

# THE STATE OF INDEPENDENCE

## INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL FAWCETT



*Excerpts from a panel discussion at the Cambridge Film Festival, September 25th 2010, for One+One Filmmakers Journal, chaired by James Marcus Tucker*

### **Q: How do you see yourself as a filmmaker? Why do you make films?**

Before I started making films I was a painter and my approach to filmmaking is probably quite similar in that my drives are quite personal and I use film as a tool for personal exploration of ideas and situations in my own life. One of the reasons I enjoy film so much is the sense of community and the feeling of family that you get when you are working with other people. I see filmmaking as an exploration, I love this thing of gathering together a gang of people and going on a journey together and exploring ideas. The finished film is more of a presentation of the document of what was discovered on the journey rather than an exact pre-planned thing. The process for me is far more important than the finished film and in that sense I am willing to take risks and when making the film, I am very much focused on the immediate situation rather than necessarily thinking about how it's all going to come together at the end which is a risky thing and I am willing to risk making what might be considered a bad film in order to have a pure process.

### **Q: How did the low budget effect the process of the making of your film and how perhaps did that lead in to the aesthetics that we see on screen?**

I think that not having money is a real liberation really. There are a lot of benefits that come from not having funding from a funding body; one is that you don't have to answer to anybody, which probably for everyone here is a key thing. Also, when you don't have money and you need things, your relationship with the person that you need things from becomes much more personal and it doesn't just become a financial transaction. You actually have to create a relationship with them. We had a lot of locations and a lot of people in our film. We had about 50 people



involved and about 20 locations. We needed a lot of things, like boats and needed to talk with the lock keeper and we really got to know everyone in the village where we were filming (...) this sense of community that I'm after wouldn't have been possible, or would have been less likely, if it was just a financial business transaction. So I think not having money makes the whole thing a much more personal experience, which is far more rewarding and much more what filmmaking is about for me.

**Q: *One+One* is really committed to exploring what the term “independence” actually means. Independent from what, independent from who? So for you Daniel, what does that term mean, what does it embody?**

I think independence is something that gets thrown around with filmmakers – I think a lot of filmmakers call themselves independent just because they haven't got funding. I don't think that's true independence necessarily. It's one type of independence, but a lot of these filmmakers that call themselves independent are only so financially, not in their thinking and their process. I don't think they are really embracing the opportunity that they have there. A lot of these filmmakers, really, are making films with the industry in mind, as sort of calling cards into the industry which I think is such a shame because I think that we are in a position now with filmmaking where films can be made without money and they can be made independently. I think that should be a choice for anybody who believes in the art of film. But it doesn't happen a lot and I think it could be an exciting time and there can be some exciting things happening if people understand that there is another option. I think we need to see a separation of those two things. Those independents who just don't have money but want to become a part of the industry and the true independents, and I think they are the people who are really exciting and should be supported and encouraged.

I think there is an importance in maybe defining or redefining what it is to be independent. We are going through a time where there is all this change in the way films are going to be funded in the UK and I think if this is a time where we could redefine a certain type of cinema, a certain type of independent cinema, there might be opportunities for that to be recognised separate from other types of filmmaking and a new avenue of funding might open up for it if it is recognised as something. Whereas otherwise, things may just turn out the same, the new funding system may just be a rehash of what it was before. But if we do have this new recognised way of making films, I think maybe there are new opportunities for funding for those.

**Q: That really leads to my last question. Looking to the future, obviously we are aware of what's happening with the UK Film Council. But what would you as filmmakers like to see, in a perfect world? Any new avenues that could open up or perhaps new ways of working, new processes that could be explored in the changing landscape of British cinema after the UK Film Council?**



I think the relationship between the people with the money and the creative people always has been a difficult one and I think it always will be. I don't think that is ever going to change because the motivations for each party are completely different. We can talk about what they should and shouldn't be doing but I think the best thing we can do as filmmakers is minimize the amount of energy that we are giving to them - they don't deserve our energy and money doesn't deserve our energy either. I would like to say that I could envision a funding body that would give money to risk-taking projects and creative projects but I am not going to hold out for it. I think that the best thing we can do is put our energy in to things that are more worth while.

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