

22 March 2010

Dear Sir Bob,

'STARSUCKERS'

We are the producers and distributors of the above film, a feature length documentary film which examines, satirises and investigates the international media's manipulation, exploitation and control of the public through the cult of celebrity and fame. The film was released in cinemas in the UK in October 2009 and has now been acquired by Channel 4 for broadcast on More 4 as part of its 'True Stories' strand. The transmission date is 6<sup>th</sup> April 2010. I also made the documentary 'Taking Liberties', a critically acclaimed and award-nominated film which was shown in the 'True Stories' strand last year.

In order to comply with the requirements of fairness in the Ofcom Broadcasting Code which governs the broadcast of programmes on television in the UK, I am writing to give you the opportunity to respond by way of a statement if you wish to the criticisms made in the film about Live 8.

The section of the film which deals with Live 8 reveals how media manipulation usurped Live 8 for its own ends with powerful testimony from leading charities and experts in humanitarian aid. It also investigates and calls into question some of the key claims that have been presented to the public. I don't know if you have seen the film and so I thought it would be sensible to summarise the key criticism to which we are giving you the opportunity to respond. These are as follows:

1. David Rieff of the World Policy Institute, who is an expert on humanitarian aid, argues that Live Aid arguably did some harm as well as some good. He accepts that a lot of money was raised and distributed to a large number of humanitarian relief agencies. However, he claims that 'some of the agencies used the Live Aid money to bring in materials and food to places where the Ethiopian government wanted these people to go' enabling the Ethiopian government to carry out ethnic cleansing and a forced population transfer of people from the combat zone, where they were thought to sympathise with the guerrilla armies to less cultivated, less settled areas in the south of Ethiopia.
2. The international charity Medecins Sans Frontieres estimates that between 150,000 and 200,000 Ethiopians were killed due to this forced relocation which was enabled by the relief effort. They claim that this killed more than famine and war during 1985.
3. Benedict Southworth of Make Poverty History claims that the timing of the Live 8 concert on the same day of the long planned MPH march diluted the political message and had the effect of leading the media to cover the concert rather than the march. He says 'What should have been a political concert was very much kind of watered down and frittered away by the way the media covered it.' When the protest moved to Gleneagles, where the G8 was meeting, another Live8 concert took place that same day in Murrayfield in Edinburgh. In the words of John Hillary of Make Poverty History

'Every time that we want to get a strong political message into the media, there happens to be a pop concert to take away all of that thunder.'

4. That Live 8 diluted the political message of MPH turning it into a 'touchy feely experience where everybody's made to feel good about themselves' when in fact the political demands were 'watered down to nothingness'.
5. That the message and information given to the public by Live 8 celebrities, including you, was not consistent. This includes the number of signatures actually in the box to be presented to the G8 leaders, which was variously given as 31 million, 38 million, 150 million and 500 million, and the number of viewers worldwide, variously said to be 2.2, 3.4 and 4.5 billion.
6. That you gave the G8 10/10 on aid and 8/10 on debt after the Jubilee debt campaign had said they had failed on debt and the UK AID Network had said they had failed on aid.
7. That given your interest in it Brook Lapping was not the ideal choice of production company to make an impartial documentary for the BBC about the Live 8 story. The BBC Trust subsequently criticised the BBC's failure to inform the programme's audience of this connection.

I would like to emphasise that the film makes it clear that you and the other leaders of Live 8 operated with the best of intentions in your approach.

If you wish to respond to any of these points any statement you chose to make would need to be received by close of business on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> March and it will be carefully considered with Channel 4 and edited and included in the programme to fairly reflect Live 8's position on these matters.