

THE LUX

PC goes deluxe

A year ago, The Lux's board of directors decided the arthouse cinema needed to make money. Robert Buckley speaks to the man brought in to turn it into a lean post-production machine

Taking a charity that's a bastion of political correctness and 70s inertia and changing it into a profit-making post-production facility is the challenge head of productions, Fritz Kohle, took on six months ago.

"Our remit is to support the British avant garde," he says. "At the moment, 70% of our income is generated by post-production, 30% comes from the likes of The Arts Council. I hope that by April we'll be making a profit and can use that 30% to support film-makers."

Based in Shoreditch, The Lux is one of the BFF's lesser-known beneficiaries. Comprising a gallery, a cinema and a post-house, it can be almost everything to everyone, housing just about any piece of equipment you might want. Need to do some Super8 editing on a Steenbeck? You got it. How about telecine? No problem. Blue-screen work? Just got one up and running. Camera hire? Name your format.

"If we were completely guided by finance," Kohle admits, "we wouldn't have most of this. But we have to support low-budget work as part of

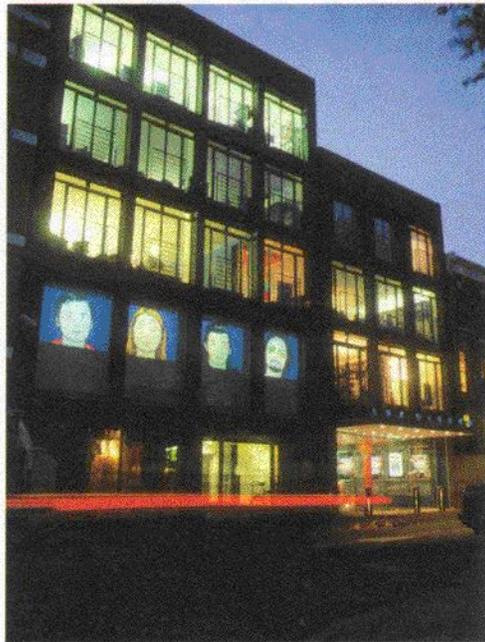
our charter. And hire generates most of our income."

Kohle, a former production manager in Germany, gave up a higher-paid City job in order to take on the challenge of turning round The Lux. He's hoping he can shed its existing image as a little-known arthouse and unveil it as a commercial company. And, so far, the biggest challenge has been internal.

"There were one or two people who were very PC, who would argue about everything - whether jobs we took were 'appropriate' or not - or who had had an easy life, not really working," Kohle remembers. "It took a while for them to come round to the changes I wanted in management structure, and to realise we need to make money and they'd have to work like everyone else."

But there were only two redundancies (part-time technical staff who shared jobs) and more hirings. The facility now has four trainees as part of the New Deal scheme, and Kohle's own programme has helped staff acquire each others' skills in both film and video.

This year will see even



Let there be dark at The Lux (above). Fritz Kohle and Keith Lynch strive for commercialism in the arts



MARK TYMAN

more changes as Kohle invests in a DVD authoring suite and new media company Createc moves in upstairs. The Lux will then have access to Hal, Henry, Flame, Maya and Domino. Kohle is even working on a production arm to develop programmes and features.

But even with all the kit, its own cinema for viewings and a gallery for displaying works such as games artwork, Kohle places the company's people-skills at the top of his selling points. "If you come to us before the production starts, we can save you a lot of money in the long run," he claims. Included

in the price are advice from post-production head Keith Lynch, who worked on *The Matrix*, and the ability to cope with artists, some of whom can be "pains in the neck." 24-hour access and a bar next-door mean you never even have to leave during a job.

With Björk and Blur's Dave Rowntree already on the client list, The Lux is on the first step towards post-house respectability. But Kohle hopes it will never come to resemble a west end facility that "looks like a restaurant. I know I'd get bored," he maintains, "and then I'd leave." ■

KIT SPEC

The Lux has two Avid 8000s, an Avid 4000 and an Avid 1000. Linearphiles have a choice of editing suites and can even work with VHS and Umatic.

Film people can use two Film Composers and a Steenbeck. A Cintel MKIII, optical printing and BW film developing services back this up.

Extras include a rostrum camera, Media Illusion, Matador and Elastic Reality, a dubbing suite and a sound studio.