

THE THIRD WAY

In the US, charities and foundations have long been an established source of finance and support for documentaries. Now the relationship between social-purpose film-makers and the so-called 'third sector' is beginning to heat up in the UK. **LEON FORDE** reports on the filmanthropy trend

The British Beekeepers' Association, the National Pig Association and the Women's Institute might not be the most obvious partners for documentary makers but it is a sign of a growing crossover between the film world and the third sector that all attended this summer's inaugural Good Pitch.

Held during the UK's Britdoc festival in July, the Good Pitch event attracted a wide range of film-makers with social-purpose projects and the charities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and foundations that are interested in working with them. These included Amnesty International, Greenpeace, Christian Aid and The Wellcome Trust.

While there has long been some overlap between film and the third sector — the term used to refer to all charities, NGOs and foundations — the rise of the theatrical feature documentary and the commercial success of films such as *An Inconvenient Truth* have underlined the fact that social purpose does not have to mean niche.

In the US, the relationship between film-makers and the third sector is well established but in the UK the crossover is only just beginning to



'We get a longer and more focused period of being able to develop'

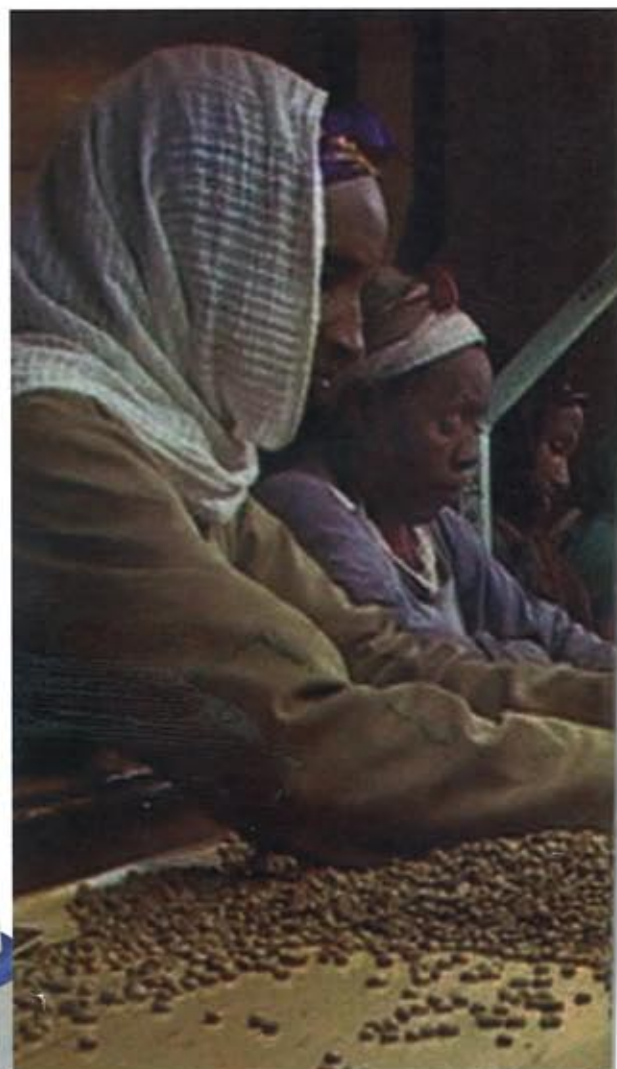
Marc Francis, Speak-It Films

expand. This is down to several factors, including a tradition of broadcaster financing.

"The US is a lot further along the line in working in this way," says Katie Bradford, editorial director of the Channel 4 British Documentary Film Foundation. "And that's because their public service television system was never like ours. It was incredibly rare for documentary makers to get 100% funding from broadcasters so they've always had to look around for other potential sources of funding. And they've got quite good at it."

But as TV finance for documentaries gets tighter, UK film-makers are being forced to seek new partners. Striking a relationship with an NGO can bring a number of benefits for film-makers, ranging from help with research and securing interviews to logistical support, finance, marketing and outreach.

Black Gold, a 2006 feature documentary about coffee and trade, worked closely with the third sector. Co-producers and co-directors Marc and Nick Francis made the initial investment to fund the first phase of the project through their com-



pany Speak-It Films. Further research and development money was then sourced from Christian Aid in the UK, and NGOs in Norway, where the film's associate producer had connections with the sector. Together with co-production partner Fulcrum TV, production and completion funding was sourced from foundations and organisations including the UK Film Council's Screen South, the Sundance Institute and the Channel 4 British Documentary Film Foundation. On completion, marketing and promotional support came from the UK's Docfactory.

"What the third sector has helped us achieve — and this is key — is that we've been able to get research and development money from them without us having sold any of the rights for the film," says Marc Francis.

"So we get a longer and more focused period of being able to develop, without worrying about having sold off territories. We can develop the projects, get them into a really good state and then start engaging with the film industry slightly later on down the line with a more solid, structured proposal and treatment."

Not just funding partners

Francis says he only sources third sector partners for relevant projects. Speak-It is also developing *Cashback* (working title), a feature doc about the shadow banking system, and has secured research and development money from NGOs including Christian Aid.

However, *China-Africa* (working title), another feature documentary the Francis brothers are about to shoot, is funded by ARTE, the BBC's Storyville and the Sundance Institute, with no third sector involvement.

"What's amazing about NGOs is how they can help," says producer Thomas Benski of the UK's Pulse Films, who is producing Gael

