution companies of the other major studios – 20th Century Fox Intl., Buena Vista Intl., Sony

Pictures Releasing Intl. and Warner Bros. Pictures Intl. – UIP formed part of the oligopoly which collectively dominated film distribution in virtually every territory outside the US. Working Title's relationship with its new distributor was, however, mediated through some familiar faces, including Stewart Till, who was appointed Chairman and CEO of UIP in November 2002. Considering the differences between PFEI and UIP, Till explained:

UIP was in 40 territories and PolyGram was in 13, but UIP was only theatrical and PolyGram was theatrical, video and TV in each territory. So, PolyGram had a lot less coverage, we were still selling Asia and Latin America, we were about to set up distribution in Latin America when we got bought by Seagram. Culturally there was also a difference because UIP was a big, all powerful, juggernaut. PolyGram was more nimble but less powerful, so both had different strengths and weaknesses. UIP was a fabulous machine. You could get any screen you wanted at top prices because you had so much power. We were very good at taking big films and maximising their revenue (Till, 2014a).

During the early to mid-2000s UIP handled the films of Universal, Paramount and Dreamworks, typically releasing 30 to 35 films a year and, in turn, regularly claiming the largest share of the international marketplace. As the regular market leader, UIP maintained a high degree of leverage with exhibitors in each territory. In practice this meant the ability to negotiate favourable terms in crucial areas such as distributor's share of the gross box office, the number of screens on which a given was played, the duration of a theatrical run and favourable release dates for its films. The importance of the theatrical market was paramount when considered in the context of a film's lifecycle as a product. 'Box office then, and still, is the single biggest corollary with all the secondary windows', Till explained. 'If a film is huge at the box office then it's going to do well in secondary windows and if a film dies at the box office, then it's not going to do well in secondary windows' (Till, 2014b). Indeed, the huge P&A spends which UIP regularly lavished upon the films it distributed were partially predicated upon the anticipated revenue from ancillary markets such as the DVD release, pay-television, terrestrial television and, in the latter half of the 2000s online streaming and download.

Despite the considerable differences between PFEI and UIP in terms of scale and output, Till was pleasantly surprised to find that UIP shared some of the same business approaches PFEI. In particular, UIP headquarters empowered the individual territories to make distribution and marketing decisions at a local level. There were, however, also some notable differences. '[At PolyGram]We had a fabulously competitive attitude as a company and we were creating history, so we had people who worked their socks off and worked all hours' Till explained. 'At UIP the management had been there 10 or 15 years, so I tried to

do two things. One was make the marketing feistier and better and I also tried to make the culture a bit more competitive, so that we were a bit more aggressive and hungry' (Till, 2014a). While UIP was responsible for distribution and marketing at an operational level, the company was not afforded a voice in strategic matters. Indeed, Universal and Paramount only briefly flirted with the prospect of actively including its distributor in the green-lighting process. 'Universal and Paramount didn't ask our opinion. In fact, I used to attend a weekly Universal green-lighting meeting by phone and after a while they asked me not to be in it because I was so opinionated' Till explained. 'They felt that we weren't part of them, that we were this third party distribution company so, frustratingly, they didn't ask our opinion' (Till, 2014).

Strategic authority for Universal's international distribution and marketing remained at UPI which, like Working Title, was based in Oxford House. In 2003, another former PFE executive, David Kosse, who was appointed Universal's President of International Marketing and Distribution. As Universal's highest ranking executive outside Hollywood, Kosse's role resembled the leader of the shadow government. 'I was in charge of the marketing and distribution of Universal movies via UIP' he explained. 'I had to approve the marketing spends and I had to approve the dating ... on the movie side it was to make sure that a Universal movie wasn't disadvantaged in any way, relative to a Paramount or Dreamworks' (Kosse, 2014). Crucially, it was the team of UPI executives which Kosse managed which provided the international marketing budgets and revenue forecasts which contributed to the complexion of the 'ten column' and thus informed the green-lighting process.

The position that Working Title had negotiated with Universal – a subsidiary at once within and without the studio – would be replicated in the company's relationship with UIP. Yet another former PFE executive, David Livingstone, was reassigned to exclusively handle the marketing of Working Title, DNA Films (which had a 'first look' deal with Universal) and any further UK acquisitions (Dawtre, 2000, 16). The specialist marketing team, which comprised Livingstone and two further executives, took up residence on the same floor as Working Title. As Livingstone explained:

Even though I worked for PolyGram, I'd worked very closely and very well with Working Title. I think they suddenly thought that if they ended up going through this big faceless company, UIP, they'd be amongst the 35 films they were releasing each year. Whereas with me, they'd got used to being amongst ten films of which, generally speaking, their films were more important than anybody else's ... UIP had so many films to release that it was a slightly homogenised environment. They had

so many films and so many executives and so many territories that it was quite hard to get attention. We used to basically deliver to them what we wanted and try to make it work that way, by delivering a complete marketing package (Livingstone, 2014).

Working Title's position within UIP's vast distribution operation and Universal's numerous production relationships led to an increased emphasis on branding. The original logo, which comprised the company name set between two semicircles, had been inspired by the London Underground sign. While the connotations of both London and industry were apt, Livingstone felt that a more distinctive moving image would enhance a sense of brand identity. 'I wanted to show the creative process and I wanted to show it in quite a classical way', he explained. With the new design, 'you go from a circular drawing, which is almost like a Leonardo Di Vinci sketch and then it evolves. It was basically the evolution of a creative idea, from its raw materials to the execution' (Livingstone, 2014). More specifically, the new logo showed a black background, centrally illuminated with a golden spot of light onto which three concentric circles appear in chalk. The circles are dissected by a diagonal cross, before revolving around one another in the motion of a gyroscope. The animation concludes with the formation of two semicircles with the words 'Working Title' once again dividing them. The new logo made its debut appearance on *Bridget Jones's Diary*, and remained a permanent fixture thereafter.

To fully understand Working Title's production activities as a subsidiary of Universal the wider production strategy of its parent company needs to be considered. The history of Universal had been defined by the industrial regimes of the parent companies under which it operated, and within those regimes, by a series of senior studio executives were responsible for forming the creative and business strategies of the studio. These evolving determinants were, of course, also shaped by external factors, including the wider economic, political and cultural contexts of the time. Nonetheless, many of the essential questions which Universal faced throughout the 20th century remained the same in the 21st. Speaking in 2005, Snider described the strategy which she had implemented since her elevation to Chairman of Universal Pictures in 1999:

We have a strategy that's actually been in place for the last 6 years. And it's something that we hold true to. It gives – it's our touchdown. The most important part of our strategy is: what movies do we make and how many do we make? ... We determined that we can make well about 14 to 16 movies a year and market and distribute well about 14 to 16 films a year. And within those 16 films or so, we have determined that to have balance and diversity of size and genre is the key to the portfolio approach, our portfolio approach.

So within that diversified play, we've planned to make one or two tent pole movies a year. These are the big expensive, special effects generated films like *King Kong*, like *The Mummy*, like *Jurassic Park*. They're released at the highest times of movie going attendance of the summer or the holiday season. And we make about one or two of them a year.

Next we make about four or five of what we call event films a year. These are star or story driven. An example of the star driven film will be *The Bourne Identity*, a story driven film might be *Meet the Parents* or *Meet the Fockers*. And these are a little bit less expensive, still pretty pricey. And we make about 4 or 5 of these a year.

A category of film that we've had real success with, that we have focused on and I think some of the other studios have ignored, are what we call portfolio films. These are low budget, niche film that are geared towards one specific segment of the audience. But we try to make them well enough that hopefully they will cross over.

An example of the niche portfolio film is *Bring it On*, which was geared to young girls, and it sort of hit all teenagers. *American Pie*, we thought just boys would go, everybody went ... they are made for low budgets, you don't see a lot of production value [and you] never see a movie star. But we sell them on story and concept and directly to a targeted audience (Snider quoted in *FD Wire*, 2005).

Universal's portfolio approach dovetailed with the development and production slates of the various independent production companies under contract to the studio. Snider's hierarchical sweep through Universal's 'tent pole', 'event' and 'portfolio' films also demonstrates the plethora of sub-contractual relationships which the studio maintained with production companies. Every film or film series within Snider's sample was produced by a separate company: *King Kong* (2005) (Wingnut Films), *The Mummy* (1999) (Alphaville Films), *Jurassic Park III* (2001) (Amblin Entertainment), *The Bourne Identity* (2002) (The Kennedy/Marshall Company), *Meet the Parents* (2000) (Tribeca Productions), *Bring it On* (2000) (Beacon Communications) and *American Pie* (1999) (Zide-Perry Productions). The deals which connected these companies to Universal were, of course, unique in their particular configurations. Beyond the variables of duration, quantity and capital, however, such agreements typically ranged from long-term 'first look' deals to ad hoc deals based on a single production or series. What united all of these companies, however, was their status as independents which were variously sub-contracted to, but not owned by, Universal. In contrast, the legacy of PFE's policy of acquiring its production subsidiaries ensured that Working Title was, and remains, the only production company directly owned by Universal. This unique position was underlined by the exclusive nature of Working Title's contract.

Between 1999 and 2006, Working Title's films were largely positioned within the 'event' and more often 'portfolio' categories of the studio's overall output. Working Title's

main slate was comprised of 'event' titles which typically combined star and story driven narratives with, what for studios are mid-range budgets. Examples include *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001), *Johnny English* (2003) and *Nanny McPhee* (2005), which each cost between \$25 million and \$40 million (see table 5 below). In contrast, Working Title's contributions to Universal's 'portfolio' films were typically mediated through a low-budget subsidiary company, WT2, which each cost between \$4 million and \$5 million (see table 6 below). Examples include *Billy Elliot* (2000), *Ali G Indahouse* (2002) and *Shaun of the Dead* (2004). Finally, a number of Working Title films defied the strict event/portfolio dichotomy of Universal's slate and were more readily aligned with the remit of Focus Features. Established in 2002, Focus was formed as a subsidiary studio of Universal dedicated to the production and distribution of non-mainstream, 'specialty' films. The budgets of these films varied considerably and were occasionally as low as Working Title's portfolio films and sometimes as high as the company's event films (see table 7). Examples of the Working Title films which fell into this category include *The Shape of Things* (2003), *Ned Kelly* (2003) and *Pride and Prejudice* (2005).

Beyond the consistency of approach in dividing Working Title's slate, taking the years between 1999 and 2006 represents an apt periodization of Working Title's evolution under Universal for two further reasons. Firstly, it coincides with the duration of Snider's tenure as Chairman of Universal, after which she was replaced by Marc Shmuger and David Linde as Chairman and co-chairman respectively. Secondly, 2006 was also the final year in which UIP operated at full force. Subsequently, Universal and Paramount elected to establish their own theatrical distribution and marketing companies in most of the major international territories. These events, combined with external changes in the global economy, significantly altered the conditions under which Working Title's films were produced and distributed in the years that followed. During the period under scrutiny below, Vivendi sold Universal to another parent company, General Electric, which, in turn, transformed Vivendi Universal into NBC Universal. Like the earlier transition between Seagram and Vivendi, however, the relationship between Working Title and Universal remained largely unaffected as the established contractual ties and the consistency of key personnel at both companies remained the same. The following sections explore the films which Working Title produced in the period between 1999 and 2006.

A Divided Slate: Working Title, WT2 and Focus Features (1999-2006)

The essential questions involved in Universal's portfolio strategy - how many films should be produced? And which films should be produced? – also became the fundamental questions for Working Title. As one of the production companies filling Universal's distribution and marketing pipeline, such questions were inevitably reiterated within the confines of Working Title as the company's slate took shape year-on-year. Between 1999 and 2006, Working Title released a total of 35 feature films, an average rate of just over four a year. The frequency of Working Title's output made the company the most prolific on Universal's books, contributing up to one third of Universal's output of 14 to 16 films a year in any given year. Within those 35 films, it is possible to define a 'main slate' of about 15 films by selecting those titles which are story and/or star driven and typically command production budgets in the range of \$25-60 million. The most commercially promising of the main slate films can be seen as contributions to Universal's 'event film' list. The following section examines Working Title's main slate between 1999 and 2006.

Working Title's main slate

Working Title's main slate can be further divided by genre, budget and box-office. Table 5, below, also presents a basic overview of the year of production, nation of origin, production budget and box office breakdown by domestic, international, UK and worldwide (where available):

Table 6 –Working Title main slate by genre, 1999-2006 (all figures in \$USD million)

Genre/Title	Year	Origin	Production Budget	Domestic (US & Can) B.O.	Int'l B.O.	UK B.O.	Worldwide B.O.
Romantic Comedy							
<i>Notting Hill</i>	1999	UK/US	42	116.8 (31.9%)	247.8 (68.1%)	-	363.8
<i>Bridget Jones's Diary</i>	2001	UK/US/ FR	25	71.5 (25.4%)	210.3 (74.6%)	60.2 (21.3%)	281.9
<i>40 Days and 40 Nights</i>	2002	UK/US/ FR	-	37.9 (39.9%)	57.1 (60.1%)	7.7 (8.0%)	95.1
<i>The Guru</i>	2002	UK/US/ FR	-	3.9 (12.8%)	21.0 (87.2%)	10.1 (42.2%)	23.9
<i>Love Actually</i>	2003	UK/US/ FR	40	59.6 (24.2%)	187.2 (75.8%)	62.6 (25.3%)	246.9
<i>Wimbledon</i>	2004	UK/US/ FR	31	17.0 (41%)	24.5 (59%)	12.9 (31.0%)	41.5
<i>Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason</i>	2004	UK/US/ FR/GER /IRE	40	40.2 (15.3%)	222.2 (84.7%)	68.2 (25.9%)	262.5
Comedy / Comedy Drama							
<i>High Fidelity</i>	2000	UK/US	30	27.2 (57.9%)	19.8 (42.1%)	-	47.1
<i>O Brother, Where Art Thou?</i>	2000	UK/US/ FR	-	45.5 (63.3%)	26.3 (36.7%)	-	71.8
<i>About a Boy</i>	2002	UK/US/ FR/GER	30	41.3 (31.7%)	89.1 (68.3%)	24.3 (18.6%)	130.5
<i>Johnny English</i>	2003	UK/US/ FR	40	28.0 (17.5%)	132.5 (82.5%)	31.1 (19.3%)	160.5
Drama							
<i>Captain Corelli's Mandolin</i>	2001	UK/US/ FR	57	25.5 (41.1%)	36.5 (58.9%)	12.9 (20.7)	62.1
<i>The Man Who Cried</i>	1999	UK/FR	0	0.7 (100%)	-	-	0.7
Family							
<i>Thunderbirds</i>	2004	UK/FR	57	6.8 (24.3%)	21.4 (75.7%)	10.1 (35.8)	28.2
<i>Nanny McPhee</i>	2005	UK/US/ FR	25	47.1 (24.3%)	75.3 (61.5%)	29.1 (23.7%)	122.4
Thriller/Action							
<i>Plunkett and Macleane</i>	1999	UK		0.4 (100%)	-	-	0.4
<i>The Interpreter</i>	2005	UK/US/ FR/GER	80	72.7 (44.6)	90.2 (55.4%)	13.7 (8.4%)	162.9
<i>Smokin' Aces</i>	2006	UK/US/ FR	17	35.7 (62.7%)	21.3 (37.3%)	6.2 (10.8%)	57.1
<i>United 93</i>	2006	UK/US/ FR	15	31.4 (41.3%)	44.8 (58.7%)	5.3 (6.9%)	76.2

Sources: Boxofficemojo.com (box office data) imdb.com (origin and production budgets)

The comedy, comedy-drama and, more especially, the romantic comedy, became Working Title's staple genres following the success of *Bean* and *Four Weddings and a Funeral* during the PFE years. They also formed almost two thirds of Working Title's main slate and became the principal genres that the company contributed to Universal's 'event' releases. Accordingly the comedy genre at large was placed at the higher end of the spectrum both in terms of budget and box office expectation. The common element of Working Title's greatest commercial successes during the 1990s was the authorship Richard Curtis, who had been under various contracts with the company since *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. His cycle of romantic-comedies continued with *Notting Hill*, an original screenplay which starred Hugh Grant opposite Julia Roberts in the eponymous London setting. In contrast, *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001), was adapted by Curtis from Helen Fielding's fictional newspaper column and later bestselling novel. The story centres upon the eponymous Bridget, a single 30-something woman seeking love in contemporary London. Renee Zellweger was cast as Bridget and Hugh Grant and Colin Firth as the two men competing for her affections.

Between the first Bridget Jones instalment and its considerably more expensive sequel, Working Title released *Love Actually* (2003), yet another romantic comedy, this time based on an original screenplay by Curtis. Once again, a contemporary London setting was used as the backdrop for nine interlocking romantic and comedic narratives taking place in the build up to Christmas. The ensemble cast included many of the biggest names in British acting, including Grant, Firth, Rowan Atkinson, Emma Thomson, Keira Knightly, Alan Rickman and Bill Nighy. The following year, *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (2004), reunited Zellweger, Grant and Firth and for a second instalment, once again extending the love triangle narrative. Signs that a third film, *Bridget Jones's Baby*, and with it a stage musical, might appear have since circulated, suggesting the Bridget Jones franchise might become the longest and most commercially successful series of films in Working Title's history (Siegel, 2013, 1).

Collectively, *Notting Hill*, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, *Love Actually* and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* proved to be the backbone of Working Title's greatest period of commercial success, collectively grossing over \$1 billion worldwide. A Curtis-like magic touch could, however, be felt elsewhere in several of the British-set comedies and comedy-dramas of the period, such as *About a Boy* (2002), *Johnny English* (2003) and *Wimbledon* (2004). An adaptation of Nick Hornby's novel of the same name, *About a Boy*, bears a certain family resemblance to *Bridget Jones's Diary* with the casting of Hugh Grant as a vain

bachelor embroiled in a series of comic and romantic situations. Similarly, *Johnny English* stars Rowan Atkinson as incompetent fish-out-of-water secret agent, a character and set-up reminiscent of *Bean*. Both films would prove substantial hits in their own right, grossing \$130.5 and \$160.5 million respectively. Rather less successful, but nonetheless formed in the Working Title house style was *Wimbledon* (2004). Another rom-com, the film revolved around the blossoming romance between an American and a British competitor in the eponymous tennis tournament, played by Kristin Dunst and Paul Bettany respectively. The Working Title comedy and romantic comedy continued to be promoted with a visual sense of uniformity by Working Title's in-house marketing team, maintaining the white background style which had started with *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. Considering the task of marketing Working Title's most popular films as time passed, Livingstone explained:

If you've already had a hit you don't have to go around proving to people that you can plausibly make a hit. If you come out with something with Rowan Atkinson or Hugh Grant in, or a Richard Curtis comedy, suddenly everybody is a believer. There was a massive conversion. Suddenly it's *Trainspotting* versus *Shallow Grave*. The truth is, *Shallow Grave* was also a very good film, but it was a small British film with a cast of unknowns. Suddenly *Trainspotting* became something worth having because it was from the team that had made a really good, well reviewed film. To a degree, we had the same thing with *Shaun of the Dead* a long time later. I was told that it was unreleasable and then it got amazing reviews and, of course, when we came out with *Hot Fuzz*, everybody had changed their tune (Livingstone, 2014).

The romantic-comedy genre was also present in Working Title's US-based slate, albeit with a more adult-oriented bent. *40 Days and 40 Nights* (2002), for example, explored a young man's attempt to abstain from sexual stimulation, while *The Guru* (2002) follows the exploits of an Indian émigré to New York who inadvertently finds himself in the porn industry. Conversely, Working Title's engagement with action and thriller films – *The Interpreter* (2005), *Smokin' Aces* (2006) and *United 93* (2006) – set the tone for what would become a consistent theme within the company's US slate in later years. In particular, *The Interpreter* (2005), an \$80 million political thriller starring Sean Penn and Nicole Kidman, became emblematic of this new direction (Dawtre, 2005, 1). 'As a strategy, we absolutely started to steer towards bigger stories and bigger worlds to put those stories in and genres we hadn't been in', Chasin explained, '*The Interpreter* had an international scope and it was what we call elevated genre – or as Eric has been calling it recently – intelligent popcorn. It was a commercially broad movie but had the smarts that had been important to us up until that point' (Chasin, 2014). In the years that followed, Working Title's 'intelligent popcorn' output would largely comprise thrillers and dramas, often with a political angle. Working

Title's production of films in the US typically have American settings, characters, storylines and stars, but for Chasin this did not mean the output simply equated to Hollywood filmmaking. As she explained:

We always make films thinking more about the international box office than the US domestic box office because that's where our bread and butter is. We know our films are doing bigger multiples internationally than other films out of the US are doing. That was something that we really leaned heavily on. It's the sensibility of a company that's based in Europe, basically, and a desire to feed that side of the world and understand that the rest of the world is equally important ... We don't make anything that feels overly American. You won't see us making an American sports movie. It's a joke I have with Tim and Eric all the time, because it's just not something they're interested in. We seem like a big company, but we actually function like filmmakers, because we're on the ground producing our movies. The taste of the company is inherently informing the decisions and we're very careful to look at all those decisions both from a creative stand point and a commercial stand point. It's a good checks and balances system for us. We never get into a corner where we're being too American, but we do get into the corner where we're being too foreign in some ways, but that's the home base and the area that's important (Chasin, 2014).

In the period of limbo between PFE and Universal, Working Title had agreed distribution with Disney for the Coen brother's *O Brother Where Art Thou?* (2000), and another Nick Hornby adaptation, *High Fidelity* (2000), both of which were released in the US through the studio's specialty distribution label, Touchstone Pictures (Dawtre, 1999, 1b). In contrast, the family film pursued child-friendly fantasy and sci-fi subjects of a particularly British nature. *Thunderbirds* (2004), for example, is a feature length film based on the sci-fi television series of the same name (ITV, 1965-66), while *Nanny McPhee* (2005) is based on the *Nurse Matilda* fantasy novels (1964-74) by Christianna Brand. The source material of both films lent themselves to film series, if the first instalment was successful in finding an audience. Unfortunately, the former proved to be the greatest financial disaster of the company's history, recouping only \$28.2 million on a production budget of \$57 million. *Nanny McPhee*, on the other hand, grossed a much more respectable \$122 million, paving the way for a second instalment in 2010.

The final genre produced by Working Title was the drama, with just two examples, *The Man Who Cried* (1999) and *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (2001). The former is a historical drama written and directed by Sally Potter which tells the story of a young Jewish musical theatre performer working and travelling in Europe during the middle decades of the 20th century. The latter is a period romance set during the Italian occupation of Greece during World War II and based on the best-selling novel by Louis de Bernieres. Despite its

presold status and a starry cast including Nicolas Cage, Christian Bale and Penelope Cruz, *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* barely recovered its negative cost. *The Man Who Cried* was afforded a very limited theatrical release which barely registered in commercial terms, despite the inclusion of star actors such as Johnny Depp and Cate Blanchett.

The average cost of a film on Working Title's main slate between 1999 and 2006 was \$37.8 million, a figure considerably below the Hollywood average which stood at \$65.8 million by 2006 (MPAA, 2006). The diversity of genre and budget on display in Working Title's main slate did little to disrupt the balance of international and domestic box office revenue which Working Title's UK-based output typically attracted. While international revenue fluctuated from 59 percent (*Wimbledon*) to 84.7 percent (*Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*) the average was 72.7 percent. In contrast, international revenue from Working Title's US-based and US-set output varied between 87.2 percent (*The Guru*) and 36.7 percent (*O Brother Where Art Thou?*). The average, however, was a much reduced 54.5 percent. Within the monolithic 'international' figure, Working Title's UK box office proved again and again to be a huge factor in the success of its UK slate. On average, the UK box-office accounted for 25.1 percent of the worldwide gross. In respect of both international and UK box office, the market profile that Working Title's films achieved during its years under PFE proved to be remarkably stable. Considering the issue, Fellner reflected:

You try to make everybody feel that they're getting what they want. Ultimately, in America, it's very hard to make them feel like they're getting what they want, because what they really want is American films. They don't want foreign films. Even though our films are made in English, they're perceived as foreign films ... We make international films as opposed to domestic centric films. American film producers, predominantly, make domestic centric films. It's because of who they are and where they're based and because of who we are and where we're based. I believe that in a multiplex in Europe, if there are two good films and one has a European sensibility and one has an American sensibility, people will choose the European one and in America the opposite (Fellner, 2014).

The hit films which Working Title contributed to Universal's overall slate acted as the market drivers upon which the studio's television production was largely predicated. As it had been under PFE, the international broadcasters with which Universal had output deals were principally interested in acquiring the studio's hit feature films. They were, however, simultaneously obliged to buy television programming as part of an overall deal. Sales to television were organised through Universal Studios Television Distribution (USTD), which sold the television programming of Universal's in-house TV productions, the Universal TV library, USA Networks and, of course, Working Title Television (WTTV) (PR

Newsire, 2001, 1). The expanded staff of WTTV, which reached ten at its height, was re-located to a separate office in Soho's Wardour Street, which also acted as an overflow workspace for Working Title. As with the PFE regime, WTTV typically sought to partner with a US broadcaster to qualify for Universal's output deals. In practice, the company produced made-for-television films such as *The Last of the Blonde Bombshells* (2000, HBO), *About a Boy* (2003, Fox) and *Perfect Strangers* (CBS, 2004). *About a Boy* was also the first instance of WTTV remaking a Working Title film for the small screen. As Simon Wright, the head of WTTV explained, Universal's output deals took the risk out of television production, but also ensured that the end product was somewhat marginalised:

It was a completely sure thing. Universal could project within a few dollars what money they would make. If it was a \$5 million production, they knew literally just through listing the output deals that they were going to recoup \$8 million and make \$3 million. They called it a license to print money. They could not get enough TV movies off me. But it wasn't that simple, because I had to get US broadcasters to make it, because we needed them attached ... The irony was, and it was one of the problems with my entire career at Working Title, was that we were off the radar in the UK, yet making British stuff. We didn't qualify as British because it was technically American programming. We were really squashed between the two markets. We existed for years outside of the mainstream in the UK and certainly outside of the mainstream in the US, just doing what we did (Wright, 2014).

The return of the low-budget film: WT2

During the years of Snider's leadership of Universal, Working Title was granted an unprecedented license to produce a diverse slate of films. The three tier slate structure she imposed allowed Working Title to produce films across a wide creative and financial spectrum. Beyond the 'event' films for which Working Title became best known, the company also produced films through its low budget subsidiary company, WT2, and films which were co-produced with Universal's specialty sister studio, Focus Features. The films produced by WT2 were very much at the 'portfolio' end of Universal's slate, and tended to be less expensive still than Universal's other portfolio films. Based on the same floor of Oxford House as Working Title, WT2 comprised just four staff, a small development budget and a mandate to produce films with budgets of \$5 million or less.

WT2 was initially run by Jon Finn and Natascha Wharton, who were respectively recruited from Working Title's production and development departments. While the new

company was financed by the existing pact between Universal and Canal Plus, it was expected that WT2 would seek third party co-financing when putting projects into production (Dawtre, 1999d, 12). Wharton and Finn would gravitate towards their respective roles in development and production within the confines of WT2, before Wharton, who had joined Working Title in 1992 as Fellner's assistant, took overall responsibility for running the subsidiary after just a year. In many ways, WT2 had grown organically out of the New Writers Scheme, an initiative which Wharton had run while working in the development department. As she explained:

We set up rather a canny structure to support writers whereby they were allowed to hold on to the copyright in the material and we gave them a set fee. We helped them along the path and took a view on whether we would develop the project. It was a fantastically rich time because quite a few of the writers I worked with went on to have careers, from James Watkins to Nick Love and John McDonagh to Rowan Joffe ... It was less about Tim and Eric finding projects and more about genuinely providing support for emerging talent. At the time Tim and Eric thought that if, out of ten projects, one of them came good or an interesting relationship emerged then that would be of value (Wharton, 2014).

The realisation that most of the material produced by the scheme did not have the mass market appeal of Working Title's main slate added weight to the argument that a new forum should be created which was capable of steering projects in a more commercial direction. From the outset, Wharton was determined to avoid films in the \$10-15 million budget range. Budgets in this middle ground, she reasoned, were not large enough to support the production values and stars typical of the main slate, yet were sufficiently high to require a substantial return at the box office without the benefit of such elements. As with all Working Title projects, any decision about green-lighting would be funnelled upwards to Bevan and Fellner and through the control sheet before a dialogue with Universal would commence. Considering how WT2 fitted with the established Working Title approach to filmmaking, Wharton explained:

It is quite rare to be making a film at a \$5 million level and assume that it will play internationally. Bizarrely they sometimes do, and the ones that you don't expect sometimes do. It was quite a challenge because we were looking at really interesting filmmakers but we always had an eye on the audience as well ... If you look at most of the British films that are made with emerging talent, they are much more overtly festival-driven films. Our agenda was to try to find talent, and to make films, but for those films to have a similar sort of mainstream appeal as the other Working Title films ... There was an absolute desire for it to be about emerging talent, but the thinking was always to try support films which would connect with wider audiences (Wharton, 2014).

As the slate for the new company came together, the WT2 mantra became ‘the three H’s: humour, horror, heart’. Fittingly, the ten films which WT2 produced between 1999 and 2006 can be split almost evenly into the genre categories of comedy, drama and horror. These categories are not, of course, hard and fast. *Mickybo and Me* (2004), *Inside I’m Dancing* (2004) and *Sixty Six* (2006) are all comedy-dramas, for example. Table 6, below, lists the ten films produced by WT2 with their corresponding production budgets and financial performances at the box office, where available.

Table 7 –WT2 slate by genre 1999-2006 (all figures in \$USD million)

Genre/Title	Year	Origin	Production Budget	Domestic B.O.	Int’l B.O.	UK B.O.	Worldwide B.O.
Comedy							
<i>Ali G Indahouse</i>	2002	UK/US/ FR/GER	5	-	23.2 (100%)	14.8 (63.7%)	23.2
<i>Shaun of the Dead</i>	2004	UK/US/ FR	4	13.5 (45.1%)	16.4 (54.9%)	12.3 (41.0%)	30.0
<i>The Calcium Kid</i>	2004	UK	-	-	0.1 (100%)	0.1 (100%)	0.1
Drama / Comedy Drama							
<i>Billy Elliot</i>	2000	UK/FR	5	21.9 (20.1%)	87.2 (79.9)	25.2 (23.0%)	109.2
<i>Mickybo and Me</i>	2004	UK	5	-	0.4 (100%)	0.4 (100%)	0.4
<i>Inside I’m Dancing</i>	2004	UK?FR/ IRE	-	0.02 (1.6%)	1.2 (98.4%)	1.2 (98.4%)	1.2
<i>Sixty Six</i>	2006	UK/FR	-	0.2 (12%)	1.6 (88%)	1.5 (83.3%)	1.8
Horror							
<i>Long Time Dead</i>	2002	UK/FR	-	-	13.1 (100%)	2.5 (19.0%)	13.1
<i>My Little Eye</i>	2002	UK/US/ FR/CAN	2	-	6.8 (100%)	4.0 (58.8%)	6.8
<i>Gone</i>	2006	UK/AU S	-	-	-	-	-

Sources: Boxofficemojo.com (box office data) imdb.com (origin and production budgets).

In practice, the most successful WT2 projects would come from established creative relationships in the wider British film and television industry. The ‘heart’ portion of the slate was dominated by the drama and comedy-drama, particularly the coming of age sub-genre, typically with a triumph-over-adversity narrative. *Billy Elliot* (2000), the first film to be produced by WT2, began life as a script in development with BBC Films and Tiger Aspect. Working Title had maintained a first look deal with Tiger Aspect since the production of *Bean* and the project was soon brought into the WT2 fold. Working Title

brought in Stephen Daldry, a theatre director who would make his feature film debut on the production. Against the backdrop of the 1984 miner's strike, *Billy Elliot* tells the story of an 11-year old miner's son who harboured the unlikely ambition to become a ballet dancer. The film proved to be by far the most critically and commercially successful amongst the ten released by WT2, grossing \$109.2 million worldwide. 'It did make things a little bit hellish, because everything afterwards seemed like a dismal failure, given that it had Oscar nominations and BAFTA wins', Wharton explained. 'I don't think it actively changed things but it did put a certain kind of pressure on and we didn't subsequently deliver something that had that kind of box office success' (Wharton, 2014). The film subsequently spawned a long running West End and Broadway theatre production, *Billy Elliot the Musical* (2005-present).

To fulfil the 'humour' quota, WT2 recruited Sasha Baron Cohen, the creator of Ali G, a character featured on the satirical sketch series, *The 11 O'clock Show* (Channel 4, 1998-2000) and later his own series, *Da Ali G Show* (Channel 4, 2000). TalkBack Productions, the company responsible for the latter series and Channel 4's in-house film production unit, FilmFour, came on board as partners. Along with Dan Mazer, a producer on both of the television series, Baron Cohen began developing the feature film *Ali G Indahouse* (2002) with WT2. In common with the television shows, Ali G was used to satirise the adoption of US hip-hop and gangster culture by suburban British youth. In a similar way, *Shaun of the Dead* came from the established writer and director team of Simon Pegg and Edgar Wright, who had created the offbeat sitcom *Spaced* (Channel 4, 1999-2001) with Nira Park of Big Talk Productions. The team had been developing a feature film at FilmFour before the company's demise and the project subsequently found its way onto the WT2 slate. As an emphatically hybrid 'rom-zom-com', *Shaun of the Dead* combined comedy, horror and romance in the tale of a zombie attack on North London.

Ali G Indahouse and *Shaun of the Dead* both proved to be substantial hits in the UK for such modestly budgeted films, grossing \$14.8 million and \$12.3 million respectively. This success was, of course, largely predicated on the 'presold' status afforded by the film's roots on the small screen. In contrast, the US release of *Ali G Indahouse* was stalled until the television series *Ali G in da USAiii* (UK title)/ *Da Ali G Show* (US title) (HBO, 2003-4), was broadcast. Ultimately, the response to the television show in the US was not deemed sufficient to justify the release of the feature film. Two other characters from the television show would, however, prove to be major international hits in the eponymous feature films *Borat* (2006) and *Bruno* (2009), made through Baron Cohen's production company, Four by

Two Films. Pegg and Wright, on the other hand stayed with Working Title to produce *Hot Fuzz* (2007) and *The World's End* (2013), the second and third instalments of what would become known as the *Three Flavours Cornetto Trilogy*. On the back of the success of *Shaun of the Dead*, the latter two films were produced with considerably higher production values and budgets, and found their way onto Working Title's main slate.

The received wisdom suggested that UIP's strength in distributing and marketing tent pole and event releases was not replicated across the low-budget portfolio releases. For Till, the issue was not the size of the budget, but the particular properties of each film. 'I honestly believe that UIP had the expertise and the resources to market all the great films we were given, large and small. I've always said that great distribution and marketing can add 30 percent to the box office and bad distribution and marketing can lose 30 percent'. But as he explained, 'what we couldn't do is take a film that hasn't got an audience and just by brilliant marketing make people go and see it' (Till, 2014). The barrier which prevented many of the films emanating from WT2 reaching a wide audience through UIP was, for Till, a matter of cultural specificity, as he explained:

Shaun of the Dead is a good case in point. It was a huge success in the UK, and didn't really work in any other territories. Working Title at the time – and probably still do – maintained that it didn't work because we didn't give it the marketing support, and that it could have worked. We didn't give it the marketing support, not because we didn't have the time or the resources. I didn't think it would work outside the UK because it has a very UK-centric humour. We did release it in a couple of territories as a test, and it did no business whatsoever ... [Similarly] If you compare *Ali G* to Sacha Baron Cohen's subsequent films, it is very, very British. It's low-budget, with low production values, and obviously, the character wasn't well known outside the UK as a television character. That's another one where it wasn't about time and resources, but that the film was inherently very UK-centric (Till, 2014b).

The release of *Shaun of the Dead* and *Ali G Indahouse* were, however, much greater than those afforded to most of the other films WT2 produced, which only had a limited theatrical release, often only in the UK market. The films in the comedy-drama genre particularly suffered in this respect. Like *Billy Elliot*, *Mickybo and Me* and *Sixty Six* are rites-of-passage tales about adolescent boys. In the former, two boys, one catholic, one protestant, bond over a shared love of *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* during the Troubles in 1970s Northern Ireland. The latter focusses on the unfortunate coincidence of a North London boy's bar mitzvah and the 1966 World Cup final. Taking a somewhat different line, *Inside I'm Dancing* tells the story of a young man with cerebral palsy whose

life in a care home is transformed when a new resident arrives with an unshakable zest for life. As with all distribution and marketing decisions, UPI and UIP had to jointly determine whether a given film warranted the P&A expenditure associated with a wide release. 'It's literally saying, does the film justify the P&A? To go wide, even on a small film involves a lot of money. I remember *Sixty Six* and *The Calcium Kid* and I for one thought they weren't films that would work at the box office and we didn't give them every wide releases', Till explained. 'It wasn't just my opinion, obviously I had a loud voice, but it was Universal's money so they would have a strong view about where they wanted to spend it as well' (Till, 2014b). The low budgets associated with WT2's films were, of course, negligible for a parent company like Universal and could be chalked up to experience.

WT2's 'horror' quota consisted of *Long Time Dead* (2002), *My Little Eye* (2002) and *Gone* (2006). Horror was virtually untested territory for Working Title at large, but was arguably the genre most likely to produce a low-budget hit, with a long history of such films becoming cross-over successes. The plot of *Long Time Dead* revolved around a group of British university students inadvertently summoning the undead with a Ouija board and paying the price. Somewhat more topical and inventive, *My Little Eye* sees five American contestants taking part in a *Big Brother*-inspired reality programme with a prize of \$1 million available only if all contestants can last six months in house with increasingly horrific rules. Both films proved modestly successful upon theatrical release, exceeding their negative costs at the box office in a genre which has a considerably longer life than most in ancillary markets. *Gone*, however, a psychological thriller set in the Australian outback was released direct-to-video.

Despite the reluctance of UIP to distribute many of WT2's films widely, the early 2000s did coincide with the reworking of Universal's distribution and marketing operations in the US in order to accommodate 'specialty' releases. Since the sale of Gramercy, Universal had been sub-contracting the distribution of its non-mainstream releases to USA Films. With the creation of Universal Focus in September 1999, Universal once again brought specialty marketing and distribution in-house (Lyons & Petrikin, 1999, 1). The first Working Title films to be channelled through Universal Focus were *Billy Elliot* and *The Man Who Cried* (2000). Universal had lagged behind its competitors in catering for niche markets, where Fox (Fox Searchlight), Paramount (Paramount Classics), Disney (Miramax), Columbia (Sony Pictures Classics) and Warner Bros (Fine Line Features) were already established in the specialty market. While Universal Focus operated as a specialty distribution and marketing division only in the US, its establishment had immediate

consequences for WT2. 'It meant there was somebody that actually cared about smaller films and was in the art house business which a lot of British films – to Americans – look like they should be in' Livingstone explained. 'If a film only did \$12 million or \$15 million it was a success to them, whereas Universal was such a huge machine, they wanted the film that did 80 or 100 million' (Livingston, 2014).

Ultimately, the WT2 experiment proved to be short lived. In June 2005, Wharton took over from Hayward as head of development, while simultaneously maintaining responsibility for WT2. Hayward was retained on an exclusive basis, continuing her role in development on a smaller number of projects. Shortly thereafter, WT2 was folded into Working Title and ceased to operate as a separate company, continuing briefly as a 'label' until 2006 (Hoffman, 2006, 2). Recalling the dismantling of WT2, Wharton explained, 'I think that the world was in a different place, I think that Tim and Eric felt that they wanted to keep focus on bigger films, and they weren't certain that it made sense for them to have multiple executives working across smaller films, and they've held to that' (Wharton, 2014). Developments in the wider Universal machinery, however, ensured that as Working Title's withdrawal from low budget filmmaking took hold, another forum was created which promoted greater access to the specialty market. As the following section explores, Universal Focus was transformed from merely a niche US distribution company to a 'mini major' studio from 2002 onwards, a venture in which Working Title was centrally involved.

From Universal Focus to Focus Features

Under the leadership of Jean Marie Messier, Vivendi Universal had turned into the most aggressively acquisitive studio in conglomerate Hollywood. Messier's desire to compete with the largest studios required increasing the company's interests in television, an area in which it had been lacking since Seagram's fire sale of USA Network four years earlier. Ironically, Vivendi chose to re-buy the outstanding equity in USA from HSN Chairman and CEO Barry Diller in a deal valued at \$10.3 billion. Closed in December 2001, the deal gave birth to a new configuration, Vivendi Universal Entertainment (VUE), which was 93.5 percent owned by Vivendi Universal, with the remaining shares split between USA Interactive (USAi), a company which absorbed USA's 'transactional' businesses, and Diller himself. As part of the deal Diller would also become CEO of the new holding company, with Universal Studios COO, Ron Meyer, retained as his deputy (Oppelaar & DiOrio, 2001, 1).

The acquisition of USA Networks had the spin-off benefit of prompting the reorganisation, expansion and rebranding of Universal Focus the following year. In May 2002, Universal acquired Good Machine, an independent production, US distribution and international sales company (Harris and DiOrio, 2002, 1). The New York-based Good Machine was run by James Schamus and David Linde, who already had a long association with Universal. In 1998, for example, Good Machine had signed a three year 'first look' deal with the studio and was additionally sub-contracted to sell the international rights to some of Universal's specialty output through its sales company, Good Machine Intl. (Petrikin, 1998, 29). Universal promptly merged Good Machine with USA Films and Universal Focus to form Focus Features. The new look Focus was, in effect, a mini major subsidiary studio of Universal with production, US distribution and international sales under one roof. Schamus and Linde were brought on board as the co-chairmen and given the task of expanding Universal's interest in the specialty market to compete with market leaders such as Fox Searchlight and Miramax. As Till explained, Focus worked to a financial model which was based on direct distribution and international sales:

In the US Focus did their own marketing and had their own people. Internationally, in the main, their business model was that they sold off the rights, so often we wouldn't get Focus product. If they were producing a film with a \$20 million budget, part of their business model is that they would have to get 'x' of that \$20 million out of international pre-sales, so regularly we didn't get the Focus films, because they sold them (Till, 2014b).

Working Title's first association with Linde and Schamus had, in fact, occurred prior to the formation of Focus Features, when Working Title and Good Machine co-produced the Coen Brother's *The Man Who Wasn't There* (2001), a typically dark neo-noir, which was released through USA Films. The development of Focus did not, in fact, impinge greatly on Working Title, since the company continued to steer its green-lighting process directly through Universal. Focus only became involved at the point of US distribution and marketing, if it was deemed a film would benefit from specialty treatment in its exploitation. In contrast to Working Title's main slate and WT2, the Focus remit was largely driven by the festival circuit, the increased expectation of critical acclaim and the occasional cross-over hit. Films from the WT2 slate were, however, occasionally also distributed by Focus in the US, such as *Rory O'Shea was Here* (the US title for *Inside I'm Dancing*). Table 7, below lists the Working Title films which were distributed through Focus between 1999 and 2006

Table 8 - Working Title's Focus Features slate by genre 1999-2006 (all figures in \$USD million)

Title	Year	Origin	Production Budget	Domestic B.O.	Int'l B.O.	UK B.O.	Worldwide B.O.
Drama							
<i>The Man Who Wasn't There*</i>	2001	UK/US	20	7.5 (39.7%)	11.4 (60.3%)	2.3 ()	18.9
<i>The Shape of Things</i>	2003	UK/US/ FR	4	0.7 (100%)	-	-	0.7
<i>Ned Kelly</i>	2003	UK/US/ AUS/FR	-	0.08 (1.2%)	6.4 (98.7%)	0.8 (12.3%)	6.5
<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	2005	UK/US/ FR	28	38.4 (31.7%)	82.7 (68.3%)	26.5 (21.8%)	121.1
Thriller/Action							
<i>Catch a Fire</i>	2006	UK/US/ FR/SA	-	4.3 (75.3%)	1.4 (24.7%)	0.2 (3.5%)	5.7

Sources: Boxofficemojo.com (box office data) imdb.com (origin and production budgets)

*Distributed through USA Films.

The first Working Title film to go through Focus Features was *The Shape of Things* (2003), a dark American campus drama written and directed by Neil LaBute. Working Title's association with LaBute had begun during the PFE years when another PFE production subsidiary, Propaganda Films, had produced *Your Friends and Neighbours* (1998) and *Nurse Betty* (2000). In 2003, Working Title also released *Ned Kelly* through Focus, a period crime drama about the eponymous Australian criminal. Exploring Australian subject matter led to a short lived subsidiary, Working Title Australia (WTA), which had been established in 2000 to explore local opportunities (Dawtre, 2001, 12). WTA only made one film, however, *Getting Square* (2003), a low budget crime drama. In contrast, *Catch a Fire* is a thriller set in apartheid South Africa which reunited Working Title with Shawn Slovo, who had written *A World Apart*. *Ned Kelly* and *Catch a Fire* were unusual productions for Working Title insofar as they were set in Australia and South Africa respectively, rather than Britain or America, the settings which dominate the company's output. The films were also minor notes in the overall output of Focus, which released several specialty hits in the same period, such as *The Pianist* (2002), *Lost in Translation* (2003), *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004) and *Brokeback Mountain* (2005).

Working Title and Focus did enjoy one cross-over hit together in *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), Working Title's first engagement with period drama since the production of *Elizabeth*. Paul Webster, who had been in charge of Working Title's LA office until 1993 came back into the fold in 2003 to produce the film, following a successful career at

Miramax, and then as Head of Film at Film Four. An adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* (2005) was already in development when Webster returned to Working Title, with Joe Wright under consideration to make his feature film debut, after his success directing the television mini-series *Charles II: The Power and the Passion* (BBC, 2003). Explaining the genesis of the film, Webster recalled:

They were applying a considered approach to what works in the market place and they looked at the tradition of the country house period British movie, and adaptations of the classics. I think Deb Hayward said 'ok, let's look for a classic, let's look for some things that are very obvious and see if there's some mileage in them'. And that's what led them to *Pride and Prejudice*, which is kind of the ultimate love story and, of course, *Bridget Jones's Diary* owes a lot to *Pride and Prejudice* and that's not unconnected. I think they thought that they wanted to make a love story rather than a period piece. They were romantic comedy specialists, so why not got back to the loadstone? (Webster, 2013).

The release of *Pride and Prejudice* also saw a return to the prestige of Academy Award and BAFTA nominations for Working Title, with the film accruing four and six nods respectively. The film was also a substantial commercial hit, grossing \$121.1 million worldwide on a production budget of \$28 million. Significantly, Webster and Wright formed a strong producer-director partnership which continued to supply Working Title with films for distribution through Focus, with *Atonement* (2007) and *Anna Karenina* (2012) continuing Working Title's run of critical acclaim, ensuring the company was known for more than its associations with Richard Curtis and the Coen Brothers.

Working Title's first seven years under Universal proved to be a period of stability in which the company consolidated its position as the leading British-based production company. Indeed, Working Title received a timely acknowledgement of its special status within the British film industry when the company was presented with the Outstanding British Contribution to Cinema award at the BAFTA ceremony in February 2004. Appropriately Bevan and Fellner were joined on stage by Chasin, Hayward, Wharton and Morrison, four of the five heads of department responsible for running many of the company's filmmaking departments day-to-day. 2004 was also the year that Universal further enhanced its reputation as the most bought and sold studio in Hollywood. Vivendi's unsustainable expansion finally reached crisis point, forcing the sale of the studio to General Electric (GE), one of the blue chip giants of corporate America. The following section explores this transition.

A new parent company: From Vivendi to General Electric

Vivendi Universal was burdened with debt from the merger which formed it, and further encumbered by the acquisition of USA Network and other multi-billion dollar investments in media companies like EchoStar and Maroc Telecom in the years that followed. The conglomerate made a loss of \$13 billion in 2001 alone, prompting the fall of its share price by 60 percent. By the time Messier was removed as President and CEO in July 2002, Vivendi Universal was in the red to the tune of \$34 billion. His replacement, Jean-Rene Fortou, was given the immediate task of selling some of the company's assets in an attempt to reduce its debt position (Vaucher & Oppelar, 2002, 1), a streamlining process which was undertaken concurrently with sale negotiations. Despite an attempt by Edgar Bronfman Jr. to regain control of the studio, Vivendi elected to sell to General Electric. By March 2004, restructuring and asset sales had reduced the number of individual companies within Vivendi Universal from an incredible 6,000 to just 1,000 and lowered the conglomerate's debt load to \$6.1 billion (Amdur & James, 2004, 1). General Electric's subsidiary, NBC, completed the acquisition of 80 percent of VUE's film and television assets, including Universal Studios, Universal Television and USA Networks. NBC paid \$3.6 billion in cash and assumed \$1.8 billion of Vivendi Universal's debt as part of the deal. The untangled Vivendi retained Universal Music Group, Canal Plus, and a 20 percent stake in the newly merged conglomerate, NBC Universal (Amdur & McClintock, 2004, 4).

In the same year as its acquisition of Vivendi Universal, GE was listed as the fifth largest corporation in the US by revenue, totalling \$134 billion the previous year, of which \$15 billion was profit. Had the listing weighted GE's assets (\$647 billion) and market value (\$329 billion) as the governing measures for the ranking, however, GE would have been declared by far the largest corporation in America (CNN Money, 2004). The ten 'GE' prefixed divisions within the corporation – Advanced Materials, Consumer and Industrial, Infrastructure, Commercial Finance, Consumer Finance, Energy, Healthcare, Transportation, Equipment Services and Insurance – revealed the vast extent of the corporation's business interests. Under the twenty year stewardship of Chairman and CEO Jack Welch, the company had transformed its business portfolio from one dominated by manufacturing to one dominated by information and services. By the time of Welch's retirement in 2001, his strategy had raised the market value of the company from \$14 billion to \$400 billion (Anderson, 2007, 279-80).

In GE's long history, however, media businesses had typically been of only temporary interest. GE's co-founder, Thomas Edison, was a key figure in the development of early cinema and broadcasting. In 1919, GE founded a subsidiary company, the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) which pooled its technology patents with other leading corporations of the era, including Westinghouse Electric, the American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) and the United Fruit Company. RCA quickly assumed a dominant position in building radio transmission towers and manufacturing radio receivers as the medium became the first to reach mass status. By 1926 RCA had formed the first network of radio stations, dubbed the National Broadcasting Company (NBC). With the advent of the sound film, RCA had attempted and failed to sell its Photophone sound equipment to the theatre chains of the major Hollywood studios. Undeterred, RCA formed its own studio, Radio-Keith-Orpheum (RKO) in 1928, by merging the film production and distribution company, Film Booking Office (FBO), with the Keith-Albee-Orpheum theatre chain. RCA would, however, ultimately sell NBC in 1932 and, a decade later, its interest in RKO (Hilmes, 2007, 323-4).

For almost fifty years GE continued without any substantial investment in media businesses until it acquired NBC from its former subsidiary, RCA, in 1986. The purchase came at the end of network era, which had been dominated by the 'big three' – ABC, CBS and NBC. By the mid-1980s, this previously unrivalled oligopoly was being challenged by the advent of competing delivery systems such as video, cable and satellite. The strategic response from other networks in the years that followed was that of conglomerate Hollywood at large – tight diversification and synergy. By 2004, the conglomerate parents of all of the major studios had acquired or established multiple broadcasting divisions: Time Warner (HBO, Turner Broadcasting System), Disney (ABC, Disney Channel), Viacom (CBS, Showtime), News Corporation (Fox Network, FX) and Sony (Sony Pictures Television). Jeffrey Immelt, the Chairman and CEO of GE, sat at the top of the corporate pyramid with former NBC CEO, Bob Wright, acting as CEO of the combined NBC Universal. GE's acquisition of a controlling interest in Universal also meant that it was the first time that the studio was under American ownership since 1990. For Working Title, however, the impact of Universal's new parent company was felt largely on the business, finance and legal side, as Working Title COO, Angela Morrison, explained:

Once GE got involved, with their very strict compliance procedures, our finance and legal side became much more heavily involved with the internal corporate GE finance and legal ... it was change in the world outside as well. Big companies are

subject to so many more compliances. For example, the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, which is American anti-bribery legislation. Because GE is an American company, it is subject to that and everything flows from that on the finance side (Morrison, 2013).

In practice, Working Title remained largely insulated from the structural and personnel changes at the top of the conglomerate by its ongoing contractual ties with Universal and StudioCanal. In an industry notorious for its revolving door approach to executives, Ron Meyer and Stacey Snider proved to be among the most durable management teams in Hollywood. This consistency in management was also matched by the renegotiation of Working Title's contractual relationship with the studio. In 2004 Working Title renewed its commitment to Universal in a deal which replicated the financial and operational terms of the original agreement signed in 1999. The general state of uncertainty surrounding the studio's future, however, prompted a more cautious approach with regards to duration, with an expiry date set at the end of 2007. In the months leading to GE's acquisition of Universal, StudioCanal had been subject to the same reorganisation and downsizing policies as Vivendi. StudioCanal's parent company, Canal Plus, had lost \$120 million in 2002 but managed to claw its way back to profitability the following year. The effect was a reduced commitment to filmmaking in 2004 with an upper limit of investment set at \$146 million per year, less than half the company's budget in 2000. Of this figure, \$40 million was, however, committed to Working Title per annum in a strategic move to refocus on 'mainstream' filmmaking (James, 2004, 20). In return for its contribution, which amounted to approximately 25 percent of Working Title's annual overhead, development and production costs, Canal Plus received all French rights and a worldwide back-end profit position (Dawtre, 2006b, 1).

The following section examines the transitions which took place at Universal from 2007 to 2012 and, in turn, the consequences of those changes for Working Title. The most significant events in this respect included changes in both leadership and the industrial structures which underpinned the green-lighting and distribution of Working Title's films.

A New Direction: Universal and Universal Pictures International (2007-2011)

Stacey Snider's term as chairman of Universal Pictures came to an end in February 2006, when she became CEO and co-chairman of Dreamworks, working alongside Stephen Spielberg and David Geffen. The press coverage surrounding Snider's replacements emphasised evolution, with the appointment of Marc Shmuger and David Linde from

within the studio's ranks. Shmuger had joined Universal in 1998 and assumed responsibility for worldwide distribution and marketing as Vice Chairman since 2000. Linde was also from a distribution and marketing background, having run the sales company, Good Machine International, before being appointed co-chairman of Focus Features in 2002 (Snyder, 2006, 1). Securing the long term future of Working Title within the Universal stable was one of the first undertakings of the Linde and Shmuger regime. In January 2007, Working Title signed a seven year contract extension, set to expire at the beginning of 2014 (Thompson & Kemp, 2007, 1). While the details of the deal were not publically announced beyond its duration, in practice, little changed. 'We got to a point where everything was working without the need to have autonomy written in', Morrison explained. 'It was a replica of what had gone before' (Morrison, 2013). As she went on to point out, however, the same could not be said for Working Title's relationship with StudioCanal:

The terms changed because StudioCanal didn't want to invest as much. We were beginning to make bigger films and they didn't have the balance sheet to support that, so they came down a bit in terms of what they were prepared to fund and they stopped funding us in 2010. They had several management changes along the way, but the distribution side of it pretty much remained the same. They were beginning to want to limit their exposure on production cost because, if you look back over the slate some of the films became \$70 million whereas at the beginning we were making much cheaper films. It was the studio [Universal] that had the appetite to make those big films (Morrison, 2013)

Since the first 50-50 co-financing deal between StudioCanal and Universal in 1999, the former had steadily decreased its financial support of Working Title. The downsizing policies enacted by Canal Plus following Vivendi's financially disastrous ownership of Universal would continue to limit StudioCanal's involvement in film production for years to come. Crucially, Working Title's green-lighting relationship continued to be routed directly through Universal, ensuring that StudioCanal remained only a financier and distributor in a small number of European territories. Working Title's new seven year deal with Universal also coincided with a major restructuring operation at UIP, the joint international distribution venture owned by Universal and Paramount. Reforming UIP was an ostensibly unusual decision given the distributors recent success in international territories. UIP was the highest grossing distributor at the international box office in 2004 and 2005, earning revenues of \$2.1 billion and 2.3 billion respectively (Hollinger, 2007, 1). As David Kosse, Universal's President of International Marketing and Distribution explained, however, UIP's market share had become one of a number of problems:

We were making a lot of movies and releasing a lot of movies. So was Paramount and so was Dreamworks. We had a point, in some of the larger territories, where we had almost a film a week. We felt there was a cannibalisation of the screens, as opposed to their being an additive nature of the screens. In other words, it got past the tipping point of, 'we're a big distributor therefore we have clout' to 'we're such a big distributor, we're taking our own films off the screen'. That was one element of it. The second element of it was that it felt like the territories, from a studio standpoint, were becoming very cookie cutter. So, the big films were held well, but in a business where surprise hits come out of different places, the surprise hit films weren't being given a chance. Next, generally the perspective was that the international market was one that was projected to grow a lot. We felt like it was a core business that we had to be in. To be going through a joint venture really made no sense (Kosse, 2014).

The decision to reshape the UIP consortium had, in fact, been made as far back as 2005. Universal chose to expand the existing video operations of Universal Pictures International (UPI), which was solely owned by Universal, to include theatrical distribution in a number of key territories and thus substantially reduce the influence of UIP. The remodelling of Universal's international distribution operation was chiefly orchestrated by Marc Shmuger, who appointed Kosse President of UPI upon the commencement of its theatrical distribution operations in January 2007. It proved to be a moment of personal irony for Stewart Till, who left UIP just as the company had adopted the structure which he had advocated at the end of the 1990s. As Kosse explained, Universal's new distribution structure ultimately involved a combination of both UPI and UIP:

The parameters of UIP were that if one company left, then the other company would get the operation, and the leaving company would have to pay whatever restructuring costs were in that. So, there was no point in leaving, it was too much of a poisoned pill. We realised that we didn't want to leave UIP per se, we felt there were a handful of territories that would be better off just releasing the movies of one studio, as opposed to both studios. I came up with this idea of instead of UIP being a joint venture, let's look at it as 36 joint ventures and let's take the most important 16 markets and let's split them up, eight going to each studio. There was a lot of concern for all of us about what would happen when we left, what if we couldn't set up on our own in the UK or France quickly enough? So we had reciprocal distribution arrangements for a few years with the other party. We were able to exit that company, knowing we could always go through Paramount for a few more years while we set up our own companies (Kosse, 2014).

As of January 2007, UPI adopted eight key UIP operating companies in Germany/Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Russia, Belgium, the Netherlands and South Korea. Simultaneously, Paramount formed Paramount Pictures International (PPI) which adopted UIP's operating companies in the UK/Ireland, Australia/New Zealand, France,

Mexico and Brazil. Distribution in the remaining smaller national markets continued to be handled through a much reduced UIP, which continued as a joint venture between Universal and Paramount (Dawtre, 2006a, 10). UIP's final year of operation under its original configuration proved to be a record breaking one for the international box-office at large. The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) reported a total worldwide box office figure of \$25.5 billion for 2006. Within this figure, \$9.1 billion had been earned in the US domestic market and \$16.3 billion in international territories (MPAA, 2007). In the preceding years neither Universal nor Paramount had involved UIP in the green-lighting process, declining to seek both market forecasts and subjective advice from the staff at their shared distributor. Under, UPI the situation was quite different. Comparing his experience with that of Till, who had been excluded from discussions about production while at UIP, Kosse explained:

It was much easier for me because I came in as a Universal guy and spent a lot more time at the Universal lot. I became their go-to guy for information because I'd developed relationships with them ... UPI is intensely involved in production now, and have been for a long time. It's an intense process to get involved in and it's a time-consuming process. They can't call and just say, 'we've got a movie, so and so is making it, read the script, and tomorrow give me a number'. It's a much more iterative and dynamic process, you really need to understand what the movie is going to be *like*, as opposed to making a quick judgement on it. UIP wasn't set up to be that, whereas UPI is just part of the company. We see the development slate all the way through the process and you have a constant ebb and flow with the executives working on it and they value my opinion (Kosse, 2014).

The effect on Working Title's green-lighting relationship with Universal was immediate and enduring. 'If we take a picture through Universal, it used to be the production people who read the script and between you and them you'd come up with a cost, you'd green light it, you'd set out to make it', Bevan explained. 'You'd tell distribution that you'd got this film coming and that would probably be the first distribution had heard about it. Whereas now, distribution and particularly foreign distribution – because that's where the growth is – would be all over the decision of whether the film gets made or not (Bevan, 2013). As the studio headed towards an era defined by a renewed emphasis on integrating distribution and marketing into the green-lighting process, it became more important than ever to retain the stable of filmmakers responsible for Working Title's greatest successes. The distribution of Working Title's influence and resources amongst the wider British film industry could be measured in cyclical contractual ties with both companies and individuals. 'We've fallen in and out of deals with Richard Curtis, depending

on where we are in a cycle. We'll have a two or three picture deal with him, we've got a several film deal with Joe Wright, we had a several film deal with Edgar Wright', Bevan explained. 'As part of those first look deals, there are elements of their lives that come with it. Joe formed Shoebox Films and we fund that, Richard had got his offices over in Portobello and we finance that' (Bevan, 2013). As Angela Morrison went on to point out, such deals were, in part, a consequence of the continuing dis-integrated structure of the wider UK industry:

It's very hard for an indie producer to have any kind of set up here, because out there in the local UK business, there aren't many overhead deals. We have had the luxury of having a decent development budget and although it has had some pressures on it, and it has reduced over time, we still felt that if we give these producers some support, they are going to bring talent relationships, script development and ideas. It's really an expansion of our development department here at Working Title and it was perceived to be a good way to bring more projects in ... We give them a small overhead contribution, and we have a first look at their projects. If we want to develop it, we pay for it, and if we don't they can go somewhere else with it. It allows them autonomy in terms of what ideas they might be generating, but then, once something is developed here it enters our system of being just like any other Working Title project (Morrison, 2014)

In maintaining production deals with independent companies, Working Title had begun to act like a miniature British-based studio in its own right. Indeed, Working Title extended the same level of creative autonomy in terms of development to the independent companies on its books as it was granted by Universal.

In the same period, Working Title closed down WTTV. Since its establishment in 1988, WTTV had been in the shadow of its parent company, a situation which was exacerbated by Universal's funding model which ensured its produce was sold internationally as part of feature-film output deals. The result had been a longstanding marginalisation of the company's output, which was largely comprised of made-for-television films which did not have the long term potential of television series. Ironically, the closure of WTTV in 2007 coincided with the broadcast of *The Tudors* (Showtime, 2007-2010), the most high profile production to bear the company's name. The series had, in fact, been largely developed in-house at Showtime and used the established brand identity of Working Title in conjunction with its take on British history to bestow a sense of authenticity on the programme (Wright, 2014).

There was also a change in production strategy at Universal. Looking towards successful 'tent pole' franchises at other studios, Linde and Shmuger began to acquire film option rights from a wide range of toy manufacturers, comic books publishers and video

games designers (Graser, 2009, 1). Discovering an adaptable property which had a 'presold' public profile, synergy in the form of ancillary products and the potential for franchise production represented the ultimate Hollywood commodity. Despite these efforts, Linde and Schmuger were dismissed in October 2009 after a run of poorly performing films. Schmuger was replaced as Chairman by Adam Fogelson, who had joined Universal as a marketing executive in 1998 before climbing the ranks to become President of marketing from 2002 onwards. His role was shared with co-chairman, Donna Langley, who had joined Universal as a production executive in 2001 before ascending to president of production under Snider in 2005 (Graser, 2009a, 1).

In 2009 Working Title moved out of Oxford House after 14 years of residence. The company's new offices on Aybrook Street in Marylebone were an apt reflection of the company's stature, and remain its home at the time of writing. The six storey Victorian era building houses all of Working Title's essential departments – administration, accounts, development, production and legal and business – in an environment which betrays the confidence of a company with a 25 year record of successful filmmaking. In the same year, Bevan was appointed Chairman of the UK Film Council (UKFC) on a four year term. Like the two previous chairmen, Alan Parker and Stewart Till, the Film Council had chosen to appoint high profile industry players who had spent their careers working in both the Hollywood and British film industries. At the time of Bevan's appointment, the UKFC had an annual budget of £70 million (\$104 million) sourced largely from the National Lottery and direct government grant aid. The council's policy had changed little since its establishment, providing direct assistance to the UK industry of £21 million (\$32 million) through a number of centralised grant schemes, £8 million (\$12 million) through nine regional screen agencies and a further £16 million (\$24 million) to support the BFI. The diversion of Lottery funds towards the London 2012 Olympics, however, meant that the UKFC stood to lose \$33 million in funding over the next five years (Ward, 2009a).

Bevan's term at the UKFC proved to be short-lived and divisive. By August Department of Media, Culture and Sport (DCMS) announced the potential for merging the UKFC and the BFI in an effort to economise on overheads and infrastructure. The plan was initially welcomed by both Bevan and the chairman of the BFI, and former Director General of the BBC, Greg Dyke (Ward, 2009b, 6). The merger was still being considered at the time of the General Election in May 2010, which saw Gordon Brown's New Labour government lose power after thirteen years in office. The Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition which formed the new government saw the leader of the Conservative Party, David

Cameron, become the new Prime Minister. The incoming Culture Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, reduced the staff at DCMS by 50 percent and abolished the Film Council by July in as part of a strategic decision to roll back the functions of the public sector. 'Abolishing the most successful film support organization the UK has ever had is a bad decision, imposed without any consultation or evaluation', Bevan declared at the time. 'People will rightly look back on today's announcement and say it was a big mistake, driven by short-term thinking and political expediency' (*Variety*, 2010, 1). The functions of the UKFC were subsequently subsumed within the BFI.

While the abolishment of the UKFC was something of a personal defeat for Bevan, the reduction of public support for filmmaking had little impact on Working Title. The company's status as first a subsidiary of PFE and now of Universal had made the prospect of attracting such investment both unlikely and unnecessary. Working Title's business strategy was firmly transatlantic, a fact reiterated by the incorporation of a new version of WTTV in February 2010. Unlike the original company, its reincarnation is owned by Bevan and Fellner and operates as joint venture between the two producers and NBC with offices in London and Los Angeles. Its London office is run by former BBC and Channel 4 executive, Juliette Howell, while the LA office is run by former NBC Universal executive, Shelly McCory (Jaafar, 2010, 6). The US office maintains a first-look deal with NBC which has thus far resulted in the two sitcom series for the network, *Love Bites* (2011) and a television remake of the 2002 film, *About a Boy* (2014-Present). In contrast, the UK office has largely produced for the BBC, including the short drama series *Birdsong* (2012) and *True Love* (2012) and yet another remake of *The Borrowers* (2011).

In April 2010, Natascha Wharton, former head of WT2 and latterly joint-head of Working Title's development department, left Working Title to take a job as a senior production and development executive at the UK Film Council (UKFC) and would subsequently work for the BFI in the same capacity. Wharton was replaced at the top of Working Title's development department by another long-serving member of staff, Amelia Granger. In September the following year, Debra Hayward also stepped down from her position in the development department at Working Title to form her own production company, Monumental Pictures. 'I wanted to be more autonomous and I also wanted to focus down', Hayward explained. 'It's hard to be creative when you're jumping from one project on to another, on to another. Doing a script meeting for three hours here, and then immediately moving into a pitch meeting there. You can do that for a long time, but it just got to a point where I wanted to focus on fewer things with more concentration' (Hayward,

2013). Monumental would not, however, stray far from Working Title, taking residence in the basement of the Aybrook Street office. The new company also added to Working Title's web of affiliated companies by securing a two-year first-look deal with Working Title (*Variety*, 2011, 12).

Universal further enhanced its reputation as the most bought and sold studio in Hollywood as reports surfaced in late 2009 that General Electric intended to sell NBC Universal to concentrate on its core industrial businesses. In December GE agreed to acquire Vivendi's 20 percent stake in the company for \$5.8 billion. The announcement also officially stated GE's intention to subsequently sell a 51 percent controlling interest in NBC Universal to the cable, internet and telephone service provider, Comcast. The deal entailed Comcast paying GE approximately \$6.5 billion and providing the new joint venture with \$7.25 billion worth of its media assets. In the longer term, Comcast reserved the right to acquire yet more of GE's stake under specified conditions (Szalai, 2009, 1). The deal would once again exemplify the strategies of tight diversification and synergy by pairing the vast production assets and catalogue of NBC Universal with the distribution machinery of Comcast. Comcast had been established in 1969 as a cable television provider, but expanded its interests into other media by voraciously acquiring dozens of other companies over the next four decades. By 2009 Comcast had grown to become both the largest cable and internet service provider in the US and the third largest telephone service company with over 24 million subscribers (Associated Press, 2009).

As with every prior corporate transition, Working Title was directly affected only insofar as the generic functions of the administration, accounts and business and legal affairs departments were reshaped to fit the new corporate model. The Comcast regime, like those of Seagram, Vivendi and General Electric before it, came with a new hierarchy at the top of the organisation. The Chairman and CEO of Comcast, Brian Roberts, appointed Steve Burke as CEO of NBC Universal upon acquisition of Comcast's 51 percent stake in 2011. It was envisaged that Comcast would acquire the remaining 49 percent stake in NBC Universal in two stages in 2014 and 2017 (Goldsmith, 2013, 1). As on previous occasions, however, the team running Universal remained the same. Meyer, now by far the longest serving studio head, remained COO and President of Universal Studios and Fogelson and Langley remained Chairman and co-chairman respectively.

During this period between 2007 and 2011, Working Title produced a total of 19 films at an average rate of just under four films a year. The dip in production level when compared to the period between 1999 and 2006 was largely a result of the closure of WT2

and the curtailment of low budget filmmaking at large. With WT2 closed, Working Title's output was divided between a main slate of 14 films, and a 'specialty' slate handled through Focus Features comprised of 5 titles. The following section examines the films which Working Title produced between 2007 and 2011.

Working Title's Main Slate (2007-2011)

Table 8, below, presents an overview of Working Title's main slate between 2007 and 2011, divided by genre, with the usual additional financial information.

Table 9 - Working Title Main Slate 2007-2011 (all figures in \$USD million)

Genre/Title	Year	Origin	Production Budget	Domestic B.O.	Int'l B.O.	UK B.O.	Worldwide B.O.
<u>Romantic Comedy</u>							
<i>Definitely, Maybe</i>	2008	UK/US/FR	-	32.2 (58.1%)	23.2 (41.9%)	5.6 (10.1%)	55.4
<i>Wild Child</i>	2008	UK/US/FR	20	-	21.9 (100%)	9.5 (43.3%)	21.9
<u>Comedy / Comedy Drama</u>							
<i>Hot Fuzz</i>	2007	UK/US/FR	12	23.6 (29.3%)	56.9 (70.7%)	41.2 (51.1%)	80.5
<i>Mr Bean's Holiday</i>	2007	UK/FR/GER	25	33.3 (14.5%)	196.4 (85.5.7%)	43.9 (19.1%)	229.7
<i>Paul</i>	2011	UK/US/FR	40	37.4 (38.2%)	60.5 (61.8%)	23.3 (23.7%)	97.9
<i>Johnny English Reborn</i>	2011	UK/US/FR/GER	45	8.3 (5.2%)	151.7 (94.8%)	33.0 (20.6%)	160
<u>Drama</u>							
<i>Elizabeth: The Golden Age</i>	2007	UK/US/FR/GER	55	16.3 (22.1%)	57.8 (77.9%)	10.3 (13.8%)	74.2
<i>Frost/Nixon</i>	2008	UK/US/FR	35	18.6 (67.9%)	8.8 (32.1%)	2.7 (9.8%)	27.4
<i>The Soloist</i>	2009	UK/US/FR	60	31.7 (82.7%)	6.6 (17.3%)	1.6 (9.8%)	38.3
<u>Family</u>							
<i>Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang</i>	2010	UK/US/FR	35	29.0 (31.1%)	64.2 (68.9%)	23.5 (25.2%)	93.2
<u>Thriller/ Action</u>							
<i>State of Play</i>	2009	UK/US/FR	-	37.0 (42.2%)	50.7 (57.8%)	9.2 (10.4%)	87.8
<i>Smokin' Aces 2: Assassins' Ball</i>	2010	US/CA/N	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Green Zone</i>	2011	UK/US/	100	35.0	59.8	8.2	94.8

	0	FR/SP		(36.9%)	(63.1%)	(8.6%)	
Documentary							
Senna	2010	UK/FR	-	1.6 (19.6%)	6.6 (80.4%)	4.9 (58.3%)	8.2

Sources: Boxofficemojo.com (box office data) imdb.com (origin and production budgets).

The single largest change in the genre composition of Working Title’s main slate was a substantial reduction in the number of romantic comedies. Only *Definitely, Maybe* (2008) and *Wild Child* (2008) fitted the description, yet neither bore a clear resemblance to the established ‘Working Title romantic comedy’, formula associated with the writing of Curtis. In place of the romantic comedy, Working Title chose to revive many of its most successful films by producing either sequels or series of films which were connected by a consistency of genre and creative personnel. In the period between 2007 and 2011 there were four sequels – *Mr Bean’s Holiday* (2007), *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007), *Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang* (2010) and *Johnny English Reborn* (2011) – as well as *Hot Fuzz* (2007), which was the second in a trilogy of Simon Pegg and Edgar Wright comedies. The compulsion to produce films which reworked the most successful titles in Working Title’s back catalogue was, for Fellner, a multifaceted issue. ‘Producing franchises wasn’t a strategic decision. If a film worked, we would see if we could make another one if there was a creative reason for it. That’s organic, that just happens. You’re crazy not to push when you can push’. He further noted that, ‘With low budget films it gets harder and harder to make films which get any traction. As we go into a world where box sets and digital distribution and high end TV are raiding the low hanging fruit of box office receipts, those films are starting to die’ (Fellner, 2014). From the perspective of Universal, the decision to produce sequels and series was a matter of mitigating risks, as David Kosse explained:

As with every producer, the first thing Working Title are trying to do is get somebody to say ‘yes’ to their movie. And if the people with the purse strings say, ‘I want Bridget Jones 3’ they’re going to try to come up with Bridget Jones 3, or Johnny English 3 or Mr Bean 3, because for a movie studio, those are the safer bets. If you take sequels out of the mix, I don’t think movie studios make a lot of money, so any movie studio will want what they consider to be a safe bet. Working Title is always looking to do those, but at the same time they’re looking to do *Les Mis* and some of the smaller films, like *The Theory of Everything* or *Trash*. So they’re looking for movies that are \$20 million or \$25 million (Kosse, 2014).

Between 2007 and 2011, the average cost of a film on Working Title's main slate was \$41.5 million, a rise of just under \$4 million from the 1999-2006 average of 37.8 million. As with previous periods, there was a large disparity in the most and least expensive, ranging from *Green Zone* (\$100 million), to *Hot Fuzz* (\$12 million). The period also represented an extended period of relative underperformance by Working Title's films at the worldwide box office. Between 1999 and 2006, the company had released four films from its main slate with worldwide grosses in excess of \$200 million and four more with grosses over \$100 million. Between 2007 and 2011, the company managed just one over \$200 million (*Mr Bean's Holiday*) and one more over \$100 million (*Johnny English Reborn*), both hits predicated on the pre-sold success of the earlier films in the franchise and the international stardom of Rowan Atkinson.

Working Title and Focus Features (2007-2011)

Working Title also released a number of critically and commercially successful films through Focus in the same 2007-2011 period. As on previous occasions, Focus handled the Working Title films which fitted the loose 'specialty' category. Significantly, while the average production budget for films in this category was \$28.8 million, the budget of *The Boat that Rocked* (2009) exceeded the average cost of films on the main slate at \$50 million, while *Burn After Reading* (2008) was not far behind at \$37 million. Nonetheless, both films were considered worthy of specialty distribution and marketing in the US because they were perceived as non-mainstream products. *The Boat that Rocked* (2009) initially appears as an incongruous addition to the Focus slate, since it was Richard Curtis's ninth collaboration with Working Title and ostensibly sat in the same mainstream company as his previous successes. The story of a 1960s offshore pirate radio station did not, however, find a substantial audience upon release in the UK and met with generally unfavourable reviews. The film was substantially re-cut and subsequently handled by Focus in the US precisely because of its failure to find a mainstream audience in international territories (McClintock & Jaafar, 2009, 1). In contrast, *Burn After Reading*, like all of the Coen brother's films, including *A Serious Man* (2009), was a much more natural fit with the typical 'specialty' fare on the Focus slate even though it featured some of Hollywood's biggest stars, George Clooney and Brad Pitt among them. Partly as a consequence, the film proved a substantial cross-over hit, grossing \$162.7 million worldwide.

Table 10 - Working Title's Focus Features Slate 2007-2011 (all figures in \$USD million)

Genre/Title	Year	Origin	Production Budget	Domestic B.O.	Int'l B.O.	UK B.O.	Worldwide B.O.
Comedy							
<i>Burn After Reading</i>	2008	UK/ US/FR	37	60.3 (36.9%)	103.3 (63.1%)	12.7	162.7
<i>The Boat That Rocked</i>	2009	UK/FR/ GER	50	8.0 (22.1%)	28.3 (77.9%)	10.1	36.3
<i>A Serious Man</i>	2009	UK/US/ FR	7	9.2 (29.4)	22.2 (70.6%)	2.4	31.4
Drama							
<i>Atonement</i>	2007	UK/US/ FR	30	50.9 (39.4%)	78.3 (60.6%)	24.0	129.2
Action/Thriller							
<i>Tinker Tailor, Soldier, Spy</i>	2011	UK/FR/ GER	20	24.1 (30.0%)	56.4 (70%)	22.5	80.6

Sources: Boxofficemojo.com (box office data) imdb.com (origin and production budgets)

Paul Webster and Joe Wright paired up once more for another period film, an adaptation of Ian McEwan's epic historical romantic drama, *Atonement* (2007), which was another critical success, securing numerous Oscar and BAFTA nominations, including the BAFTA award for Best Picture, a substantial box-office return given the for a film distributed by Focus. 2007 was also the year that Wright formed his own production company, Shoebox Films, which Webster and a second producer, Guy Heeley, joined in 2011. Shoebox continued their relationship with Working Title through a first look deal thereafter, typically providing films oriented towards the 'art house' end of the studio spectrum for marketing and distribution through Focus.

Working Title's first collaboration with StudioCanal since the end of their contractual agreement the previous year was on *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (2011). This film was an adaptation of the John Le Carre spy novel, which had previously appeared as a television miniseries (BBC, 1979). Despite the ongoing exclusive agreement between Working Title and Universal, all of the financing for *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* came from StudioCanal. The unprecedented decision was a result of an impasse in the green-lighting process and Working Title's desire to see the film realised. 'We went to StudioCanal on *Tinker, Tailor* and they distributed it themselves in three territories', Bevan explained. 'In all the territories where distribution was not taken, Universal had a first right once the film was complete, so they ended up buying back the distribution rights to *Tinker, Tailor* in the United States' (Bevan, 2013).

The first look deal and the return of StudioCanal (2012-Present)

By the turn of 2012, Working Title had been under an exclusive deal with Universal for almost 14 years, and had a further two years to run on its current contract. The single most significant contractual transition between the two parties was enacted in April that year, when the exclusive agreement was replaced by a first look deal until the end of 2015 (*Screen International*, 2012, 1). The change brought Working Title in line with the vast majority of the independent production companies on Universal's books. For Bevan, the new terms reflected the overall direction of Universal and the Hollywood studios at large:

It's an ever evolving relationship, the studio relationship. If you look at the way the studio is going, it's polarising towards bigger movies, these gigantic blockbusters. A low budget studio film is probably \$75 million but an average film is well over \$100 million now and their core movies are \$200 plus ... The smaller films we would have made in the past are just less attractive to them, basically. They may be attractive to their foreign people, they may not be. The studio recognised that and we recognised that. It didn't make sense because within the Working Title slate, nobody wanted to change that, there was always going to be those sorts of movies in an entirely exclusive relationship. For the bigger budget films, we'll always make them with the studio, and they'll get a first look at everything (Bevan, 2013).

Working Title's transition from an exclusive to a first-look deal was, in fact, more likely to have been the result of a combination of factors including the relative underperformance of the company's films in recent years, the effects of the global financial crisis and recession and the studio's polarisation towards big budget films. While Working Title remained a subsidiary of Universal, the first-look deal paved the way for StudioCanal to once again act as a financing and distribution partner for Working Title. Following a considerable period of retrenchment after the collapse of Vivendi Universal, StudioCanal began to expand under Chairman and CEO Olivier Courson. In 2006 the company acquired the UK-based distribution company, Optimum Releasing, before buying the Germany-based distributor, Kinowelt, in 2008. Combined with its existing distribution operations in France, StudioCanal had achieved integrated distribution across all media platforms in Europe's three largest markets, complemented by an international sales company which sold to third party distributors in all other territories (Barraclough, 2012).

Significantly, StudioCanal had also adopted an increasingly 'international' production strategy under Courson's leadership. Upon his arrival in 2006, 90 percent of the company's output was in the French language; by 2012, 70 percent was produced in English. While the label of 'European major' was once again applied to StudioCanal, its production strategy remained largely in the \$15-25 million range per film, a scale which is

more in tune with the specialty divisions of Hollywood's studios (Hopewell, 2012, 79a). In July 2012, StudioCanal further underlined its project of expansion by acquiring Hoyts Distribution in Australia and New Zealand, adding a fourth major territory to its network of direct distribution companies (Hopewell, 2012b, 6). By the end of the year, StudioCanal announced production budget of \$260 million for 2013, a figure which would produce ten films with two or three in the \$40-50 million range (Hopewell & Keslassy, 2012, 8). The market position which StudioCanal had attained was, inevitably, wedded to the leverage that the company had with exhibition in its operating territories. For Bevan, the great disparity in size and market share between UPI and StudioCanal presented a number of drawbacks:

Studio Canal distribute in four of the big territories, they're not worldwide yet. You see, from our point of view that they do not have the power. When you see Universal put a picture out in the UK, you see the muscle they have with exhibition, because you'll sit in between *Fast and the Furious* and *Despicable Me* ... that makes a substantive difference in terms of getting your film into the market and keeping it there, holding the cinemas, and the business that you're able to do. Now, if that's branded Hollywood, it's fine by me. It's a good thing that some British films can get distributed like that (Bevan, 2013).

While StudioCanal was building its infrastructure to support what were by Hollywood standards, largely specialty films, Universal began doing the opposite. James Schamus was removed as CEO of Focus Features in October 2013 and replaced by Peter Schlessel, the co-founder and CEO of FilmDistrict, a company which specialised in financing, acquiring and distributing independent films. FilmDistrict was promptly subsumed by Focus, before a wide reaching reorganisation was implemented. The merged company's headquarters were moved from New York to Los Angeles and its London-based international sales arm, Focus Features International, was closed in November (Kay, 2013). The transition was widely seen as a curtailment of the creative and operational independence which Focus had enjoyed under Schamus. The move was also in keeping with the studio's general movement away from low budget and specialty films towards the event and tent pole releases. While the contents of the new Focus slate is not publically available at the time of writing, the best indicator of its likely complexion can be gathered from looking at the short-lived output of FilmDistrict before its integration into Focus. The company's biggest releases were horror, action and thriller films like *Insidious* (2011), *Looper* (2012) and *Olympus has Fallen* (2013). Under Schlessel it seems likely that Focus will

be steering away from its original focus on the ‘art-house’ end of the studio spectrum and instead pursue more genre driven fare with mainstream appeal.

For the period since 2012, it makes sense to divide Working Title’s slate broadly along the lines of the three wider institutional relationships that shape the company: Universal, Focus and StudioCanal. Universal continues to deal with Working Title’s main slate, while Focus and StudioCanal concentrate on the specialty end of the company’s output. Table 10 below shows the films which Working Title produced for Universal between 2012 and 2014.

Table 11 - Working Title’s Main Slate (Universal) 2012-2014 (all figures in \$USD million)

Genre/Title	Year	Origin	Production Budget	Domestic B.O.	Int’l B.O.	UK B.O.	Worldwide B.O.
<u>Romantic Comedy</u>							
<i>About Time</i>	2013	UK	-	15.3 (17.6%)	71.7 (82.4%)	12.0 (13.7%)	87.1
<u>Action/ Thriller</u>							
<i>Contraband</i>	2012	UK/US/ FR	25	66.2 (69.1%)	29.7 (30.9%)	3.3 (3.4%)	96.2
<u>Family</u>							
<i>Big Miracle</i>	2012	UK/US	40	20.1 (81.5%)	4.5 (18.5%)	0.9	24.7
<u>Musical</u>							
<i>Les Miserables</i>	2012	UK/US	61	148.8 (33.7%)	293 (66.3%)	63.2 (14.3%)	441.8

Sources: Boxofficemojo.com (box office data) imdb.com (origin and production budgets)

The films which Working Title continued to produce for Universal were, as ever, typically at the bigger-budget end of the spectrum and produced for a mainstream audience. Production out of the US office continued along the ‘intelligent popcorn’ line with the US-set thriller *Contraband* (2012) and the family film, *Big Miracle* (2012) based on the real life events of Operation Breakthrough, a successful attempt to recuse whales trapped under arctic ice. The former proved a commercial success, while the latter failed to recoup its negative cost by a substantial margin. On the other side of the Atlantic, Working Title’s most regular collaborators continued to take centre stage in the company’s slate. Richard Curtis’s tenth feature film collaboration with the company, *About Time* (2013), is a

blend of romantic comedy and fantasy revolving around a young man’s love life and his hereditary ability to travel back in time. Working Title also made its first foray into the ‘tent pole’ category of Universal’s slate with the adaptation of the long-running stage musical, *Les Miserables* (2012). The musical had played in the West End and on Broadway for record periods and was arguably the most famous ‘pre sold’ property in theatre. The film was made on an appropriately large scale and proved to be the greatest commercial victory of Working Title’s near thirty year history, taking \$148 million in the US and \$239 million internationally.

In the same period, Working Title contributed four films to the Focus slate, a comedy, two dramas and a thriller (see table 11). The first two were products of creative relationships which the company had nurtured for several years. The Shoebox team contributed an unorthodox adaptation of *Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina* (2012), once again directed by Joe Wright and starring Keira Knightly. Like the previous contributions of Shoebox, Wright had chosen to work within the period drama genre by adapting another acclaimed piece of literature. The writer-director pairing of Pegg and Wright reunited for the final instalment of the Three Flavours Cornetto Trilogy with the alien themed *The World’s End* (2013). Like the first two films, it had a particular resonance with the British audience, while becoming a crossover cult hit in the US. Choosing to finance an eclectic sweep of Working Title’s films, Focus backed *The Theory of Everything* (2014), a biopic about Stephen Hawking based on his years as a student at Oxford and Cambridge Universities. Finally, *Closed Circuit* (2013) continued the ‘intelligent popcorn’ strand with a British-set crime thriller centering on terrorism in contemporary London, but failed to make an impact at the box-office.

Table 12 - Working Title’s Focus Features Slate 2012-2014 (all figures in \$USD million)

Genre/Title	Year	Origin	Production Budget	Domestic B.O.	Int’l B.O.	UK B.O.	Worldwide B.O.
Comedy							
<i>The World’s End</i>	2013	UK/US/JP	28	26.0 (56.4%)	20.0 (43.6%)	13.3 (28.9%)	46.0
Drama							
<i>Anna Karenina</i>	2012	UK	-	12.8 (18.6)	56.1 (81.4%)	8.7 (12.6%)	68.9
<i>The Theory of Everything</i>	2014		TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Thriller/Action							
<i>Closed Circuit</i>	2013	UK/US	-	5.7	-	-	5.7

				(100%)			
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Sources: Boxofficemojo.com (box office data) imdb.com (origin and production budgets)

The films that were not released by Universal and Focus in the US and by UPI internationally effectively equated to the films which Universal chose not to green-light and which StudioCanal subsequently picked up. Table 12, below, shows the two films which fall into this category and which were financed, distributed and/or sold internationally by StudioCanal:

Table 13 - Working Title's StudioCanal Slate 2012-2014 (all figures in \$USD million)

Genre/Title	Year	Origin	Production Budget	Domestic B.O.	Int'l B.O.	UK B.O.	Worldwide B.O.
<u>Romantic Comedy</u>							
<i>I Give it a Year</i>	2013	UK	-	0.03 (0.1%)	28.2 (99.9%)	9.4 (33.3%)	28.2
<u>Thriller/Action</u>							
<i>The Two Faces of January</i>	2014	UK/US/ FR		TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC

Sources: Boxofficemojo.com (box office data) imdb.com (origin and production budgets).

I Give it a Year (2013) is a contemporary London-set romantic comedy which centres on a blossoming relationship and the impact of the friendship circles each partner brings with them. The ensemble cast fused a combination of familiar names from British television and rising stars in film with Working Title's most recognisable genre package. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the film performed the best at the UK box-office, taking a third of its income from that market alone. In the US, however, StudioCanal sold *I Give it a Year* to the independent distributor, Magnolia Pictures, and failed to find an audience. In contrast, *The Two Faces of January* (2014) is period thriller based on the Patricia Highsmith novel of the same name about an American couple who befriend a con-artist while on holiday in Greece. Working Title's newly reconfigured position between Universal and StudioCanal was, however, underpinned by a growing sense of animosity between the two conglomerates. In March 2013 StudioCanal filed a lawsuit against Universal, claiming that during the years in which the two companies jointly funded Working Title, Universal had been guilty of wide ranging financial misconduct. According to the charges, Universal had, amongst other things, failed to disclose and distribute all of the revenue from the joint venture, double charged the partnership for certain overheads and deducted

unsubstantiated expenses (Johnson, 2013, 28). At the time of writing, the matter had not been resolved.

A straightforward divide between the distribution channels provided by Universal, Focus and StudioCanal does not, however, present the only possibilities for Working Title in the period since 2012. A first-look deal meant that the company could raise finance outside the confines of both Universal and StudioCanal. The first example of this strategy was the development of *Rush* (2013), a biographical sports drama about a rivalry in Formula One. The film had been developed at the LA-based Imagine Entertainment, a production company also under a first-look deal with Universal. When Universal declined to green-light the film, the financing and sales companies, Exclusive Media and Cross Creek Productions, presold the international rights for \$30 million and raised another \$16 million in equity finance. Working Title and Revolution Films came on board to secure UK tax credit which, along with German tax credit, added a further \$7 million, to complete the \$53 million budget (McClintock, 2013). This complex network of relations ensured that the film listed four production companies and six producers on its credits. Both Universal and StudioCanal were still involved, however, as the former acquired the US distribution rights and the latter the UK distribution rights.

Having considered the business history of Working Title as a subsidiary of Universal, it is now necessary to return to the conceptual framework of this thesis, namely Transatlantic British Cinema. More particularly, the activity of Working Title will once again be examined through the tenets of that concept: economic, globalising and affinitive transnationalism.

Universal, Working Title Films and Transatlantic British Cinema

In the period between 1999 and 2014, Working Title produced a total of 64 films. Of this number, 28 can be identified as examples of Transatlantic British Cinema. That is to say, they are the product of transnational interaction between the film industries and cultures of Britain and Hollywood and embody the strategies of economic, globalising and affinitive transnationalism. Transatlantic British Cinema is not a hard and fast category, however, and it does not necessarily function in a uniform or discrete manner. Thus, each transatlantic British film may display a stronger or weaker inclination to each transnational strategy. The 28 films I have identified as transatlantic British productions and which appeared on Working Title's slates for Universal, Focus Features and latterly StudioCanal between 1999

and 2014 are listed in Table 9 below. These films are further broken down into separate genres in tables 10 to 14 below. The films produced by WT2 will be discussed separately.

Table 14 - Working Title's Transatlantic British Cinema by genre 1999-2014 (all figures in \$USD million)

Title / Genre	Year	Budget	Worldwide B.O
Romantic Comedy			
<i>About a Boy</i>	2002	30	130.5
<i>Johnny English</i>	2003	40	160.5
<i>Hot Fuzz</i>	2007	12	80.5
<i>Mr. Bean's Holiday</i>	2007	25	229.7
<i>The Boat that Rocked</i>	2009	50	36.3
<i>Johnny English Reborn</i>	2011	45	160.0
<i>Paul</i>	2011	40	97.9
<i>The World's End</i>	2013	28	46.0
Comedy			
<i>About a Boy</i>	2002	30	130.5
<i>Johnny English</i>	2003	40	160.5
<i>Hot Fuzz</i>	2007	12	80.5
<i>Mr. Bean's Holiday</i>	2007	25	229.7
<i>The Boat that Rocked</i>	2009	50	36.3
<i>Johnny English Reborn</i>	2011	45	160.0
<i>Paul</i>	2011	40	97.9
<i>The World's End</i>	2013	28	46.0
Drama			
<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	2005	28	121.1
<i>Elizabeth: The Golden Age</i>	2007	55	74.2
<i>Frost/Nixon</i>	2008	35	27.4
<i>Atonement</i>	2007	30	129.2
<i>The Theory of Everything</i>	2014	-	-
Family			
<i>Thunderbirds</i>	2004	57	28.8
<i>Nanny McPhee</i>	2005	25	122.4
<i>Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang</i>	2010	35	93.2
Thriller/ Action			
<i>Plunkett & Macleane</i>	1999	-	-
<i>Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy</i>	2011	20	80.6
<i>Closed Circuit</i>	2013	-	5.7
<i>Rush</i>	2013	53	90.2

Economic Transnationalism

This section and those that follow examine the development of Working Title's operations in the period between 1999 and 2014 in relation to the strategies of economic, globalising and affinitive transnationalism. Any discussion of Working Title in terms of

economic transnationalism is, once again, bound up with a consideration of the activities of its parent company. Working Title's integration into Universal positioned the company directly within the established Hollywood oligopoly for the first time in its history. Hollywood, of course, describes both a geographical location in Los Angeles in which the major studios are headquartered and an entertainment industry which is inherently transnational, indeed truly global, in nature. Between 1999 and 2014, Working Title's films were principally handled by UPI and UIP, two integrated Universal-owned distribution and marketing companies in international territories, and by Universal in the US. UIP and UPI were not, of course, the only companies to handle Working Title's films. The Paris-headquartered StudioCanal also had an important but comparatively minor part to play between 1999 and 2010 when it provided production finance to Working Title in exchange for distribution rights in various European territories. Thereafter, StudioCanal reinvigorated its relationship with Working Title by fully funding three films. This coincided with the expansion of StudioCanal's distribution and marketing network to four key territories: France, Germany, the UK and Australia/New Zealand, as well as an international sales company which sells to third parties in all other territories.

For Working Title, however, the dominant transnational orientation, both in terms of operational management and production strategy, remained the transatlantic. The company continued to operate two offices, one in London and the other in Los Angeles, and the green-lighting process for Working Title's films was, with the recent exception of three StudioCanal funded films, filtered through the 'ten column' and the senior executive ranks at Universal. Similarly, the listed nation(s) of origin for the vast majority of Working Title's films also indicates the transatlantic nature of the company. Alongside the almost ubiquitous 'UK' and 'US' classifications, the French 'FR' also appears regularly. More than representing the economic input and respective locations of Working Title, Universal and StudioCanal, such multilateral co-production arrangements also betrays the advantages of accessing the filmmaking tax structures of several countries. Significantly, during the Universal years, Working Title continued to produce exclusively English language films, the vast majority of which can be characterised as Transatlantic British Cinema or in many cases, simply as Hollywood cinema, since there is British cultural dimension to the films.

The Transatlantic British Cinema produced by Working Title continued to be the company's most commercially successful product in international territories. Between 1999 and 2014, for example, the company produced 12 examples of Transatlantic British Cinema which grossed over \$100 million at the worldwide box office. On average, 75.3 percent of

their revenue came from the international market, with the remaining 24.7 percent from US domestic. A similar pattern was observable during Working Title's years under PFE, and thus it can once again be concluded that a partial explanation for the company's success in international territories can be found in the fact that that Transatlantic British Cinema resonates more deeply with an international audience. A second explanation can be found in the profound changes that have occurred in the complexion of worldwide of film audiences in the last decade. Considering the importance of the contemporary international market, UPI President, David Kosse explained:

The overall international market is so much more important now and gets so much more focus from all of the top management. International was just called 'foreign', and it was an insignificant part of the business insofar as it wasn't part of the strategic planning. It's gone from being a small outlier to being the focal point of the business. Within that, what is 'international'? International is a composite of a lot of countries. The relative importance and the mix of those countries has dramatically shifted. France, Germany, the UK and Japan: that's what it was 15 years ago, and that's what you wanted to focus on by asking 'will it work there?' Now, is it going to work in Brazil, Mexico, UK, China, Korea, Germany and France? ... Where the audience is internationally is shifting, which will shift and define the kinds of movies that are being made (Kosse, 2014).

Comparing MPAA statistics with Kosse's observations further underlines the point. In 2003, for example, the international box office accounted for \$10.9 billion (54 percent) and the US domestic box-office \$9.2 billion (46 percent) (MPAA, 2007). By 2013, the international market had more than doubled to reach \$25 billion (70 percent) while the US domestic market had grown at a much slower rate to \$10.9 billion (30 percent) (MPAA, 2013). While Working Title's films had once looked remarkable for their success in international markets, they now more closely resembled the market profile of the rest of the Hollywood industry. There is no doubt that Working Title is thoroughly wedded to the strategy of economic transnationalism, which provides access to global markets via the infrastructure of a major Hollywood studio and ultimately supports the production of Transatlantic British Cinema.

Globalising Transnationalism

The key strategies of globalising transnationalism – working with high production values, popular genres and film stars – continued to apply to the majority of the transatlantic British films that Working Title produced during the Universal years. In the first instance, production values can once again be broadly inferred from production budgets. The

average budget for the transatlantic British films listed above was \$35 million. As a point of comparison, the average production budget for a Hollywood studio film in 1999 was \$54.8 million, a figure which increased to \$70.8 million in 2007 (the last year that the MPAA published the statistic) (MPAA, 2000 & 2007). Thus, in keeping with its reputation during the PFE years, Working Title remained a highly cost-effective production company by the standards of the Hollywood industry, but its average budget size was still high when compared to UK and European averages. An important factor in Working Title's ability to remain economical by Hollywood standards was the genres in which the company chose to work. Entirely avoiding the costly special-effects driven 'tent pole' film for which the Hollywood studios became increasingly known in the 2000s, Working Title divided its slate between five broad genres that can be produced on lower budgets – romantic comedy and other types of comedy, family films, drama and the action/thriller film. Amongst these genres, by far the most frequently produced were the comedy and the romantic comedy, which represented over half the slate.

The leading actors associated with Working Title's transatlantic British films include some of the most significant British and American stars in contemporary Hollywood cinema. Undoubtedly the most defining and commercially successful cycles have been the romantic and other comedies in which Hugh Grant has starred (*Notting Hill*, *Bridget Jones's Diary*, *About a Boy*, *Love Actually* and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*) and the comedies in which Rowan Atkinson starred (*Johnny English*, *Mr. Bean's Holiday* and *Johnny English Reborn*). The *Bridget Jones* films also made major stars of the other two members of the love triangle, Colin Firth and Rene Zellweger. The comparatively low-budget comedy partnership of Simon Pegg and Nick Frost nonetheless generated significant cross-over hits with their brand of cultish humour in *Hot Fuzz* and *The World's End*. The pairing also brought with them many lesser stars from British television and independent film, including Olivia Coleman, Paddy Considine and Martin Freeman. *Paul*, on the other hand, teamed Pegg and Frost with higher profile Hollywood stars such as Seth Rogen and Jason Bateman.

The dramas which consistently brought Working Title critical acclaim took an ensemble approach to casting which accommodated their grand narratives while also allowing for a mix of established and rising stars. *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, starred amongst others, Keira Knightley, Donald Sutherland and Judi Dench, while *Atonement* featured Knightley, James McAvoy and Vanessa Redgrave. Hoping to capitalise on the success of *Elizabeth*, the sequel, *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* recast Cate Blanchett alongside a high calibre cast including Geoffrey Rush, Clive Owen and Samantha Morton. The

ensemble approach was not, however, the reserve of drama alone. In many ways, *Love Actually* was a composite of Working Title's greatest hits both in terms of genre and casting, with a principal cast including Grant, Firth, Thompson, Knightly and Atkinson alongside a host of others. Similarly, a prestigious and star-laden cast featured in *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* which included Firth, Gary Oldman, John Hurt and Tom Hardy.

The Transatlantic British Cinema which Working Title produced arguably featured fewer 'A-list' stars than the company's American-set output. Such films as the Coen brother's *Burn After Reading* (Brad Pitt, George Clooney) or those on the 'intelligent popcorn' spectrum such as *State of Play* (Ben Affleck, Russell Crowe), *Green Zone* (Matt Damon) and *Contraband* (Mark Wahlberg) featured many of the biggest stars in contemporary Hollywood. Nonetheless, the Transatlantic British Cinema which Working Title produced during the Universal years has prominently featured a broad cross-section of British acting talent which ranges from established stars (who, in many cases found stardom through featuring in Working Title's films) to rising stars who are beginning to make their presence felt.

Affinitive Transnationalism

The transatlantic British films which Working Title produced under Universal can, once again, be characterised by two forms of affinitive transnationalism, one explicit and the other implicit. Working Title's romantic comedies were typically the most emphatically affinitive as they regularly combined both forms. Explicit affinity was achieved by including American characters (or in some cases American stars, playing British characters). The archetypal example is *Notting Hill*, which paired English bookseller William Thacker (Hugh Grant) with Hollywood star, Anna (Julia Roberts) in a contemporary London setting. The commercial success of the film was followed by a slightly different approach in *Bridget Jones's Diary* and its sequel. While Bridget is an undeniably English heroine, the character was played by Renee Zellweger, a Hollywood star. The love triangle in which she was embroiled included the English characters Daniel Cleaver (Grant) and Mark Darcy (Colin Firth). In contrast, *Love Actually*, was divided into multiple interlocking narratives, a number of which incorporated American characters or, in one instance, British characters in American settings. The British Prime Minister (Grant), for example, has a political stand-off with the US-president (Billy Bob Thornton), for instance, while Colin (Kris Marshall) relocates to America to try his dubious charms with American women. Similarly, in *About*

Time, an Englishman Tim (Domhnall Gleeson) falls in love with, Mary (Rachel McAdams), an American.

Table 15 - Working Title's Transatlantic British Cinema by genre: Romantic Comedy (all figures in \$USD million)

Title	Year	Budget	Worldwide B.O
<i>Notting Hill</i>	1999	42	363.8
<i>Bridget Jones's Diary</i>	2001	25	281.9
<i>Love Actually</i>	2003	40	246.9
<i>Wimbledon</i>	2004	31	41.5
<i>Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason</i>	2004	40	262.5
<i>Wild Child</i>	2008	20	21.9
<i>About Time</i>	2013	-	87.1
<i>I Give it a Year</i>	2013	-	28.2

More than the persistence of American characters and/or stars in British settings, Curtis's films also share a number of archetypal or stereotypical representations amongst the British characters that are featured. These implicit forms of transnational affinity typically include white, middle-class, southern English characters and idyllic rural and metropolitan locations. In the films in which Grant and Firth individually or collectively appear, they play characters who, like the public personas of the actors themselves, are wedded to upper middle-class representations. While *Love Actually* affords a greater range of representations due to its multi-layered narrative structure, the majority of the central characters (those played by Grant and Firth included) still conform to the dominant representations. Similarly, in *About Time*, Gleeson plays a young white man who leaves a comfortable middle-class home in a rural idyll to pursue a career as a lawyer in London. Indeed, it is the combination of both the direct incorporation of American elements and the persistence of archetypal British representations which make Curtis' films paradigmatic examples of Transatlantic British Cinema.

Beyond Curtis' romantic comedies, Working Title has also applied many of the same affinitive strategies to other examples of the same genre. *Wimbledon*, for example, combined the archetypally middle-class milieu of the titular tennis tournament with a romance between an English player in the men's competition (Paul Bettany) and an American player in the women's competition (Kirsten Dunst). Taking a similar approach, *Wild Child* tells the tale of a spoiled Californian teenager (Emma Roberts) who is sent to a boarding school in England where she is subjected to the strict and, of course, class-based

hierarchy of a British private school. In keeping with the genre, a romance ignites with the headmistress's English son (Alex Pettyfer). Finally, in *I Give It a Year*, a newlywed English couple, Nat (Rose Byrne) and Josh (Rafe Spall) are pitted against the charms of an interloping American love interest (Simon Baker) who threatens their marriage. The sense of transatlantic affinity promoted by the combination of both American characters (and occasionally settings) and a largely archetypal depiction of Britain and Britishness also serve an important narrative function. The cultural differences between the two nations (and thus the characters that embody them) are simultaneously great and small, and it is precisely this balance of affinity and difference which informs much of the humour and drives the narrative. Writing in *The Observer*, Tim Adams suggests that Curtis' films, and those which were subsequently inspired by his canon, embody the zeitgeist of the New Labour era, beginning in the summer of 1994 with *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and building momentum thereafter:

You can't separate atmospheres out, quite, or see where one begins and another ends, but certainly in that summer of its genesis you could find some of New Labour's shiny, happy geography in what we have come to know as Curtisland. *Four Weddings* located a different kind of Britain to any that had been filmed before. It was neither kitchen-sink gritty nor carry-on smutty. It was an apolitical place, full of can-do possibility, obsessed with the educated middle class, perfectly relaxed about the filthy rich, much more in love with sentiment than ideas, and insatiable in its optimism; it was also in thrall to the idea of happy endings ... As the Blair years unfolded, so did Curtisland become more populous. Looked at one way, Britain became the broken-home and teenage-pregnancy capital of Europe; looked at another, it was the subject of ever more feel-good, confetti-strewn, loved-up films. If they were not always from Curtis's pen, then at least they followed his winning formula (Adams, 2009, 12).

The prominent profile of 'Curtisland' within the Working Title canon has elevated this particular version of Britishness (often reducible to Englishness) to the level of a recognisable brand. The distinction is further enhanced by the ubiquity of the 'From the makers of...' promotional line which subsequently cites successful examples of earlier Curtisland films against the familiar white background poster design. The formation of the brand ultimately rests on the consistency with which such projects have passed through the centralised creative and financial filters of PFE and Universal in the development stage. In turn, such filters are calibrated according to historical box office performances and thus the unexpected commercial success of *Four Weddings* ensured that films which resembled it in terms of genre, casting and the range of national representations on offer are more likely to succeed in being green-lit. On one hand this situation points to the democracy of

the marketplace. Curtisland persists because large audiences want to revisit its geography. On the other hand, it points to the fact that familiar and staid representations of Britain and Britishness, enhanced by their many explicitly and implicitly affinitive elements, are those which will continue to thrive at Working Title.

The other examples of comedy that can be considered examples of Transatlantic British Cinema (see table 11) typically embraced the strategy of implicit affinitive transnationalism or, in some examples, foregrounded the strategy of globalising transnationalism instead. While these films rarely incorporated American characters or settings, they often used representations of Britishness which met, and in some cases subverted, the affinitive stereotypes familiar from the company's romantic comedies. *About a Boy*, for example, cast Hugh Grant in a comedy with romantic elements following the back-to-back success of *Notting Hill* and *Bridget Jones's Diary*. The film relied more heavily on the strategies of globalising transnationalism – Grant's star power and the association of genre – to sell the film. The film did, however, also include the familiar array of implicit affinitive representations including white, middle-class southern English characters and metropolitan locations. Similarly, *Johnny English*, its sequel, *Johnny English Reborn*, and *Mr. Bean's Holiday*, all relied largely on the globalising transnationalism lent by star power of Rowan Atkinson. But the *Johnny English* films are also a parody of the James Bond franchise and subsequently subvert many of the established representations of the world's most famous spy (many of which are explicitly or implicitly British) for comic effect. *Mr. Bean's Holiday*, on the other hand, simply transplants Atkinson's most famous character from the American setting of the first instalment to France in the second. In contrast, the less commercially successful *The Boat That Rocked*, used the largely affinitive – that is to say, stereotypically recognisable – representations of the music and iconography of London in the 'swinging sixties' to tell the story of a pirate radio station, and its American star DJ, 'The Count' (Philip Seymour Hoffman).

Table 16 - Working Title's Transatlantic British Cinema by genre: Comedy (all figures in \$USD million)

Title	Year	Budget	Worldwide B.O
<i>About a Boy</i>	2002	30	130.5
<i>Johnny English</i>	2003	40	160.5
<i>Hot Fuzz</i>	2007	12	80.5
<i>Mr. Bean's Holiday</i>	2007	25	229.7
<i>The Boat that Rocked</i>	2009	50	36.3
<i>Johnny English Reborn</i>	2011	45	160.0

<i>Paul</i>	2011	40	97.9
<i>The World's End</i>	2013	28	46.0

The second and third instalments of the 'Three Flavours Cornetto Trilogy', *Hot Fuzz* and *The World's End*, are less emphatic examples of Transatlantic British Cinema. Both starred the central comedy partnership of Simon Pegg and Nick Frost familiar mostly to British audiences from *Spaced* and the first instalment of the trilogy, *Shaun of the Dead*. This comparative lack of globalising transnationalism was, nonetheless, accompanied by comedic parodies of the buddy cop and the sci-fi film, which both riffed on popular Hollywood genres. In contrast to the white and middle-class milieu of Working Title's other comedies, the settings of *Hot Fuzz* and *The World's End* are self-consciously provincial and bear the imprint of both middle England and the regional working classes. This more inward-looking construction of Britain also finds its source of humour by gazing inwards. Rather than relying on the clash of archetypal British representations with their American equivalents, familiar forms of Britishness are satirised by the British characters themselves. A more standard version of Transatlantic British Cinema was restored with *Paul*, which saw Pegg and Frost depart for the US in a comedy once again featuring aliens, this time with the Hollywood stars Seth Rogan and Jason Bateman.

The five (historical) dramas identified as transatlantic British films (see table 12) also incorporated various implicit affinitive strategies by playing on well-known British historical periods, figures or novels. *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, for example, not only told the tale of one of history's most famous monarchs, but also traded on the established critical and commercial success of its prequel, *Elizabeth*. Similarly, *Pride and Prejudice* was an adaptation of Jane Austen's 1813 novel, which is not only one of the most famous works of English literature in its own right, but also the subject of multiple television and film adaptations. *Atonement*, on the other hand was a much more contemporary work of fiction by Ian McEwan which nonetheless met with critical acclaim and popularity upon publication. Significantly, however, its story is largely set during the 1930s and World War II, historical eras which are familiar from numerous British period dramas and conform to one of Britain's 'eras of greatness'.

In contrast, *Frost/Nixon* and *The Theory of Everything* are much more contemporary in setting, the former set during the 1970s and the latter largely during the 1960s and 1970s. In the first instance, the Peter Morgan play on which the film was based had been a critical success in both the West End and on Broadway prior to the film's release. Moreover an explicit sense of transatlantic affinity is readily on display as the main

characters are former US President, Richard Nixon, (Frank Langella) and British television presenter, David Frost (Michael Sheen). In contrast, *The Theory of Everything* is a forthcoming biopic about arguably the world’s most famous living scientist, Stephen Hawking, known to the world through a series of best-selling popular science books and numerous television appearances. Significantly, *The Theory of Everything* centres on his time at the prestigious and class-based settings of Oxford and Cambridge Universities and thus draws heavily on the familiar range of implicit affinitive representations common to much Transatlantic British Cinema.

Table 17 - Working Title’s Transatlantic British Cinema by genre: Drama (all figures in \$USD million)

Title	Year	Budget	Worldwide B.O
<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	2005	28	121.1
<i>Elizabeth: The Golden Age</i>	2007	55	74.2
<i>Frost/Nixon</i>	2008	35	27.4
<i>Atonement</i>	2007	30	129.2
<i>The Theory of Everything</i>	2014	-	-

The same strategy is at work in the two *Nanny McPhee* films. The first recreated a Victorian rural idyll populated by Cedric Brown (Colin Firth), his seven misbehaving children and their magical guardian, Nanny McPhee (Emma Thompson). The second saw the time travelling Nanny McPhee (Thompson again) arrive in World War II to help Isabel Green (Maggie Gyllenhaal) and her three children, yet again in an idyllic British rural setting. Such representations build an implicit sense of affinitive transnationalism by reproducing the eras, locales and/or representations present in many more famous works of British children’s fiction, including *Peter Pan*, *Alice in Wonderland* and the *Narnia Chronicles*. The other family film identified as transatlantic in orientation, *Thunderbirds*, attempted to find an audience based on the resurgent popularity of the 1960s animated television series of the same name. *Thunderbirds* substituted the implicit affinitive elements of the *Nanny McPhee* films for an explicit strategy which included the casting of American actors (Bill Paxton and Anthony Edwards) as American characters.

Table 18 - Working Title's Transatlantic British Cinema by genre: Family (all figures in \$USD million)

Title	Year	Budget	Worldwide B.O
<i>Thunderbirds</i>	2004	57	28.8
<i>Nanny McPhee</i>	2005	25	122.4
<i>Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang</i>	2010	35	93.2

Finally, Working Title's output of Transatlantic British Cinema included four examples of the action/thriller genre (see table 14). These films did not typically rely on the inclusion of American characters or stars, but rather exploited the sense of affinity generated through famous aspects of British history, characters and literature. *Plunkett & Macleane* was loosely based on the story of the eponymous eighteenth century highwaymen, respectively played by Johnny Lee Miller and Robert Carlyle. Rather than the notoriety of the characters themselves, the film exploited one of the principal criminal archetypes of British history, while paring the lead actors with a rising American star (Liv Tyler). In contrast, *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, is an adaptation of John Le Carre's spy novel of the same name and exploited the not only the pre-sold status of the author's novels, but also their many film and television adaptations. While its 1970s setting does not coincide with one of the 'periods of greatness' in British history which invite affinitive representations, the film nonetheless largely conforms to the white, middle-class, metropolitan archetypes of so many examples of Transatlantic British Cinema.

Table 19 - Working Title's Transatlantic British Cinema by genre: Action/Thriller (all figures in \$USD million)

Title	Year	Budget	Worldwide B.O
<i>Plunkett & Macleane</i>	1999	-	-
<i>Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy</i>	2011	20	80.6
<i>Closed Circuit</i>	2013	-	5.7
<i>Rush</i>	2013	53	90.2

Closed Circuit tells the tale of the trial which follows an apparent terrorist bombing in London. English lawyers Martin (Eric Bana) and Claudia (Rebecca Hall) are assigned to defend the accused British-Asian man, after which an elaborate conspiracy plot unfolds. Beyond the dominance of white, middle-class and metropolitan representations, the film relies more strongly on the globalising appeal of its genre and stars. Finally, *Rush* is a biopic

about the battle between James Hunt (Chris Hemsworth) and Niki Lauda (Daniel Bruhl) for the 1976 Formula One championship. Once again, the film demonstrates a mix of globalising and affinitive transnationalism. On one hand, the global popularity of Formula One is combined with the star power of the film's lead actors. On the other, Hunt is largely depicted in the upper class, white and privileged world of motor racing which surrounded his Hasketh racing team.

Universal, WT2 and Transatlantic British Cinema

For the six year period in which it was in operation, WT2 operated as a low budget subsidiary division of Working Title. The company exclusively produced films with budgets under \$5 million and had the broad remit of working with 'emerging talent', which typically meant first time writers and directors. While the budgets and personnel that WT2 worked with were more typical of the independent British industry, the company maintained the same green-lighting, distribution and marketing relationships with Universal as Working Title. In this sense, the films of WT2 also stood to enjoy the benefits of economic transnationalism in the form of the global distribution and marketing networks which UIP and UPI provided. The remit of the company largely precluded the development of Transatlantic British Cinema at a textual level, however, by largely avoiding the globalising and affinitive transnationalism associated with the conceptual category.

The strategy of globalising transnationalism is effectively ruled out in terms of production values due to the \$5 million budget cap placed on WT2's films. Similarly, established star actors are few and far between. While several films feature actors who have subsequently risen to international fame such as Jamie Bell (*Billy Elliot*), Sacha Baron Cohen (*Ali G Indahouse*), Simon Pegg and Nick Frost (*Shaun of the Dead*) and James MacAvoy (*Inside I'm Dancing*), their star power was, in most cases, established by their subsequent roles. The films did, however, conform to popular genre conventions, typically the comedy, comedy drama and horror, with one example of drama.

Of the ten films that the company produced between 2000 and 2006, eight are set in Britain (see table 14). Significantly, almost all of these films avoid both the marked and unmarked versions of affinitive transnationalism by largely avoiding both the inclusion of American characters and/or settings and avoiding a narrow focus on the archetypal British representations regularly featured in Working Title's Transatlantic British Cinema. In contrast, there is an effort to explore representations from multiple regions and countries within the United Kingdom. *Mickybo and Me* and *Inside I'm Dancing*, for example, are set in

Northern Ireland, and *Billy Elliot* in the north east of England. While all of the other films had metropolitan locations, they depicted versions of London far removed from those in Working Title’s Transatlantic British Cinema. *Ali G Indahouse* was set in suburban Staines, *Shaun of the Dead* in a hum drum district of north London and *Sixty Six* within a Jewish community. Similarly, *The Calcium Kid* and *Long Time Dead* were set within decidedly everyday London environments.

Table 20 – WT2 by genre (all figures in \$USD million)

Genre/Title	Year	Budget	Worldwide B.O
Comedy			
<i>Ali G Indahouse</i>	2002	5	23.2
<i>Shaun of the Dead</i>	2004	4	30.0
<i>The Calcium Kid</i>	2004	-	0.1
Drama / Comedy Drama			
<i>Billy Elliot</i>	2000	5	109.2
<i>Mickybo and Me</i>	2004	5	0.4
<i>Inside I’m Dancing</i>	2004	-	1.2
<i>Sixty Six</i>	2006	-	1.8
Horror			
<i>Long Time Dead</i>	2002	-	13.1

With the strategies of globalising and affinitive transnationalism largely absent from the films of WT2, the subsidiary did not, however, revert to the model of ‘social art cinema’ which Working Title had pursued during the 1980s. As Natascha Wharton, the former head of WT2 explained earlier in this chapter, the company always sought to produce films which would have the same kind of mass audience appeal as those on Working Title’s main slate. This ambition was attempted largely through the means of genre. Thus, the cultural specificity visible in WT2’s films is twinned with the genre conventions of Hollywood storytelling. All of the dramas and comedy dramas, for example, were united by the narrative theme of triumph over adversity which sees a happy conclusion for their respective protagonists. *Billy Elliot* was the singular instance of this approach resulting in a commercial success on a global scale. In most cases, however, it was precisely the cultural specificity evident in WT2’s films which guided UIP’s decision to afford them only a limited theatrical release. A solitary hit of the magnitude achieved by *Billy Elliot* was, however, enough to fund the entire WT2 slate twice over. Significantly, Working Title has not returned to low-budget production since the closure of WT2, and the

lifespan of the company remains an incongruous period in Working Title's output insofar as it represented a deviation from the production of Transatlantic British Cinema.

Conclusion

This thesis has placed Working Title within a wider business history of broad continuity, rather than exception. The transnational activities of British-based film studios such as London Films, the Rank Organisation and MGM-British during the 1930s and 1940s established a form of cinema defined by interaction between the film industries and cultures of Britain and Hollywood that I have called Transatlantic British Cinema. Economic transnationalism was achieved in three discrete industrial modes. London Films was first a subcontractor and later stakeholder in United Artists (UA), Rank was first a subcontractor for UA and later a stakeholder in Universal, and MGM-British a subsidiary of MGM. At a textual level, each company pursued the strategy of globalising transnationalism by adopting many of the aesthetic and cultural forms of Hollywood cinema, while the content of the films they produced regularly embraced affinitive transnationalism by drawing parallels between the cultures of Britain and America.

The lack of available historical detail about the particular institutional structures which guided the processes of development, green-lighting and production at London Films, the Rank Organisation and MGM-British make direct comparisons with those in place at Working Title difficult. It is, however, clear that the major issues at stake in the transatlantic relationships which these companies forged with the Hollywood studios revolved around creative agency on one hand, and access to the wider industrial functions of distribution, marketing and exhibition on the other. Alexander Korda and J. Arthur Rank maintained a high degree of creative autonomy for London Films and the producers of the Rank Organisation respectively, but were afforded inadequate or irregular access to the US and international markets in which UA and Universal were established as distributors. In contrast, Michael Balcon was denied creative autonomy at MGM-British, while the films which the subsidiary produced were afforded full access to MGM's distribution and exhibition businesses in the US and elsewhere.

The longevity and success of Working Title is in large part a consequence of the company's ability to effectively manage its institutional relationships, both in creative and business terms, in ways that its predecessors did not. The enterprise of filmmaking has, of course, changed dramatically since the 1930s and 1940s. Unlike London Films, Rank and

MGM-British, Working Title has never been encumbered with the extraordinary expense of operating a film studio, employing a large number of staff and producing films in a factory-like manner. In contrast, Working Title is the epitome of a modern production company, with a permanent staff that has rarely risen above 40, who employ the requisite creative and technical personnel on a film-by-film basis. Its two principal functions have been limited to the development and production of film and television, functions which are divided between just five principal in-house departments – development, US office, production, legal and business affairs and WTTV. Crucially, as a subsidiary of PolyGram and later Universal, Working Title has operated as an internal business within two multinational entertainment conglomerates which have provided its overhead, development and production budgets on an annual basis and thus insulated the company from any direct relationship with the free market.

Similarly, the green-lighting relationship between Working Title and PFE and Universal has been markedly different from those which London Films, the Rank Organisation and MGM-British forged with the Hollywood studios of the 1930s and 1940s. Rather than privileging the autonomy of the creative producer on the one hand, or the ultimate authority of the studio head on the other, both PFE and Universal spread the agency for the green-lighting between Working Title, the respective studio's distribution and marketing divisions and its senior management. Thus, while Working Title maintained autonomy in development, the creative and commercial integrity of its slate was consistently tested by PFE and Universal's centralised filters, respectively dubbed the 'control sheet' and the 'ten column'. At one level these are opinion polls of the perception of public taste in the global film market, and they have become a crucial factor in determining which films Working Title produces and which it does not. Crucially, such filters also engage the process of distribution and marketing at an earlier stage, and thus coordinate the entire process of filmmaking with an unfaltering gaze towards the global audience.

It would, however, be misleading to reduce Working Title's success to the financial support and business structures of its successive parent companies. While the figures of Korda, Rank and Balcon loom large over the history of British cinema none of them succeeded long term with their endeavours with Transatlantic British Cinema. In this field, Working Title's co-directors and producers-in-chief, Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner, are peerless in the longevity and diversity of their successes and continue to assume overall responsibility for guiding the company's films through the stages of development,

greenlighting, production, post production and marketing. The process of packaging the creative and technical talent directly responsible for the company's films is of course also attributable to the agency of Working Title's present and former heads of department – Debra Hayward, Natascha Wharton, Amelia Granger, Angela Morrison, Jane Frazer and Michelle Wright – and the staff that have worked under them. In focussing on the role of the producer and the production company it is, of course, possible to forget the names more commonly associated with Working Title's films, including writer and directors such as Richard Curtis, Joel and Ethan Coen, Joe Wright, and Edgar Wright, or the stars of many of its films including Hugh Grant, Cate Blanchett, Rowan Atkinson, Renee Zellweger and Simon Pegg.

The business and creative structures, processes and inputs of individual and collective agency which define Working Title as an institution clearly have important consequences for the films it produces at a textual level. In the conceptual framework of this thesis, Working Title's films bear the imprint of globalising transnationalism as defined by high production values, popular genre conventions and star actors. As the label suggests, it is these factors which form the basis of their appeal to the global markets which PFE and subsequently Universal have exploited. Secondly, Working Title's films also engage the strategy of affinitive transnationalism, either by explicitly combining the cultures of Britain and American on screen, or by the more implicit use of archetypal or stereotypical signifiers of Britain and Britishness which are familiar to Hollywood's US and global audiences. Such representations do not, of course, derive from the immediate determinants of business practice alone. They also bear the historical influence of similar representations in Transatlantic British Cinema and Hollywood cinema over the preceding fifty or sixty years and, in many cases, the dominant British representations of canonical British literature and theatre which measure their influence in centuries.

The business history of Working Title and historical-conceptual framework of Transatlantic British Cinema that compose this thesis have left little room for the many other areas of discussion which they suggest. Chief among these is the application of close textual analysis to the transatlantic British films that make up Working Title's central canon. What, for example, does the relationship between *Four Wedding and a Funeral's* Carrie and Charles tell us about gender roles in the context of national identity? What do the multiple historical inaccuracies in *Elizabeth* reveal about the nature of Hollywood narrative conventions and the place of fact in historical dramas? How can the stand-off between Hugh Grant's British Prime Minister and Billy Bob Thornton's US President in *Love Actually*

be understood in terms of Anglo-American political relations during the Blair and Bush administrations? What do the representations of the Miners' strike and the north east of England in *Billy Elliot* contribute to the social realist tradition?

Finally, it is worth mentioning that Transatlantic British Cinema is, for some, a cause for concern. The representations it offers may be viewed as staid and romanticised at best and socially and politically regressive at worst. Such a perspective is arguably more pertinent still given Working Title's origins in the social art cinema of the 1980s. With the power of a major Hollywood studio's distribution and marketing apparatus behind Working Title's films, the company's house style of Transatlantic British Cinema that has become one of the dominant strands of Britain and Britishness available to global film audiences, along with such well-known franchises as Harry Potter, James Bond and The Chronicles of Narnia. Transatlantic British Cinema has, however, been a constituent part of the fabric of the national and transnational cinematic experience since at least the 1930s and has co-existed with other forms of British cinema. It is a fair assumption that audiences hoping to engage with the diversity and complexity of British life do not look to Bridget Jones, Mr. Bean and Nanny McPhee for answers. Such representations can, however, be found in a British art cinema that has, since the 1980s, continued to support such auteurs as Ken Loach, Sally Potter and Mike Leigh while also making room for new names like Andrea Arnold, Ben Wheatley and Richard Ayoade. In many ways the strength of British cinema is the diversity of its forms, transatlantic or otherwise.

Appendix 1

List of Interviewees (in alphabetical order)

Tim Bevan

Co-chairman of Working Title Films, 1984-Present

Graham Bradstreet

Co-chairman and Finance Director of Working Title Films, 1986-1992

Liza Chasin

Head of Working Title LA, 1993-Present

Eric Fellner

Co-Chairman of Working Title Films, 1992-Present

Debra Hayward

Head of Development, Working Title Films, 1993-2011
Chairman of Monumental Pictures 2011-Present

David Kosse

Vice President of Marketing, PolyGram Video, 1993-2007
President of International, Universal Pictures International (UPI), 2003-Present

Michael Kuhn

CEO and President, PolyGram New Business Division, 1987-1991
CEO and President, PolyGram Filmed Entertainment, 1992-1998

David Livingstone

President of International Marketing, Manifesto/PolyGram Films International, 1992-1998
President of Marketing, Working Title Films, 2000-2011

Margaret Matheson

Head of Production, Zenith Entertainment, 1984-1990

Angela Morrison

Head of Business and Legal Affairs/COO, Working Title Films, 1992-Present

Carole Myer

Head of Sales, Film Four International 1984-1985
Head of Sales, The Sales Company, 1986-1996

Alison Owen

Head of Working Title Low Budget Division, 1991-1992
Working Title producer, 1992-1998

Wendy Palmer

Head of Sales, Manifesto Film Sales, 1989-1992

Malcom Ritchie

PolyGram New Business Division CFO, 1987-1991

PolyGram Filmed Entertainment COO, 1992-1998

Russell Schwartz

President of Gramercy Pictures, 1992-1998

President of USA Films, 1999-2002

Julia Short

Head of Marketing and PR, PFE UK, 1992-1998

Stewart Till

President of International, PolyGram Filmed Entertainment International (PFEI), 1992-1998

President of International, Universal International Pictures (UPI), 1999-2000

Chairman and CEO, United International Pictures (UIP), 2002-2006

Paul Webster

Head of Working Title LA, 1991-1993 / Co-Chairman of Shoebox Films, 2011-Present

Natascha Wharton

Head of WT2, 1999-2005 / Co-head of Development, Working Title Films, 2005-2011

Gareth Wilson

Universal Pictures, Business Development & Strategic Planning Group, 2002-2006

Working Title Films, Vice President of Business Development and TV Finance, 2006-Present

Simon Wright

Head of Working Title Television, 1990-2007

Michelle Wright

Head of Production, Working Title Films, 1999-Present

Appendix 2

Working Title Filmography

The Independent Years (1984-1990)

Title	Year	Director	Writer	Producer	Executive/co-producer
My Beautiful Laundrette	1985	Stephen Frears	Hanif Kureishi	Tim Bevan, Sarah Radclyffe	
Personal Services	1986	Terry Jones	David Leland	Tim Bevan	
Caravaggio	1986	Derek Jarman	Nicholas Ward-Jackson, Derek Jarman	Sarah Radclyffe	
Wish You Were Here	1987	David Leland	David Leland	Sarah Radclyffe	
Sammy and Rosie Grt Laid	1987	Stephen Frears	Hanif Kureishi	Tim Bevan, Sarah Radclyffe	
A World Apart	1988	Chris Menges	Shawn Slovo	Sarah Radclyffe	Tim Bevan, Graham Bradstreet
For Queen and Country	1988	Martin Stellman	Martin Stellman	Tim Bevan	
Paperhouse	1988	Bernard Rose	Matthew Jacobs	Tim Bevan, Sarah Radclyffe	Jane Frazer
The Tall Guy	1989	Mel Smith	Richard Curtis	Paul Webster	Tim Bevan
Diamond Skulls	1989	Nick Broomfield	Tim Rose-Price	Tim Bevan	

The PolyGram Years (1990-1998)

Title	Year	Director	Writer	Producer	Executive/co-producer
Chicago Joe and the Showgirl	1990	Bernard Rose	David Yallop	Tim Bevan	
Fools of Fortune	1990	Pat O'Connor	Michael Hirst	Sarah Radclyffe	Tim Bevan, Graham Bradstreet
Dakota Road	1990	Nick Ward	Nick Ward	Donna Grey	Sarah Radclyffe
Drop Dead Fred	1991	Ate De Jong	Carlos Davis	Paul Webster	Tim Bevan
Rubin and Ed	1991	Trent Harris	Trent Harris	Paul Webster	
Edward II	1991	Derek Jarman	Ken Butler,	Stephen Clark-Hall, Anthony Root	Sarah Radclyffe
Robin Hood	1991	Joh Irvin	Sam Risnick	Tim Bevan, Sarah Radclyffe	
London Kills Me	1991	Hanif Kureishi	Hanif Kureishi	Tim Bevan, Graham Bradstreet	
Bob Roberts	1992	Tim Robbins	Tim Robbins	Forrest Murray	Tim Bevan, Paul Webster
Map of the Human Heart	1992	Vincent Ward	Louis Nowra	Tim Bevan, Vincent Ward	Graham Bradstreet
The Young Americans	1993	Danny Cannon	Danny Cannon, David Hilton	Alison Owen, Paul Trijbits	
Romeo is Bleeding	1993	Peter Medak	Hilary Henkin	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner	
Posse	1993	Mario Van Peeble	Sy Richardson, Sario Scardapone	Preston Holmes, Jim Steele	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner
The Hudsucker Proxy	1994	Joel Coen	Joel Coen, Ethan Coen	Ethan Coen	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner
Four Weddings and a Funeral	1994	Mike Newell	Richard Curtis	Duncan Kenworthy	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner
That Eye, The Sky	1994	John Ruane	Jim Barton	Grainne Marmion, Peter Beilby	Tim Bevan, Fred Schepisi
Panther	1995	Mario Van Peeble	Melvin Van Peebles	Preston Holmes, Mario Van Peebles, Melvin Van Peebles	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner
French Kiss	1995	Lawrence Kasdan	Adam Brooks	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner	Charles Okun
Moonlight and Valentino	1995	David Anspaugh	Ellen Simon	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Alision Owen	
Loch Ness	1995	John Henderson	John Fusco	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Steve Ujlaki	
Dead Man Walking	1995	Tim Robbins	Tim Robbins	Tim Robbins, Jon Kilik, Rudd Simmons	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner
Fargo	1996	Joel Coen	Joel Coen, Ethan Coen	Ethan Coen	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner
The Matchmaker	1997	Mark Joffe	Greg Dinner, Karen Janszen	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Luc Roeg	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward
Bean	1997	Mel Smith	Richard Curtis, Robin Driscoll	Peter Bennett-Jones, Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner	Rebecca O'Brien
The Borrowers	1997	Peter Hewitt	John Kamps, Gavin Scott	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Rachel Talalay	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward
The Big Lebowski	1998	Joel Coen	Joel Coen, Ethan Coen	Ethan Coen	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner
What Rats Won't Do	1998	Alastair Reid	Steve Coombs, William Osborne	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Simon Wright	
Elizabeth	1998	Shekhar Kapur	Michael Hirst	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Alision Owen	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward
The Hi-Lo Country	1998	Stephen Frears	Walton Green	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Barbra Da Fina, Martin Scorsese	Liza Chasin

WT2 (1999-2006)

Title	Year	Director	Writer	Producer	Executive/co-producer
Billy Elliot	2000	Stephen Daldry	Lee Hall	Greg Brenman, Jonathan Finn	Natascha Wharton, Tessa Ross, Charles Brand, David Thompson
Long Time Dead	2002	Marcus Adams	Marcus Adams	James Gay-Reed	Natascha Wharton, Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner
Ali G Indahouse	2002	Mark Mylod	Sacha Baron Cohen, Dan Mazer	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, William Green, Dan Mazer	Natascha Wharton, Sacha Baron Cohen, Peter Fincham
My Little Eye	2002	Marc Evans	David Hilton, James Watkins	Jonathan Finn, Alan Greenspan, David Hilton	Natascha Wharton, Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner
Shaun of the Dead	2004	Edgar Wright	Simon Pegg, Edgar Wright	Nira Park	Natascha Wharton, Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Alison Owen
The Calcium Kid	2004	Alex De Rakoff	Alex De Rakoff, Raymond Friel, Derek Boyle	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner	Natascha Wharton
Mickybo and Me	2004	Terry Loane	Terry Loane	Mark Huffam, Mike McGeagh	Natascha Wharton, Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Stephen Daldry
Inside I'm Dancing	2004	Damien O'Donnell	Jeffrey Caine	James Flynn, Juanita Wilson	Natascha Wharton, Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Morgan O'Sullivan
Sixty-six	2006	Paul Weiland	Bridget O'Connor, Peter Straughan	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Elisabeth Karlsen	Natascha Wharton, Richard Curtis
Gone	2006	Ringan Ledwidge	James Watkins, Andrew Upton	Deborah Balderstone, Nira Park	Natascha Wharton, Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Jonathan Finn

The Universal Years (1998-Present)

Title	Year	Director	Writer	Producer	Executive/co-producer
Plunkett & Macleane	1999	Jake Scott	Selwyn Roberts, Robert Wade	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Rupert Harvey	Jon Finn, Natascha Wharton
Notting Hill	1999	Roger Michell	Richard Curtis	Duncan Kenworthy	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner
O Brother, Where Art Thou?	2000	Joel Coen	Joel Coen, Ethan Coen	Ethan Coen	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner
The Man Who Cried	2000	Sally Potter	Sally Potter	Christopher Sheppard	Simona Benzakein, Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner
High Fidelity	2000	Stephen Frears	Steve Pink, John Cusack, Scott Rosenberg	Tim Bevan, Rudd Simmons	Liza Chasin, Alan Greenspan, Mike Newell
Captain Corelli's Mandolin	2001	John Madden	Shawn Slovo	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Mark Huffam, Kevin Loader	Liza Chasin, Jane Frazer, Debra Hayward
Bridget Jones's Diary	2001	Sharon Maguire	Helen Fielding, Richard Curtis, Andrew Davies	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Jonathan Cavendish	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward
The Man Who Wasn't There	2001	Joel Coen	Joel Coen, Ethan Coen	Ethan Coen	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner
40 Days and 40 Nights	2002	Michael Lehmann	Rob Perez	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Michael London	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward
About a Boy	2002	Chris Weitz, Paul Weitz	Peter Hodges, Chris Weitz, Paul Weitz	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Robert Di Niro, Brad Epstein	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward
The Guru	2002	Daisy von Scherler	Tracey Jackson	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Michael London	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward, Shekhar Kapur
Johnny English	2003	Peter Howitt	Neal Purvis, Robert Wade, William Davies	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Mark Huffam	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward, Jo Burn
Ned Kelly	2003	Gregor Jordan	John McDonagh	Lynda House, Nelson Woss	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Tim White
Love Actually	2003	Richard Curtis	Richard Curtis	Duncan Kenworthy, Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner	
Thirteen	2003	Catherine Hardwicke	Catherine Hardwicke, Nikki Reed	Jeffrey Levy-Hinte, Michael London	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Liza Chasin
The Shape of Things	2003	Neil Labute	Neil Labute	Neil Labute, Gail Mutrux, Philip Steuer, Rachel Weisz	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner
Wimbledon	2004	Richard Loncraine	Jennifer Flackett, Mark Levin, Adam Brooks	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Mary Richards, David Livingstone	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward
Thunderbirds	2004	Jonathan Frakes	Michael McCullers, William Osborne	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Mark Huffam	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward, Jo Burn
Wimbledon	2004	Richard Loncraine	Adam Brooks, Jennifer Flackett, Mark Levin	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Liza Chasin, Mary Richards	Debra Hayward
Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason	2004	Beeban Kidron	Richard Curtis, Helen Fielding, Andrew Davies	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, John Cavendish	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward
The Interpreter	2005	Sydney Pollack	Charles Randolph, Scott Frank, Steven Zaillian	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Kevin Misher	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward Sydney Pollack
Pride & Prejudice	2005	Joe Wright	Deborah Moggach, Emma Thompson	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Paul Webster	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward, Jane Frazer
Nanny McPhee	2005	Kirk Jones	Emma Thompson	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Lindsay Doran	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward, Glynis Murray
United 93	2006	Paul Greengrass	Paul Greengrass	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Paul Greengrass, Lloyd Levin	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward, Bruce Toll
Catch a Fire	2006	Philip Noyce	Shawn Slovo	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Anthony Minghella, Robyn Slovo	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward, Sydney Pollack
Smokin' Aces	2006	Joe Cranahan	Joe Cranahan	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner	Liza Chasin, Robert Graf
Hot Fuzz	2007	Edgar Wright	Edgar Wright, Simon Pegg	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Nira Park	Natascha Wharton
Mr Bean's Holiday	2007	Steve Bendelack	Hamish McColl, Robin Driscoll	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Peter Bennett-Jones	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward, Richard Curtis
Atonement	2007	Joe Wright	Christopher Hampton	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Paul Webster	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward, Ian McEwan
Elizabeth: The Golden Age	2007	Shekhar Kapur	William Nicholson, Michael Hirst	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Jonathan Cavendish	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward, Michael Hirst
Definitely, Maybe	2008	Adam Brooks	Adam Brooks	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner	Liza Chasin, Bobby Cohen, Kerry Orent
Wild Child	2008	Nick Moore	Lucy Dahl	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Diana Phillips	
Burn After Reading	2008	Joel Coen, Ethan Coen	Joel Coen, Ethan Coen	Joel Coen, Ethan Coen	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Robert Graf
Frost/Nixon	2008	Ron Howard	Peter Morgan	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Brian Grazer, Ron Howard	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward
The Boat that Rocked	2009	Richard Curtis	Richard Curtis	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Hilary Bevan-Jones	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward, Richard Curtis
State of Play	2009	Kevin McDonald	Matthew Carnahan, Tony Gilroy, Billy Ray	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Andrew Hauptman	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward, Paul Abbott
The Soloist	2009	Joe Wright	Susannah Grant	Gary Foster, Russ Krasnow	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner
A Serious Man	2009	Joel Coen, Ethan Coen	Joel Coen, Ethan Coen	Joel Coen, Ethan Coen	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Robert Graff
Smokin' Aces 2: Assassins' Ball	2010	P.J. Pesce	Olatunde Osunsanmi	Mike Elliot	Joe Carnahan
Green Zone	2010	Paul Greengrass	Brian Helgeland	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Paul Greengrass, Lloyd Levin	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward
Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang	2010	Susanna White	Emma Thompson	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Lindsay Doran	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward, Emma Thompson
Senna	2010	Asif Kapadia	Manish Pandey	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, James Gay-Rees	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward
Paul	2010	Greg Mottola	Simon Pegg, Nick Frost	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Nira Park	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward, Natascha Wharton
Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy	2011	Tomas Alfredson	Bridget O'Connor, Peter Straughan	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Robyn Slovo	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward
Johnny English Reborn	2011	Oliver Parker	Hamish McColl, William Davies	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Chris Clark	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward, William Davies
Contraband	2012	Baltasar Kormakur	Aaron Gazikowski	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Baltasar Kormakur, Stephen Levinson, Mark Wahlberg	Liza Chasin, Evan Hayes, Bill Johnson
Big Miracle	2012	Ken Kwapis	Jack Amiel, Michael Begler	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Liza Chasin, Steve Golin, Michael Sugar	Stuart Besser, Paul Green
Anna Karenina	2012	Joe Wright	Tom Stoppard	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Paul Webster	Liza Chasin
Les Misérables	2012	Tom Hooper	William Nicholson	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Debra Hayward, Cameron Mackintosh	Liza Chasin, Angela Morrison
I Give it a Year	2013	Dan Mazer	Dan Mazer	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Kris Thykier	Liza Chasin, Debra Hayward
About Time	2013	Richard Curtis	Richard Curtis	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Nicky Kentish Barnes	Liza Chasin, Amelia Granger, Richard Curtis
The World's End	2013	Edgar Wright	Edgar Wright, Simon Pegg	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Nira Park	Liza Chasin, Simon Pegg, Edgar Wright
Closed Circuit	2013	John Crowley	Steven Knight	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Chris Clark	Liza Chasin, Amelia Granger
Rush	2013	Ron Howard	Peter Morgan	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Andrew Eaton, Brian Grazer, Ron Howard, Peter Morgan, Brian Oliver	
The Two Faces of January	2014	Hossein Amini	Hossein Amini	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Robyn Slovo, Tom Sternberg	
The Theory of Everything	2014	James Marsh	Anthony McCarten	Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner, Anthony McCarten, Lisa Bruce	

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