



ALBERT: THE FUTURE OF TV PRODUCTION?

We now live in a world where electric cars can go from 0-60 in 4 and a half seconds, humble biofuels can fuel passenger flights, London boasts possibly the greenest Olympic stadium ever and solar technology in Spain generates over 3000 megawatts of power. So you could say it's odd that drama sets are frequently not recycled, many of the programmes we watch are still shot and delivered on tape and that crews are still flying all over the world to capture the moments we see on our small screens.

It takes some pioneering thinking to change the status quo, but that is what I hope I can bring to you today. An introduction to a group of motivated and committed Broadcasters and Independent producers who have joined together to affect practical and lasting change which could transform the future of TV production for us all.

We want the process of making a TV programme to become more sustainable, more environmentally friendly, more "green" as we say in the UK. We want production to have a positive not negative impact on the people and places involved in its creation. It's an enormous task but one we're beginning to tackle with passion, not just for the sake of the planet but also for the business benefits it will bring.

But where did it all start?

Well, in 2009 the BBC piloted an online resource called 'ALBERT'. This was a pioneering initiative, designed to encourage production teams to measure the environmental impact of their work. In short, a carbon calculator. The creation of former TV journalist, Richard Smith, Albert was built for the BBC by developers Sharepoint City and an early version of ALBERT rolled out across BBC Vision and BBC Children's, with the support of Pat Younge, the BBC's Chief Creative Officer. The initial aims of Albert were simple: to engage with production teams and help them to work in a more sustainable way. As the project progressed, it became apparent that the adoption of this technology across the whole production community could affect lasting and significant change. The BBC needed an independent body to take the project forward and embrace the Indy sector and so they approached BAFTA to do just that.

My initial reaction to the idea was that this was something BAFTA should definitely get involved with. We are a charity, promoting, supporting and rewarding excellence in the art forms of the moving image both in the UK and Internationally. We embrace the craft and creativity of the film, television and games industries and



so to take such a valuable initiative to the television community seemed like a no-brainer and that's why we got involved and why I'm speaking here today.

Early last year, BAFTA approached a number of Indies and Broadcasters to form a Consortium to take this product to market on a not-for-profit basis. All of those around the ALBERT Consortium table have donated time, money and expertise to making this project a reality

As well our indie and broadcast partners, we have a number of valued technical partners who have worked hard to bring this new, pan-industry version of ALBERT to the industry.

The generosity and support of the consortium has meant that Albert is currently free for any production company to use in 2012.

Once the Consortium was in place, it was time to look at the BBC's version of ALBERT and adapt it to suit the whole of the UK's production community. Our design partners, Aerial Studios, developed a new look for the portal and our Heads of Production on the Consortium got together to make sure that the demands on their production managers would be reasonable. The ALBERT you will see here today is designed to seamlessly integrate as far as possible with the budgeting process. You put in the numbers and predict your carbon footprint alongside your budget and then, at certain points in the life of your production, you put in the 'actuals' and see if your prediction was correct.

Making sure Albert speaks the language of production, not the jargon of the sustainability consultant, was extremely important, as we didn't want to make the adoption of ALBERT in the production process arduous or off-putting in any way.

So how exactly does Albert work?

To get into the specifics, Albert asks a series of questions relating to key areas of production: the office, travel, overnight accommodation, generator usage on location, power in studios and stages and post-production.

So for example, it asks how much energy you use in a studio on a typical working day. And because it knows how many days you spend in the studio per episode, and how many episodes you're making during the production period, it can work out your carbon footprint for this and several other aspects of production.

The back-end data used to make Albert work comes primarily from "carbon conversion factors" provided by one of Albert's technical partners, AMEE. Albert is linked to AMEE's own "carbon library", which means that every time AMEE update their data, Albert is updated too.

Other "factors", such as the amount of carbon associated with using an edit suite for an hour, are "bespoke" and specific to Albert. These will be updated manually every year to tie in with changes in carbon factors issued by the UK Government.



For anyone particularly interested in the carbon data there is always the option within Albert to click on the 'show me the maths' button which details exactly how each carbon factor has been worked out.

We believe that as long as the data is entered into Albert accurately then the final figure produced is extremely robust. Of course the old adage stands that if you put rubbish in you'll get rubbish out. However we feel confident that thanks to the support of AMEE and our external auditors Mason Hardy, who will be reviewing every completed footprint, we will be able to build up a world-leading database of TV production carbon footprints. This will allow productions and companies to benchmark against each other while keeping their specific data private and secure.

The version of the carbon calculator that you're seeing here is just the first step. Since its launch in November 2011 we have already begun to create a list of ways to improve Albert. We already think it's a user-friendly and comprehensive tool but we plan to make it even better.

Albert has already helped the BBC to calculate their carbon footprint for programming. Following a year of use within the BBC, nearly 90 accurate footprints were created which allowed the BBC to publish their very first carbon figure for an hour of programming. It came out at 8.2 tonnes of carbon dioxide per hour of output.

To put that into context, as this picture shows, that's the equivalent of the yearly emissions from two UK households. And that block there is the actual volume of space that 8 tonnes of carbon actually takes up. Whatever we might think about this figure, the important point is that we now have a figure against which we can gauge progress in the future.

So at last the industry has a tool through which they can measure the carbon footprint for every programme they make.

At the start of 2010, I don't think there was broadcaster or production company in the UK who could confidently stand up and say what the carbon footprint of their programmes was. Now with Albert, any production company who is interested in becoming sustainable is able to use a relatively simple calculator tool to find out their carbon footprint and begin to reduce it.

And if the recent climate talks in Durban are anything to go by, then Albert could very quickly find itself becoming a key tool within the TV production industry. There may well come a time quite soon when companies will be required by law to reveal the carbon footprint of their products – and that could include TV programmes.

When discussing the outcome of the conference in a recent article in The Guardian, former UN Climate Chief Yvo de Boer said that the talks were a



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"clear signal that the international community is committed to taking the climate change agenda forward, that market-based mechanisms [such as carbon trading] will continue and *that there will be clear reporting guidelines on carbon dioxide emissions, which will affect companies.*"

In other words, businesses need to start putting plans in place now in order to get ready for a low-carbon future.

For the TV Industry, Albert could become the vital carbon reporting tool needed to help companies understand how much carbon they're producing.

And like many industries, I think we'd all agree that the TV Industry could go a lot further in its aims to be more sustainable, not just in terms of carbon reduction but in other environmental areas too.

I could give you lots of examples here of where our industry is wasteful. Instead I'll give you a more positive story.

A new BBC comedy called *The Bleak Old Shop of Stuff* used Albert to track their emissions. Doing so triggered a chain reaction of benefits. Aiming to cut carbon on the stage where they were filming led them to use low energy lighting. This meant they could use electricity from the mains rather than hiring diesel generators, saving them thousands of pounds in equipment hire and fuel. The low energy lights stopped the set overheating, meaning actors were more comfortable and required less frequent make-up checks. I'm told there was even a positive social benefit as the production team felt good about doing "the right thing". The Director of Photography says the low energy lights were as good if not better than the traditional ones, meaning no artistic compromise. And yes, they cut their carbon too. There's more the team want to do in the future, but this is an inspiring start.

So ALBERT is more than just a Carbon Calculator, it's a game changer, a way of thinking that can permeate the industry and affect how we approach TV production profoundly. As take up of ALBERT grows, the Consortium intends to focus on the wider issues to hand; the supply chain, how we can join up with the Film Industry to achieve a British Standard for sustainable production, how we can influence the commissioning process to best affect change; these are all big issues which with your support, we'll be addressing over the coming year. Our aim is that the Albert consortium will become a think tank for sustainability on behalf of the UK TV Industry. Please may I encourage you all to take a business card with you today and find out more about this ground-breaking project. We need support and input from industry professionals across all genres and production communities if we're really going to change things for the future.

We'd particularly like to hear from you if you're outside the UK to gauge interest in an international version of Albert. Please do let us know if you'd like Albert to work for you, no matter where you are.



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In November this year, we will be able to share the results of the carbon footprints we've managed to capture since launch and we'd love to include your productions within that exercise. Then we will really begin to have a true picture of where the industry is today and what we need to do to make sustainability a reality for tomorrow.

If we work together, we really can change the future of television production and maybe even the future of the planet.

All of us involved in Albert believe sustainability for our industry should not equal austerity, but creativity. We'd be delighted if you join us on this exciting journey. We think Albert is the place to start.

Finish with video.