The Veteran

ISSUE 175
WINTER 2022

The Magazine of
The British Cinema and
Television Veterans





COURTESY OF MERLIN CINEMAS

The new Regent Redcar

See page 29

PLUS: The Newsletter of the Film & TV Charity

FILM+TV CHARITY

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British Cinema and Television Veterans

An association of men and women who have given more than 30 years to the cinema, film or television industries

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EMPIRE OF LIGHT

This major new film, written and directed by Sam Mendes, opens in cinemas in January. Large portions take place in a cinema, using the exterior of the Dreamland Margate and a new foyer set built nearby (see our Summer issue, no. 173).

Let us have your opinion of the film's validity as a drama and its accuracy as a representation of how an independent cinema was run in the early 1980s.

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The Veteran

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From the President



The current increases in fuel and food costs, among others, are worrying many people. Quite exceptionally, therefore, I am posing a question. Do you have any form of need with which you would like help? Our association came into being because the cinema industry at that time did not want anyone who had served it since its early days to be forgotten or to be in dire financial circumstances. Not long after our foundation, the then industry charity, The Cinematograph Trade Benevolent Fund, was established to help people in need. One hundred or so years later, the names have changed but the concerns and objectives haven't. If anyone reading this, or someone you know who is an industry veteran, would like help of some sort, please contact our marvellous Secretary, Kathy Darby. Anything you tell us will be treated with great discretion. As an association we may only be able to help directly in a limited way but we can be a conduit to the Film & Television Charity, the latest name of the original Benevolent Fund. At a recent meeting, our Executive Committee expressed great concern and felt we should do what we could to respond to the current national situation, hence my question "Do you have any form of need with which you would like help?"

In November I had the pleasure of hosting a lunch for those of our members who live in East Anglia and were able to attend. It was an extremely relaxed and enjoyable gathering. The lunch took place in Picturehouse's Cinema City in Norwich which, as the accompanying picture shows, is housed in an historic building. This prompted me to wear, at least for a time, the President's badge of office. As this is normally only used at our Annual General Meetings, I thought it would be a nice gesture to put it on show to members who are unlikely to be able to attend an AGM. The badge was commissioned by Arthur Cunningham when he was President in 1934/35 and he presented it to the then Cinema Veterans. The badge was hallmarked by the London Assay Office in 1935 as Sterling Silver with the metal being silver gilt. It is not of great financial value but it is valuable enough for the association to keep it insured. If you examine the photographs of this year's AGM featured in the Autumn issue of the magazine, you will see the date of 1903. To be a member of the original Cinema Veterans when it became a formal organisation, you had to have been working in the industry by that year. Arthur Cunningham was a pioneer of the cinema industry and a founder member both of our association and the industry charity. He owned and operated cinemas throughout the north of England and was based in Leeds, where he also manufactured cinema seating.



The badge of office.

Cineworld's financial difficulties have received media coverage beyond mentions in the city pages of newspapers. Thankfully for all the company's cinemas in this country, it has been business as usual. Unfortunately for Cineworld corporately, business as usual has not been good enough. The second half of this year has not delivered the admissions that they needed. If the pandemic had not wrought havoc on virtually every type of business, Cineworld would most likely be riding out the current storm without too much difficulty. Cinema admissions have always been on a roller coaster. There is a tendency to become very worried when there is a bad period. That is when everyone has to remind themselves that the usual explanation for the dip is "It's the films, stupid." Cinemas have always depended on films which appeal to audiences and not all films do that in sufficient numbers. When great entertainment is on offer there is no better place to enjoy it than in a cinema - even Netflix has begun to acknowledge this as they will be premiering one of their productions in cinemas nationally before it is streamed on line. Cinemas are also very safe places to watch a film partly because of their very good air conditioning. No covid infection in this country has ever been traced to a cinema.

To end on some cheerful notes and with two appeals:

I first want to publicly congratulate the designer of our magazine, Angela Lyons, on winning the award for Graphic Designer of the Year at the Digital Women Awards 2022. The awards celebrate women working in and around digital and digital-based businesses who are doing exceptional work in their respective industries. Second, now that we have our events programme up and running again, let me say that it would be great for the association if there was a volunteer to look after it! All expenses are covered and Kathy provides excellent help. Third, we also need a new web master as Jim Whittell, our founding web master, is having to step down. You do not need to be a computer programmer, just computer literate, and everything needed can be done at home. Jim will fully brief his successor. Fourth, our next President's visit and lunch will be for our members in the Midlands. It is being planned on May 4th next year in central Birmingham. Lastly, I want to wish you all happy cinema-going as well as a Happy Christmas and healthy New Year.

Tony Williams
President



Those attending were (in alphabetical order): Rhoda Bunclark, Peter Gray, Jules Greenway, Antony Pierce-Roberts, Nigel Randall, Keith Rogers, James Sandys, Michael Turner and Ruth Young.

The Film and Television Charity has a 24-hour help line: 0800 054 0000. Its web site is www.filmtvcharity.org.uk

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Casting Aside



Tony Arnell reflects on his career as a casting director

The whole process of casting starts with a script arriving on your desk. It is read formulating the different characters as to their importance, type, age group and, very importantly, knowing the fee the character might command. Next is a meeting with the director and submitting ideas that he, the caster, had assembled previously with the aid of *The Spotlight Casting Directory* and ideas from various agents. Although the director has the final say, the caster's job is to introduce ideas to him from the vast knowledge of all the artists he has seen working. Therein lies another branch of the work, covering performances in the Fringe theatre, repertory theatres (the few that remain), tours and, of course, the West End – not forgetting TV and films. This work is done after office hours which makes for a long working day.

There may be more casting sessions but eventually a form of what could possibly work happens. With the director occupied elsewhere sorting out his camera script, locations, etc., the caster is left to start booking the artists they had agreed on. Then the fun starts: the particular actor to play the lead is no longer available, others want a better fee, some are not sure and want to see the script… and so on. The balance has changed and you and the director might have to start all over again, but time may be very limited. It is similar to putting a jigsaw together. You probably are working on other series into the bargain which complicates life. The caster has to be a psychologist in theory, working out what is in the director's mind, the way he works, the type of actor he enjoys working with. The caster has to be a good judge of character as to the limitations of actors – are they temperamental, too gauche, will they bump into the furniture, will they remember their lines?

Then there is the money! Maths had not been my strong point but that was soon corrected by being in control of thousands of pounds for my cast budget. This entailed working out the actual fee plus rehearsal payments, production days, repeats, fees for all the different areas of transmission – and much more.

In the years since I retired, television has changed completely. So much preparatory work is now done on line, accountants now run the show. I do believe television reached its zenith in the Seventies and early Eighties and am thankful I was there to experience it. It was a hectic life – but nothing was more rewarding than seeing the cast you had helped put together work out to everyone's satisfaction.

ABC TV: January 1962

The starting time of my first day was 9.30 but there was already a problem. The radio announced that last night's snowfall was the worst in recent years, traffic had been brought to a standstill, no buses or trains. My brain warmed up and the realisation dawned that I would have to trudge on foot in *Scott Of the Antarctic* mode. No point in considering the 1938 Ford stuck outside which never started in tropical temperatures, let alone sub zero.

I hauled myself to the main doors of Teddington Studios and saw it was not quite 9.30am. I had covered the two miles in surprisingly good time. The foyer was deserted apart from a receptionist behind a large desk and I gave her my name. She smiled and apologised that no one had yet arrived due to the inclement conditions. It was uncannily quiet, a slight sense of anti-climax. Then someone suddenly appeared and said they would show me to my office. This done, they departed as quickly as they had arrived and I was left surveying a small room with a desk, a swivel chair and an old armchair with a caster missing. No carpet, just lino. It was at the front of the building, facing snow-shrouded playing fields belonging to the Lensbury Club. This was to be my office for the foreseeable future in my capacity as assistant casting director at ABC Television. New horizons!

Curriculum Vitae

I had attended an interview some weeks before in this building. On that occasion I had been ushered along corridors to a large room with a long shiny table. Sitting the other side of the table was Dodo Watts, head of casting, George Brightwell (the administration head), and a television director whose name I do not recall. Mr. Brightwell invited me to sit and, although they already had my curriculum vitae in front of them, he asked me to fill in my career up to this point. They wanted to hear me talk.

I was educated at the Bristol Cathedral School (no, I did not sing in the choir), left at 16 in 1946 to join the Rapier Players at the Little Theatre in

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Bristol. In those days most towns had a repertory theatre putting on a different play each week – a hard life but a great training ground for the actors of the future.

The Rapier Players were such a company and run by Ronald Russell and his wife Peggy Ann Wood. I started as a student, working my way up to assistant stage manager and eventually stage manager, combined with acting in many roles such as the title role in *The Winslow Boy*, once when I was 18 and again on my return from National Service at 20. Ronnie Winslow was 15 but I always did look younger than my age which was an asset in this case. Later, on my one afternoon off, I studied theatre management under the auspices of the theatre manager, hoping this would add another string to my bow. I stayed with the company for nearly seven years. Eventually I knew I had to move on, especially as Tina, Ronald's secretary, and I had become close and I needed to find something more secure.

Ronald Russell was casting his next season at the *Spotlight Casting Directory* offices in London and happened to mention that I was looking for a different direction. By sheer good luck they were looking for an editorial assistant – hardly an executive position, but at least it was a start and in London.

Spotlight had been started back in the Twenties by Arthur Moss whose intention was to publish actors' photographs and details in volumes to be circulated around the theatres and film studios for casting purposes. He was either too kind-hearted or simply foolish because he extended financial credit to the actors to pay him with their next pay packet. They never did and Rodney Millington, who was connected to the Basildon Bond notepaper hierarchy, rescued the company from bankruptcy and became its managing director. The company grew under his banner with a telephone enquiry service and a department with details of the vast repertory movement nationwide. There was also a casting office which charged no commission helping the regional theatre companies. The firm went from strength to strength under Rodney's strict supervision: he would ask an employee as to why they had arrived at 9.32am when the start time was 9.30am! No quarter was ever given.

I started at Spotlight in July 1953 where my duties included helping compile and check the artists' advertisements and attending the counter to sign up a potential advertiser or answer any of their queries. Tina joined me in London a few months later. We were married the following February. Ronald Russell and Peggy Ann were invited. They had been very kind during my years with them, giving me a great grounding for which I shall always be extremely grateful.

At Spotlight I joined Cary Ellison, its representative. He was the most charming of men and extremely well organised. We gelled from the start. He realised there was an untapped potential from agents who regarded Spotlight with suspicion, for having its own casting department and taking no commission. So he set about explaining the position to the agents, cajoling them into seeing how vital it was to advertise their clients in the *Directory*. In a short time, the *Directory* expanded into four volumes and the dye was cast. In addition, twice a year Cary would organise a two-week tour of repertory companies. After each show, he would talk to the performers, reassuring them they were not cut off from the metropolis and at the same time spreading the gospel of Spotlight. If he spotted anyone exceptional, he would make sure the London talent workers were notified. Janet Munro was one of his finds and, after introducing her to the British branch of the Walt Disney company, she became a star in several of their film productions.

Meanwhile, I was put in charge of the advertising at another of Spotlight's publications, *Contacts*, which listed names and addresses of agents, theatre producers, prop makers, etc. I also interviewed actors, principally to sign them up for the *Directory* but also to answer any queries they may have had. Before long, we were, as Cary put it "like a surgery, bolstering the morale of these poor souls who had had so much rejection. Our job was to inspire them so they could go out and face the world again with renewed vigour in their endeavours to find work."

By 1961 things were going well at Spotlight but I was getting a little restless and when I saw a trade journal advertisement for a casting 'person' at ABC Television in Teddington, I applied. An appointment was arranged and here I was a few days later sitting before the board.

Success!

At the interview board, George Brightwell spoke. "You mentioned you viewed the 'Armchair Theatre' production last evening which Miss Watts cast. How would you have cast it?"

A pregnant pause. I cleared my throat.

"Well, I would have to consult my *Spotlight* for further ideas… but I don't think I could have improved on Miss Watts' experienced and impeccable taste!"

That seemed to suffice and after a few more questions the interview was over and I left. A few days later Miss Watts phoned to say the job was mine!

A Potted History

ABC Television was an offshoot of the ABC cinema chain, part of ABPC (Associated British Picture Corporation) whose studios were at Elstree. Together with J. Arthur Rank and his Pinewood studios, they were the two main film production companies in this country. ABC Television started transmitting in the Midlands in February 1956 and in the North the following May. The company was recognised as one of 'the big four' with Associated-Rediffusion, ATV and Granada being the other three. This allowed them to network their programmes throughout the country.

Warner Bros. held shares in the early days of ABC and owned Teddington Studios which were situated alongside the River Thames between Twickenham and Kingston-on-Thames. Although ABC TV was theoretically a Northern-based company with offices and studios in Manchester, the bulk of the productions were centred at Teddington.

For such a large company, the casting department might be assumed to have been of a

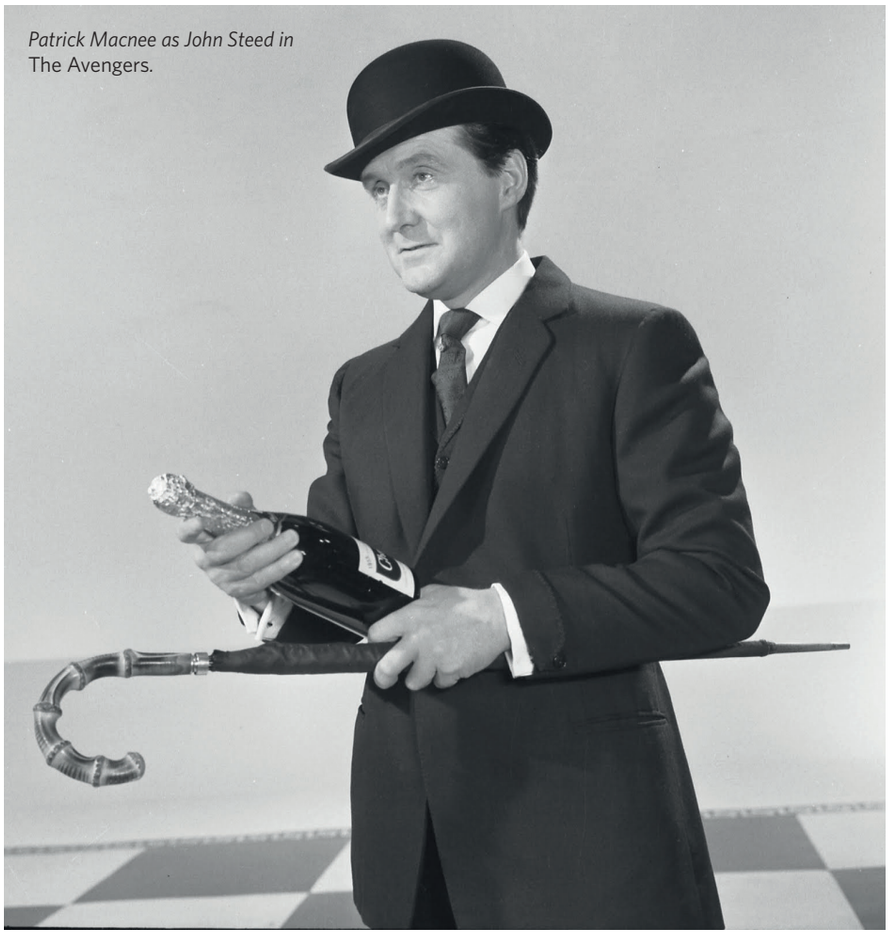


The young Lynne Frederick. (IMDB.)



Janet Suzman.

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Patrick Macnee as John Steed in The Avengers.

corresponding size. Alas, no! Dodo Watts was the head; then there was myself and Myrna Malinsky, who dealt solely with light entertainment. Iris Frederick acted as the department's general booker, her purpose being to assist any of us who were overwhelmed with work and also to book the background artistes. Unfortunately, Myrna was always under pressure and commandeered Iris's services most of the time. So, in total, there were only three of us plus our secretaries to undertake all of the station's artistic output.

Dodo Watts was a lady in her fifties who had a great zest for life. Her bright personality and her eagerness to learn about all things added to her attractiveness. She had a slightly puckered face extenuated by screwing up her eyes when she smiled which made her all the more appealing. She had started in the theatre at the age of twelve playing the Dormouse in *Alice in Wonderland* and the following year *Where the Rainbow Ends,* both at the Holborn Empire. She progressed from playing children to juvenile roles and later entered silent films and eventually the West End stage. In the 1930s she starred in many films but left in 1935 to marry (twice) and have four sons. She returned to the stage in 1947 and then turned her career on its head by joining BBC TV to train as a stage manager with a view to learning the technical side. By 1954 she had climbed the ladder as assistant director at High Definition Films and later as casting director. In 1956 she became head of casting at ABC TV.

There was no doubting Myrna Malinsky came from the light entertainment world. She carried an air of show business about her, was always smartly dressed and made-up. She had an attractive Northern brogue with an accompanying warm personality, but she also was a forthright and determined businesswoman.

Mrs. Frederick was in her forties, tall and carried herself well. I had no idea where she came from or if she had any show business background but she did have a nine-year old daughter, Lynne. On occasions the little girl would be brought to the office during school holidays. She would sit at a desk and occupy herself as quietly as she could, drawing whilst her mother worked. She grew into a very attractive young actress who married David Frost for a brief period and later became the fourth wife of Peter Sellers. She starred in several films but with the death of Sellers in 1980 it seems her life changed and was not helped by her screen career being in decline. It was tragic that she should reach such a low ebb that she felt the need to end her life in 1994 when just 42.

Wrong and Right

My casting career started like a damp squib at a firework display. Equity, the actors' union, was in dispute with ITV. No actors were allowed to be employed in any television production. Equity was never in a strong position to carry out this threat but felt the television companies were treating its members unfairly – which in my opinion they were. It was a David facing Goliath situation but this was the era of strong trade union control and battle had to be seen to be done. It had been imperative that I join the ACTT union (Association of Cinematograph and Television Technicians). It would be taboo if I made a single phone call or opened the pages of the *Spotlight Directory* without being a member.

With no sign of the strike being resolved, Dodo suggested I might like to do a short rep tour. This suited me fine, except my wife was now expecting our second child in a matter of weeks (Tina gave birth to our daughter Jane in May 1959) – but I would only be away three days and she insisted I went.

ABC Television had set up a trainee director scheme where they supported certain directors in the rep companies in the hope they might eventually step onto the television ladder. I had been told to look out for such a chap at Leicester who was on loan from the Northampton rep. So I went along to the Living Theatre Company in Leicester to see its production of *Candida*. From the programme I noted that Jill Gascoine was a director of the company (later I would cast her in *The Gentle Touch*) along with two young men, William Hays and Derrick Goodwin, who later became distinguished directors in theatre and television. However, the object of my interest was the person on stage playing Marchbanks. He was actually the director, standing in for an actor who had been taken ill the previous week. No one else was available so he was landed with acting this important role.

I wrote in my programme: "a very young eager company needing someone with experience to lead the way." I added: "With Kenneth Loach directing and having to take over the part of

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Marchbanks [it] must have been very difficult but nevertheless his acting was dreadful and his diction was very wishy washy." As for his directing capabilities, he was working under difficult circumstances but I felt on this showing Mr. Loach did not have much of a future!

Next day I travelled to the recently opened Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, and the following day to the Library Theatre at Manchester before returning home. Great theatre and some very good performances helped to put the Leicester experience behind me.

Back in London, I had spotted a girl at drama school who stood out from all the others. Janet Manners was born in South Africa and studied at the University of Johannesburg before coming to England to train at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. I wasn't the only one who had spotted this new talent and I needed to move quickly before she was pounced on by other talent seekers. Next morning, I rushed into Dodo's office singing Janet Manners' praises, which she duly noted. With great fortune, the young actress straight out of drama school landed the part of Liz in *Billy Liar* at Ipswich and was now going to reprise the role at Windsor. Thereupon I drove Dodo to Windsor, hoping she would be impressed by my discovery. But we were to be disappointed. Her performance was average – not enough to warrant the praise I had lavished on her. My confidence took a hard knock and I imagined what Dodo might be thinking as we drove home in silence.

Sometime later, I saw Janet in Shakespearean mode in Manchester where she was quite brilliant. She had changed her name to Janet Suzman and went on to fulfil a long career with the Royal Shakespeare Theatre and other top ranking companies. Her fame put her beyond anything I could ever hope to offer her on the type of series I cast, but to know I had not been wrong in recognising her talent in the first place was some sort of consolation.

DIY

Weeks came and went without any sign of the strike coming to an end. Secretly we all felt sorry for the actors, even though this was of their own making. In normal times the majority would be scrapping around for any morsel, one line in a weekly rep, anything to earn a crust. Now even leading actors who worked on a semi-regular basis were hard pressed; it was in the lap of the Gods how long they could hold out.

Meanwhile, we had explored all areas that could occupy our time – except perhaps for Dodo's home improvements! Broom Road in Teddington is a long, pleasant, tree-lined road which had the studios at one end and Dodo's flat at the other. One bleak afternoon she asked if I would be willing to build her a couple of curtain pelmets. Anything to break the monotony and so I obliged. It occupied most of the afternoon and whilst relaxing during a tea break she mentioned in rather a confidential tone that it looked as though there was a glimmer of hope with the strike negotiations. In which case, directly it was over I would be working on a series starring Ian Hendry and Patrick Macnee. The original series had been called *Police Surgeon* but it hadn't exactly set the pulses beating so it was withdrawn and reappeared as *The Avengers*. Ian Hendry played Dr. Keel, a police surgeon-cum-amateur-sleuth whose girlfriend had been murdered by a drugs gang. He enlisted the help of British Intelligence and John Steed, a mysterious undercover agent played by Macnee who aided him in avenging her death – hence the title.

The series became an immediate success and shot Ian Hendry into the limelight. But then the actors' strike struck and everything came to a stop. The film tycoons, realising Ian Hendry was box office, made him tempting offers. With no sign of an immediate end to the strike, he decided to leave and pursue a film career. As a virile, aggressive leading man, he was an instant success in a succession of hard-hitting British films. Coincidentally, he married the previously mentioned Janet Munro in 1963 but they divorced in 1971. A year later there was a terrible tragedy when Janet accidentally choked to death. Ian Hendry continued with a prospering career but he was addicted to alcohol and died in 1984.

Life begins

Towards the end of February, the actors' strike was resolved. With amazingly good timing, my son Jonathan was born a matter of days before the strike ended and I was able to spend some time at home. But thereafter I was back at work with all systems go.

There were six *Avengers* scripts left over from before the strike and they would be the first to go into production. Hendry had to be quickly replaced so the producer, Leonard White, a couple of directors – Peter Hammond and Don Leaver – and myself had already been sorting out possible candidates and eventually came up with an outsider, Jon Rollason.

Then came a change of course. Sydney Newman, the brilliant Canadian head of drama who had created the series in the first place, decided that the new sidekick should be a woman. Steed would be promoted and she could partner him – she might be an icy-cool blonde with a PhD in anthropology and a leaning towards dishing out her own brand of rough justice, she might even be a judo expert. Jon Rollason was already in rehearsal, but he was only contracted for six episodes which would give us time to find the new female. He would record three episodes as Dr. Martin King, which would be inserted into the series somewhere along the line. There was never any doubt Rollason was a good actor and did a very efficient job. It was unfortunate that changing to a female character had not been mooted much earlier.

So the search began. It circulated around the agents and suggestions came pouring in. I compiled a list of over one hundred possible candidates and then began the long process of filtering it down with Leonard White. An agent insisted I met one of her clients who was in her late twenties and about to embark on a hugely successful career but at this stage had done very little television. Glenda Jackson was obviously



Sydney Newman. (IMDB.)



Jon Rollason. (tobyhadoke.com.)

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Television directors Don Leaver (top) (mediagems.de) and Peter Hammond (Wikipedia).



an excellent actress judging by her stage work, but perhaps physically not quite right for this particular role. I wrote these remarks on her interview form which remained in my file for many years. To my shame, I was proved wrong when she went on to win the Academy Award in Ken Russell's *Women in Love* in 1969 and was extremely attractive in the comedy *A Touch of Class* with George Segal.

'Tis my Honor

Jon Rollason's episodes were now in production and there was still no sign of the ice blonde with a PhD. With only a couple of weeks before her rehearsals started, we were getting increasingly worried until one morning I took a call from an agent who dropped the name of Honor Blackman into the conversation. She was already on my list with the query "too Kensington?" pencilled alongside. I had met her, albeit briefly, when she came to see Cary at *The Spotlight*. It had been during a downturn in her life, a recent death of a close relative, a sticky marriage, and ill health – but despite all that, she looked marvellous, had great sex appeal and above all, had presence. Originally, she had been a member of the Rank "charm school", submerged in "English rose" roles since the mid-Forties, but her basic experience, stamina, and charisma all added up to what we were looking for.

But would she do it? She had made a name for herself in films and might be too expensive. I put her name forward and certain reservations were expressed: she wasn't an ice blonde, she was a bit "Kensington" and she was in her thirties, not twenties (Heaven help us!). Putting all that aside, the more I thought about it the more right she seemed, and her experience must count for something. So I pushed the idea more strongly than ever. I had to be careful, realising that human nature baulks at ideas being pushed right in someone's face: they sometimes want to have thought of it themselves!

To complicate matters, another contender was being pushed from 'upstairs'. This was Yolande Turner, Peter Finch's ex-wife. Also, I gathered that John Grant, Honor's agent, was having a hard time convincing her the series would be a good move, assuming we offered it to her.

I felt we had to make a decision quickly, before Honor cooled on the idea or other obstacles got in the way. So, that winter's morning, three of us stood outside the canteen at Teddington; Leonard White, director Jonathan Alwyn and myself. As we discussed the subject further, I could feel Jonathan slowly edging towards the idea of Miss Turner as he puffed on his pipe. Leonard remained neutral so it seemed like a sparring match with me pursuing the cause for Honor on one side and Jonathan the other. Whys and wherefores shuttled back and forth until there was nothing left to say. Everything went silent, except for the sound of breaking crockery in the canteen. Jonathan was not adamant about the other lady and perhaps had even been swayed by my argument. There was a long pause as Leonard turned away deep in thought. It seemed a lifetime before he turned back, then looked me straight in the eye, saying quietly with an uncertain smile flickering in the corner of his mouth, "Be it on your own head!" Jonathan smiled and knocked his pipe out against the canteen wall. To my relief, Honor accepted the role.

Rough Justice

The scripts had hurriedly been changed to accommodate the new character of Cathy Gale but they weren't right. One called for her to sit in front of a large dressing table mirror revealing her top half, clad only in a sexy black bra, and at other times in various seductive poses. She had a great figure and would do more than justice to what was required – but this was the early Sixties and fashion had become fetish. There had to be something more than pseudo pin-up shots as in the Fifties. I gather, amongst others, it was Patrick Macnee who suggested the current cult was leather. Together with the wardrobe department, Miss Blackman found herself clad head to foot in black leather fighting suits. She was required to dish out her own brand of rough justice, so she had to learn judo. After a hectic day rehearsing, she would dash to the gym and be taught the rudiments of the art, then home to concentrate on the next day's lines. She could already ride a motorbike, having been trained by the police as a motorcycle dispatch rider during the war. She could also handle a gun and could knock men flying.

Location work was practically unknown, so all the action sequences had to be done in the confines of the studio. Honor did a lot of her own stunts under the supervision of stuntmen such as Jackie Pallo. Towards the end of one episode, the action called for her to fight a grave-digger (Pallo) and knock him out so that he fell backwards into one of his own graves. Unfortunately, her punch actually connected with Pallo's chin and he fell awkwardly, hitting his head on the side of the grave. In those days it was extremely costly to stop the videotape before the commercial break. So, despite the thought she might have badly injured him – or worse, killed him – her professionalism made her persevere for those last few interminable remaining minutes. Directly it ended, she rushed over almost in tears but was extremely relieved to see he was only slightly concussed and grinning at her as he was helped to his feet.

A Busy World

Apart from casting *The Avengers*, I was assigned the last few episodes of a war time series about the French Resistance. Half an hour in length, they would only be shown in the ABC TV area based in Manchester. It was a rather tired story, particularly as Michael Mills, the producer/director, was better known for his comedy programmes, not this rather turgid dramatic subject. Luckily there were not many extra characters to cast but it all took up time when I needed to concentrate on *The Avengers*.

The first re-jigged *Avengers* episodes were now in the can and reports were good. The story editors, Richard Bates and John Bryce, had done a good job. Richard was the son of H. E. Bates, the distinguished author, so his pedigree was certain and he went on to story-edit and produce many successful series.

The relationship on screen between Macnee and Blackman sparkled and all seemed to be going well. Then scripts of a new children's serial landed on my desk to be produced by Guy Verney. He was a pleasant man, slightly withdrawn in personality but perfectly professional in his work. The only problem was he preferred working with actors he knew very well and they

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became known as the Guy Verney Repertory Company. He would never take a chance on someone new. Consequently, some actors were squeezed into roles which could have been cast more imaginatively. This made my job easier, but a casting director wants to breathe life into characters by presenting fresh new actors to the director or casting actors in a totally different way.

Directors did not always have the time to visit theatres on a regular basis, and some never went, so it was up to the casting director to go out to the Reps., drama schools, and everywhere where an actor could be seen working. This had to be done after the day's work was over. The extent of my range for an evening was Birmingham in the Midlands, Bristol in the West, Worthing in the South and Ipswich to the East. This gave me the opportunity to return the same night and be back at my desk next morning. Such distances were not possible every week and I had to restrict my visits to theatres nearer to London such as Farnham, Leatherhead, Windsor or Watford. I gradually built up a knowledge of actors' work, their range, their presence, estimating their likely fee in television terms and, what was equally important, those actors not to use: they were not necessarily being a 'ham' but went through the motions, lacked vital energy and the presence that marked out a good actor from a dull one. The rare commodity that defines a great actor is that you should be totally unaware he or she is acting, you are drawn in by the portrayal of the character making you hang on to each word, forgetting for a time you are not in a theatre but instead in a cherry orchard or a garret in Paris – occasions so rare but wonderful when witnessed.

I don't remember the title of Guy Verney's series but it featured Gerald Flood and had a sci-fi background. I had almost finished the French Resistance series but the work load was increasing. The budget for *The Avengers* was barely adequate and I approached Michael Chapman, who worked with George Brightwell and was in charge of budgets. Michael had been in the Navy and bore the semblance of a Naval Officer with the appropriate stature and strict discipline. He was in his thirties, very smart and spoke in a clipped resonant tone which commanded attention. His reply to my plea for an increase in the *Avengers* budget was a definite negative. Even in 1962, a little over £1000 an episode hardly covered the artistes' fees, rehearsal money, insurance, overtime and background artistes. He was quite adamant and I just had to plough ahead but it wasn't easy.



Honor Blackman as Cathy Gale in The Avengers.

Contretemps

Dodo concentrated solely on casting the Sunday night plays under the title of 'Armchair Theatre'. First seen in 1956, they were successful under the first producer Dennis Vance but they really began to make their mark under Sydney Newman. He focussed on contemporary themes and 'real' issues, assembling top dramatic talents of the day, including such directors as Philip Saville, George More O'Ferrall and William T. Kotcheff, story editors Irene Shubik and Peter Luke, plus young playwrights Harold Pinter, Alun Owen, Robert Muller and Ray Rigby. Dodo was given the task of casting quality performers to match these talents; they included Flora Robson, Joan Greenwood, Billie Whitelaw, Donald Pleasance, Tom Courtenay and Susannah York. Many think this influential drama anthology has never been surpassed.

One 'Armchair Theatre' was a version of John Wyndham's "Dumb Martian" which was shown as a 'taster' for a new science-fiction series titled *Out Of This World.* I was to cast the series with Leonard White once again producing. The story editor, John Bryce, had shown great promise in the drama department and was promoted to take over from Leonard to produce *The Avengers* with Leonard keeping a quiet eye on him if he needed any help.

So I had *The Avengers*, the children's serial and now *Out Of This World* on my plate. I was delighted at the prospect but the pressure was certainly piling on.

(To be continued)

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HISTORY PROJECT FILM TELEVISION THEATRE RADIO

THE BRITISH ENTERTAINMENT HISTORY PROJECT

KEN HOLT
(1930 – 2018)

Interviewer: Sean Holmes
Cameraman: Andrew Dawson
Date: 13 June 2013
Production Media: Video
Duration: 109 mins



Interview copyright © The British Entertainment History Project

Ken Holt began a career as a technician at Denham film laboratories in 1944. Much of the interview, conducted at his home in Stratford-upon-Avon, is devoted to his years in the labs where he describes special effects and the workings of the sensitometric and optical departments. After seven years at Denham, Ken moved to the labs at MGM Studios, headed by Tom Howard. Subsequently, he became *Thunderbirds* studio manager in Slough. Ken completed his career in commercial television as assistant head of film at ATV in Birmingham.

The following is edited extracts. To see and hear the interview, go on the internet and search "BEHP" and then "Ken Holt".

The lure of Denham

I'm the youngest of five children. We were just a normal working class family living in Uxbridge. I had two brothers and two sisters. My father was in the services, but he was a cabinet maker. My eldest brother took after him, went into being a carpenter, as well [as doing] his part for the war years and he finished up as a model maker at Pinewood.

We were just kids, having a normal childhood apart from the War. We had three cinemas in Uxbridge: the Odeon, Regal and the Savoy, and we used to go to them regularly. The programme was changed on Sunday: we'd often go on a Sunday. And on Saturday mornings we had the children's programme – we'd go there to watch Flash Gordon, Tarzan, etc.

I really, really enjoyed the cinema and got quite engrossed with it. Knowing that Denham was down the road, I was very keen to see if I could get into Denham Studios. I did mention that when I got to the age of 14, was going to leave, and someone from the school did make an approach for me. There were no vacancies at Denham Studios but I could go for an interview at the laboratory. I did not know what a laboratory was. I said, I don't want to be a chemist, I wouldn't be bright enough – I just want to be in film.

I saw that the laboratory was adjacent to the studio – almost the same building, it looked like. I went for the interview, and I got the job as a junior clerk in an office. So, I thought, at least I'm here. And I loved it. I was fortunate. I did say to the woman who was running the office at the time that I'd love to go downstairs. She did put a word in for me. I got involved with everything and saw how things happen: what they did there was have the dupes come over and process the prints to go into cinemas. And to me, that was, Wow, that's great, so I always used to be downstairs in the dark rooms and watching the printing and developing.

There was a guy named George Barker, who was the boss. I had an interview and he's "I've got just a spot for you." I would have gone anywhere. And [it] turned out to be the godsend in my career in the way it put me into the sensitometric c control department, which controlled all the developing machines, all the baths.

The War was a difficult time. We had to be so careful of processing something which they'd shot all day, I'm talking about original negative. The positive was okay – if it stopped, it stopped. But the original: once you started processing, these guys would want to work right the way through any raid, and there was air raids every night. But when it got really critical, you'd lose as many people as possible, let them go, but keep maybe just two guys, one loading and one taking off the other end.

That was the beginning of us also having women in the developing rooms because that never happened [before] – whether it was because

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it was dark rooms, I don't know. We found that that really worked. But that was the War. Fortunately, we got through it.

Pinewood has been used for something else during the War but quickly went back over. There was quite a big involvement with Denham because we were right next door to it. I often used to go down in the lunch hour on to the studio floor and see how it was done, what was going on – which we were allowed to.

I was there five years: '44 to '51. A couple of my mates had gone somewhere else and we were having a drink one night. One of them said, "Would you be interested in leaving Denham? They just started up a little laboratory at MGM and we need someone who does sensitometry." So I go over there for my interview. And I meet a guy, a chap called Thomas Howard, who is the big governor. And I find out that he's a special effects genius. He's got an Oscar for doing *Blithe Spirit*. And MGM had given him permission to build this lab in the studio.

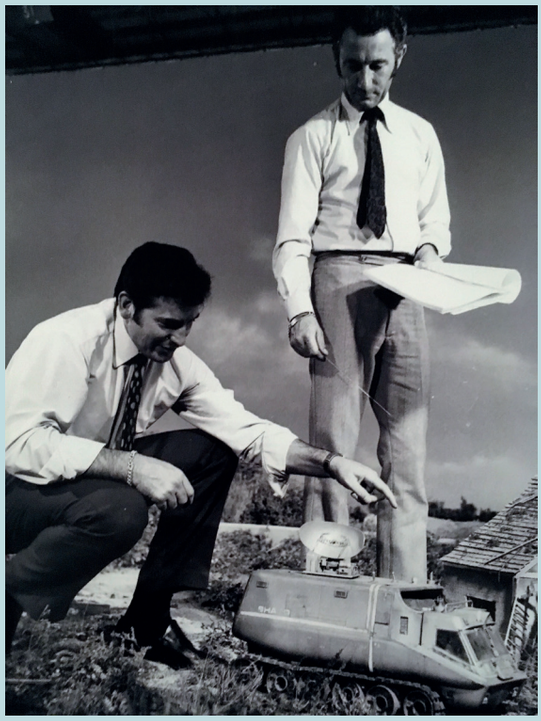
The lab was in the studio and there's this stage and there's all these chippies and carpenters and everything about, and then you see some extras walking along, all made up. This is what I want! And I really took to it instantly.

There were four of us and that meant that we had to make up the baths ourselves. I knew what they used to put in, but I'd never actually done it. And all they done was some opticals because Tommy Howard was into opticals. He took me down onto the studio floor, showed me the BP [back projection] projectors and really showed me everything. He said, "We've never processed anything straight from the floor yet, only opticals, but with people like yourself in and more equipment we're ordering, we're going to get the first film to process. I think it was called *The Hour of the Thirteen*. [*The Hour of Thirteen*, 1952 release, director Harold French, DoP Guy Green, with Peter Lawford and Dawn Addams.] I can't remember much about it. But that was our first movie. I used to go on the floor to see how they were getting on [and] brought the first roll back. We didn't have to wait for night, see – we had our machines all ready, we've done all these tests. We had our first day's rushes. We took the first reel off the floor, put that through… perfect gamma and everything else like that. We never looked back. And we processed *The Hour of the 13* and did the first prints of it. We didn't do the release – we can't do hundreds. But we did the first three copies – the premiere in Leicester Square was one of them and we went to see that up there.

I didn't know then that Eastman Color was rearing its head. At the moment, we only did the black and white stuff and the opticals. Technicolor obviously did the Technicolor stuff. And we got involved with Technicolor, because we do the BP plates and shoot the actual BP

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With Derek Meddings at Century 21 studio, Slough. (This and subsequent pictures courtesy of Betty Holt and Deborah Holt.)

on the floor: that is, the film cameras here, a screen in the middle and the projector at the back. And we did travelling mattes on lots of things, *Yellow Rolls Royce*, and some of these big epics, *633 Squadron*, stuff like that. And without travelling matte, it wouldn't have happened – this stuff in the aircraft cockpits, which is easy now, [with] CGI [computer generated imagery], but then it wasn't. You had a model of a cockpit on the floor, which had a wobble and that used to be horrendous – some of it would go off the blue screen. We'd do all the masters for that.

When we doing it for Technicolor, we had to do three masters, blue, green and red separations – nightmare! – but it was a learning curve, wasn't it? And then the miracle happened and Eastman Color arrived. And Tom Howard had a great bonhomie with Kodak's – the Kodak guys used to come over and we used to do a lot of tests for them as a lab because they knew they could come in and we would do it right away – not have to wait for a neg bath to come up. We had a lot to do with that – the anti-halation backing – so Tom Howard decided that he's going to have an Eastman Color developing machine. The people who were going to make it were Arnold and Richter – that's the Arri works in Munich – and he said, "Well, you'll have to go over there, Ken, and see how they do it." Three of us went to Munich to see 'em doing it. We bought one and we went over to colour, big stuff.

ACTT

I had to be a member. And I think they did a lot of good because I think it's an industry where unthinkingly you can be abused timewise. You get creative talent – directors, producers, etc. – who get so carried away with what they are doing that they throw things like common sense out of the window. People are going to love this, aren't they, but I think it needed a controlling factor. And the union did that. Because people *were* taken advantage of, yeah, and it happens now. So I think it was a very good thing. I think they got a bit too strong. This is only my opinion. Like the ETU, I think they started to spoil things by over manning things and having to have two or three guys to watch something which everyone knew one guy could watch. And, of course, this created financial troubles and cost us work, I think. But that's only my opinion.

The contact man

I was a contact man. I got to know all the cameramen very, very well. If they were doing a location and we were going to process it, I'd go out to the locations, staying with the DoP [to learn what was] the effect he's after, and that helps when you get back to the dyeing process – grading it – give him what he wants.

Would I like to be a cameraman? I preferred to be more technical. To be a cameraman, you're single minded. And I knew I'd be right at the bottom – clapper boy again, and come all the way through and would I make it? Because you've got a loader and you got a focus puller and you got an operator and you got your lighting cameraman. What irritates me now when these people come out of film school and say, "I'm going to be a cameraman" and they don't come up from the bottom unfortunately. And we suffer for that.

If a cameraman had a really serious problem, he'd call a contact man, who would sometimes take a grader with him and then go on the studio floor and discuss it with the cameraman while he's shooting it. This really worked. And often, a good man was the editor to go in and liaise with the DoP. And very, very helpful, because he knew when he's looking at the rushes what that man was after and he could tell him instantly, "That worked", or "It's a shade within tolerance, but you've got to look at it."

An editor will make a really good director. And in my humble opinion, an editor makes a better director than a cameraman – even top men like Jack Cardiff, who you wouldn't better as a cameraman, wasn't really a great success as a director.

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At centre, with members of the Film Unit at ATV in the 1980s.

Moving on

We thought we were the cat's whiskers with special effects. We were doing *633 Squadron* and we were taking up three months to do miniatures and stuff like that. And in came Mr. Kubrick, *2001.* And he needed the whole of the special effects department. It was fantastic for the studios because at last we'd got something with a lot of meat on it.

I was getting itchy feet then. I thought, I've been here fourteen years and I want to move on, really. So I had an opportunity and I grabbed it

I spoke to Bob Dibley at Ranks. He said, "We have a laboratory in Acton and I want you to be my chemist." I left MGM and started there as a chemist. But I wasn't there long. Someone said, "Do you watch *Thunderbirds*?" I said, "Avidly. I compare your special effects with what we do." And the guy in charge of the special effects, Derek Meddings – we're old schoolmates. I knew he'd gone into our industry and he was a creative guy.

I had the opportunity to go there and see it. There's this studio full of lads and lasses and they were churning out these model shots. There were two stages, on the Slough trading estate, and they had their tank there and they had a wind machine. I said, "Is this 16mm?" "No, it's all 35mm." So I said, "Why all the light?" And they said, "High speed, because it's miniature." And they said, Am I interested in joining them? So I went and had an interview. And they said, "Yeah, we'd like you to start." I said, "What am I going to be?" And they didn't know what to call me. So I was the studio manager – but production as well – which is right up my street. And I loved it though… and Derek was there.

I was really responsible for the running of the studio, and the equipment (make sure that all the crews had equipment), personnel, and health and safety, basically. And anything else we could think of – we made it up as we went along. It was in two groups, special effects and the puppets. There was more office work to do than I'd ever done before, which I was not that keen on. But there are a good bunch: Gerry [Anderson], John Reed, and Reg Hill and Sylvia Anderson, they ran it, but they were all hands on. John was a cameraman, Reg was an art director and Sylvia was costume and everything. They really were involved. I was very impressed with it all. We were [at] the end of the *Thunderbirds*, really, and we were going to start up *Captain Scarlet*. So that was coming off the ground, so I was involved from right at the beginning.

We had six crews: four special effects crews, and two puppet crews. We had to handle the puppet crews because of the unions as if it was a live action, which I thought was a bit unfair – so, in other words, you had to have a loader, focus, operator cameraman, you know. We had editors, post production. We created union positions. There'd never been a special effects assistant. We made one of those. There'd never been in a lip sync operator. So we developed that post which was quite fun.

We did *Captain Scarlet*, we did *Joe 90.* We went into live action. We did *Doppelganger* which was a live action movie which we shot half in Pinewood and all the effects we did at Slough because we couldn't shoot sound at Slough.

Then we did *UFO,* which was pretty well all live action. They needed a studio because Pinewood was busy, so I suggested to Gerry a studio called MGM. And he said, "Of course, you know it slightly." So I went back as a customer, got a good deal over there.

Lew Grade called Gerry one day and he told him, "Sorry, Gerry, but I'm going to have to wrap Slough because the generation of kids changes every ten years and they'll all come back on *Stingray* and your early *Thunderbirds, s*o there isn't an audience." Also, I think the standard of our puppet stuff had gone down a bit. You know, we had *Secret Service* and I don't think it really worked. We mixed it with live action.

It all came to an end, unfortunately, and I went back, freelancing. And I get a phone call from Gerry. He's thinking about doing something – am I free? And I said, "Hang on. I'll have a look. Yes." And he said, "I'm thinking of it being like a puppet [version of] *Hawaii Five-0.*" And it was in Malta,

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Working on Inspector Morse *with the latest mobile phone in the early 1990s, at left with Kevin Whately.*

so he said, "I'd like you to come on a recce with me and Harry Oates", who's one of our good old cameramen, a special effects man at Slough. So we go over to Malta. We have a look around and decide, "Yeah, this would be fine." But we were going to start filming in January. Sunny Malta. Wet Malta! We had to finish up at their Rock Studios and their blue backing is a thing God handles – it is called the sky. Their tank goes along and the backcloth is the sky. It's quite incredible. So we did a lot of stuff in there. So it's like being back at Slough as far as I'm concerned.

We had two puppets but in a live action – they'd been miniaturised from outer space. So we shot them all round as they were with miniature stuff, miniaturised cars and stuff. We had a nightmare in Medina, a city in Malta on the cliff – beautiful place, but it's up on a rock almost. And we had the guys from Slough with radio-controlled models stuff, which over here ran perfectly. We're getting into Medina and there's loads and loads of radio waves, which we never knew about. Gerry would say "Action." And the guy would roll his model, radio-controlled, and it went straight into a wall. That was a write-off. So we lost a model on the first day in Medina. What with that and the weather, we had to go back into the studio to do a lot, which was galling. Anyway, it all came together. United Artists funded this and wanted Gerry to do it. It was a good little pilot. We get back, setting everything up, and Gerry gets a phone call to say that the guy handling it at United Artists had been kicked out and they'd cleared his desk and this had gone with it. So we only did a pilot.

John Seaborne

And I get a call. It was Seaborne Enterprises. And he said, "John [Seaborne] would like to see you. What are you doing now?" And I said, "Resting", as one does. And he offered me a position: production supervisor. And it was great. It was in Maidenhead and I was living in Booker. We were doing opera and I was up to here in culture. The only thing is we used Universal labs, not Denham. So I got to know the guys there and got on very well with them, especially when they knew I used to work at Denham. We were the first documentary crew to go to Taiwan, free China. We went to India, Peru, all sorts of things. So that was five successful years.

ATV

I took a job at ATV … as assistant head of film, running the Film Unit who were doing all the drama and documentaries, and also the news – because news was shot on film. And we have little Rank labs in Birmingham because it's on reversal. Good, zap into there, get it back quickly. I really loved film, got on with it. We were doing everything on film. I'd gone over to 16mm with John Seaborne. That's how I got the job really – I knew the equipment, knew the people, knew about documentaries, I knew about travelling abroad.

And we were a very successful film unit. We're travelling all over the world with people like [John] Pilger and stuff like that. But coming in was electronic and the equipment started to be good. It was called ENG – electronic news gathering. And we went over to it quite smoothly, really. We had electronic boys and our boys who were cameraman soon quickly picked up how to shoot ENG as well. So it transformed pretty easily. But we were still doing the main drama and main documentaries on film for a very long time because there wasn't enough electronic cameras to do the quality we wanted for a good drama.

Freelancing

I thoroughly enjoyed freelancing as a location manager. I seemed to get more involved as a location manager than I did sometimes when I was in the thick of it elsewhere. I enjoyed *Inspector Morse.* They did it as if they were shooting as a feature film, being on 35mm. The techniques I saw was exactly as same as if I'd been out with an MGM location.

I did not shoot or work on anything to do with all video until I did a TV series called *Judge John Deed* and that is in the 2000s. I was quite impressed - by then, we had interchangeable lenses instead of just a zoom. So it was almost the real thing.



At left, after retiring, with director Alan Perry and focus puller Robin McDonald on a Century 21 Slough studio panel. (Photo credit unclear.)

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2022: All The Veterans

Every three years or so, we publish a list, name only, of all the current members of the British Cinema and Television Veterans, including widows/widowers and honorary members. Lists were previously published in issue 164, Autumn 2019, and issue 152, Autumn 2016.

The purpose of this list is not just to provide a printed record of our membership for posterity but to let you know who your fellow Veterans are, to ask you to encourage others who are not listed but should be one of us to join up, and to enable you to renew contact with other Veterans through our office – we will forward letters or emails to the address we have on file (but cannot, of course, guarantee a response).

Please advise the office of any omissions, misspellings or other errors.

With thanks to Tim Potter for his help in converting the data file.

Roberta Aarons
Syed Abbas
Bassem Abdallah
George Achilleas
Michael Adam
Charmian Adams
Jason Adams
Mark Adams
Remi Adefarasin
Michael Adelman
Ray Adnett
Barry Agar
Joe Ahearne
Graham Aikman
Betty Ainslie
George Akers
Andrew Albrecht
Muriel Alcock
Denyse Alexander
Wilma Algar
John Allaker
David Allan
Angela Allen
Pamela Allen
Chris Allies
James Alloway
Christopher Anderson
Geoff Andrew
Raymond Andrew
David Andrews
Derek Andrews
Jack Andrews
Mervyn Andrews
Rhiannon Andrews
David Appleby
Terence Apsey
Cate Arbeid
Michael Armstrong
Moira Armstrong
Tony Arnell
Brian Ash
Carola Ash
Brad Ashton
Olga Astley-Jones
Peter Atkins
David Atkinson
Mick Audsley
Tony Auguste
Barry Austin
Susan Avery
Geoff Axtell MBKS
Linda Ayton
Pearl Ayton

Barbara Back
Albert Bailey
Gemma Bailey
Jeanne Bailey
Michael Bailey
Clifford Baillie
Derek Bain
Sheila Bain
Brenda Baird
John Baker
Stephen Baker
Thaliasingham Balendra
Raymond Ball
Terence Bamber
Karin Bamborough
Shelly Bancroft
Albert Barber
Gillian Barber
Henry Barber
Montague Barber
Trevor Barber
Kenneth Barley
Michael Barnes
Michaela Barnes
Margaret Baron
Libbie Barr
Helen Barrett
William Barringer
Doris Bartholomew
Carolyn Bartlett
Brenda Barton
Phyllis Barton MBE
Sean Barton
Michael Bass
Nigel Bate
Shirley Bateman
William Bates
Simon Baxter
Joy Bayley
David Baynham
Ashley Beale
Orin Beaton
Roger Beck
Roy Beck
James Beeby
William Beenham
David Beesley
David Beevers
Ann Belcher
Penelope Bell
Tom Bell
Jill Bennett
Peter Bennett
Peter D. Bennett
Roy Benson
Bee Benton
Joan Berfield
Carol Bernard
Paul Berriff OBE
Jeannete Berry
John Bevan
Christine Beveridge
Kevin Bibby
Robert Bierman
George Biggs
George Bijum
William Billett
Trevor Billing
Alan Bilyard
Neil Binney
Angela Bird
Christopher Bird
Colin Birnie
Edmund Bishop
Jannette Crystal Black
Glenda Blackaller
Les Blair
Darrol Blake
Michael Blakemore
Brian Blamey
Pat Blanchard
Richard Blanshard
Norman Blight
Gordon Blockley
David Boardman
John Bolton
Pamela Bonicos-Smithers
Eunice Bornasty
Dennis Bosher
Joan Boultbee
Jill Bowe
Linda Bowen
Sheena Boyd
Alan Boyle
Marilyse Morgan Boyle
Bob Boyton
Brian Brackley
Richard Bradford
Gillian Braithwaite-Exley
Peter Brand
Alexandra Branson
Arthur Branson
Robert Bremner
Jim Brennan
Tina Brennan
Christopher Brett
Michael Brewster
Graham Briault
Bob Bridges
Vera Brimson
John Brinley
Ken Brinsley BSC
Roland Brinton
Lucy Bristow
Beverly Brittan
Judy Britten
Martin Bromfield
Alan Brooks
Jeffrey Broom
Hugh Brown
Jamie Brown
Julie Brown
Leonard Brown
Leslie Brown
Michael Brown
Max Browne
Robert Brownhill
Kevin Brownlow
Christopher Bruce
John Bruce
Anne Brunker
Moira Brunskill
Richard Brunskill
Elaine Brunton
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Only Cinema Satisfies

Alan McCann reflects on his move from projection to management

It's bad enough watching a cinema being demolished. When it is the one that you were working in until it closed just a few weeks previously, it hurts. The ABC had been the premier – and largest – cinema in Hastings but was now suffering the indignity of cranes, pneumatic drills and bulldozers ripping it apart. Those wonderful decorative details, once softly lit, were now exposed to harsh daylight by the demolition team. A pile of cinema seats was burning in the centre of the site.

I used to think a company would only close a cinema because the patrons stopped going. Hastings was sold to Sainsbury's in 1971 for its site value, disregarding its profitability – indicating in my mind that EMI's ABC was not the ABC of old. The closure left Hastings and St. Leonards with just three cinemas: the Classic, the Curzon in St. Leonards, and the Orion just three hundred yards down the road from the ABC. (Another, the Penguin Cinema, opened in August 1974 hoping to benefit from the ABC closure, but only lasted for twenty-nine months).

The Classic now had the choice of the releases and, with only two screens, couldn't show all of them. The Orion, a small independent cinema, had struggled for years, first as a second run house, then resorting to X-certificate "Continental" films which were enough to keep it going. Now, having seen the total number of cinema seats in the town halved at a stroke, the Orion felt it had an opportunity to move into mainstream product. Although a full-time cinema, it had been staffed on a shoestring; in the projection room was the chief (another Eric) whom I had known for many years, and a crew of part-time staff. I joined Eric as the co-chief. From the projection room of my new employment, I could see the demolition of the ABC taking place just down the road, drawing some comfort from the fact that the works were taking much longer and were not as easy as had been anticipated.

I arrived at the Orion with a dowry. Surplus materials from the previous projection store that our old chief at the ABC had accumulated for a rainy day. Polish, cloth and dusters, gelatins for the footlights, light bulbs, paint and many other goodies unknown to the impoverished Orion. Once I was established, improvements were made. For instance, in the foyer and up the main stairs and in the upper foyer all the wall light brackets were formed in wrought iron spelling the name Orion, with two 'candle' effect lamps and small conical shades top and bottom. These shades were burnt black from many years of use, some of the white 'candles' were missing and some of the fittings weren't working. Over the space of a few weeks we removed individual fittings, rewired them, re-sprayed them gold and, using a local glass instrument company, had them make some new 'candles' from the same size glass tube cut to length and painted white. I asked the manager about buying some new shades – 25p each at Woolworths. He said to buy one a week. These we saved in the box until the manager asked Eric why he was getting 25p receipts every week but there were no shades! Eric showed him the shades, explaining that we were waiting until all the fittings were complete before replacing the old ones. For the next few months Eric and I worked together doing numerous jobs around the cinema. We repainted the toilets (in ABC colours), we replaced the tabs cable as it hadn't worked for over a year, a job that needed two of us.

The cinema was looking better, projection and sound was good – but, despite our combined efforts, it was clear that attendances were not noticeably improving. First run product was not appearing as much as expected, probably because



ABC Hastings, circa 1971. The demolition of two shops and houses adjacent was for Sainsbury's, the first indication of the fate of the cinema, although ABC told the local newspaper that there were "no plans" for the ABC Hastings - which, with hindsight, was very true. (CTA Archive/photograph by Raymond Dolling.)

Alan McCann's reminiscences began in issue 173.

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Orion Hastings, above the shops. (Entrance, courtesy of Alan McCann. Wide view, from CTA Archive/Raymond Webb.)

of the higher rentals, and the cinema still appeared to be running on a shoestring. Accepting that the box wage bill had more than doubled with no great increase in box-office, it became increasingly clear that sooner or later something would break and maybe I should jump before being pushed.

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It was time for a change in employment, and it wasn't going to be to another cinema. In the next two years, I had four different jobs – none of them offering the same satisfaction as the one I had left behind. In those times, if a job was not satisfactory you didn't leave until you found an alternative. I had applied for and been accepted as a North Sea gas conversion fitter, but an opportunity to be a trainee service station manager seemed a better idea as it was local. It took one week to realise that it wasn't, and ascertaining that the gas fitter position was still available, one week to work my notice. After a five-week intensive training course on gas conversion methods it was out on the road, let loose on the cookers and other appliances around the South East. The pay was very good but the job was soul destroying.

Toward the end, British Gas workers came out on strike. For a few weeks we were allocated areas for "call-backs". It was obvious that many of the conversions by others had been poorly carried out – indeed, sometimes it was easier to do another full conversion that try to repair the faults. Those who took a pride in their work didn't want to be tarred with the same brush as these fitters and so I sought a change again.

A local electrical company was part of a consortium carrying out works for Classic Cinemas, predominantly twinning and tripling existing cinemas. It wanted people with cinema experience to work alongside an approved electrician for these works. I was one of two, the other being Eric, my ex-chief at the ABC Hastings. On my first week, working with Jim, my new workmate, we were given the task of splitting the shared electrical supply at the Classic Sittingbourne, in order to give separate metering between the cinema and the bingo hall below. This is where I first met Classic's electrical consultant, Fred Watts, a really knowledgeable cinema man, and a great person to boot. Little did I know that our paths would cross years later. With my electrical partner, Jim, I worked on numerous conversions including the Granada Slough, the Classic Redditch and the Classic Quinton.

They were good times, but we were soon aware of Classic's requirement to get as much for as little costs as they could – part of this being the requirement to keep the cinema operating all through the conversion. This often meant using the circle only, projecting onto a temporary screen hung just above the front of the balcony edge. However, the means of support – often string tied to a wood batten – meant that there were folds and ripples across the screen rather than a tight surface, and these folds became very apparent when the camera panned an image across the screen. To me, this was awful – but not for me to comment. Other than that, it was an enjoyable experience, helping create three cinemas from one. Unfortunately, it didn't last for long. Classic slowed down and the work dried up. Jim and

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I started looking for alternative employment. It seemed better seeking another position before being made redundant, with time to consider choices.

An advertisement for a juke box service engineer locally based appeared to be an attractive option, and a successful interview led to driving around in a van with a two-way radio across South East England visiting mainly pubs, repairing juke boxes and fruit machines. Once again, as with the gas conversion, it was well paid but with long hours and late evenings. It wasn't a bad job but after a while came the realisation that it was changing. Original machines that were electrical/mechanical, operated by numerous relays and contactors with multicoloured wiring looms, were being updated with printed circuit boards. Repairs to these meant removing one set of boards and replacing them – and the slow realisation that it didn't require skilled personnel to do this. Time to start looking again!

Mention of these alternative occupations may be of little interest but they show that in two years there wasn't one job that made me really happy. It was a time when there was always alternatives, especially for those without formal qualifications. However, there were things learned from all of them, some more useful than others, and one especially – the experience of working on cinema conversions – did come back to help in later years.

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An end to this list of stopgap positions came from a telephone call from Keith, my senior projectionist friend from the Cinema De Luxe of years before. He was working at the Curzon Cinema Bexhill-on-Sea as manager/projectionist. They had started part-time bingo, three nights a week, increasing his managerial duties, so they needed a projectionist, and he wondered if I would be interested.

I had to meet Eric Rhodes who owned Bexhill, along with the Curzons at Eastbourne, St. Leonards and Folkestone. I was wary, having heard of Mr. Rhodes' reputation from his days of heading Classic and running a tight ship. I knew that the high wages I had been earning would not be achievable in a cinema, especially one in a small seaside town. However, I knew how much I needed to support my family and this was what I asked for. I also wanted to break away from the usual practice of add-ons such as Sunday pay. I wanted a set sum fifty-two weeks a year. I would cover any hours during the normal working week, but with time and a half for working a day off and double time for the second day. To my surprise, after some argument over my expectations, he agreed.

And so I was back in the box, on my own for most of the time, with a part-time projectionist in the evenings. The bingo continued for Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday – the first two became my days off with the third for maintenance and 'making up' films. There were already plans to subdivide the cinema with bingo continuing in the stalls and a smaller cinema in the circle. This began a few months later, with the same consortium that I had worked with previously. My first request was for a timber frame for a temporary screen, which was rejected by the site agent as "no one else had needed one". A phone call to Mr. Rhodes meant that the frame appeared as requested. The screen was unlaced from its frame on the stage, stapled tightly to the new frame and suspended just in front of the circle balustrade. Shining a light from the projector to determine the size, I painted a mask with black emulsion to retain a sharp edge to the image. This maintained a sense of presentation, including a pair of temporary coloured floods to illuminate it during intervals, until the works were complete.

Following on from Classic principles, the decorative inverted dome ceiling wasn't going to be painted 'for economy', but would have four Furze profile spotlights to shine down to hide the ceiling with the bright beams. I rang Fred Watts, who was still advising on the electrical works, and suggested that the small 'reflector spot' fittings that we had used on earlier jobs might be more practical, especially from an economical point of view. This earned a visit from Mr. Rhodes who wanted to know why I wanted to change things. I explained that the lamp life of the Furze fittings was quite short, especially positioned pointing straight down, and the replacements lamps were costly. The reflector spots would achieve the same result and the fittings and lamps were much cheaper to maintain. The fittings were changed and kudos earned!

For the next two years I was happy doing what I enjoyed. Bexhill was a small town on the South Coast and even the new single screen, seating 260, struggled at times – without the now full-time bingo in the former stalls, it would have closed. In summer beach weather, the film would be laced up and run without light or sound just to keep to the timetable; a phone call from the cashier to say that a patron was entering would mean a quick panic to make it look as if it had been running normally.

As at many struggling cinemas, I would sometimes be asked to insert an intermission into a print. However, watching Albert Finney in *Murder On The Orient Express* through from the end of part three and part four I could not see an appropriate place to cut it. I told the manager, recently promoted from the Curzon Folkestone, that I couldn't do it. That evening he mentioned this to Mr. Rhodes who said to cut it after one hour. I didn't.

On the following day, Mr. Rhodes phoned and asked about the intermission. I had told the manager that I wanted a letter of instruction to do what was asked, to which the response was, "Do it – or else!" The next day, came the sound of heavy footsteps on the stone stairs to the box… Mr. Rhodes! After a rant about who did I work for, who paid my wages, he wanted to know why I wouldn't do it. I told him that I had inserted intermissions previously, and would probably do so again, but I would not do it to this print as there wasn't a suitable place for it. It would spoil the film. "OK, chief," he said, and that was it! I realise that to many people working in film production this mutilation of a feature film will cause feelings of horror – hands thrown in the air! But, in the real world of small cinemas, it could mean the difference between profit or loss, and many small independents were doing the same.

As before, showing the film was only one part of the job. There was looking after the boiler, for instance, and maintenance around the building. Mr. Rhodes had a reputation of being a hard businessman – one that he encouraged, no doubt – but he was not the ogre that he professed to



Curzon Bexhill. Exterior in October 1976. (CTA Archive/Tony Moss Collection.)

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Classic Hastings, after twinning, with original entrance. (Courtesy of Alan McCann.)

be. I liked him and the next two years working for him and then for Gerald, his son, were happy times.

However, the start of the final chapter of my working life was about to begin. Eric, the ex-chief from my ABC days, had been helping out at the two-screen Classic Hastings though long past his retirement. Numerous chiefs had come and gone from there. The Classic had gained a reputation for poor standards of projection. I had, in fact, complained on a number of occasions – the manager, Mr. Cragg, said, "You've complained before!" My response was that every time I paid for a ticket and the presentation was bad, I would complain. But I assured him not to worry as I would never use his cinema again, and for years did not!

Eric visited me at Bexhill and offered me the position of chief at the Classic. I said I didn't want to work there and that Mr. Cragg wouldn't have me in any case because of our history. Eric assured me that he would, and asked me to go to meet Mr. Cragg. I was happy at Bexhill and certainly hadn't been considering a move, but I went for an interview. Not wanting to change, I asked for my same working conditions, something that I thought a circuit cinema wouldn't agree to. Also I asked for a substantial increase over what I was getting at Bexhill. Mr. Cragg objected to this, saying that it was more than he earned. I did tell him that he should get an increase as well.

The following day at Bexhill, there was a call from a Mr. Hickey who said he was the area director for Classic Cinemas and asked me when would I be able to start at Hastings. I explained that I had been turned down as I was asking for too much in wages. He replied that he would pay what I was asking for and when could I start?

So it was that two weeks later I was chief at the Classic Hastings. On the first day I learned of the urgency in getting the position filled. Eric was running the cinema for seven days a week with just two trainee projectionists – and was going for three weeks holiday to Italy on the Friday! From the start I was committed to four weeks with no day off, with Saturdays having a children's matinee, a full day programme and a late night show, then back early on the Sunday mornings for making up.

After the third week, Mr. Cragg mentioned that Brian Yeoman, the deputy managing director, was going to visit. I was told that he would likely comment on the substantial overtime I was getting. I remembered a tale the Eric had told me of an incident he had with ABC, so I said to Mr. Cragg that, if he did, I would like to talk to him.

Mr. Yeoman's opening gambit was, of course, how pleased he was that I had taken the position – and other complimentary remarks. However, he continued, I must understand that the cinema could not sustain the amount of overtime I was getting. I told him if he wished I would reduce the overtime to more acceptable levels. On being asked how, I replied, just tell me which two days did he want to close the cinema! He was not happy, saying that I was being facetious, but I explained how and why I was earning so much. I was the only projectionist, the two trainees were a help but couldn't run on their own, and there were no relief projectionists available. I was doing all the extra shows as well abnormal performances, and I also pointed out that, overall, the total projection wages were still the equivalent of a fully staffed box. I also mentioned that Mr. Cragg was quite proud of the fact that at the last company conference he had been told that Hastings was the third most profitable cinema on the Classic circuit. Overtime was not mentioned again. This was my introduction to Classic Cinemas, and with it a realisation that maybe I hadn't asked for enough!

The cleanliness of the box and the equipment left a lot to be desired, and one of the priorities was to improve this. One of the trainee projectionists was willing to accept this but the second trainee said that he was there to show films, not clean. He would not accept that if I was prepared to clean up the box, he should also. I advised him that he was wrong for the job and should consider something else. After a few weeks he left.

Things gradually improved. Eric returned off holiday and, to make up for the loss of one trainee, Pete Burton joined us – the old ABC team, but with roles slightly reversed. The relationship with Mr. Cragg improved to first name terms and for the next few years life was good. Another trainee joined us so we were now four, running the two separate boxes but without single manning equipment. Everything was running to high standards.

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Classic with the original second screen from May 1971, using the rear stalls and opened as a 16mm cinema but soon converted to 35mm. (Courtesy of Alan McCann.)

One day I was asked to go to the office on a theatre visit by Mr. Hickey. He explained that Mr. Cragg had been managing Hastings for over forty years and was now past retiring age. They needed someone to take over and he suggested it could be me! He thought I would make a good manager, I had the right attitude. It was something I had never ever contemplated.

I rejected the offer. Why should I be a manager when we were working a shift pattern in the box that gave me more time off than the manager. Also, with losing the occasional overtime I would be worse off financially. No – definitely a non-starter! However, the pressure continued. Eventually I was forced into taking it by the offer of more money. My new position was house manager while learning the job, with Mr. Cragg remaining as manager. Within weeks, though, it became very evident that he didn't want to retire and he didn't want to release control.

After about eight months of doing precious little, I knew I had made the wrong decision. The relationship with Mr. Cragg was frosty, attempts to get him to show me things were rebuffed. I was basically covering for his days off. I couldn't go back into projection as I had given the chief's position to Pete. I had two weeks' holiday due and determined to find another job when I returned.

On the evening before returning to work, I went into the office to pick up my keys to find the Mr. Cragg had been suffering from ulcers while I was away. He was going on sick leave for a month, but before I went in the following day, I was instructed to go over to Brighton to see Mr. Hickey. I was told how disappointed he was in me, how I had made no attempt to take over, how he thought I was better than that. It was all from Mr. Cragg's point of view. When he had finished, I told him that I hadn't been allowed to take over, that Mr. Cragg wouldn't show me the administration, wouldn't let me get involved in publicity, I wasn't allowed to make any decisions on staffing or running. In short, Mr. Cragg didn't want to give up his job, and Mr. Hickey hadn't made it any easier. In all the time I had supposedly been managing, not once had he come to see me, to see how I was doing – only coming on theatre visits when Mr. Cragg was on duty. I asked Mr. Hickey where was his support for me? I said that while Mr. Cragg was off sick I would show him that I could run the cinema, and that when Mr. Cragg came back he could resume his job and I would leave.

I felt confident that I could run the cinema. There was a part-time bookkeeping assistant who very quickly introduced me to the stock sheets, the weekly business sheets, the banking, time sheets and how to do the weekly publicity.

It was nearer six weeks before Mr. Cragg returned and in that time I had taken over everything. Mr. Hickey came over to see me. I asked if I had proved I was capable. He said yes, and asked what was I going to do. I said that if he wanted me to stay, Mr. Cragg could come back as my part-time relief manager but I would be the manager. And for the next six years that was that. It was an unhappy period that again reinforced my opinion of working for Classic Cinemas.

Although Hastings was profitable, it had been neglected over the years and was looking tired. Originally an old theatre that opened in 1882 with 1,600 seats, the Gaiety had been gutted, losing the stalls, circle and upper circle along with all the ornate plasterwork. It was reformed as a cinema with just stalls and circle and still with 1,600 seats. In 1971 Classic formed a second screen by building a wall across the rear stalls, which were stepped. This was a 165-seat cinema, meaning that screen one came down to 770 seats, with circle and front stalls, still one of the largest on the circuit. It was one of, if not *the* oldest cinema on the circuit and, although the auditorium was quite modern in appearance, everything else showed its age. It was a very old structure, pointing and woodwork neglected; the roof was original as was the drainage, and now and again it would remind you of this – something that head office were happy to be left ignorance of.

But change was coming. Lord Grade's ACC acquired Classic Cinemas; area directors disappeared and in came regional controllers. I was fortunate to have Brian Gauntlett as my new controller. The seats in the auditorium were old and of a special design – and they were wearing out! Mr. Gauntlett told me about a recently closed cinema in Portsmouth and authorised a hire van. With the trainee projectionist, I drove down and we stripped out two hundred seats, backs and standards. Employing a part-time handyman, all the seats from Classic Two were changed to these 'new' seats, with thirty plus spares giving us 165 spares for Classic One. The replacement seats were gold material, so once installed Classic Two was redecorated from a dark red to a deep gold; the result making it appear less small. Mr. Gauntlett was happy to let me continue using the handyman to repaint other parts of the cinema. The only part deemed too large was Classic One. With Brian's support and encouragement, my position of manager felt more productive, and the next few years were happier, With the choice of all product, and only two screens, business could be very good.

I had not been managing for long when, under the new managing director, Bernard Kingham, there was a one day conference in London. Part of the presentation included a talk on theatre maintenance –and how if you reported a small fault early enough, it could be rectified long before it became dangerous or expensive. When it came to questions, I stood up and listed all the main problems at Hastings, all of which had been reported. The MD replied that they were aware of the problems but that Hastings was not profitable enough to warrant major expenditure – however, there would be some improvements soon. I stood up again and told him that Hastings had been the third most profitable cinema on the circuit. They had spent money on Tunbridge Wells and Haymarket, which were the two above my cinema, but had taken money out of Hastings and put none back in. I asked him to come to Hastings to see why the profits were static, and finished by saying I was glad it wasn't my name on the cinema licence. There was silence, then a suggestion to move on.

Needless to say, nothing appeared in the way of improvements apart from our continued local efforts. One of these was the redecoration of the circle foyer, which included a recessed barrel ceiling and a decorative moulded frieze which had been painted a pale green, along with the walls, the doors and the skirtings – all very bland. This was redecorated in shades of blue and white, the frieze and floral mouldings picked out, and blue wallpaper with big white flowers for the walls. This was then carried on down the main staircase.

ACC'c ownership wasn't long lasting, and

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The temporary cinema in Classic Hastings was formed in the circle before demolition of the stalls started. (Courtesy of Alan McCann.)



they sold the circuit at a loss to Cannon. All we knew about our new owners was that they were a couple of Israeli cousins, Menahem Golan and Yoram Globus, who owned cinemas in Israel and a film studio in America. David Pratt, who had been Classic's booking director, became the new MD and brought Yoram Globus to Hastings as he knew that it could make more profit. I was asked to show Yoram around the cinema. He could see how run down it was. The carpet between the rows of seats had worn threadbare; many areas hadn't yet been redecorated; flaking plasterwork showed where the water came in. I spared him nothing and when we re-joined the others, he remarked that in Israel his worst cinema was a palace compared to Hastings – but, he said, "You will get a new cinema."

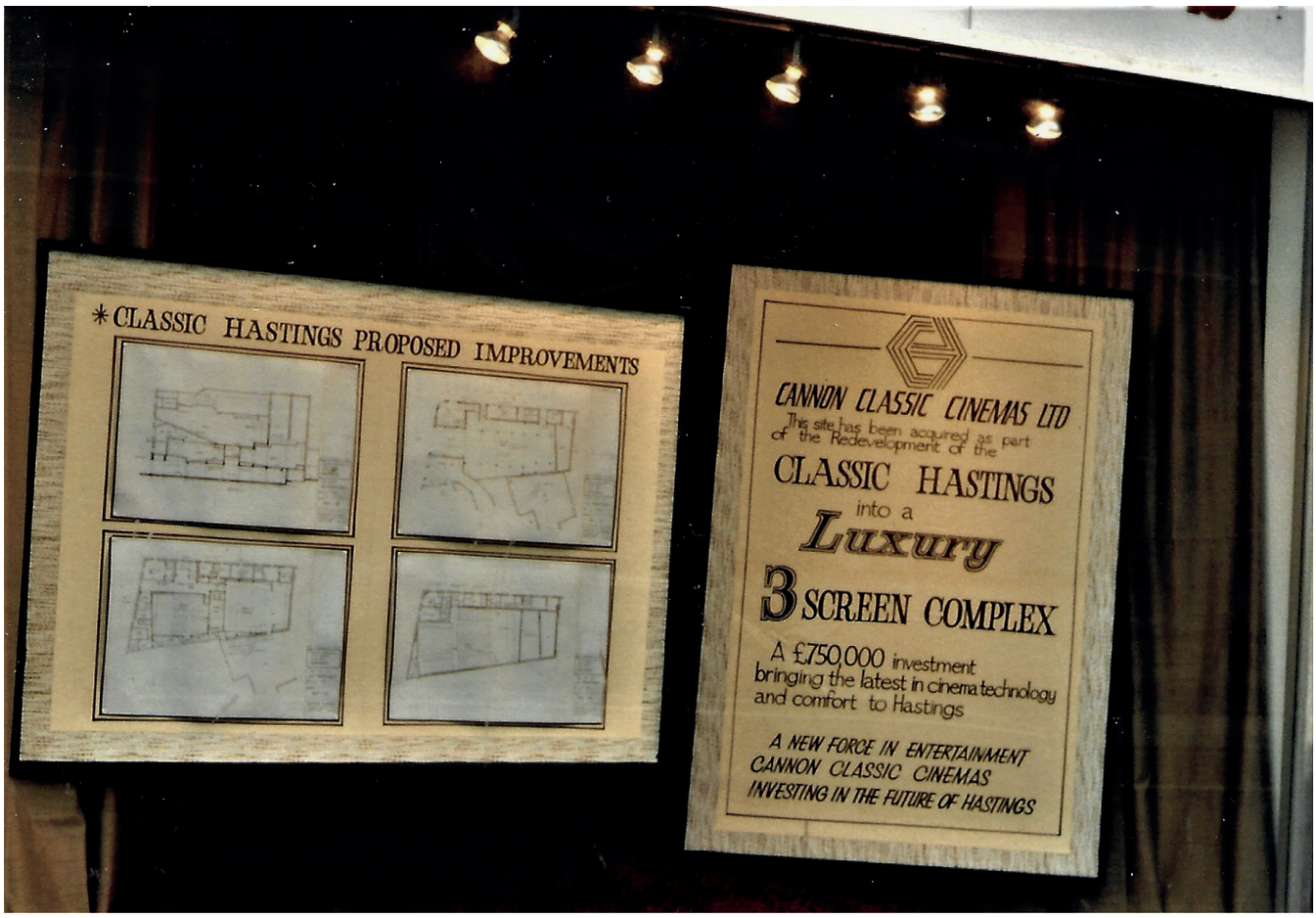
I was praised for the efforts we had made to improve things but, commenting on the blue décor, he asked why I had painted it blue when there was a red carpet. I replied that I wanted some blue carpet! Within weeks, Yoram sent down an Israeli architect to draw up a scheme and at the first Cannon Cinema conference, in Jersey, the plans were unveiled. It was six screens on two levels across the existing auditorium, each with approximately two hundred seats. The layout looked good; the new projection boxes were relocated to where the old dressing rooms were, on the side, and they would have been perfect; but it was the scenic lift on the front of the building and the rooftop restaurant that helped push the budget up to £3 million.

After the session ended, I went to have a closer look and was joined by Barry Jenkins, the technical director. I had met Barry previously when installing signage made by his company Electroneon many years before, but he didn't remember me. When he asked what I thought, I replied that the scenic lift would not survive the salt air that was driven in by the winter gales and the rooftop restaurant would be dive bombed by the seagulls. I didn't think that we could repay the investment, but I loved the cinema layout.

As an aside, managers were invited to ask questions of Golan and Globus, and one question from a manager was that, if Cannon were filming in the UK, would there be opportunities for local publicity, to which the answer was, of course, yes. I took the chance to say that they should consider filming in Hastings. It was full of history, and it was rumoured that William the Conqueror, while waiting to fight Harold at the Battle of Hastings, had spent the night at the Classic.

Tragically, David Pratt passed away a few months later, and his place was taken by Barry Jenkins. He did reiterate the company's commitment to upgrade the cinema. So, during the following years, at conferences and meetings, I would continually labour the point about the

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Display of Cannon's proposal for a three-screen complex in the window of an adjacent shop acquired for cinema use. (Courtesy of Alan McCann.)

poor state of Hastings. In the meantime, things were changing for the better under Cannon. Brian Gauntlett retired, sadly, but was replaced by David Beevers, a blunt Yorkshire man. He was quite encouraging and seemed happy with the way that Hastings was running.

Finally, I was beginning to see the plus side of management, that it could be enjoyable. I began to think that I was the manager, and not the projectionist doing a manager's job. It was the little things that made a difference. Many of the staff had been there for years and accepted that I was now happy to be running the cinema. I liked to stand by the cash desk to see in the last performance and, whenever possible, again at the end of the show. On the children's matinees I would be in the foyer as parents arrived, getting into conversations with them about forthcoming films, and then later, seeing them in the queue for a film and taking pleasure in going across to talk to them.

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Time passed. I was still waiting for the promised improvements when a circular from head office arrived, advertising the position of trainee regional controller in the northern region. David advised me to apply for it. I said I didn't think I would be suitable as I didn't understand the requirement of "management by exception". He replied that it was me – I did the job, he left me alone. I duly sent in an application, which prompted a phone call from Barry Jenkins. He said he thought I was going to be at Hastings until the new works were complete. I, of course replied that I'd been told this so many times that I didn't believe it would happen. A little later I was told that I was unsuccessful in getting an interview. One day I was told to expect a visit from Dowton and Hurst – London architects. They were coming to survey the whole building with a view to the design of three new cinemas, a new entrance on the corner in an adjoining property that Classic had bought, and a retail unit taking up the ground floor level.

After their visit, I took a call from Fred Watts, our electrical consultant. Now he had recently sent out a letter to all cinemas saying that under no circumstances should projectionists undertake any electrical works in their cinemas. (This was in response to Local Authority inspections that had found illegal cable installations.) Part of the new cinema design included the upper levels of the adjoining property, which had been empty for years and were infested with pigeons, both alive and dead, plus years of accumulated bird droppings. Rentokil were coming in to clear all this but there was no power in the building. Fred asked whether Pete and I could run a temporary supply from the projection room if he sent down all the materials. I had to tell him that we couldn't do it. As he knew me from my contracting days, he said, Of course I could. I replied that, unfortunately, someone from head office had sent a letter forbidding such work. Expletives followed until he saw the joke – and we did the work.

After the design drawings were complete and approved, permissions granted and builders appointed, the works were going to take eight months and we were going to use the circle as a temporary screen. (The whole of the stalls floor, lower foyer and stage area were to be completely removed.) True to his word, Barry said he wanted me to be involved during all the works. When we had the preliminary meeting prior to the work starting, I asked for a temporary floor to be extended from the circle balustrade, and a wall to be dropped from the ceiling, giving us separation from the rest of the site, and from all the dirt and dust.

In the first week the builders formed the separation floor with scaffolding and boards. During one night Pete and I dismantled the existing screen frame and rebuilt it on the new floor. The following day, with the help of the builders, we moved the stage speakers up, running a new feed from the box. Then the builders formed the separating wall with plasterboard. We reinstated the masking to the new smaller image, but unfortunately it was not motorised. We had paid a visit to a closed cinema at Hythe and 'acquired' tabs and drapes which were installed in the temporary cinema – again not motorised but as stage dressing, with dimming stage floods.

The end result was a mini auditorium seating just under two hundred which would maintain the cinema's presence in the town for the next eight months. The intention was to run one performance every weekday evening, and three performances on Saturday and Sunday. Eric finally took retirement as there weren't enough hours in projection. Pete busied himself with jobs like temporary lighting. Finally, I and Hastings were going to get the cinema we deserved. What could go wrong? V

(To be continued)

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NEWS FROM HISTORY PROJECT

FILM TELEVISION THEATRE RADIO

BRITISH ENTERTAINMENT HISTORY PROJECT

(Formerly BECTU History Project)

WWW.HISTORYPROJECT.ORG.UK

In my last article for THE VETERAN, I mentioned that the British Entertainment History Project was about to move to new premises from the BECTU headquarters in Clapham, south London, which has been the home for our archive recordings since August 2002.

We've spent the last couple of months boxing up our precious archive of over 800 interviews with the men and women who have worked in the film, television, theatre and radio industries, ready for the move. We managed to fill 50 boxes with tapes, paperwork, books, recording equipment and artifacts. It's only in the last couple of weeks that we have, after much searching, found a suitable home for our collection. It's in Twickenham in south west London - only a stone's throw from the famous film studios at St. Margaret's.

I therefore thought it appropriate to take a look at some of the History Project interviews with some of the men and women who have worked at Twickenham Studios over the years since the site on an old skating rink was acquired by Dr. Ralph Jupp 110 years ago. In 1923 he formed The London Film Company to produce his first film - *The House of Temperley*, directed by Harold Shaw.

In one of our earliest recordings we have an interview with **Bill Girdlestone**, born in 1899, who started working in the film labs at Twickenham in 1915. One of his first jobs was to print rushes for D. W. Griffith's *Hearts Of The World*, which was shot in England and on the Western Front in France in 1917:

"It was there I taught myself grading, because every scene they shot was put into little rolls and I had to test every scene for Ernie Palmer (the American cameraman) and develop it for three minutes, take it to him and he'd mark the printing light and I'd print the foley [?]. That was my job. After I'd been doing this for some time I thought 'I wonder if we might make this a bit easier.' So I got these negatives out and put them on the bench and I compared some with others and when I saw two or three that looked alike, I just tested one and put the other two alongside with it and found that I was doing it right. So I taught myself the rudiments of grading to start with."

You can find our interview with Bill Girdlestone at:

http://historyproject.org.uk/interview/bill-girdlestone

When financial problems hit the studio in the 1920s it was leased to various film companies until in 1928 Julius Hagen founded Twickenham Film Studios Limited and became chairman and managing director. Our interview with cinematographer **Ray Elton** has the following recollection of meeting Hagen for the first time in 1933:

"I was given an appointment to see Julius Hagen at Twickenham Film Studios, which I found with some difficulty, not being a Londoner. And to my amazement I was asked immediately to go up and see Mr. Hagen. So I knocked at his door and walked into the traditional film mogul's office - he was sitting about half a mile down the carpet smoking an enormous cigar - and he eventually looked up and said, 'Who are you?' and I said, 'I am **Ray Elton**, I have an appointment with you, sir.' Whereupon he said, "You're not the Elton I'm expecting to see, but now you're here what do you want?' I said, 'I want terribly to work in your lovely studio' or words to that effect. It was quite obvious I didn't know anything - I was only a boy - so he said, 'All right, start Monday, thirty shillings a week. Goodbye.'"

http://historyproject.org.uk/interview/ray-elton

Gerry Humphreys joined Twickenham Film Studios as a sound recordist in 1964.

He was a prolific sound technician, and eventually became Head of Twickenham Film Studios in 1996. Humphreys' 250 film and tv credits include many directed by Richard Attenborough. Nominated for five BAFTAs, Gerry won twice for *A Bridge Too Far* (1977) and *Cry Freedom* (1978). Other credits include *Blade Runner* (1982), *Gandhi* (1982) and *Hamlet* (1990). He was nominated for two Oscars - *A Chorus Line* (1985) and *Gandhi*.

"If I could only dub for one person ever, start all over again , it would be Dickie Attenborough. He is fantastic. He gives you time, total freedom and guidance. He is great at man management. I remember the very first picture I dubbed for him as a director was *Oh What a Lovely War*. You dub the reel, go back to the front, turn the lights down and just project it on the screen and then, when the lights go up, you say to the editor, the director and anyone else who is important in the room 'How was it for you?' And Dickie was sitting behind me and I said, 'All right for you?' 'Oh, all right for me, darling. That is perfect for me. If it is all right for you, it is all right for me.' So now you think, 'Oy yoy yoy.' Because there is a slight imperfection that only you have heard, because you know you didn't do your hand movement just the way you wanted something, and you would take that secret to your grave. No one else even knows it is there. It is only you that has got it and if it goes through, it certainly ain't going to spoil the soundtrack. But now he throws the responsibility back onto you. He says, 'If it is all right for you, it is all right for me.' So I say, 'I think I would just like to go again - I think I can do that fade in a little bit better.'

You can hear our interview with Gerry at:

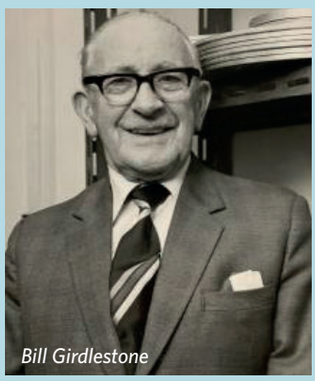
http://historyproject.org.uk/interview/gerry-humphreys

The British Entertainment History's website has many more interviews with people who have worked at Twickenham Studios over the years. Check them out on our website.

Mike Dick
Chair



Gerry Humphreys at work



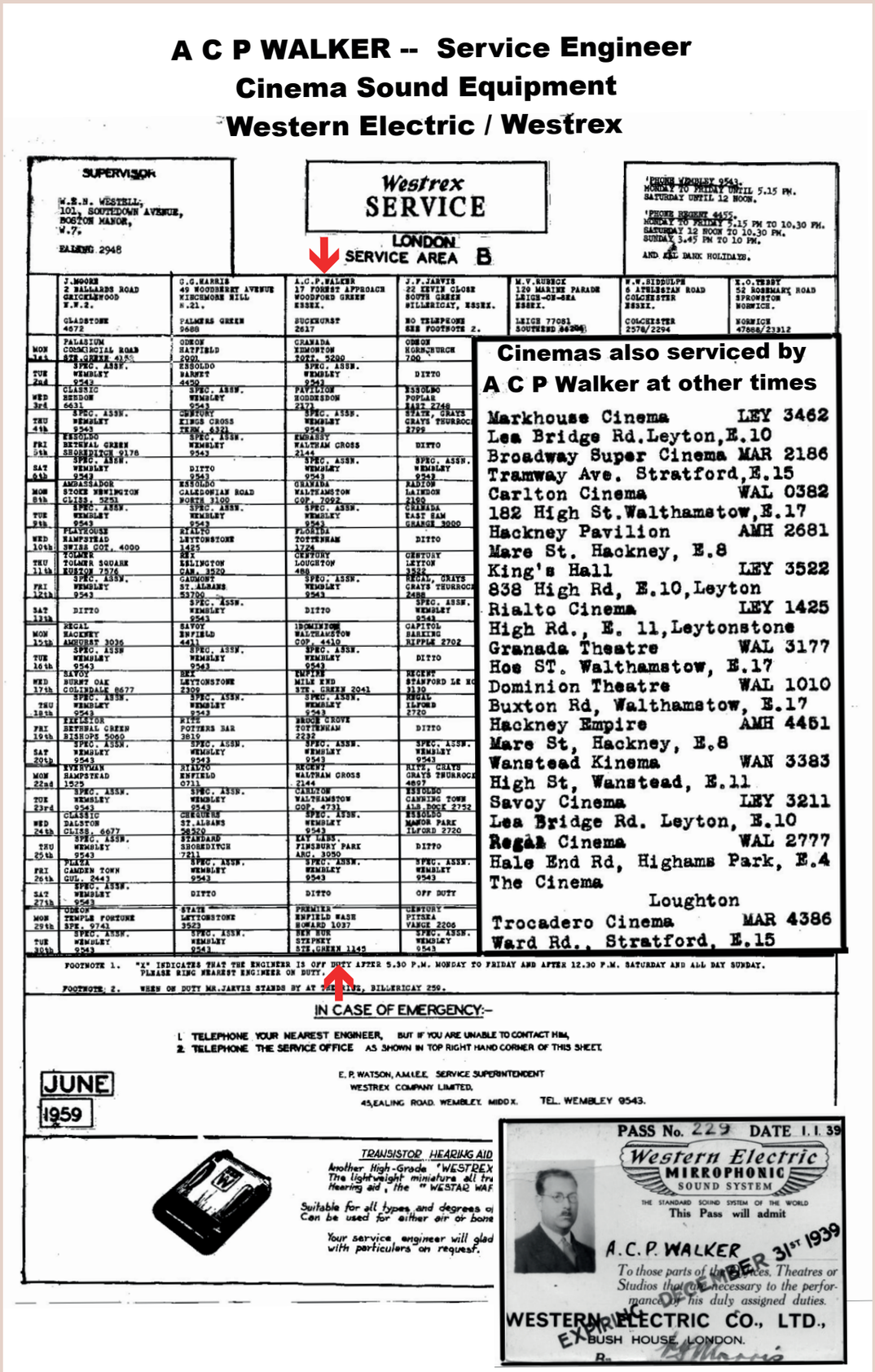
Bill Girdlestone



Mike Dick

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Letters can be sent by post to **Editor – The Veteran, 13 Tennyson Court, Paddockhall Road, Haywards Heath RH16 1EZ** *or by email to* **bctv.veterans@btopenworld.com**



A C P WALKER -- Service Engineer
Cinema Sound Equipment
Western Electric / Westrex

SUPERVISOR

W.E.S. WESTELL,
101, SOUTHDOWN AVENUE,
BOSTON MANOR,
W.7.

EALING 2948

Westrex
SERVICE

LONDON
SERVICE AREA B

'PHONE WEMBLEY 9543.
MONDAY TO FRIDAY UNTIL 5.15 PM.
SATURDAY UNTIL 12 NOON.

'PHONE REGENT 4455.
MONDAY TO FRIDAY 5.15 PM TO 10.30 PM.
SATURDAY 12 NOON TO 10.30 PM.
SUNDAY 3.45 PM TO 10 PM.

AND ALL BANK HOLIDAYS.

	J.MOORE 2 BALLARDS ROAD GOLDERS GREEN N.W.2. GLADSTONE 4672	G.G.HARRIS 49 WOODBERRY AVENUE HIGHGATE HILL N.21. PALMERS GREEN 9688	A.C.P.WALKER 17 FOREST APPROACH WOODFORD GREEN ESSEX. BUCKHURST 2617	J.F.JARVIS 22 KEVIN CLOSE SOUTH GREEN BILLERICAY, ESSEX. NO TELEPHONE SEE FOOTNOTE 2.	M.V.RUBECK 120 MARINE PARADE LEIGH-ON-SEA ESSEX. LEIGH 77081 SOUTHEND 66294	W.W.HIDDULPH 6 ATHELSTAN ROAD COLCHESTER ESSEX. COLCHESTER 2576/2294	E.O.TERRY 52 ROSEMARY ROAD SPROWSTON NORWICH. NORWICH 47888/23812
MON 14th	PALLADIUM COMMERCIAL ROAD STE.GREEN 4185	ODEON HATFIELD 2001	GRANADA KENSINGTON WOOL. 5200	ODEON NORBURY CHURCH 700			
TUE 15th	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9542	ESSOLDO BARNET 4450	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	DITTO			
WED 16th	CLASSIC HENDON 6631	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	PAVILION HODDESDON 2171	ESSOLDO POPLAR EAST 2748			
THU 17th	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	CENTURY KINGS CROSS TERM. 6321	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	STATE, GRAYS GRAYS THURROCK 2795			
FRI 18th	ESSOLDO BETHNAL GREEN SHOREDITCH 9176	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	EMBASSY WALTHAMSTOW 2144	DITTO			
SAT 19th	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	DITTO 9543	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543			
MON 21st	AMBASSADOR STOKE NEWINGTON CLISS. 5251	ESSOLDO CALEDONIAN ROAD NORTH 3100	GRANADA WALTHAMSTOW COP. 7092	RADION LAINDON 2100			
TUE 22nd	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	GRANADA EAST SAM GRANGE 3000			
WED 10th	PLAYHOUSE HAMPSTEAD SWISS COT. 4000	RIALTO LEYTONSTONE 1425	FLORIDA TOTTENHAM 1224	DITTO			
THU 11th	TOLMER TOLMER SQUARE EUSTON 7376	REX ISLINGTON CAN. 3520	CENTURY LOUGHTON 486	CENTURY LEYTON 3322			
FRI 12th	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	GAUMONT ST.ALBANS 53700	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	REGAL, GRAYS GRAYS THURROCK 2488			
SAT 13th	DITTO	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	DITTO	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543			
MON 15th	REGAL HACKNEY AMHURST 3036	SAVOY ENFIELD 4411	DOMINION WALTHAMSTOW COP. 4410	CAPITOL HARLING RIPPLE 2702			
TUE 16th	SPEC. ASSN WEMBLEY 9543	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	DITTO			
WED 17th	SAVOY BURNT OAK COLINDALE 8677	REX LEYTONSTONE 2309	EMPIRE MILE END STE. GREEN 2041	REGENT STANFORD LE H 3130			
THU 18th	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	REGAL ILFORD 2720			
FRI 19th	EMBASSY BETHNAL GREEN BISHOPS 5060	RITZ POTTERS BAR 3819	BRUCE GROVE TOTTENHAM 2232	DITTO			
SAT 20th	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543			
MON 22nd	EVERYMAN HAMPSTEAD 1525	RIALTO ENFIELD 0711	REGENT WALTHAM CROSS 2144	RITZ, GRAYS GRAYS THURROCK 4807			
TUE 23rd	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	CARLTON WALTHAMSTOW COP. 4731	ESSOLDO CANNING TOWN 418 DOCK 2752			
WED 24th	CLASSIC DALSTON CLISS. 6677	CHEQUERS ST.ALBANS 58320	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	ESSOLDO MANOR PARK ILFORD 2720			
THU 25th	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	STANDARD SHOREDITCH 7211	KAY LABS. FINSBURY PARK ARC. 3050	DITTO			
FRI 26th	PLAZA CAMDEN TOWN GUL. 2441	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543			
SAT 27th	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	DITTO	DITTO	OFF DUTY			
MON 29th	ODEON TEMPLE FORTUNE SPE. 9741	STATE LEYTONSTONE 3523	PREMIER ENFIELD WASH HOWARD 1037	CENTURY PITSEA VANGE 2206			
TUE 30th	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543	BEN HUR STEPNEY STE.GREEN 1145	SPEC. ASSN. WEMBLEY 9543			

Cinemas also serviced by A C P Walker at other times

Markhouse Cinema	LEY 3462
Lea Bridge Rd.Leyton,E.10	
Broadway Super Cinema	MAR 2186
Tramway Ave. Stratford,E.15	
Carlton Cinema	WAL 0382
182 High St.Walthamstow,E.17	
Hackney Pavilion	AMH 2681
Mare St. Hackney, E.8	
King's Hall	LEY 3522
838 High Rd, E.10,Leyton	
Rialto Cinema	LEY 1425
High Rd., E. 11,Leytonstone	
Granada Theatre	WAL 3177
Hoe ST. Walthamstow, E.17	
Dominion Theatre	WAL 1010
Buxton Rd, Walthamstow, E.17	
Hackney Empire	AMH 4451
Mare St, Hackney, E.8	
Wanstead Kinema	WAN 3383
High St, Wanstead, E.11	
Savoy Cinema	LEY 3211
Lea Bridge Rd. Leyton, E.10	
Regal Cinema	WAL 2777
Hale End Rd, Highams Park, E.4	
The Cinema	
Loughton	
Trocadero Cinema	MAR 4386
Ward Rd., Stratford, E.15	

FOOTNOTE 1. "X" INDICATES THAT THE ENGINEER IS OFF DUTY AFTER 5.30 P.M. MONDAY TO FRIDAY AND AFTER 12.30 P.M. SATURDAY AND ALL DAY SUNDAY. PLEASE RING NEAREST ENGINEER ON DUTY.

FOOTNOTE 2. WHEN ON DUTY MR.JARVIS STANDS BY AT THE FIVE, BILLERICAY 259.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY:-

1. TELEPHONE YOUR NEAREST ENGINEER, BUT IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO CONTACT HIM,
2. TELEPHONE THE SERVICE OFFICE AS SHOWN IN TOP RIGHT HAND CORNER OF THIS SHEET.

JUNE
1959

E. P. WATSON, A.M.I.E.E. SERVICE SUPERINTENDENT
WESTREX COMPANY LIMITED,
45, EALING ROAD, WEMBLEY, MIDDX. TEL. WEMBLEY 9543.

TRANSISTOR HEARING AID

Another High-Grade "WESTREX
The lightweight miniature all tr
Hearing aid, the "WESTAR WAF

Suitable for all types and degrees o
Can be used for either air or bone

Your service engineer will glad
with particulars on request.

01 Mar 2013

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A SOUND WAY OF LIFE

I am just hoping that a Veteran may have information on Mr. A. C. P. Walker. His son is still alive (at 85] and I would like to be able to pass onto him any further information on Westrex and its history, especially if it is about Mr. Walker himself. Does anyone recall Mr. Walker and the Westrex company?

TIM EVERETT
(ex-Warner Bros.)

This is an insight into the routine of a sound engineer employed by a leading supplier.

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THAT WAS THEN

50 YEARS AGO - DECEMBER 1972



Sophia Loren and Peter O'Toole in Man of La Mancha. *(United Artists.)*

Man of La Mancha has a royal premiere and run at the Dominion Tottenham Court Road after more than a year of *Fiddler on the Roof*. Another royal premiere launches *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* at the Odeon Marble Arch where huge attendances are seen in the evening as well as earlier shows.

Two highly successful revivals are Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* on Rank circuit holiday release and Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* at three London Classic cinemas.

The top ten box office draws of the year in British cinemas are (1) *Diamonds Are Forever*, (2) *The Godfather*, (3=) *Fiddler on the Roof/Bedknobs and Broomsticks*, (5) *Steptoe and Son*, (6) *The Devils*, (7) *The French Connection*, (8) *Nicholas and Alexandra*, (9) *Ryan's Daughter*, (10) *Dirty Harry*.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs office suggests cinemas might help celebrate Britain's entry into the Common Market by showing some European films in January. French, German and Italian films will qualify for British quota.

Fox Rank Distributors starts operations, combining the former distribution arms of the Rank Organisation and 20th Century-Fox.

The Odeon Cheltenham and ABC Gravesend re-open as triple cinemas. The Odeon has a licence to sell alcohol from a trolley in the two smaller screens. The ABC Warrington re-opens for cinema and bingo. A second screen opens at the Victoria Cambridge. The ABC Coatbridge closes for splitting between films and bingo.

Star opens a second complex in Manchester, Studios 6-9, in part of a new office block.

The Beacon Great Barr at Birmingham and West's in the Channel Islands close down.

Victor Saville is interviewed at a *Guardian* lecture at the National Film Theatre to accompany a season of his work.

Films in the studios include *The Hireling* at Bray; *A Doll's House* (also on Norway locations), *Dracula Is Dead and Well and Living in London* (to become *The Satanic Rites of Dracula*) and *The Legend of Hell House* at Elstree; *That'll Be The Day* at Lee International; *The House in Nightmare Park, The Belstone Fox, The Mackintosh Man, Phase IV* and *The Mutations* at Pinewood; *Tales That Witness Madness, The Homecoming* and *Luther* at Shepperton.

Films on location include *Live and Let Die, Don't Look Now* (Venice and Hertfordshire), *Dark Places* and *A Delicate Balance* (London).

Passing on: Janet Munro, actress; Dudley Foster, actor; Adrian Scott, producer and former blacklist refugee; Reg L. Kemp, exhibitor.

25 YEARS AGO - DECEMBER 1997

Top film draws of the month are (1) *Tomorrow Never Dies*, (2) *The Borrowers*, (3) *Spiceworld The Movie*, (4) *Alien Resurrection* and (5) *The Full Monty.* December's admissions total is the highest since 1970.

Admissions for the year at 139.2 million are the best since 1974 with a box office take of £512 million. There have been 2.1 visits per person (compared to 4.7 in the United States!) The top ten of the year are (1) *The Full Monty*, (2) *Men in Black*, (3) *The Lost World*, (4) *Bean*, (5) *Star Wars* (reissue), (6) *Batman and Robin*, (7) *Evita* (opened 1996), (8) *Ransom*, (9) *The English Patient* and (10) *Liar, Liar.*

Four multiplexes open: Odeon Wrexham (7 screens – 1,283 seats); ABC Mansfield (8 – 2,100); Odeon Kettering (8 – 1,464) and Cineworld Bristol (14 – 2,663).



Odeon returns to Kettering after 37 years. (Photograph by David Simpson.)

The three-screen Commodore Ryde, Isle of Wight, re-opens.

The single screen Odeon Swansea and four-screen ABC Enfield close.

Andreas Whittam-Smith replaces James Ferman as president of the British Board of Film Censors after Home Secretary Jack Straw vetoes its vice president and former film producer Lord (Michael) Birkett from taking the role.

Films in production include *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*; *Rogue Trader* (London, Singapore); *Woundings* (Isle of Man); *Love and Rage* (Isle of Man, Achill Island); *Sugar, Sugar* (London); *Understanding Jane* (London); *The Jolly Boys' Last Stand*; *Jackie* (Liverpool); *Final Cut*; *I Love You Love Me* (to become *Married 2 Malcolm*) (Liverpool, Blackpool); and *L. A. Without a Map* (Los Angeles, Bradford).

Passing on: Richard Vernon and Richard Warwick, actors; Vanda Greville (aka Wanda Vangen), actress; Peter Taylor, editor; Buxton Orr, composer.

We'd have liked to record the passing TV scene as well - but it requires a volunteer with some knowledge of industry affairs.

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Your Pictures

IN OUR HEARTS

In our last issue we recorded the passing of Peter Bayley MBE. On his way to the funeral, Nigel Wolland caught this tribute on the canopy of his long term place of work, the Phoenix Finchley, north London:



WIDOWS MEET

Maureen Comfort submitted this photograph of a widows' Ladies Lunch on 3 August, the latest of several intermittently held in south east England over the years. "All of our husbands were very well known in film production and we ladies like to get together when we can." Most of the ladies also worked in the industry.



Left to right: Jacqueline, first wife of Benny Lee; Anna, wife of John Lee; Renee, wife of Harry Benn; Diana, wife of Tony Spratling; Maureen, wife of John Comfort; Penny, second wife of Benny Lee; and Brenda, wife of Roy Baird and the hostess on this occasion.

FRONT COVER STORY

REGENT REDCAR





This new cinema, costing £9.6 million with an exterior in a brilliant revival art deco style, opened on 21st October, built for the Council at the coastal resort and former industrial town of Redcar, in a depressed area of north-east England eight miles away from Middlesbrough. It replaces the original Regent (below) on the same site which was deemed structural defective and demolished. The site is unusual in that the cinema faces inland, built out over the beach.

The Regent is operated by Merlin Cinemas and seats 200 in three screens. The top adult price for standard film is £8.50 (seniors £7.50) but Merlin Cinemas accept the Veterans' pass at the usual times. Don't all rush at once.



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New Members

These are the latest members to have been approved by the Executive Committee of the British Cinema and Television Veterans to join our ranks and they are warmly welcomed. The following short profiles have been compiled from details on application forms and supplementary research where necessary.

SARAH GOLDING, London N4
Her work as script editor and consultant includes *Kin* (1999), *Two Men Went to War* (2001), *American Cousins* (2002), *The Constant Gardener* (2004), *The Painted Veil* (2005), *The Edge of Love* (2007), *In Our Name* (2010), *Exit Marrakech* (2013), *Exodus: Gods and Kings* (2014), *Lady Macbeth* (2016), *Close* (2018), *Censor* (2020), *Tell No Lies* (2021) and *Kindling* and *Lies We Tell* (in production 2022). She has also been a senior tutor at the National Film and Television School (1998-2021) and visiting tutor at the Central School of Speech and Drama (2007-2020), etc**.**

GARY LEACH, Brighton
A projectionist at Mercury Theatres in Wardour Street (1968), he became an assistant film editor at Terence Donovan Productions (from 1970), film editor at RM EMI (1973), film editor and director of documentaries, cinema shorts and TV commercials at The Cutting Rooms (1976) and Creative Post Productions (1983), director of film documentaries and TV programmes at Harry Films (1986), and a director of TV commercials at SVC Productions (2001) and Fiona Films (2003), then a freelance from 2005. He is now retired.

CHRIS ROOTS, London SW4
After various running roles to get "a foot in the door", he joined Silverglade Associates as an assistant video editor in 1992. He worked as a freelance Avid offline editor (1995-98), then as a staff editor for Oasis Television and others, then freelancing from 2001, titles including *Gaudi's Barcelona* (2002), *Voices of the Great War* (2005), *Monster Moves* (2008), *Wartime Farm* (2012), *Spying on the Royals* (2016), *Secrets of the Bermuda Triangle* (2018), *Elvis: Are You Lonesome Tonight?* (2020), *Tutankhamun's Family Tree* and *David Baddiel: Jews Don't Count* (both 2022).

STEPHEN ROWLEY, Whitchurch
His career as a projectionist dates from relief work at the Tatton Gatley and Studio 1 Altrincham (1968/70), then at Studios 1 and 2 Manchester (1970/72), Temple Cheetham Hill (1972), New Oxford Manchester (1973/74), SKC cinemas in Germany (1974/76), ABC Deansgate Manchester (1976/79), Carlton Salford (1979/81), various as cinema engineer/relief, then Imperial War Museum (1985/6), Tatton Gatley (1986/88) and engineer/relief projectionist from 1988 until retirement in 2019.

MICK SOUTHWORTH, Twickenham
He joined ABC cinemas in 1973, rising from post boy to assistant booker, booker, then booking supervisor. He stayed for one year after Cannon took over, then became a theatrical salesman for Recorded Releasing in 1987 and head of sales at Virgin Distribution. He next set up the Feature Film Company and the UK theatrical distribution arm of Channel 4 as managing director. After that he was CEO of Content Film, Winchester Films and The Works. He was producer/executive producer on *First Reformed (2017), Escape from Pretoria* (2020), *The Card Counter* (2021) and others. He has been an industry advisor to the LFF and PACT as well as contributing to *Moviescope* magazine.

MICHAEL WILES, Glasgow
He has been in cinema management since 1988, starting as a trainee manager at Cannon Lime Street Liverpool. He was then assistant at Cannon Parkhead Glasgow from 1989, house manager at Cannon Chester (1991), ABC Sauchiehall Street Glasgow (1992), MGM Arcadian Centre Birmingham (1993) and back at MGM Parkhead Glasgow (1994). After secondments to Cineworld Trocadero London and Rochester, he was opening general manager for UGC West Indian Quay (1999), UGC Dundee (2000), UGC Edinburgh (2001), deputy general manager (2002) and general manager (2007) of UGC Renfrew Street Glasgow, then operations manager in 2018 for the Grosvenor, Perth IMAX and Scotsman Picturehouse. From 2021, he has been general manager of the Empire Clydebank.

In Memoriam

JOSEPH (CHUCK) DESPINS, London
1 July 1933 – 28 August 2022

JOHN FRANKAU, Newmarket
4 September 1925 – 12 March 2022

ROBERT FUNAI, Chelmsford
4 February 1937 - 27 June 2022

ERIC HARRISON, Wilmslow
3 September 1932 – 8 September 2022

ALEXANDER HOBLEY, London
24 August 1936 – 24 September 2022

ANTHONY KILMISTER OBE, Chorleywood
22 July 1931 - March 2022

JEANNE LA CHARD, London
29 January 1932 –

JULIA LISNEY, Leeds
– 27 August 2021

JOHN RENDALL, East Molesey
24 August 1939 – 2 September 2022

DONALD JOSEPH TERRETT, Penrith
– 8 June 2022

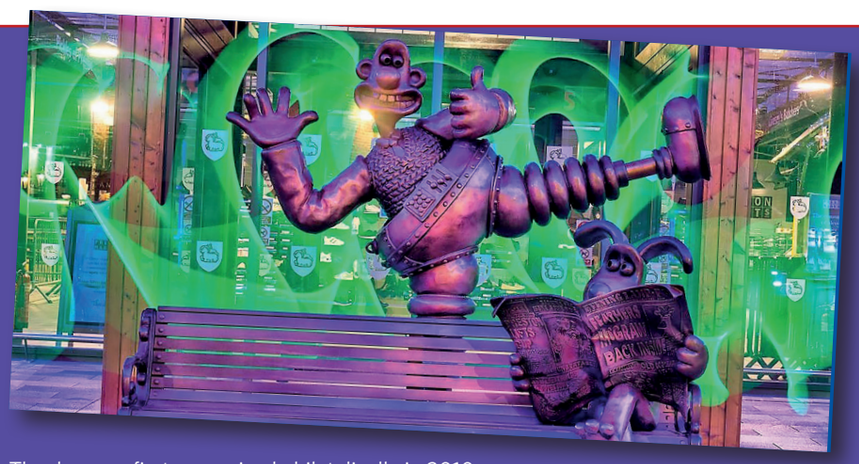
BACK COVER STORY

When next in Preston, pay a visit to Wallace and Gromit at the Market Hall. The bronze statue and bench paying tribute to the cheese-loving inventor and his pooch pal is based on their 1993 film *The Wrong Trousers*.

Why is it located in Lancashire when the Aardman Animations which makes the W&G films is in Bristol?

The pair's creator Nick Park was born in Preston's Brookfield Park in 1958 and grew up on the Greenlands Estate. He spent two summers in Bristol working at Aardman before moving there.

Image and information courtesy of Visit Preston.



And look for a new series of Royal Mail stamps just issued. The duo was first recognised philatelically in 2010. The new set of eight stamps offers two options each for first and second class as well as for £1.85 and £2.55 values. They recall The Wrong Trousers, A Matter of Loaf and Death, A Close Shave and A Grand Day Out.

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FILM + TV CHARITY

Newsletter

Winter 2022



Winter Appeal 2022

As the country faces a winter where many are just getting back on their feet, and where many more are worried about rising costs, continued inequality, or challenges to their mental health, the Charity is asking everyone who can to support their friends and colleagues by donating to its Winter Appeal today. The pressures caused by the cost-of-living crisis have only added to the effects of the pandemic and the challenges it presented. On top of that, continued skills shortages, amplified by the ongoing production boom, have conspired to make life incredibly tough for too many this winter.

Over the last 12 months, thousands of industry workers have accessed financial support that has enabled them to navigate some of the challenges they face. They have found somewhere to turn with their Bullying Advice Service, advising on next steps when experiencing bullying, harassment or discrimination, and they found practical advice, resources, and a friendly ear at the end of their 24/7 Film and TV Support Line. All of this is only possible thanks to the generosity of individuals and businesses from across the creative sector.

From organisations that are benefitting from the production boom and want to support their workforce, to those in the industry who know how vital our services are for themselves and for many of their colleagues – each and every donation helps to:

- Provide grants for people to meet urgent financial need or access opportunities
- Support individuals through difficult times, with their 24-hour Film and TV Support Line, counselling and therapy
- Develop new resources like their financial support tools
- Roll out further support for mental health and wellbeing
- Support grassroots activity such as their Community Grants
- Launch resources like the Whole Picture Toolkit for Mentally Healthy Productions to improve working practices across the industry

Times are tough, but that's why the Charity is asking anyone who can to make a donation to help them deliver and develop their support and services. Head to their website for details of how you can donate: https://filmtvcharity.org.uk/make-a-difference-this-winter/

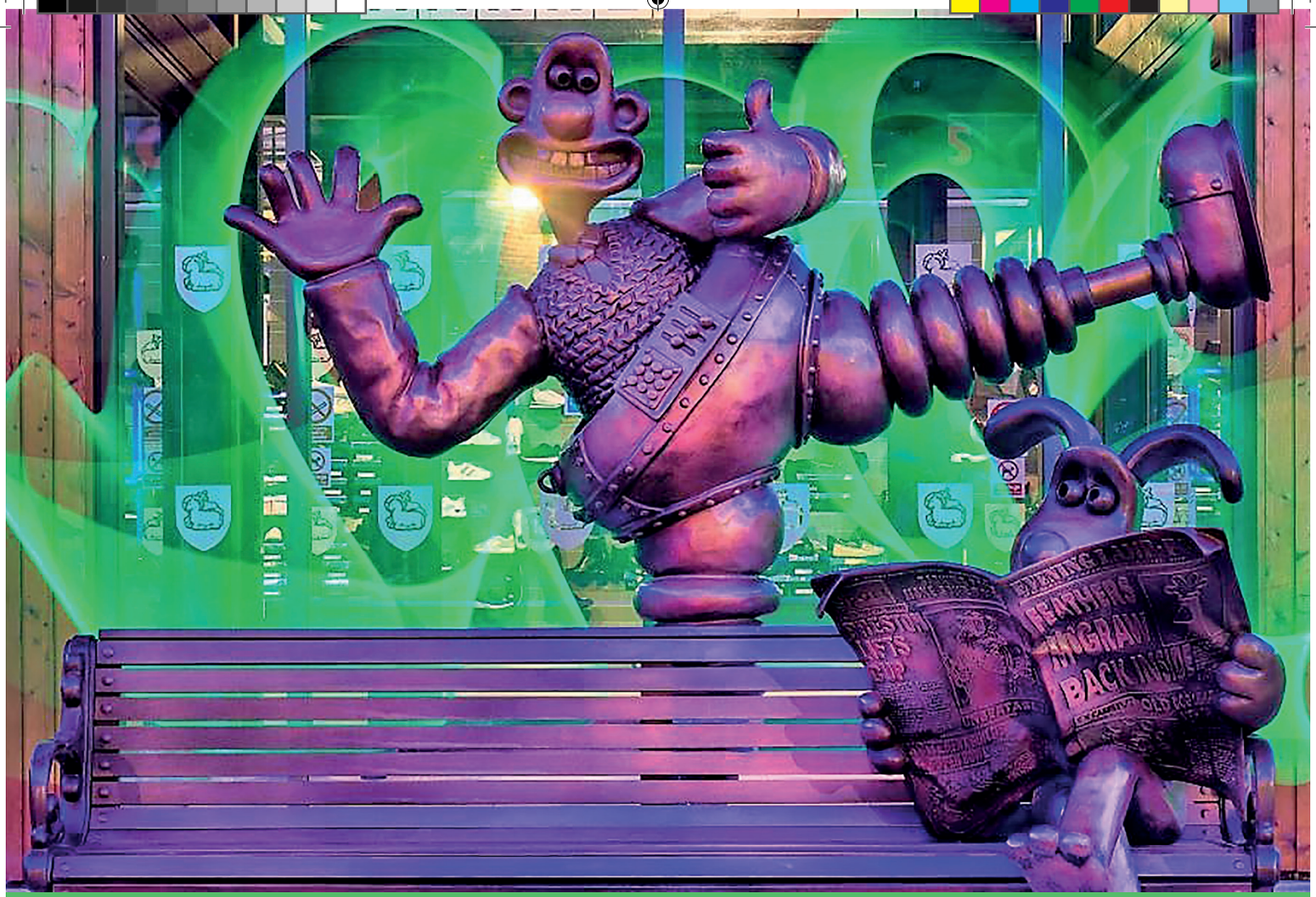
Behind the Scenes Week

At the end of November, the Charity launched Behind the Scenes Week, the UK's first week dedicated to celebrating everybody working behind the scenes in Film, TV and Cinema. They invited the industry, from head honchos to new recruits to take a moment to celebrate one another. It's been a tough few years for everyone, not just in the industry but across the world. But, despite the hardships, the UK film, TV, and cinema industries have created and delivered some of their best work to date, informing, educating, and entertaining the nation – uniting us all with the power of truly world-class content. And that's down to the contributions of everybody in the film, TV, and cinema community working together to create real magic.

The Film and TV Charity wanted to celebrate the brilliant people behind that great work, and make sure everyone felt the love of that celebration, particularly those that might normally get overlooked. Thanks to everyone that took part!

You can also visit the Charity via their Facebook at Facebook.com FilmTVCharity, Twitter @FilmTVCharity or Instagram at instagram.com/filmtvcharity/





WALLACE AND GROMIT IN PRESTON AND ON NEW POSTAGE STAMPS

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