

Corrupted, Tormented and Damned: Reframing British Exploitation Cinema and The films of Robert Hartford-Davis

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January 2013

Abstract

The American exploitation film functioned as an alternative to mainstream Hollywood cinema, and served as a way of introducing to audiences shocking, controversial themes, as well as narratives that major American studios were reluctant to explore. Whereas American exploitation cinema developed in parallel to mainstream Hollywood, exploitation cinema in Britain has no such historical equivalent. Furthermore, the definition of exploitation, in terms of the British industry, is currently used to describe (according to the *Encyclopedia of British Film*) either poor quality sex comedies from the 1970s, a handful of horror films, or as a loosely fixed generic description dependent upon prevailing critical or academic orthodoxies. However, exploitation was a term used by the British industry in the 1960s to describe a wide-ranging and eclectic variety of films – these films included, “kitchen-sink dramas”, comedies, musicals, westerns, as well as many films from Continental Europe and Scandinavia. Therefore, the current description of an exploitation film in Britain has changed a great deal from its original meaning. Moreover, the films currently described as exploitation films include not only low budget independent films but also films made by large filmmaking companies like the Rank Organisation.

The filmmaker Robert Hartford-Davis, whose career spans the 1960s, is frequently described as a director of British exploitation films. How can Hartford-Davis’ films help us to identify and understand the role of these films which are perceived as outside of the cultural mainstream, and how do these films fit into the narrative of British cinema? Hartford-Davis’ films, although now described as exploitation, were made to compete with the rest of the British film industry, unlike American exploitation which was sustained in opposition to Hollywood. Nonetheless, Hartford-Davis’ films exposes the tension that existed throughout the 1960s, between British low budget independent companies and companies like the Rank Organisation and other larger British film companies. Moreover, Hartford-Davis’ films throw up wider questions, not only about the definition and meaning of British exploitation films, but also about the accepted narrative of post-war British film culture, as well as the structure of the domestic industry during the 1960s. Furthermore, if the outsider status of British exploitation filmmakers is removed, then perhaps the accepted opposition between the “quality” film and lowbrow film is also considerably blurred, and supported only by an existing critical and academic consensus.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank David McGillivray and Norman J. Warren, who kindly agreed to be interviewed, and for their patience when replying to my questions. I am also grateful to Wickham Clayton, Ian Cooper, Prof. Mark Jancovich, Jenni Kenneally, Edward Newbrook, Michael Storr, and Bev Zalcock for their advice, guidance, help and support. My thanks also go to the staff at the British Film Institute Library. I am also indebted to Peter Newbrook without whom this thesis would have been a great deal poorer. Peter kindly allowed me access to his scrapbooks and assorted memorabilia. He also answered my many questions with a great deal of generosity and time. This thesis is dedicated to the memories of Robert Hartford-Davis and Peter Newbrook.

Introduction: The Question of British Exploitation & Robert Hartford-Davis

What is a British Exploitation Film?

‘The term exploitation film is derived from the practice of exploitation, advertising or promotional techniques that went over and above typical posters, trailers, and newspaper ads’.
Eric Schaefer, 1999.¹

In Eric Schaefer’s seminal study on American exploitation cinema, he argued that exploitation films ‘functioned as an alternative to Hollywood while also shedding light on the mainstream motion picture business’.² Schaefer declared that between 1919 and 1959, American exploitation cinema developed alongside mainstream American cinema: a period marked at a time when Hollywood was ‘constructing its image as the world’s premiere manufacturer of wholesome entertainment’.³ According to Schaefer, American exploitation developed to challenge the hegemony and dominance of the mainstream industry. Schaefer’s argument is important for this thesis because it raises the question of how we can talk about a British exploitation cinema. Although this thesis covers the 1960s, it is important to discuss whether there was an historical equivalent to the industrial practices within the British film industry. In other words, was there a similar developmental process for British exploitation cinema to the American model? Moreover, if the American mainstream film industry ‘depended on the contrast of exploitation to construct its own image’ did a comparable structure evolve in the British film industry?⁴

Robert Hartford-Davis has been described as a producer of ‘cheap exploitation films’, and the Compton Cinema Group, the company Hartford-Davis began his feature film career with, has been described as producers of exploitation films.⁵ However, what do we mean when we refer to British exploitation film? The definition of a British

¹ Schaefer, Eric, “*Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!*” *A History of Exploitation Films 1919 – 1939*, Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1999, p.4.

² Schaefer, 1994, p.14.

³ Schaefer, 1994, p.2.

⁴ Schaefer, 1994, p.14.

⁵ The following authors have all described Compton as a producer of exploitation and sexploitation films: McGillivray, David, *Doing Rude Things: The History of the British Sex Film 1957–1981*, London: Sun Tavern Fields, 1992, p.52; Mellor, Roger Philip, ‘Compton Films (aka Compton-Cameo Films)’, Brian McFarlane (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of British Film* Third Edition, London: Methuen, 2007, p.149; Murphy, Robert, *Sixties British Cinema*, London: British Film Institute, 1992, p.78.

exploitation film, as described in *The Encyclopedia of British Film* (by the scriptwriter and film critic David McGillivray), refers to a small group of films and filmmakers associated with ‘a large number of poor quality soft-core sex comedies and a handful of intense horror films’.⁶ Moreover, unlike the American model, the British exploitation era is described as being ‘at its height in the 70s’.⁷ However, it is unclear how this era developed, how British exploitation cinema might be different from American exploitation cinema, or whether there is a difference between exploitation and mainstream British cinema (if there is actually a difference).

McGillivray also describes filmmakers such as Stanley A. Long, Derek Ford, and Pete Walker as producers of exploitation films. However, the description of these filmmakers is confined primarily to the end product, and does not take into account methods of production, marketing, exhibition, or distribution. Are the horror exploitation films of, for example, Pete Walker different from the horror films produced by Hammer Studios or Amicus? If they are different, then why and how are they different? In addition, if the British exploitation film was at its height in the 1970s, then how did the exploitation film develop? In other words, what existed before the 1970s?

Schaefer argued that ‘during the post-war years, the designation of exploitation film was gradually expanded to include almost any low-budget movie with a topical bent. During the 1960s and 1970s, the term [as applied to the American industry] was modified to indicate the subject that was being exploited, such as for “sexploitation” and “blaxploitation” movies’.⁸ Schaefer’s description is not the only one, in 1963 the scriptwriter Frank Ferrer, in an article for the American cinema journal *Film Comment*, noted that the American film industry, ‘defines an exploitation film in this way: a low budget film that deals with sex, rape, murder, corruption, drug addiction, perversion, and any other distorted emotion that will attract large audiences capable of paying an average of one dollar and fifty cents per seat’.⁹

Ferrer’s views were dismissed a year later by the American producer and director, Barry Mahon. Mahon was closely associated with the American exploitation industry during the 1960s, and was responsible for movies such as Errol Flynn’s last film, *Cuban Rebel Girl* (Mahon, US., 1960), as well as *Violent Women* (Mahon, US., 1960), *Pagan Island*

⁶ McGillivray, David, ‘exploitation films’, in Brian McFarlane (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of British Film* Third Edition, London: Methuen, 2007, p.230.

⁷ McGillivray, 2007, p.230.

⁸ Schaefer, 1994, p.4.

⁹ Ferrer, Frank, ‘exploitation films’, *Film Comment*, No.6, 1963, p.31.

(Mahon, US., 1961), *1,000 Shapes of a Female* (Mahon, US., 1963), and many others. Mahon refuted ‘almost every paragraph that was written’ of Ferrer’s article.¹⁰ Furthermore, Mahon used ‘the term “exploitation” to describe the sexual-attraction type of film, as distinct from the “nудie,” [...] However, both types of picture are referred to commonly as exploitation pictures because the advertising generally oversells what you see when you get inside’.¹¹ Mahon may have dismissed Ferrer’s article, however, both recognised that exploitation described a type of film that was different from pictures made in Hollywood (many of Mahon’s films contained exactly the type of subject matter Ferrer described as exploitation). Although Ferrer and Mahon may have disagreed, the separation between exploitation and Hollywood was very clear, as Schaefer later cogently explained.

Although the differentiation between the two industrial models may have started to break down during the 1960s, in Britain there was no tradition of an exploitation industry existing alongside the mainstream industry. Furthermore, the term exploitation was used by both small, low budget independent studios as well as larger, film production companies in the UK.

David McGillivray now refers to Hartford-Davis’ first feature film, *The Yellow Teddybears*, as Britain’s first sexploitation film, he also acknowledges it was a term he and other filmmakers rarely used at the time.¹² McGillivray declared, ‘I can’t be sure about the word exploitation but I’m pretty sure we didn’t use it. I don’t know how we would have termed the films we made. But they were very different as far as I was concerned. Often they wouldn’t play the major circuit so they were deemed by the circuits to be low class’.¹³ McGillivray’s statements highlight some of the confusion that surrounds the definition of exploitation films when applied to British cinema.

McGillivray argues that the type of films he made with Pete Walker (mainly low budget horror films) were relegated to playing in independent cinemas, in a climate dominated by the two largest British film production companies; the Rank Organisation and Associated British Picture Corporation (ABPC). The duopoly position these two companies had on the rest of the British film industry, as well as the links Rank and ABPC had with Hollywood studios, meant that independent film producers had to either

¹⁰ Hitchens, Gordon, ‘The Truth, the Whole Truth, and Nothing but the Truth about Exploitation Films with Barry Mahon’, *Film Comment*, No. 2, 1964, p.5.

¹¹ Hitchens, Gordon, ‘The Truth, the Whole Truth...’, *Film Comment*, No. 2, 1964, p.1.

¹² McGillivray, David. *The Films of Robert Hartford-Davis*, [Letter] Personal communication, 11 February 2009.

¹³ See Appendix B.

find another way of distributing and exhibiting their films, or make the type of film that might have appealed to these companies (although as this thesis will examine how some independent companies competed successfully with the duopoly). This is a different situation when compared to the American model because although exploitation cinema and Hollywood cinema existed alongside each other, they produced, distributed and exhibited films in different ways – as argued by Schaefer.

In Sixties British cinema, the term exploitation had a different currency to that of the American film industry. For example, Nat Cohen and Stuart Levy (owners of Anglo Amalgamated, a British production and distribution company) referred to exploitation as a way to announce the release of the company's new double feature package – *13 Steps to Death* (aka. *Why Must I Die?* Roy Del Ruth, US., 1960), and *Liane—White Slave* (*Liane, Die Weiße Sklavin*, Herman Leitner, WGer., 1957). *13 Steps to Death* was made by the independent production company, Viscount Films, and was a low budget imitation of Robert Wise's death-row drama, *I Want to Live* (Wise, US., 1958), *Liane—White Slave* (despite the film's title) was an action-adventure story, featuring a female version of Tarzan. These films were described by Cohen and Levy as a 'new action-packed "exploitation special" double-feature programme—"13 Steps to Death" / "Liane—White Slave"'.¹⁴ As far as Cohen and Levy were concerned (and this applied to the rest of the British film industry) these films were mainstream entertainment, whereas in America, a film described as exploitation was commonly associated with disreputable entertainment, and marginalised from the distribution and exhibition strategies of the mainstream American industry. Anglo Amalgamated also promoted the following U-rated war films, *Through Hell to Glory*, and *Suicide Battalion*, as 'Another Dynamic 'Exploitation Special''.¹⁵

In Britain, exploitation was also used by the trade press to describe a range of different genres. For example, *Cover Girl Killer* (Terry Bishop, 1959), a film about a serial killer, was described by *The Daily Cinema* as a 'sound thriller', an 'exploitation attraction', and 'its subject has exploitation possibilities'.¹⁶ The horror film, *The Flesh and the Fiends* (John Gilling, 1960) was a 'strong horror thriller with exploitable X certificate'.¹⁷ Exploitation was not confined to low budget genre films or X films. Warner-Pathé, the

¹⁴ 'Exploitation Special for Trade Show', *The Daily Cinema*, 21 September 1960, p.4.

¹⁵ 'Thundering Double-Action! Another Dynamic 'Exploitation-Special' from Anglo Amalgamated', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 22 May 1958, p.21.

¹⁶ 'Cover Girl Killer', *The Daily Cinema*, 5 February 1960, p.5.

¹⁷ 'The Flesh and the Fiends', *The Daily Cinema*, 5 February 1960, p.5.

British distribution arm of Warner Bros., heavily promoted the Cliff Richard musical *Summer Holiday* (Peter Yates, 1962), and told *Kinematograph Weekly* that the stars and director of the film appeared ‘on virtually every magazine and light entertainment programme on radio and television in every region of the British Isles’, this also included the ‘biggest and most effective exploitation items in the whole campaign’.¹⁸ The London Routemaster Bus which featured prominently in the film, was also a ‘key item in the exploitation campaign [...] seven advertising spaces on the front, back, and sides of the bus were taken by BEA, BP Petrol, Remington Electronic Shavers, Dolcis Shoes, Rentavilla, Vespa Scooters and Fidelity Radio’.¹⁹

Exploitation was also used to advertise competition tie-ins for films. For example, *The Daily Cinema* announced the ‘Greatest Competitive Exploitation’, following the release of the Boulting Brothers’, *A French Mistress* (Roy Boulting, 1960).²⁰ A £500 cash prize was offered for ‘the best (printable) description of Agnes Laurent’ the French star of the film, and the competition was predicted to be ‘one of the most successful pieces of promotion ever organised by British Lion’ – the postcard results included responses such as, “‘She’s all right, Jacques!’” and “‘Wrecker of Hommes!’”²¹

There was also recognition by the British industry of the differences in exploitation between the UK and American market. For example, for the American release of *Beat Girl* (Edmond T. Gréville, 1960), ‘an Exploitation Manual that is somewhat different in form and make-up from that usually sent out by British companies’ was produced by the distributors.²² The manual included ‘a series of Photostats depicting the explosive business done by the film in Britain [...] Advertising, front-of-house displays, street stunts’, as well as mention of the music by ‘John Barry and his Orchestra and Seven [*sic*]’.²³

It was not only feature-films that were described as exploitation. Exploitation was used to describe fictional documentaries as well as popular melodramas. For example, a *Kinematograph Weekly* advertisement for a double-bill at the British Film Institute referred to ‘The Exploitation Programme of the year!’²⁴ The two films featured in the advertisement were the controversial BBC television drama-documentary *The War Game*

¹⁸ ‘Warner-Pathé launches biggest-ever exploitation for ‘Summer Holiday’’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 January 1963, p.10.

¹⁹ ‘Warner-Pathé launches biggest-ever...’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 January 1963, p.10.

²⁰ ‘Greatest Competitive Exploitation’, *The Daily Cinema*, 23 September 1960, p.7.

²¹ ‘Greatest Competitive Exploitation’, *The Daily Cinema*, 23 September 1960, p.7.

²² ‘They ‘Dig’ ‘Beat Girl’ Overseas’, *The Daily Cinema*, 13 January 1961, p.3.

²³ ‘They ‘Dig’ ‘Beat Girl’ Overseas’, *The Daily Cinema*, 13 January 1961, p.3.

²⁴ ‘The Exploitation Programme of the Year!’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 12 May 1966, p.9.

(Peter Watkins, 1965) and the mystery-drama, *Four in the Morning* (Anthony Simmons, 1965). Watkins' *The War Game* is a dramatised documentary speculating about the effects of a nuclear attack on a British city. The film features horrific scenes of firestorms, radiation burns, and the execution of looters by the British army. Banned by the BBC, Watkins offered a serious critique of the effect of nuclear weapons, as well as the Cold War concept of Mutually Assured Destruction. Simmons' *Four in the Morning* is a London based drama following the lives of two couples and their connection to a woman's body found in the River Thames. Although *The War Game* and *Four in the Morning* contain some exploitative ingredients (specifically the terrifying effects of a nuclear explosion in the former, and a reference to unmarried sex in the latter) these films are unlikely to be described as exploitation films in the way the term is currently understood.

Throughout the 1960s, British exploitation became an integral part of the marketing, promotion, and publicity of a film released in the UK. Moreover, the successful exploitation of a film was viewed as a positive within the British film industry, as James Carreras, the chairman of Hammer studios, pointed out 'exploitation pictures are the key to it all'.²⁵ Hammer may have mainly produced horror films nevertheless the films were distributed on the lucrative and high profile ABC cinema circuit (an arrangement made possible by the distribution deal the company had with Warner Bros.)

Nonetheless, it is worth pointing out that the pejorative connotations currently associated with exploitation films were not entirely absent from discourses within British cinema. In 1955, as Anthony Aldgate has noted, the British Film Producers Association (BFPA), an industry body that represented the interests of British film production, had deplored 'the increased exploitation in films of themes of brutality and violence for the purposes of sensationalism'.²⁶ However, the BFPA's concern was primarily directed at American horror films which attracted an X certificate (the rating had been introduced in 1951) which they felt was deterring families, as well as competing with British films. The release of American X-rated films had gradually increased in Britain following the introduction of the X category: 7 American films were rated X in 1951, in 1952 this figure rose to 10, and in 1953 the figure was 12 – for the same period British X films

²⁵ Carreras, James, 'Commercial? Of Course We Are!', *The Daily Cinema* Preview, 1960, p.38.

²⁶ Quoted in Aldgate, Anthony, *Censorship and the Permissive Society: British Cinema and Theatre 1955 – 1965*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, p.51; The BFPA had representatives from both large production companies like Rank and ABPC, and smaller companies like Monarch Productions, Nettlefold Studios, Somlo Films Ltd., etc. The *Kinematograph Year Book 1954* lists over thirty companies on the BFPA Executive Council for that year.

remained static at 2 a year for 1952 and 1953, with no X films released in 1951.²⁷ Moreover, for the same period, the amount of U films far outnumbered the other categories – 320 U films in 1951, 376 in 1952, and 347 in 1953.²⁸

The BFPA's concern for X films (not exploitation) was expressed again at a meeting on 3 December 1958, when they pressed the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC) to reinstate the H certificate because of 'the current vogue for horror films and the danger of its bringing the industry into disrepute', as well as emphasising 'the importance of the family business to the industry'.²⁹ The new secretary of the BBFC, John Trevelyan, resisted the request by the BFPA, primarily because Trevelyan believed the X certificate would help to raise the quality of British films by introducing more adult themes. Trevelyan felt justified by his decision following the critical and commercial success of *Room at the Top* (Jack Clayton, 1958), and pointed out that 'up to this time the cinema, with rare exceptions, had presented a fantasy world; this film dealt with real people and real problems'.³⁰ Trevelyan's stance was reinforced by the Cinema Consultative Committee (CCC) in 1959 when they decided not to support the BFPA's campaign.³¹ In reply to the CCC, Arthur Watkins the president of the BFPA, agreed with Trevelyan that the X certificate 'should stand for truly adult films', however, Watkins also thought there was now 'a belief that the X meant something horrific and sensational'.³²

Despite Trevelyan's worthwhile intentions, filmmakers increasingly began to use the X certificate in promotional campaigns intended to exploit the most sensational features of their films (*Room at the Top* was no exception as I will discuss in chapter one). Furthermore, the belief that X films were responsible for declining audiences, fails to reveal some of the more complex reasons behind the problems facing the British industry at this time. However, as the examples cited above show, from the late 1950s onwards, exploitation gradually shifted away from a description of mainly (American) X films, and was used as a marketing term, not only for X films but also U and A film categories. I would suggest that the real reason for the BFPA's concern was the desire to protect the British market from the increasing number of American horror films.

We have looked at how exploitation was used by the British film industry during the 1960s, I now want to examine Schaefer's argument further, and try to understand if

²⁷ *Kinematograph Year Book 1954*, London: Oldhams Press Ltd., 1954, p.518.

²⁸ *Kinematograph Year Book 1954*, London: Oldhams Press Ltd., 1954, p.518.

²⁹ Quoted in Aldgate, 1995, p.51.

³⁰ Trevelyan, John, *What the Censor Saw*, London: Michael Joseph, 1973, p.106.

³¹ 'H Certificate: CCC Will Not Support BFPA', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 14 May 1959, p.104.

³² 'H Certificate: CCC Will Not Support BFPA', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 14 May 1959, p.104.

there was ever a period in Britain that mirrored Schaefer's description of an "American classical exploitation" of 1919 to 1959. I will do this by analysing a period in the British industry that gave rise to a similarly maligned product: the "quota-quickies".

Furthermore, it is important to understand that the "quota-quickies" developed out of a specific set of industrial conditions and legislative protective measures, as the following will make clear.

The British film industry prior to World War I had flourished, and although, as Charles Barr has argued, 'there was no such thing yet as a "national cinema"'; the domestic industry was a viable competitor to other film producing countries.³³ Nevertheless, a shortage of investment in the British film, and the wide scale distribution of films from Hollywood, prompted a crisis within the industry. By the mid-1920s, the once vibrant British film industry was 'facing oblivion', the lowest point being 1926 when only thirty-six British films were made in comparison to the release of six hundred and twenty American films.³⁴ The British government, to protect the industry, passed two Acts of Parliament: the 1927 Cinematograph Films Act, and the 1938 Cinematograph Films Act. Designed to stimulate production in the British industry, the 1927 Cinematograph Films Act stipulated that 'a certain proportion of films distributed and exhibited in Britain had to be British in origin', in effect a quota was established (subsequently known as the Quota Act).³⁵ Initially a quota of 5 per cent was set for exhibitors and 7.5 per cent for distributors, eventually rising to 20 per cent for both exhibitors and distributors within ten years.

Are "quota-quickies" analogous to American exploitation films? These films, as other scholars and critics have made clear, were often deemed to be of low quality and lacking 'any artistic or technical merit'.³⁶ Nevertheless, Steve Chibnall has defended these films, arguing that the 'quota quickie cannot be so easily disinherited and denied [...] the offspring may have been under-socialised and may have exhibited symptoms of disability, but its legitimacy was without question. It must be treated as part of the lineage of British popular film'.³⁷ Furthermore, the Act unlocked, as Chibnall has pointed out, 'American finance for the uncertain business of British film production and stimulate a

³³ Barr, Charles, 'Before *Blackmail*: Silent British Cinema', in Robert Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book* 3rd Edition, London: British Film Institute, 2009, p.145.

³⁴ Glancy, 1998, p.59.

³⁵ Chibnall, Steve, "*Quota Quickies*" *The Birth of the British 'B' Film*, London: British Film Institute, 2007, p.1.

³⁶ Glancy, H. Mark, 'Hollywood and Britain: MGM and the British 'Quota' Legislation', in Jeffrey Richards (ed.), *The Unknown 1930s: An Alternative History of the British Cinema, 1929-1939*, London: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd., 1998, p.58.

³⁷ Chibnall, 2007, p.xi.

mushroom growth of indigenous film companies', nonetheless, these films were never marginalised in terms of distribution and exhibition (in the way American exploitation films in the US were).³⁸ Moreover, the "quota-quickie" evolved from a specific set of industrial conditions that developed within the British industry, and although the "quota-quickie" possessed parallels to exploitation films, i.e. critical dismissal, low budgets, and often featured disreputable, exploitable subject matter, these films were primarily screened as support pictures alongside mainstream products; unlike the American exploitation film, which was 'segregated from the mainstream'.³⁹

The British film industry (during the late 1950s and 1960s) used the term exploitation differently from the way the word is understood by contemporary critical and academic orthodoxies. To refer to an American exploitation film is to call attention to a specific set of industrial conditions not found within the British industry. However, how did we arrive at a point where critics and academics can now talk about an era, or genre, of British exploitation films? In other words, what is it about the films Hartford-Davis made (for example) that defines them as exploitation films? Are there other industrial conditions within the British industry, during the 1960s, that subsequently led to the marginalisation of Hartford-Davis' films as exploitation films, and if so what are they? How and why did Hartford-Davis' career development in both low budget independent production for Compton and big budget filmmaking for companies like the Rank Organisation, and what does this tell us about British film culture? Furthermore, if there is no difference between Hartford-Davis' films made for mainstream consumption then what does this tell us about the orthodox critical consensus built around British exploitation films and the rest of the industry?

British Film, the Critics and Questions of Quality

'[T]he term 'British national cinema' is clearly not homogenous'.

Sarah Street, 1997⁴⁰

The current definition of the British exploitation film has developed in opposition to the critical and academic consensus of British national cinema and the

³⁸ Chibnall, 2007, p.2.

³⁹ Schaefer, 1994, p.4.

⁴⁰ Street, Sarah, *British National Cinema*, London: Routledge, 1997, p.2.

“quality film”. The “quality film” encompasses notions of a reputable, prestigious British cinema. Leaving aside the questions of what constitutes a national cinema, as the film historian Sarah Street has pointed out, questions which are ‘complex and contentious’ discussions of British cinema, as Charles Barr has argued, had ‘existed somewhere on the margins, outside the mainstream of real film history and criticism, as a branch of sociology, or of cultural analysis, or of an insular national history – or as a curious specialised area for a minority of film buffs’.⁴¹ Critical discourse has significantly shifted from a period where (as Alan Lovell noted during the 1960s) that the, ‘scholarly neglect of British cinema was so great that it was effectively an unknown cinema’ – a situation that had scarcely shifted twenty years later when James Curran and Vincent Porter argued that ‘the academic study of cinema is still in its infancy in Britain’ – to the point where Lovell could argue, ‘today, British film scholars can hardly be accused of neglecting their national cinema. In the space of thirty-five years we moved from scarcity to abundance’.⁴²

Debates on the merits of a British national cinema has led to the gradual establishment of a canon of films and filmmakers which have often come to define the industry, as well as the concept of the “quality” British film. For example, one of Britain’s former leading film critics, Alexander Walker, emphasised the activities of Free Cinema, the British New Wave, and production companies like Woodfall, Bryanston, British Lion, the Rank Organisation, ABPC, as well as the impact that Hollywood had on the British industry. Furthermore, Walker’s discussion of smaller production companies, for example, Hammer, Amicus, Tigon, or Compton, is either absent, minimal, or dismissive.

Moreover, the development of a consensus is frequently selective and arbitrary. For example, the now critically regarded melodramas from Gainsborough Studios have led, as Sue Harper has pointed out, to the marginalisation of the ‘three-tenths of the 271 films [...] designed to make audiences laugh’.⁴³ The comedies of Ealing Studios are now recognised through their humorous observation of British national identity, nevertheless, the portmanteau horror film *Dead of Night* (Robert Hamer, Basil Dearden, Charles

⁴¹ Street, 1997, p.1; Barr, Charles, ‘Introduction: Amnesia and Schizophrenia’, in Charles Barr (ed.), *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema*, London: British Film Institute, 1986, p.3.

⁴² Lovell, Alan, ‘The British Cinema: The Known Cinema?’ in Robert Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book* 3rd Edition, London: British Film Institute, 2009, p.5; Curran, James & Porter, Vincent, ‘Introduction’, in James Curran & Vincent Porter (eds.), *British Cinema History*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd., 1983, p.1.

⁴³ Harper, Sue, ‘Nothing to beat the Hay Diet’: Comedy at Gaumont and Gainsborough’, in Pam Cook (ed.), *Gainsborough Pictures: Rethinking British Cinema*, London: Cassell, 1997, p.80.

Crichton, Alberto Cavalcanti, 1945), war films such as *The Cruel Sea* (Charles Frend, 1953), as well as several lowbrow comedies featuring popular working-class comedians such as George Formby, Will Hay and Tommy Trinder, are commonly referenced through their status as popular genre products, and rarely as Ealing products.⁴⁴

The selection of a particular type of British film is not confined to contemporary critics. As John Ellis has argued, there was an attempt by British film critics from 1942 onwards, to ‘change the nature of mass cinema in Britain’.⁴⁵ These critics were initially inspired by what they believed was a ‘fundamental change in British films made since the beginning of the war’ – a shift from the ‘glamour of day dreams’ to ‘naturalism’.⁴⁶ These films incorporated a style ‘fixed in reality’ and were referred to by critics as the ‘quality film’.⁴⁷ The typical “quality” film included the family at war saga, *Millions Like Us* (Frank Launder & Sidney Gilliat, 1943), the pro-Soviet *The Demi-Paradise* (Anthony Asquith, 1943), the feuding lower middle-class family of *This Happy Breed* (David Lean, 1944), the moral-boosting of *The Way Ahead* (Carol Reed, 1944), the overtly propagandist *Henry V* (Laurence Olivier, 1944), the emotionally restrained love story *Brief Encounter*, and the IRA thriller *Odd Man Out* (Reed, 1947), among others. Despite the critics’ early optimism, by 1948, British cinema was viewed with ‘a sense of unfilled promise’.⁴⁸ Furthermore, by the late 1940s and early 1950s, the domestic industry was viewed as consisting of ‘low-life melodramas and exotic costume pictures’.⁴⁹ Middleclass cinemagoers were encouraged to reject British cinema, as critics ‘turned to foreign films (in particular Italian Neo-Realism)’.⁵⁰

By the late 1950s, the critical consensus between the “quality” film and the lowbrow continued to provoke the critical establishment. For example, Dudley Carew, film critic for *The Times*, ‘the paper read by top people’, argued, ‘the commercial cinema is not an art’.⁵¹ For Carew, by ‘not expecting a masterpiece’, he could ‘appreciate the immense technical skill, the acting and directing ability, the care and thought, the blood and sweat and tears that have gone into the production’.⁵² Carew’s cinema was a craft

⁴⁴ The Ealing films starring these comedians include Formby in *Let George Do It* (Marcel Varnel, 1940), Hay in *The Goose Steps Out* (Will Hay, Basil Dearden, 1942), and Trinder in *Fiddlers Three* (Harry Watt, 1944).

⁴⁵ Ellis, John, ‘The Quality Film Adventure: British Critics and the cinema 1942—1948’, in Andrew Higson (ed.), *Dissolving Views: Key Writings on British Cinema*, London: Cassell, 1996, p.69.

⁴⁶ Ellis, 1996, p.69.

⁴⁷ Ellis, 1996, p.69.

⁴⁸ Ellis, 1996, p.72.

⁴⁹ Murphy, 1992, p.59.

⁵⁰ Murphy, 1992, p.59.

⁵¹ Carew, Dudley, ‘A Compromise with Art’, *Films and Filming*, September 1959, p.15.

⁵² Carew, Dudley, ‘A Compromise with Art’, *Films and Filming*, September 1959, p.15.

made up of skilled technicians, not artists, and the tension between art and popular culture was neatly avoided. *The Times* is a daily broadsheet mainly marketed at a middleclass, literate readership, by way of contrast, Margaret Hinxman, the film reviewer for the populist *Picturegoer* (which was primarily aimed at movie fans), believed that any film critic working for the magazine was in ‘an occupation considered, in many respected quarters, to be only slightly less delinquent than compèring a teenage rock ‘n’ roll programme or manufacturing “I Love Elvis” knick-knackery’.⁵³ Similarly Hinxman (like Carew) might not have thought of cinema as an art, nevertheless, she was willing to accept the legitimacy of films as a form of popular entertainment, and her film reviews in *Picturegoer* and *The Daily Cinema* echo this sentiment.

The comments cited above were published as part of a series of articles in the monthly British film magazine, *Films and Filming*, and they offer a fascinating insight into many of the critical debates of the late 1950s. Analysing all of these articles in depth is outside the scope of this thesis, nevertheless, I would like to highlight some of the attitudes that emerge from them because they serve to focus on the opinions and viewpoints held by post-war critics towards the domestic film industry – giving an insight into the environment filmmakers like Robert Hartford-Davis had to work within. For example, the religious imagery of a preacher teaching to the (uneducated) masses is referred to several times. Fred Majdalany from the *Daily Mail*, warned against the critic who took ‘himself too seriously and grow to believe that he is engaged in some kind of missionary work’.⁵⁴ Margaret Hinxman believed, ‘one is preaching not so much to the converted as to the enthusiasts’.⁵⁵ Jympson Harman in the *Evening News* argued that, ‘a good film critic is at once martyr and a missionary, enduring much that is bad and sinful, but carrying the gospel of true films into the wilderness of unthinking cinemagoers’.⁵⁶ The editor of *Films and Filming*, Peter Baker, pointed out that the critic who, ‘really loves Cinema, will be a crusader, bringing whatever influence he can to bear to make good films more widely known. [...] The critic’s function, then, is to find and encourage what is good for Cinema [emphasis in the original]’.⁵⁷ Therefore, for the critics who contributed to the *Film and Filming* articles, there was a duty to educate the public, and to emphasise the good “quality” film.

⁵³ Hinxman, Margaret, ‘Even a ‘Fan’ Deserves an Honest Answer’, *Films and Filming*, July 1959, p.15.

⁵⁴ Majdalany, Fred, ‘In an Age of ‘No Time’’, *Films and Filming*, January 1960, p.15.

⁵⁵ Hinxman, Margaret, ‘Even a ‘Fan’ Deserves an Honest Answer’, *Films and Filming*, July 1959, p.15.

⁵⁶ Harman, Jympson, ‘All I Demand is Sincerity’, *Films and Filming*, November 1959, p.15.

⁵⁷ Baker, Peter, ‘Without Fear, Favour...or Pretension’, *Films and Filming*, June 1960, p.15.

The elitist position taken by film critics was supported by (for some) a dislike of the cinemagoer. Harman referred to cinemagoers as ‘unthinking’, and revealingly the title of Leonard Mosley’s article (film critic for the *Daily Express*) was ‘The Audience is My Enemy’.⁵⁸ Majdalany recounted how he frequently tried to, ‘sit alone at the end of an empty row’ because ‘I find it distracting to be next to someone who is laughing his head off, wriggling in agony or rage, or merely transmitting waves of enjoyment or unenjoyment [*sic*]’.⁵⁹ Richard Mallett, from the long running satirical magazine *Punch*, referred to the ‘unobservant or semi-literate moviegoer’.⁶⁰

Critical debates on the X film were also discussed in terms of the difference between “quality” and low culture. For example, Peter Baker eschewed, ‘the unhealthy sexuality of the recent flood of X-certificate melodramas from France [...] the sadistic excesses in the more realistic horror subjects, such as *The Strangers of Bombay*’.⁶¹ British cinema, according to Baker, had failed to make, ‘the sensitive, introspective films of a Bresson or Bergman, or aspire to the astringent drama of Wajda or satire of Fellini’ because audiences would rather flock to see ‘big, lush spectacle, the trivial comedy, the pop-singer vehicle’.⁶² Baker’s misgivings were echoed by Leonard Mosely: ‘the public will still flock to its Lana Turners and John Waynes’, but fail to ‘turn up to see Anna Magnani in Scunthorpe’.⁶³ Mosely’s reference to Magnani, who had appeared in films associated with Italian neo-realism, they include *Rome, Open City* (Roberto Rossellini, 1945) and *Bellissima* (Luchino Visconti, 1951), highlights how some critics defined the high art (Italian neo-realism) and low culture (Lana Turner melodramas or the westerns of John Wayne).

British exploitation film, as it is now currently understood, developed out of a critical and academic orthodoxy that constructed a particular type of British film that represented a prestigious, “quality” cinema. In opposition to this critical consensus was the type of the film that exploited controversial and sensational narratives, as well as explicit sex, violence or nudity (within the context of the time). Nevertheless, this definition is only a construction and does not represent the actual industrial conditions that produced these films.

⁵⁸ Harman, Jympson, ‘All I Demand is Sincerity’, *Films and Filming*, November 1959, p.15; Mosley, Leonard, ‘The Audience is My Enemy’, *Films and Filming*, August 1959, p.15.

⁵⁹ Majdalany, Fred, ‘In an Age of ‘No Time’’, *Films and Filming*, January 1960, p.15.

⁶⁰ Mallett, Richard, ‘Honesty is Best’, *Films and Filming*, December 1959, p.15.

⁶¹ Baker, Peter, ‘Without Fear, Favour...or Pretension’, *Films and Filming*, June 1960, p.15.

⁶² Baker, Peter, ‘Without Fear, Favour...or Pretension’, *Films and Filming*, June 1960, p.15.

⁶³ Mosley, Leonard, ‘The Audience is My Enemy’, *Films and Filming*, August 1959, p.15.

The British Film Industry: Mainstream and Independent

What do I mean when I refer to the mainstream British industry? The Rank Organisation, the largest British film production company in the 1960s, and ABPC, dominated the post-war domestic cinema industry, and like the steadily developing post-war critical consensus, these companies tried to create a framework for British cinema built on quality films and family-friendly entertainment. The director of the Rank Organisation, J. Arthur Rank, had started in the film business after forming the Religious Film Society, aimed at promoting religious education in Sunday Schools and Methodist Halls. Rank gradually built up the company until, by the mid-1940s, it owned five studios, a production company, a distribution company, and, through a takeover of two the biggest cinema chains in Britain (Odeon and Gaumont-British), 650 cinemas. At its height, the Rank Organisation was one of the few British vertically integrated companies ‘with the muscle to match the Hollywood majors’.⁶⁴

In 1962, after the company began to experience significant financial difficulties, J. Arthur Rank left the running of the company to an ex-accountant, John Davis. The Rank Organisation’s filmmaking ethos was grounded in family and children’s entertainment, and heavily influenced by the personal preferences of both J. Arthur Rank and Davis. Rank’s Methodist background, as well as his fondness for children’s cinema (Rank had started the Odeon Children’s Clubs in 1943, and in 1944 financed Children’s Entertainment Film), combined with Davis’ commitment to family entertainment (and a dislike of X films) prescribed Rank’s output for most of the post-war period.⁶⁵

ABPC was established by John Maxwell (head of the production company British International Pictures) in 1933, following the acquisition of British National Pictures and that company’s film studios at Elstree (just outside London). Along with a chain of cinemas, Associated British Cinemas (ABC), Maxwell’s company gradually developed its production, distribution and exhibition facilities, committed to making “quality” pictures, by the 1930s the company was one of the few serious competitors to the Rank Organisation. Following Maxwell’s death in 1940, the Hollywood studio Warner Bros. bought 25% of the company; a transaction designed, as Vincent Porter has argued, ‘to

⁶⁴ McFarlane, Brian, ‘Rank, Organisation, The’, in Brian McFarlane (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of British Film* Third Edition, London: Methuen, 2007, p.607.

⁶⁵ For information on Rank’s involvement with children’s cinema see, Agajanian, Rowana. ‘Just for kids? Saturday morning cinema and Britain’s Children Film’, www.powell-presburger.org.

ensure its American films were booked by the growing ABC cinema chain'.⁶⁶ By the 1960s, and following severe cuts in production budgets, ABPC were either making cheap comedies, or co-financing films with independent producers like Hammer Studios.⁶⁷ However, the dominant position of the ABC cinema circuit (similar to Rank) resulted in a particular type of film, one that was unlikely to upset the critical consensus, or avoid problems in terms of controversial content or clashes with the British censors.

Furthermore, ABPC and Rank constituted a powerful duopoly that other British independent producers had difficulty competing with. This was a position that came under frequent criticism by others in the industry, at a time when the British film business was struggling with declining cinema audiences. Independent producers found it increasingly difficult to obtain a release in either Rank or ABC cinemas, and often had to rely on the smaller chain of independently owned (but less lucrative) cinemas. The dominance of Rank and ABPC, and the effect this had on the distribution of films, was highlighted by a 1962 study from the economist John Spraos. Spraos emphasised the ongoing concern of cinema closures, as well as finding 'an alternative to the Rank and ABC release outlets'.⁶⁸ A report by the Federation of British Film Makers (FBFM) published in November 1962, confirmed the findings of Spraos' study, 'before 1958 there were three major circuits, plus a number of independents, many of whom during 1956-58 were organised into a fourth circuit by Twentieth-Century Fox. Now there are two major circuits only and many fewer independents'.⁶⁹ The FBFM report pointed out that, with only two major circuits 'except in the case of films which are made at an exceptionally low cost or which have prospects of exceptional overseas earnings, financial disaster results unless a booking is secured on either the Rank or ABC release'.⁷⁰ Furthermore, the report found:

There is very little competition between the combines for films. A situation that has grown up whereby some of the major distributors are "Rank suppliers" — such as the Rank distribution organisation itself, United Artists, Fox, Columbia and Disney—and some are "ABC suppliers," such as Warner Pathe and Anglo Amalgamated (both of whom are financially linked with ABC) and Paramount. British Lion and MGM, however, trade with both combines. Some minor groups may also

⁶⁶ Porter, Vincent, 'Associated British Group', in Brian McFarlane (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of British Film* Third Edition, London: Methuen, 2007, p.32.

⁶⁷ Porter, 2007, p.33.

⁶⁸ 'Viewpoint—Problem Study', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 21 June 1962, p.4.

⁶⁹ Filson, A.W., 'Memorandum to the Sub-Committee appointed by the Cinematograph Films Council from the Federation of British Film Makers', *The Daily Cinema*, 6 February 1963, p.5.

⁷⁰ Filson, A.W., 'Memorandum to the...', *The Daily Cinema*, 6 February 1963, p.5.

trade with both combines, but they never have any negotiating strength. The result is that if, example, a UA film is refused a release by the Rank booker, it has no hope of being accepted by the ABC group. The combines do not poach on each other's preserves, though exceptionally a major distributor may transfer from one combine to another.⁷¹

Furthermore, and despite the FBFM's report, the dominance of Rank and ABPC was rarely challenged by other filmmaking organisations in Britain which resulted in the indirect support for the structure. Throughout the 1960s, filmmakers like Robert Hartford-Davis were frequently stymied by the structure of the British film industry. The choices faced by Hartford-Davis were either to remain with production companies like the Compton Group, where he could retain creative control of his films, as well as any potential profit from a smaller cinema release; or negotiate, film-by-film, with either the Rank Organisation or ABPC. There were significant advantages of shifting into the mainstream. Rank or ABPC could offer a more lucrative and higher profile cinema circuit release nevertheless with this arrangement there was the possibility of a loss of creative control, and no guarantee of a nationwide circuit release. However, if the film was selected for distribution, then there was an opportunity of receiving a percentage of (potentially) larger box-office receipts, as well as an increased likelihood of international distribution and exhibition. It is this tension that will be explored throughout this thesis.

A Brief Note on the Auteur Theory

If this thesis is a study of the films and career of Robert Hartford-Davis then is it appropriate to discuss the director as an auteur? An analysis of Hartford-Davis' films reveals several stylistic signatures and themes which might be described as the presence of an authorial touch. Nonetheless, the purpose of this thesis is not to unpack, what Jonathan Rigby has described as Hartford-Davis' 'demented directorial technique', or the use of bold, primary colours, popular music (primarily trad jazz and rock 'n' roll), the often controversial subject matter, as well as the reoccurrence of similar set pieces and framing shots (the chase sequence was a particular favourite of the director).⁷² Hartford-Davis' career as a filmmaker is not widely known (his entry in McFarlane's *Encyclopedia of British Film* consists of one paragraph), and, as mentioned earlier, he is known as a

⁷¹ Filson, A.W., 'Memorandum to the...', *The Daily Cinema*, 6 February 1963, p.7.

⁷² Rigby, Jonathan, *English Gothic: A Century of Horror Cinema* Second Edition, Richmond, Surrey: Reynolds & Hearn Ltd. 2002, p.161.

director of exploitation films.⁷³ The primary purpose of this thesis is to understand the structure of a particular type of British filmmaking during the 1960s, and Hartford-Davis' films and career offer a way to examine, in depth, how these films were made.

Furthermore, an analysis of his career helps us to understand the decisions that led to the production of his films with reference to the structure of the British film industry, the problems of British censorship (primarily industry reaction to the X category), as well as the critical reception to his films – which offers an insight into the changing development of film criticism.

The auteur theory has offered several different frameworks with which an individual director's career can be examined. For example, Barbara Klinger's analysis of how various institutions employed different ideological discourses to create meaning in the films of Douglas Sirk; Robert E. Kapsis' approach to 'changes in the aesthetic judgements and standards of critics, aestheticians, and other key art-world members' in the work of Alfred Hitchcock; as well as the Charles J. Maland's overview of the shifting critical reception to the films of Charlie Chaplin.⁷⁴ A different approach was taken by Peter Hutchings in his analysis of the British director Terence Fisher, who worked primarily for the British film company Hammer Studios. Hutchings' argument that the 'focus on the director as source of cinematic meaning and value is that it precludes a proper consideration of the creative input into cinema of other professions', and that (in a later discussion on another British director, Roy Ward Baker) 'bagging another *auteur* [emphasis in the original] for Britain is not necessarily the best way of developing our understanding of British cinema', was an argument supported earlier by Julian Petley who noted that "auteurism' is not a particularly useful or fruitful approach to British cinema'.⁷⁵

The purpose of this thesis is not to reclaim Hartford-Davis as a long-lost British auteur, but to use Hartford-Davis' career as a key to unlocking different aspects of the British film industry during the 1960s, and to shed light on the structure of the industry in terms of production, distribution, promotion, and exhibition, as well as the tension

⁷³ McFarlane, Brian, 'Robert Hartford-Davis', in Brian Masters (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of British Film* Third Edition, London: Methuen, 2007, p.325.

⁷⁴ Kapsis, Robert E., *Hitchcock: The Making of a Reputation*, Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992, p.7. For Klinger see *Melodrama & Meaning: History, Culture, and the Films of Douglas Sirk*, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994; and for Maland see *Chaplin and American Culture: The Evolution of a Star Image*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989.

⁷⁵ Hutchings, Peter, *Terence Fisher*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001, pp.21-2; Hutchings, Peter, 'Authorship and British Cinema: The Case of Roy Ward Baker', in Justine Ashby & Andrew Higson (eds.), *British Cinema, Past and Present*, London: Routledge, 2000, p.180; Petley, Julian, 'The Lost Continent', in Charles Barr (ed.), *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema*, London: British Film Institute, 1986, pp.98-9.

within the critical establishment and the trade press between “quality” British film and lowbrow culture. I am not arguing for a critical re-evaluation of Hartford-Davis’ films, or contending whether he was a good or bad filmmaker. It is unlikely that the critical establishment will ever want to re-evaluate his career, so often entrenched is the mainstream orthodoxy towards lowbrow cinema, as demonstrated from some of the critics’ comments above. Moreover, Hartford-Davis’ films have been re-appropriated by advocates, scholars and academics of trash cinema, cult films, or paracinema (David McGillivray in the horror fanzine, *Shivers*, was one of the first to try and bring attention to the exploitation credentials of the director, swiftly followed by Jonathan Rigby and David Hanks). Instead this thesis will attempt to reposition Hartford-Davis within the framework of a wider discourse on the development of British film culture during the 1960s, and as part of a reframing of the definition of British exploitation film.

Methods

In order to understand some of the contemporary debates within the British film industry, a number of articles from several film publications, primarily *Kinematograph Weekly*, *The Daily Cinema*, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, *Films and Filming*, and *Sight and Sound*, have been used. These publications offer an important insight into the British film industry during the 1960s. They also contain an invaluable historical record of the different attitudes and viewpoints held by filmmaking organisations within the industry, as well as the different analysis used by film critics in the trade press, *Kinematograph Weekly* or *The Daily Cinema*, and more critical middlebrow publications, like *Sight and Sound*.

Moreover, these publications offer an important insight into the debates, pressures, and anxieties of the British film industry during the 1960s. Throughout the decade, these publications offered an on-going and important forum for critical and industrial debates within the British film industry that by the mid-1970s had all but disappeared. Many of the daily, weekly or monthly film journals and periodicals had either ceased publication or had merged together: a reminder, as well as an indicator, of the gradual decline in the cinema as a medium of mass entertainment.⁷⁶ The disappearance of publications like *Kinematograph Weekly* inevitably reduced the

⁷⁶ *Kinematograph Weekly* was first published in November 1904 as the *Optical Lantern and Kinematograph Journal*, it was renamed *Kinematograph Weekly* in December 1919. It ran until 25 September 1971 when it was merged with *Today’s Cinema*; see ‘The Kine is Sold’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 11 September 1971, p.3. *The Daily Cinema* was first published in February 1928 as *Today’s Cinema: News and Property Gazette*. The title became *The Daily Cinema* in November 1957. It was renamed *Today’s Cinema* in January 1969 and in November 1971 it became *CinemaTV Today*. The final edition was published on 30 August 1975.

availability of a forum for the British film business. By examining these publications, it becomes clear how closely interdependent low budget independent film studios producers and the mainstream film industry were during the 1960s. Moreover, these publications contain invaluable surveys, critical articles, and debates on the state of the film industry, as well as discussions on the fall in cinema audiences and the possible reasons for that decline.

The academic texts used in this thesis include debates on the development of the post-war British film industry (specifically texts that cover the British cinema of the late 1950s and 1960s); analysis of highbrow and lowbrow culture, including exploitation and cult cinema; and finally, overviews of Sixties British culture and society (to establish the necessary historical, as well as social context).

This thesis also includes interviews with filmmakers who were involved in different aspects of the British film industry during the 1960s and early 1970s. These interviews were carried out by the author exclusively for this thesis, and they offer an insight into the problems and experiences of working in the low budget British film industry. The interviewees include – Peter Newbrook, David McGillivray and Norman J. Warren. Newbrook was a director of photography and producer on many of the films discussed in this thesis (he was also Robert Hartford-Davis’ business partner throughout the 1960s and, with the director, formed the independent production company Titan International). David McGillivray, worked as a film critic in the late 1960s for *Monthly Film Bulletin* and *CinemaTV Today*, and he also wrote the scripts for many low budget horror films during the 1970s. McGillivray is also the author of *Doing Rude Things*, an overview of the history of the British sex film, as well as the sexploitation pictures of the 1970s. Norman J. Warren directed many British low budget sex comedies and horror pictures from the late 1960 onwards, as well as working within many other parts of the industry during this period. Warren’s first feature film, *Her Private Hell* (1968), has been described as Britain’s first narrative sex film.⁷⁷ This thesis also contains a complete transcript of an interview given by Robert Hartford-Davis in 1968, in which he offers an insight into some of the problems of British film distribution and production.

I wish to end this section with a brief discussion on some of the terminology used in this thesis, for the purposes of clarity. As referred to above, exploitation film, as it is currently defined, borrowed from a style of filmmaking applicable to the American

⁷⁷ See *Her Private Hell* (BFI Flipside, DVD, 2012).

exploitation industry. In the 1960s, exploitation has no currency beyond marketing and promotion within the British film industry, and I will often refer to exploitation within the terms defined by the industry during this period. The independent film industry is used to describe a mode of production other than the Rank Organisation and ABPC. However, I am aware that independent cinema is also a complicated term. Simon Blanchard and Sylvia Harvey have defined an independent cinema that ‘developed as a movement which is concerned to rethink and reconstruct’ the history of English cinema.⁷⁸ Blanchard and Harvey locate the British independent sector within movements such as Free Cinema, as well as local filmmaking groups like Cinema Action, Berwick Street Collective, Amber Films, and the London Women’s Film Group, etc.⁷⁹ The movements Blanchard and Harvey cite are situated within the tradition of art cinema which is thought of as independent from mainstream, popular cinema. However, for the purposes of this thesis, independent cinema is a specific industrial mode that describes a specific method of production, distribution, marketing, promotion and exhibition within the commercial British industry. The British mainstream film industry primarily refers to the two largest film production companies in the UK, the Rank Organisation and ABPC, and to the cinema circuits owned by these companies, as well as the numerous organisations that ran the British industry.

Structure

The thesis is divided into two parts. The first part examines the production and marketing strategies of the films Hartford-Davis made for the Compton Cinema Group. The second part examines the production and marketing strategies, as well as the funding arrangements of Hartford-Davis’ independent production company, Titan International. The Compton Cinema Group was a British production, distribution and exhibition company that operated throughout the 1960s. Compton began as a private cinema club, exhibiting and distributing films throughout the UK, eventually developing into a vertically integrated film production company. Titan International was an independent film production company set up by Robert Hartford-Davis and Peter Newbrook in the mid-1960s. A comparison of these companies establishes a pattern of similarities and

⁷⁸ Blanchard, Simon & Harvey, Sylvia, ‘The Post-war Independent Cinema – Structure and Organization’, in James Curran & Vincent Porter (eds.), *British Cinema History*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1983, p.228.

⁷⁹ Blanchard & Harvey, 1983, p.229, p.231.

differences that map on to changes occurring within the independent and mainstream British film industry throughout the 1960s.

Chapter 1 will question how the term exploitation was used in the British film industry at the beginning of the 1960s, and argue that the exhibition and marketing strategies used by companies like the Compton Cinema Group, for films like *That Kind of Girl* (O'Hara, 1963), *The Yellow Teddybears* (Hartford-Davis, 1963), and *Saturday Night Out* (Hartford-Davis) – now described as early examples of sexploitation films – was comparable to that of the mainstream British film industry, specifically the promotional strategies used for the “kitchen-sink dramas” of the now critically acclaimed British New Wave.

Chapter 2 will question how horror films were discussed within the British film industry, and argue that Compton's marketing and exhibition strategy for both Hartford-Davis' *The Black Torment* (1964) and Roman Polanski's now highly critically-regarded, *Repulsion* (1965) were the same. Furthermore, this chapter will argue that the differences in the critical reception towards these films, demonstrates a hierarchical division (between highbrow and lowbrow) of horror films produced by British and non-British filmmakers. The lack of a critically-lauded art/horror film cycle such as *Nosferatu* (Murnau, 1922) and *Vampyr* (Dreyer, 1932) within the British industry, the critical evaluation of Roger Corman's horror films in the 1960s, and the negative critical reception of *Peeping Tom* (Powell, 1960), demonstrate a persistent unease by the industry and the critics towards domestic horror and non-British horror films.

Chapter 3 will question how the industry tried to deal with the effects of declining cinema audiences, and will argue that the mainstream answer of producing family-friendly genres like musicals and comedies failed to understand the shift in cultural and social attitudes, as well as the changing character of the British cinemagoer. From productions like the musical *Gonks Go Beat* (Hartford-Davis, 1965) to the Rank-financed comedies, *The Sandwich Man* (Hartford-Davis, 1966) and *Press for Time* (Asher, 1966), these films, while fully exploiting in terms of marketing, showmanship and promotion, demonstrate how the mainstream duopoly within the British film industry contributed to the decline of the domestic film business.

Chapter 4 will question the influence Hollywood studios had over the British film industry, and debate whether this encouraged or discouraged growth in the business. Hollywood, encouraged by the success of big budget musicals like *The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise, US., 1965), encouraged the production of more musicals and comedies

from their British based studios, as well as similar films from the Rank Organisation. Furthermore, Hollywood while insisting there would be an increase in family-friendly films, and a shift away from X-rated and adult films was a move supported by the mainstream British film industry. Nonetheless, low budget independent production companies were continuing to demonstrate that there was a lucrative market for X-rated films in Britain. Moreover, Hollywood's opposition to X films was complicated by the success of films like Hartford-Davis' *Corruption* (1967) which was distributed in America by Columbia Studios and exhibited in Britain on the Rank-owned cinema circuit. This chapter will argue that it was the production of low budget X films which offered an easier and more lucrative route to box-office success both internationally and domestically.

Chapter 5 will question how literature has often been used to validate critical perceptions of the "quality" British film, and argue that both highbrow and lowbrow literature was a feature of low budget independent British filmmaking. The association of highbrow literature with "quality" British films is blurred with the production of Hartford-Davis' vampire film, *Doctors Wear Scarlet* (*Incense for the Damned*, 1970), which was adapted from the critically acclaimed book by the Cambridge scholar, Simon Raven. Nonetheless, the finished film merges highbrow literature with nudity, sex and violence and blurs the difference between art and lowbrow culture.

Finally, the conclusion to the entire thesis will re-examine the claims made throughout the preceding chapters, and argue that the definition of a British exploitation film has been, at times, uneasily applied, and on the whole misunderstood. The term exploitation film (when applied to British films) is a retrospective term, now used to describe a group of low budget, independently produced films, low in prestige and quality. The American exploitation film has been clearly defined in terms of specific industrial conditions however the same cannot be said for the British exploitation film, or what we have come to understand as the British exploitation film. In reframing exploitation as a generic description, the value of films like Hartford-Davis' can be re-evaluated as part of the development of British film culture.

Conclusion

This thesis primarily covers Hartford-Davis' career throughout the 1960s and although, as other historians have pointed out, there is a danger of compartmentalising historical narratives into discrete ten year periods, the 1960s constituted a period when

the British film industry continued its push against the boundaries of onscreen violence, sex, nudity, language and controversial narratives. Although many of the reforms in the 1960s led to considerable social and cultural change – the decade saw the abolition of the death penalty; reform of the laws against male homosexuality; changes to abortion rights; a radical overhaul of the divorce laws; relaxation in censorship of films, the theatre, and novels; the beginning of the feminist movement, gay rights; as well as a growing political awareness by the British black community – it is worth noting that the desire for change had begun a decade earlier.

Nevertheless, the decade represents an important period in the development of the British film industry mirrored by changes in society and culture. It was a decade when post-war British cinema emerged from what John Hill has referred to as a ‘period of decline and stagnation’ into an industry that ‘sought to break with the habits of the ‘old’ by inserting a whole area of social experience hitherto suppressed or treated as marginal’.⁸⁰ It was also a period, as Jeffery Richards has pointed out, that ‘witnessed a revitalization of British cinema and the emergence of a flourishing and diverse film culture, after what was widely perceived to be the doldrums era of the 1950s’.⁸¹ Furthermore, by the end of the 1960s, the film producer John Boulting could argue that, ‘suddenly, the rather cold, diffident, shy, withdrawn, inhibited, stiff-upper-lip British emerged as rather way out, a bit wild and imbued with a terrific creative capacity, ranging from the Beatles, through to Mary Quant and so forth [...] I think it’s something we should be rather pleased about’.⁸² As the social commentator and historian Brian Masters later pointed out, ‘the kaleidoscope of sins and boons which galloped through the decade left the country entirely different from what it had been before’.⁸³

I would suggest that the changing social and cultural conditions of the 1960s laid the groundwork for an industry that for a short time was in the position to offer a challenge to the prevailing critical consensus and orthodox British filmmaking. Nonetheless, the challenge of independent filmmakers was met with resistance by the critical establishment and many in the film industry, this stifled what might have been a

⁸⁰ Hill, John, ‘Working-class Realism and Sexual Reaction: Some Theses on the British ‘New Wave’’, in James Curran & Vincent Porter (eds.), *British Cinema History*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd., 1983, p.303.

⁸¹ Richards, Jeffery, ‘New Waves and Old Myths: British Cinema in the 1960s’, in Bart Moore-Gilbert & John Seed (eds.), *Cultural Revolution? The Challenge of the Arts in the 1960s*, London: Routledge, 1992, p.218.

⁸² ‘The Stable Dour after the (US) force has gone’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 6 December 1969, p.7.

⁸³ Masters, Brian, *The Swinging Sixties*, London: Constable, 1985, p.33.

profitable, as a well a possible longer term solution, to the problems constantly faced by the industry.

The challenges faced by film industry during the 1960s is shown in the way British filmmakers developed different strategies of production, distribution, and exhibition throughout the decade. Robert Hartford-Davis' career, from low budget, independent "quota-quickies", and full-length feature films, to negotiations with large production companies like Rank, and international distribution deals with Hollywood, illustrates the difficulties experienced by filmmakers in the 1960s. Confronted with declining audiences, filmmakers had to choose between making popular X-rated films, for the less lucrative independent cinema circuit (and the slim possibility of a major release), or family-oriented films for the larger, more profitable Rank and ABC cinema circuit (and access to the North American market). Filmmakers also had to contend with balancing the pressures of creating a commercially viable film with the burden of dealing with an (at times) hostile critical establishment. The increasing liberalisation of the arts in the 1960s bought opportunities for production companies like Compton to make films that could often test the conservative duopoly of the Rank Organisation and ABPC. Furthermore, the career of Robert Hartford-Davis, offers an opportunity to challenge some of the orthodoxies associated with the British film industry during the 1960s, as well as question the structure and importance of the mainstream domestic business.

Literature Review

The primary purpose of this thesis is to open for debate some of the discourses relating to independent low budget filmmaking and the British film industry, as well as to confirm if the term exploitation film can be separated out from its contemporary definition, and to consider what exploitation filmmaking (within a British industrial context) can tell us about the post-war British film industry of the 1960s. Working through these arguments, I have examined several key texts that cover the development of British cinema during this period – these cover historical overviews as well as theoretical arguments. I have also tried to place Hartford-Davis' films and career within an historical and industrial context through the use of several social and cultural texts that cover not only the many voices of the British film industry, but also give an insight into some of the changes occurring in Britain during this period.

The exploitation film is commonly defined as a specific genre of filmmaking that consists of low production values, exploitable themes, controversial narratives, and explicit marketing and publicity. As a starting point in the analysis of the history of exploitation films, I began with Eric Schaefer's, *"Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!" A History of Exploitation Films, 1919-1959*. Schaefer's analysis is important because his work offers a theoretical framework from which I could examine whether the industrial conditions that resulted in American exploitation films could be similarly applied to the British film industry. Schaefer's work established the significance of Hollywood to the exploitation industry which raised the question of whether Schaefer's model could be legitimately applied to the British industry, and if there were the problems in applying this framework. Examining the development of the film industry in Britain, it became clear that the American model and the British models were very different. Censorship, as well as the structure of the mainstream sector, led to a British film industry that developed in very different ways to the equivalent American industry.

The critical and academic orthodoxy of the exploitation film has been applied to other industries and several useful essays, offering theoretical frameworks that discuss films on the periphery of cultural acceptability are found in the following edited collections: Jeffrey Sconce's *Sleaze Artists: Cinema at the Margins of Taste, Style, Politics*, and Ernest Mathijs and Xavier Mendik's *The Cult Film Reader*. These collections offer a wide range of articles, and contain valuable approaches to the reading and analysis of exploitation (and cult) films. Nevertheless, there is an absence of any in-depth discussion of exploitation film within the context of the British film industry. As far as exploitation

film in Britain is concerned, the definition has been loosely applied to a type of film without a discussion of the industrial context that might have produced such films. Furthermore, today the conventional critical and academic orthodox definition of the British exploitation film assumes the American generic archetype of low budget filmmaking and explicit or exploitable subject matter. There exists, therefore, a gap in our knowledge of how exploitation can be applied to low budget filmmaking in Britain. Arguably, the closest to the American model (in terms of industrial conditions) are the “quota-quickies”, and the British “B” movie. These films are thought of as similar to the American exploitation film because they suffered from comparable low production values, they were made very quickly, they contained subjects that often attempted to push cultural and social boundaries, and were frequently dismissed by the critical establishment. Two key books that examine the history of the quota-quickie and the “B” movie are Steve Chibnall’s, *‘Quota Quickies’ The Birth of the British ‘B’ Film*, and Chibnall’s & Brian McFarlane’s, *The British ‘B’ Film*, and the analysis in these books offer a framework from which to explore this type of (often perceived as culturally disreputable) filmmaking in Britain. Nonetheless, the industrial conditions from which the “quota-quickie” and British ‘B’ film arose are very different to the American model of exploitation film as discussed by Schaefer.

The following texts offer not only an historical overview of the development of the domestic film industry, but also opinions and debates on the British industry, as well as (in some cases) the valorisation of a particular type of British film culture and the discourses on quality cinema and lowbrow culture. In *A Mirror for England*, Raymond Durgnat suggested that films could comment on the state of the nation, an argument later challenged by John Hill, who expressed a concern that there were limitations as to whether ‘conclusions about British society can be arrived at on the evidence of the films alone’.¹ Nevertheless, Durgnat’s analysis was primarily concerned with the underlying text of the film, and not with the structure or conditions of the British industry. A similarly approach was used by Roy Armes in *A Critical History British Cinema*, who, while finding enjoyment at ‘the discovery or rediscovery of work of real interest’, also argued that ‘British cinema has produced no equivalent to the masterpieces of neo-realism [...] and no film maker who has explored the possibilities of a realist style in the fictional film with the sensitivity and tenacity of Satyajit Ray’.² Furthermore, Armes believed that

¹ Hill, John, *Sex, Class and Realism: British Cinema 1956 – 1963*, London: British Film Institute, 1986, p.2.

² Armes, Roy, *A Critical History of British Cinema*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1978, p.2.

tracing ‘the progress of British cinema through the 1960s is, with very few exceptions, a fairly bleak procedure’, a perception that other academics such as John Hill and Robert Murphy have attempted to challenge.³

Armes examined the British cinema industry from the silent era onwards, and the coverage of the 1960s forms a small part of Armes’ overview, therefore his analysis was less useful for this thesis, although worth noting is the establishment of a hierarchy of worthwhile British films – a theme that is contained in many other similar critical and academic texts. John Hill’s *Sex, Class and Realism: British Cinema 1956-1963* and specifically Robert Murphy’s *Sixties British Cinema* have attempted to recover the reputation of 1960s British cinema. Hill recognised how, during the mid-1950s and early 1960s, the contents of British films increasingly included, ‘working-class realism, horror, more explicit sex’.⁴ Hill also demonstrated how independent production companies like Hammer, Bryanston and Woodfall ‘were increasingly well placed and most inclined to innovate’ during the start of the decade.⁵ Furthermore, Hill’s analysis focused on what he saw as an increase, from the mid-1950s onwards, in films dealing with contemporary social issues. Hill argued that ‘in one sense [...] that all social problems are ‘exploitative’, capitalising on some current social trend or phenomenon’.⁶ Nevertheless, exploitative and exploitation are two wholly different terms, and although Hill pointed out that ‘the more specific connotations of the ‘exploitation’ label [...] are those of the ‘exploitation’ of subject-matter (and, by implication the audience) through a sensational, and often prurient, treatment’, it is the significance of films associated with the “sensational” and the “prurient”, placed within their industrial context that this thesis will examine.⁷ It is the exploitation label that will be unpacked in this thesis, what it means and if it can be applied to discussions on a certain type of British film.

Murphy’s book argued for a re-appreciation of many British films from this period. Murphy pointed out that many British films produced in the 1960s, for example “kitchen-sink dramas”, were believed to be ‘glum, drab and visually boring’.⁸ British genre cinema, as well as the Swinging London films have similarly been dismissed as superficial, or received minimal critical appreciation, as Murphy has noted.⁹ Murphy’s

³ Armes, 1978, p.262.

⁴ Hill, 1986, p.48.

⁵ Hill, 1986, p.48.

⁶ Hill, 1986, p.117.

⁷ Hill, 1986, p.117.

⁸ Murphy, Robert, *Sixties British Cinema*, London: British Film Institute, 1992, p.1.

⁹ Murphy, 1992, p.2.

book covers the period of this thesis; however his analysis is different from this thesis in terms of the discussion of the definition of exploitation, and the relationship low budget filmmakers had with the mainstream industry. Murphy's description of Hartford-Davis' *Saturday Night Out* and *The Yellow Teddybears*, as 'straightforward exploitation films', conflates low budget filmmaking with the current definition of the exploitation genre, and does not consider the specific modes of production, distribution, and exhibition of these films.

The following texts place an emphasis on British cinema as a nationally specific cinema which has something to say about the state of the nation. Andrew Higson's *Waving the Flag: Constructing a National Cinema in Britain*, Sarah Street's *British National Cinema*, Jeffrey Richards *Films and British National Identity: From Dickens to 'Dad's Army'* and Anthony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards *Best of British: Cinema and Society from 1930 to the Present*, offer debates on the definition of British films, as well as quality film and lowbrow cinema. Street, in making the point that 'British cinema has been both respectable and disreputable, according to the prevailing notions of what constituted a good British film', usefully demonstrates the ongoing tension between highbrow and lowbrow culture.¹⁰ Street's point is reinforced by Aldgate and Richards who argued that the British Board of Film Censors, through their support and validation of the British New Wave, helped to cultivate, 'its own concept of a national cinema'; a cinema predicated on establishing a quality and prestigious British film, whereby the main influence was often based on a literary or theatrical background, and not on a cinematic, or purely visual context.¹¹ Furthermore, Aldgate and Richards, as well as Higson's historical selection of important British films serves to highlight how discourses on the British industry has been framed by references to an established canon, or hierarchy, of good, worthwhile British films. In this thesis, I want to shift the debate and blur the critical and academic discourses of the quality film and lowbrow cinema in terms of production, distribution, and exhibition.

Keywords: British Cinema, Compton Cinema, Exploitation, Robert Hartford-Davis

¹⁰ Street, Sarah, *British National Cinema*, London & New York: Routledge, 1997, p.2.

¹¹ Aldgate, Anthony & Richards, Jeffery, *Best of British: Cinema and Society from 1930 to the Present*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2002, p.194.

Part One: “Counting on Compton”: Exploitation at Compton and British Cinema, 1960 – 1964

Chapter One: “Kitchen-Sinks” and Sex: Exploiting Social Realism

‘We shall continue to present the type of screen entertainment with the maximum effect on the box-office results in order that theatres throughout this country be given the opportunity to thrive and maintain a live and healthy outlook in the future’.

Tony Tenser, 1964.¹

Introduction: Compton and “Kitchen-Sinks”

In 1964, the managing director of the Compton Cinema Club, Tony Tenser, gave an interview to the cinema trade journal *Kinematograph Weekly*. Tenser began with the following declaration, ‘We have fulfilled our promise to provide highly commercial and exploitable programmes for theatres everywhere, and even more important ensured that the right promotion has been executed to ensure that maximum results have been attained’.² Within a few short years, Tenser along with his business partner Michael Klinger had expanded Compton from a distributor of low budget films and owners of a private cinema club, into a fully developed British film production company. Tenser’s approach to working within the British film industry during the early 1960s demonstrates the significance of showmanship, marketing and the promotion of a film as a saleable product. Moreover, Tenser and Klinger believed in the importance of taking advantage of the many avenues available to the company in the presentation of their films.

The desire to view British cinema as an industry worthy of critical and artistic consideration has often resulted in the privileging of a certain type of film, and the elevation of a small group of filmmakers, directors and producers. Particularly relevant to this chapter is the critical and scholarly attention paid to the relatively small output of films that became known as “kitchen-sink dramas”, films that heralded the British New Wave of the late 1950s and early 1960s. The “kitchen-sink dramas” have been celebrated because they embraced narrative social realism matched with the authenticity of a documentary visual aesthetic, an emphasis on explicit sexual themes, location shooting and naturalistic dialogue. This chapter will question the highbrow status awarded to the “kitchen-sink dramas” in the light of the similar marketing and promotional strategies used by the producers of these pictures and the social realist dramas (now referred to as

¹ Tenser, Tony, ‘...‘Counton Compton’ for All-Round Entertainment’, *The Daily Cinema* Preview of 1964, January 1964, p.144.

² Tenser, Tony, ‘Our Promise Has Been Fulfilled’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 7 May 1964, p.66.

exploitation and sexploitation films) made for Compton by Hartford-Davis. Furthermore, the initial critical reaction to both Hartford-Davis' films and "kitchen-sink dramas" was similar, up to the point where crucial critical distinctions (between highbrow and lowbrow culture) were often blurred.

The Filmmakers of Compton: Tenser, Klinger, Hartford-Davis and Newbrook

Tony Tenser was born in London in 1920, and had been involved with the British film industry since the age of twenty-five when he became a trainee cinema manager for the ABC cinema chain.³ Cinema managers at that time were responsible for marketing and promoting films at a local level and Tenser's abilities swiftly led to him becoming 'one of ABC's brightest stars' and won him the title of 'Cinema Manager of the Year for 1949'.⁴ Tenser's reputation led *Kinematograph Weekly* to describe him as 'an experienced cinema manager and publicist with a flair for enterprising showmanship'.⁵ An example of this is demonstrated when, as head of publicity for the independent distributor, Miracle Films, Tenser had been responsible for promoting the sex comedy ...*And God Created Women (Et Dieu...créa la femme*, Roger Vadim, Fr., 1956) starring Brigitte Bardot. When initial interest in the film began to fall, Tenser arranged with Michael Klinger to borrow several dancers from Klinger's Gargoyle Club (a local strip club) to walk through London's West End during lunchtime to demonstrate against the film. As a result, according to Tenser, 'receipts went through the roof'.⁶

The London born Michael Klinger, coyly described by the trade press, as 'an engineer, with an interest in the entertainment world', was the owner of two London strip clubs, the Gargoyle Club and the Nell Gwynne.⁷ Klinger was keen to move into more mainstream entertainment after the Gargoyle Club was used as a film location. According to the cinematographer, Gerry Arbeid, 'Michael got a taste of what a film unit does [...] and got bitten by the bug'.⁸ Following Tenser's successful promotion of Vadim's film, he suggested to Klinger that the pair invest in 'a private cinema, a

³ Hamilton, John, *Beasts in the Cellar: The Exploitation Film Career of Tony Tenser*, Godalming, Surrey: FAB Press, 2005, p.9.

⁴ Hamilton, 2005, p.9.

⁵ 'Count on Compton', Supplement to *Kinematograph Weekly*, 19 November 1964, p.3.

⁶ Hamilton, 2005, p.10.

⁷ 'Count on Compton', Supplement to *Kinematograph Weekly*, 19 November 1964, p.3.

⁸ Arbeid, Gerry. 'Interview with Gerry Arbeid', *michaelklingerpapers.uve.ac.uk*; The film Arbeid refers to is possibly the comedy *On the Fiddle* (Cyril Frankle, 1961), it is the only film made during this period that fits the timeline.

“members only” club’.⁹ Tenser’s decision to establish a private cinema was based on the knowledge that as a private club they would not have to follow the restrictions imposed by the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC) and could ‘show its clientele whatever films they liked’.¹⁰

Established in 1913 by the British film industry, the BBFC carries no legal status, ‘its function being to either classify or cut or reject films submitted to it’ and the certificates awarded to films served only as a guide to local authorities to denote whether the film was suitable for adults or children.¹¹ Nonetheless, local authorities still retained the right to decide to show films within their district. This anomaly has its origin in the 1909 Cinematograph Act, which gave local authorities the right to license cinemas to show films on the pretext of health and safety regulations. However, the wording of the Act also allowed local authorities to ‘act as censors of film content’.¹² The BBFC was thus established to avoid over six hundred local authorities individually censoring or banning films within their districts. Nevertheless, the right of local authorities to censor or ban films still existed in the 1960s, and into the 1970s.

On 25 January 1961, *The Daily Cinema* announced that the Compton Cinema was ‘now available for press and trade shows [...] London’s newest luxury theatre with refreshment room and licensed bar service’.¹³ The club, according to Gerry Arbeid who later worked for Compton as a technical manager, ‘was an immediate success. They used to line up day and night to get in. Money was flowing like water’.¹⁴ The success of the Compton Cinema Club led to establishment of the distribution company, Compton-Cameo, followed by a production division, Compton-Tekli. For Compton-Tekli, Tenser and Klinger hired a filmmaker who was already associated with the British film industry: the producer\director Robert Hartford-Davis.

Hartford-Davis was born in Ramsgate, and (according to Hartford-Davis) he ‘left school at 13, worked as an electrician at Teddington Studios, educated himself at night school, got to America as a photographer on the Queen Elizabeth and worked at a studio canteen in Hollywood while he took a degree at the University of California’.¹⁵ After the

⁹ Hamilton, 2005, p.10.

¹⁰ Hamilton, 2005, p.10.

¹¹ Robertson, James C., *The Hidden Cinema: British Film Censorship in Action 1913-1975*, London: Routledge, 1993, p.1.

¹² Richards, Jeffrey & Robertson, James C., ‘British Film Censorship’, in Robert Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book* 3rd Edition, London: British Film Institute, 2009, p.67.

¹³ ‘The Compton Cinema’, *The Daily Cinema*, 25 January 1961, p.10.

¹⁴ Arbeid, Gerry. ‘Interview with Gerry Arbeid’, *michaelklingerpapers.uwe.ac.uk*.

¹⁵ Edwards, Sydney, ‘The sour smell of success’, *Evening Standard*, 15 September 1972, BFI Microfiche.

war, Hartford-Davis ‘moved to British National Studios at Elstree [...] he worked in the camera department, as a clapper boy, focus puller (a job he disliked) and in the cutting room’, and as electrician on “B” features like *Waltz Time* (Paul L. Stein, 1945), *The Laughing Lady* (Stein, 1946), and *Dual Alibi* (Alfred Travers, 1948).¹⁶ In the early 1950s, Hartford-Davis worked with several well-known directors including, ‘John Huston, King Vidor, Charles Crichton and Basil Dearden on films like “Moby Dick,” “Seventh Veil,” “Lavender Hill Mob” and “Scott of the Antarctic”’.¹⁷

There is some speculation and confusion surrounding the details of Hartford-Davis’ early career, as David McGillivray pointed out, ‘the only source of information for his early life is his own CV, which has suspicious gaps in some places and is packed with equally suspicious glamorous incident in others’.¹⁸ Furthermore, there are several conflicting stories, for example, Hartford-Davis revealed that he was ‘orphaned at 14’, however Peter Newbrook recalled talking to Hartford-Davis’ father several times on the telephone when the pair worked together during the 1960s.¹⁹ Moreover, Newbrook confirmed ‘that he had been an electrician at Teddington Studios under the name of Bob Davis. When he became Robert Hartford-Davis I don’t know’.²⁰

Despite these contradictions in Hartford-Davis’ early background, we do know that he began his directing career making short films in the mid-1950s for several small, low budget British film studios. Hartford-Davis’ first film, for the independent British producer Edwin J. Fancey, was *The Man on the Cliff* (1955), a short thriller about an amnesiac man who believes the police want him for murder. Fancey, like Tenser and Klinger, began by distributing films from Continental Europe, as well as short British films through the companies DUK and New Realm. Fancey’s selection of films, as Steve Chibnall and Brian McFarlane have noted, ‘showed a willingness to exploit the topical and the mildly salacious that was at odds with attempts to promote British cinema’s claims to seriousness, quality and wholesomeness’.²¹ Throughout the 1950s and into the early 1960s, Fancey’s production companies – Border, Fantur Films, and New Realm – would make a succession of thrillers, as well as exploit the late-1950s trend in nudist camp films; for example, New Realm distributed *Nudist Memories* (Arnold Louis Miller,

¹⁶ Clarke, Sue, ‘Hollywood? It’s just another place to make a movie’, *CinemaTV Today*, 6 May 1972, p.26; O’Hara, Gerry. ‘Interview with Gerry O’Hara’, *michaelklingerpapers.uwe.ac.uk*.

¹⁷ Clarke, 6 May 1972, p.26.

¹⁸ McGillivray, David, ‘High Blood Pressure’, *Shivers*, January 1994, no.10, p.12.

¹⁹ Todd, Derek, ‘After ‘Sandwich Man’ — the pill’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 30 December 1965, p.14.; See Appendix A.

²⁰ See Appendix A; Hartford-Davis’ Wikipedia entry also refers to him as William Henry Davis.

²¹ Chibnall, Steve & McFarlane, Brian, *The British ‘B’ Film*, London: British Film Institute, 2009, p.117.

1959), one of Britain's first nudist films.²² Hartford-Davis' *The Man on the Cliff* starred Ronald Leigh-Hunt, and Adrienne Scott (the screen name of Adrienne Fancey, the daughter of E. J. Fancey) and was the story of a missing scientist, amnesia, and a stolen identity; the film is typical of many low budget crime thrillers of the period.²³ Moreover, Hartford-Davis' exposure to this type of low cost filmmaking would have been familiar from his early career spent working at Teddington Studios.

Teddington was the British-based location for the Hollywood film company Warner Bros. During the 1930s in America, Warner Bros. had become associated with social problem pictures in an attempt to shift away from the fantasy and light entertainment offered by other American studios, and towards a more realistic aesthetic.²⁴ The films produced by Warner Bros. at Teddington were often low budget thrillers that, as Steve Chibnall has noted, 'encountered more censorship problems than most', for example, *Smithy* (George King, 1933), suggested pre-marital intercourse, and *Mayfair Girl* (King, 1934) originally featured a 'spanking scene'.²⁵ This early introduction to controversial subject matter would reoccur throughout Hartford-Davis' career.

Hartford-Davis' next film, *Dollars for Sale* (1955), was produced by Ascot House Films Productions (the only film produced by the company). The film was directed by Denis Kavanagh and produced and written by Hartford-Davis. Kavanagh was also closely associated with E. J. Fancey, a relationship that had begun in 1940. The director had made several short musical films for the company before moving on to directing *Night Comes Too Soon* (Kavanagh, 1948), 'a creepy country house ghost story'.²⁶ Given the relatively small-scale nature of the British film industry at this time, it is likely that Hartford-Davis would have met Kavanagh during the shooting of *The Man on the Cliff* for Fancey.

Dollars for Sale, as Chibnall has noted, is interesting because of the unusual casting (for its time) of the black actor Earl Cameron as the villain.²⁷ As Jim Pines has argued, black representation in British cinema during the 1930s, was either framed within post-

²² *Nudist Memories* is perhaps more notable for featuring the first screen appearance by the ex-stripper Anna Karen, who would later become a household name as Olive, the long-suffering sister of Reg Varney's character, Stan Butler, in the long running situation comedy *On the Buses* (LWT: UK, 1969-73).

²³ Ronald Leigh-Hunt had a long career on British television, including appearances in *The Avengers* (ABC: UK, 1961-9) and *Danger Man* (ATV: UK, 1960-8).

²⁴ Gledhill, Christine, 'The Gangster Film', in Pam Cook (ed.), *The Cinema Book* 3rd Edition, London: British Film Institute, 2007, p.282.

²⁵ Chibnall, Steve, '*Quota Quickies*' *The Birth of the British 'B' Film*, London: British Film Institute, 2007, p.143.

²⁶ Chibnall, 2009, pp.117-8.

²⁷ Chibnall, 2009, p.103.

colonial discourses, or, following post-war mass immigration from the Caribbean, confined to ‘blacks as ‘victims’ or ‘social problems’’.²⁸ The character Cameron plays is central to the action, unlike other contemporary British films featuring prominent black characters such as *Pool of London* (Basil Dearden, 1951), *Sapphire* (Dearden, 1959), and *Flame in the Streets* (Roy Baker, 1961). Furthermore, the racial tension in these films ‘functions primarily as a backdrop against which the domestic melodramas [of the white families] unfold’.²⁹ Cameron made appearances in all of these films nevertheless his presence can be described as non-threatening, ‘polite, deferential and reflective’.³⁰ *Dollars for Sale* is an indication of how low budget features could embrace subjects (in this case a black villain) in ways that other higher profile films, from mainstream British studios, were reluctant to do so. For example, *Pool of London*, *Sapphire* and *Flame in the Streets* were all distributed by the Rank Organisation, and the black criminal characters’ contribution to violence in these films is far less explicit than their white counterparts. For example, the criminal black underclass in *Sapphire* is shown however the murderer is the white boyfriend of the eponymous Sapphire, and the black characters are only guilty of failing to cooperate with the police (whom, in the case of one of the detectives, are depicted as racist anyway).

In spite of Cameron’s casting, the plot, which concerned a joint Anglo-American police operation attempting to track down an international gang of forgers, was believed by the trade press to be a blatant attempt to appeal to the American market. *To-Day’s Cinema* liked the ‘fast-moving detection and thrills’ but identified the ‘shrewd eye for the American market’.³¹ *Kinematograph Weekly* described the film as a ‘pint-size British crime featurette, with a pronounced American flavour’, and ‘obviously made with the American market in mind’.³² Furthermore, the American influence on the film was viewed as the least positive aspect of the movie, as *Kinematograph Weekly* pointed out, ‘most of the players sound adenoidal’.³³ The criticism of the actors’ speech pattern brings to light a particular type of American speech pattern – one that is associated with lowbrow Hollywood gangster and crime films – and something many in British film industry, as

²⁸ Pines, Jim, ‘British Cinema and Black Representation’, in Robert Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book* 3rd Edition, London: British Film Institute, 2009, p.120.

²⁹ Pines, 2009, p.120.

³⁰ Hill, John, *Sex, Class and Realism: British Cinema 1956-1963*, London: British Film Institute, 1986, p.83.

³¹ ‘Film Reviews, “Dollars for Sale”’, *To-Day’s Cinema*, 8 July 1955, p.8.

³² ‘Dollars for Sale’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 14 July 1955, p.19.

³³ ‘Dollars for Sale’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 14 July 1955, p.19.

well as film critics, believed was unhelpful to the development of British films as a “quality” cinema.

After *Dollars for Sale*, Hartford-Davis travelled to South Africa where he produced, directed and scripted *City of Contrasts* (1959) a documentary about the differences in the way of life between white Europeans and black South Africans. Following this, Hartford-Davis made an unusual adaptation of the Charles Dickens novel, *A Christmas Carol* (1960); in which a ‘white Scrooge’s conscience is pricked by the plight of the poor black Cratchit family’.³⁴ The critical reaction to the twenty-eight minute film, which was made during the apartheid regime in South Africa, is confined to a sole review in *The Daily Cinema* which only referred to the film as ‘useful for showmen with a flair for seasonal gimmicks’.³⁵ Nonetheless, it is difficult to judge how radical the film might have been because no copies are available for viewing. However, it is worth noting that the film was produced by Nat Cohen and Stuart Levy the owners of Anglo Amalgamated, a British independent production and distribution company set up in 1942. Anglo Amalgamated, along with Compton, had a significant influence on the development of low budget independent British film industry during the 1960s, as I will discuss in the following chapters.

On Hartford-Davis’ return to London, he made the twenty-three minute documentary *Stranger in the City* (1961), which he again produced, directed and scripted, with his production company Caesar Films. The film examined the less culturally respectable end of life in London, and predates similar views of the capital’s sleazy nightlife which feature prominently in several documentaries made by the independent director and producer Arnold Louis Miller – they include *West End Jungle* (1961), *London in the Raw* (1964) and *Primitive London* (1965). Furthermore, *Stranger in the City* was also one of the first films to be distributed by Compton. The film featured prostitutes, tramps, as well as footage of striptease shows.

The filming of striptease shows and nude revues is not that unusual for the period and had already entered into the mainstream of British culture, something Hartford-Davis would have been aware of. The striptease sequences in *Stranger in the City* were an attempt to capitalise on the popularity of this type of adult entertainment that had gradually replaced traditional music hall and variety shows (which had also frequently been associated with risqué and bawdy entertainment) throughout the late 1950s and

³⁴ McGillivray, *Shivers*, January 1994, p.13.

³⁵ ‘A Christmas Carol’, *The Daily Cinema*, 21 November 1960, p.8.

early 1960s. However, the decline in theatre audiences throughout the 1950s forced many owners to introduce live nude acts with, as historian David Kynaston has pointed out, ‘ultimately disastrous consequences in terms of family entertainment’.³⁶ The titillating allure of striptease was exploited in a number of British films during the 1960s including *Cover Girl Killer* (Terry Bishop, 1959), *Beat Girl* (Edmond T. Gréville, 1960), *Jungle Street* (Charles Saunders, 1961), *Strip Tease Murder* (Ernest Morris, 1963), as well as a later entry, Compton’s production of *Secrets of a Windmill Girl* (Arnold Louis Miller, 1966) – used to promote the company’s recent takeover of the famous London theatre.

The differences in the critical reaction between *Stranger in the City* and other short documentaries released at the same time, demonstrates how even documentaries could not avoid the critical and cultural demarcation between the respectable and the lowbrow. For example, the reviewer for the middlebrow *Monthly Film Bulletin* noted that *Stranger in the City* ‘depicted [...] a mixture of (badly) acted and unposed [*sic*] scenes’, and the ‘everyday life of the capital’s millions is scarcely touched upon, the ground covered is familiar to filmgoers, perhaps most of all the supposedly “off-beat” material—pick-up girls, a strip-club’.³⁷ By way of contrast, the short documentary *Sea Sanctuary* (Ralph Keene, 1960), which was released at the same time as *Stranger in the City*, was produced by Selwood\Independent Artists and distributed by the Rank Organisation. The *Monthly Film Bulletin* pointed out that ‘colour film of the birds and seals of England’s shores is nothing new, but a well-photographed record like this one [...] is still most welcome’.³⁸ For a documentary about semi-conductor research, *Transistors* (Clive Rees, 1961), the same publication reviewed in great detail the manufacturing techniques featured in the film, and argued that it was ‘handsomely produced [...] the commentary is lucid, the music discreet, and the Eastman Colour photography of a high order’.³⁹ The difference between the lowlife stories of *Stranger in the City*, and the depiction of nature in *Sea Sanctuary*, suggests the *Monthly Film Bulletin*’s preference for culturally respectable representations of nature, or meditations on British industry in *Transistors*, rather than the sordid depictions of sleazy city life found in Hartford-Davis’ film.

The difference in reception is also marked by the critical response in *Kinematograph Weekly*. The reviewer supported Hartford-Davis’ film, and highlighted the more commercial aspects of *Stranger in the City*, which was described as ‘an unusual look

³⁶ Kynaston, David, *Family Britain 1951-57*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009, p.206.

³⁷ ‘Stranger in the City’, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 1 June 1961, p.87.

³⁸ ‘Sea Sanctuary’, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 1 June 1961, p.87.

³⁹ ‘Transistors’, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 1 June 1961, p.87.

at aspects of London life during one day. The film is without commentary, with music creating the necessary “atmosphere” for various situations; some pathetic, some amusing, and some suggestive’.⁴⁰ The differences between the reviews in the *Monthly Film Bulletin* and *Kinematograph Weekly* demonstrate the divergent stress placed on some films in Britain. *Kinematograph Weekly* was one of the most important trade publications of the period and was primarily interested in the promotion of the film industry as a commercial business, whereas the *Monthly Film Bulletin* supported the cultural “quality” features of cinema. Furthermore, the differences in critical reception illustrates one of the key aspects of this thesis, the marginalisation of a film like *Stranger in the City* has led to a failure to acknowledge the film’s contribution to changes in British culture and society (in this case striptease and aspects of London’s sleazier and sordid side) – a point I will return to throughout this thesis.

Stranger in the City also marked the first collaboration between Hartford-Davis and Derek Ford (the associate producer of the film). Ford, and his brother Donald, worked with Hartford-Davis on all of his films made at Compton; and, after leaving the company, Donald contributed the screenplay for Hartford-Davis’ horror film, *Corruption* (1967). *Stranger in the City* also features an early musical score by the composer and presenter Steve Race, who presented the long-running radio programme *My Music* (UK: BBC, 1967-94), and also provided the music for Hartford-Davis’ next film *Crosstrap*. Personnel working in the British film industry would frequently cross paths throughout their careers and illustrates the compact, cottage industry-like nature of low budget filmmaking.

On the 6 February 1961, Hartford-Davis returned to Twickenham Studios to begin work on the sixty-two minute second feature *Crosstrap*, ‘an action drama of a young couple caught up in the conflict between rival gangs of international crooks’, which was based on a novel by James Newton Chance.⁴¹ The production marked an important shift away from Hartford-Davis’ previous thirty-minute short films to longer features. *Crosstrap* also benefited from an increased budget which allowed the director to film the

⁴⁰ ‘Stranger in the City’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 18 May 1961, p.30.

⁴¹ ‘Studio—wise, “Crosstrap”’, *The Daily Cinema*, 1 February 1961, p.8; James Newton Chance was a prolific writer of crime fiction, and he wrote over 150 novels between 1935 and 1987, including several entries in the Sexton Blake detective series, as well as the science-fiction novel *Night of the Big Heat* (1959), which was later adapted for the cinema by Terence Fisher in 1967.

explosion of an aircraft, for which Hartford-Davis bought a second-hand plane – avoiding any expensive (and more time-consuming) miniature model work.⁴²

Crosstrap also offered some intriguing precursors to Hartford-Davis' later films. For example, *Crosstrap* featured, as the review in *The Daily Cinema* pointed out, a 'climatic bloodbath, in which corpses bite the dust as freely as Indians in a John Ford Western', this ending echoes the climax of Hartford-Davis' *Corruption*, in which all of the principal characters are killed by the beam of a malfunctioning surgical laser.⁴³ The critical reception to *Crosstrap* is also similar to many of the responses given to Hartford-Davis' later films. *The Daily Cinema* referred to, 'hearty action and intrigue' as well as the 'spot of sex for flavour', and *Kinematograph Weekly* described *Crosstrap* as, 'brawny, but brainless [...] crudely mixed. Poorly scripted, over-acted and indifferently directed'.⁴⁴ In addition, the *Monthly Film Bulletin's* description of the film as, 'overacted, ludicrous, and amateurish, this so-called thriller finally explodes in a merry crescendo of guns, fists and blood-letting' is similar to the critical reception given to Hartford-Davis' penultimate film, *Black Gunn* (US., 1972) which was described by A.H. Weiler of the *New York Times* as containing 'the "surefire ingredients" of "frequent fireworks and bloodletting," culminating in a "gory final shoot-out."⁴⁵

An analysis of Hartford-Davis' early career confirms several familiar visual and narrative signifiers, including a preference for genre pictures, frenetic action sequences, and the suggestion of sex, as well as a fondness for location shooting, usually London-based, that would reappear in his other films such as *Saturday Night Out* (sex and London scenery), *The Sandwich Man* (shot exclusively in London), and *The Fiend* (more sex, violence and London-based locations). Furthermore, Hartford-Davis' use of popular, contemporary music (in place of traditional orchestral scores) like trad jazz, beat music and rock 'n' roll, feature prominently in many of his films including *The Yellow Teddybears*, *Saturday Night Out*, *Gonks Go Beat*, and *The Fiend*. Finally, *Crosstrap* is also significant because it was the first time that the cinematographer, Peter Newbrook, recalled meeting Hartford-Davis.

The difference between Hartford-Davis' background and Newbrook's early life could not be more dissimilar. Newbrook was born on the 29 June 1920 in Chester,

⁴² Champ, John, 'Production', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 9 February 1961, p.16.

⁴³ 'Crosstrap', *The Daily Cinema*, 26 January 1962, p.6.

⁴⁴ 'Crosstrap', *The Daily Cinema*, 26 January 1962, p.6; 'Crosstrap', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 1 February 1962, p.24.

⁴⁵ 'Crosstrap', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, March 1962, p.40; Quoted in 'Black Gunn', *Film Facts*, 15 December 1972, p.674.

England. His father was a livestock breeder of horses and dogs and his mother was a dancer from New Zealand. Newbrook was educated at Worcester Cathedral School, where he was a weekly boarder, and after leaving school at fourteen, Newbrook found work (like Hartford-Davis) at the Warner Bros. studios in Teddington. Newbrook's first job was as a messenger before he moved into the stills department. He later worked in the sound room, cutting room, and projection booth, as well as the script department, before eventually becoming a second assistant cameraman in 1936.⁴⁶

After the outbreak of the Second World War, Newbrook volunteered for the photoreconnaissance department in the RAF, and was transferred into the army's Kinematographic Service, where he worked alongside several filmmakers who would find work in post-war British cinema; they include Roy Ward Baker, Philip Leacock, Thorold Dickinson and Freddie Young.⁴⁷ After the war, Newbrook worked at Ealing Studios on *Dick Barton Strikes Back* (Godfrey Grayson, 1949), which was based on the highly successful BBC radio play, and in 1951 he joined British Lion/London Films as an aerial unit cameraman on *The Sound Barrier* (David Lean, 1952). Newbrook's work on *The Sound Barrier* was the start of a working relationship with Lean that would last for eleven years. Newbrook would later work with Lean on *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (Lean, 1957) and *Lawrence of Arabia* (Lean, 1962); it was Newbrook (with Freddie Young and John Box) who helped to develop the now famous sequence of the actor Omar Sharif riding across the desert towards the audience.⁴⁸

During the 1960s, Newbrook worked with Hartford-Davis at Compton, and with Hartford-Davis setup the production company Titan International. After the business relationship with Hartford-Davis ended, Newbrook went on to produce the modern day horror film, *Crucible of Terror* (Ted Hooker, 1971), and directed his only film, the period horror movie, *The Asphyx* (1972). Newbrook ended his long involvement in the British film industry in 1975, mainly for financial reasons, 'the availability for money for motion picture production in this country was virtually nil. The merchant bank that had bankrolled our company had gone into receivership [...] I lost about £40,000 in shares in

⁴⁶ Newbrook, Peter, AHRC Anglia Television Oral Histories. *Peter Newbrook*, Interviewed by Richard Taylor and Louise Lawrence, [Tape] East Anglian Film Archive, Norwich, 31 July 2007.

⁴⁷ Newbrook, 31 July 2007.

⁴⁸ Newbrook, 31 July 2007.

the bank'.⁴⁹ Newbrook subsequently found employment in the television industry, and worked on several television programmes, including the long-running soap operas *Coronation Street* (UK: Granada, 1960-) and *Emmerdale Farm* (UK: Yorkshire, 1972-). Newbrook then worked at Anglia television as a lighting director before retiring.

Tenser, Klinger, Hartford-Davis, and Newbrook would each bring different but useful experiences to Compton. Tenser's background in showmanship, as well as his talent for publicity stunts and promotional gimmicks created an aura of excitement around Compton's films; an aura that was exploited by Tenser within the pages of *Kinematograph Weekly* and *The Daily Cinema*, as well as on Britain's high streets. Klinger's experience of owning nightclubs and striptease clubs, demonstrated that, in post-war Britain, sex, nudity (and the suggestion of sex) could be a profitable commodity, and he too was well aware of the benefits of promotion and publicity. Hartford-Davis' familiarity with genre films, as well as shooting to a tight schedule and low budgets, was a skill that would combine easily with a style of filmmaking dependent on offering a quick and up-to-date product for cinema audiences. In Newbrook's case, his experience with working on the sets of big budget, Hollywood movies helped Hartford-Davis' early feature film career. I would also argue that Newbrook's cinematographic expertise often gave Hartford-Davis' films a professional sheen they might not otherwise have had for similar low budget productions – as Hartford-Davis generously pointed out in the late 1960s, 'I think that Peter Newbrook is one of the finest producer and cameraman in the world'.⁵⁰

“Kitchen-Sink Dramas”: Social Realism with Sex, Nudity and Violence

The following section will examine how Tenser and Klinger identified the more sensational aspects of British New Wave films (referred to here as “kitchen-sink dramas”). These now highly regarded British films have many similarities, in terms of Compton's approach to the marketing and promotion, as well as exploiting the controversial subject matter, with the films Hartford-Davis produced and directed at the company. Throughout this chapter I will refer to “kitchen-sink dramas” as a description of the New Wave films because I wish to highlight the nuances exposed by describing a

⁴⁹ Peter Newbrook. *AHRC Anglia Television Oral Histories: Peter Newbrook*. Interviewed by Richard Taylor and Louise Lawrence. [Tape] East Anglian Film Archive, Norwich, UK. 8 August 2007. This interview contains a fascinating insight into Newbrook's war career, including details of a joint British, American and Canadian top secret mission in which Newbrook was given the grim task of photographically documenting Japanese wartime atrocities.

⁵⁰ See Appendix D.

film as “New Wave”, as an indication of “quality”, and “kitchen-sink” which suggests culturally or critically disreputable.

It was in publications like *Sight and Sound* that we frequently find an early celebration of a British “New Wave”, whereas the trade press often rejected the description. For example, Penelope Houston argued that *Room at the Top* (Jack Clayton, 1958), ‘has the impact of genuine innovation: a new subject, a new setting, a new talent [...] one of the real turning-points’.⁵¹ The *Daily Express* enjoyed, ‘a British film which at long last, got its teeth into those subjects which have always been part and parcel of our lives’.⁵² The *Monthly Film Bulletin* noted ‘its uncompromising suggestion that life today in an English industrial town can be wretched, ugly and corrupt. Faintly deriving on the one hand from the French low-life directors, and on the other from the Italian realists [...] a rare departure in British film-making’.⁵³ By way of contrast, Bill Edwards in *Kinematograph Weekly*, during the making of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (Karel Reisz, 1960), wrote about, ‘The posh film papers, those journals which generally recognise a film only when it is silent and well scratched, have been quick to find in Woodfall Productions the British answer to the French “New Wave”’.⁵⁴ However, the cycle failed to live up to many of the critics expectations. The cycle had barely begun before critics like Victor Perkins, in the highbrow critical journal *Movie*, argued that the artistic and commercial renaissance of British film was only a ‘change of attitude, which disguises the fact that the British cinema is as dead as before’.⁵⁵

Houston’s celebration of *Room at the Top*, as something new and exciting, signalled the beginning of a critical re-evaluation British film. Peter Hutchings has stated that *Room at the Top*, which was based on the bestselling book by John Braine, was the first film of the British “New Wave”, and its positive reception by critics and British audiences ensured similar films followed.⁵⁶ *Room at the Top* was an instant success on both sides of the Atlantic, and was quickly followed by an adaptation of Alan Silitoe’s account of Northern England working class life, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. Other films in the cycle included a story of teenage pregnancy, and pre-marital inter-racial sex in *A Taste of Honey* (Tony Richardson, 1960), more pre-marital sex, and course dialogue in *A Kind of*

⁵¹ Houston, Penelope, ‘Room at the Top?’, *Sight and Sound*, Spring 1959, pp.58-9.

⁵² Quoted in Sandbrook, Dominic, *Never had it so Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles*, London: Little, Brown, 2005, p.192.

⁵³ ‘Room at the Top’, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, February 1959, p.15.

⁵⁴ ‘Edwards, Bill, ‘Production’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 24 March 1960, p.16.

⁵⁵ Perkins, Victor, ‘The British Cinema’, *Movie*, no.1, June 1962, p.3.

⁵⁶ Hutchings, Peter, ‘Beyond the New Wave: Realism in British Cinema, 1959-63’, in Robert Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book* 3rd Edition, London: British Film Institute, 2009, p.305.

Loving (John Schlesinger, 1962), and further pre-marital sex, violence and bad language in *This Sporting Life* (Lindsay Anderson, 1963).⁵⁷ However, despite the successes of these films the cycle was pretty much over by 1965, having given way to the flamboyance and celebration of consumerism and affluence of films which celebrated “Swinging London”.

Although these films were primarily adaptations of famous novels, or based on successful stage plays, they brought a literary and artistic integrity previously absent from pictures dealing with similar subjects. These films included previously taboo subjects like abortion, illegitimacy, unmarried mothers, graphic violence, as well as a candid approach to the depiction of adult sexual relationships, nudity, and explicit language. Furthermore, although there were gradual shifts within British society taken place towards the themes dealt with in the books, plays and the theatre, the “kitchen-sink dramas” took advantage of the liberalisation of censorship regulations in the late 1950s; themes that Hartford-Davis, Tenser and Klinger would have been well aware of at Compton.

The “kitchen-sink dramas”, signalled a new approach to filmmaking typified, not so much by creating a “quality” cinema, but by creating films that pushed taboos and moral boundaries. “Kitchen-sink dramas” capitalised on controversial content offered as adult entertainment and exploited the commercial prospects of the new X rating category. The independent film producer Harry Saltzman tried to point out this dichotomy.⁵⁸ Saltzman argued, ‘that there is a place in Britain for realistic, hard-hitting films which take chances and show the well-trodden paths of stereotyped, purely-commercial, film-making’.⁵⁹ Moreover, Saltzman shrugged ‘off the comparison that he is consciously making arty rejoinder to the new foreign film-making schools’.⁶⁰ Saltzman was wary of being associated with art cinema, ‘one thing I should like to point out is that we did not form Woodfall Productions from an arty-crafty point of view. We are extremely commercial-minded and we regard the properties we have as commercial properties’.⁶¹

Saltzman’s viewpoint highlighted the tension that existed between the industry and the critical establishment. Saltzman’s commitment to ‘making commercial motion

⁵⁷ The cycle includes *Look Back in Anger* (Tony Richardson, 1959), *The Entertainer* (Richardson, 1960), *The L-Shaped Room* (Bryan Forbes, 1962), *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (Richardson, 1962), and *Billy Liar* (John Schlesinger, 1963), however, this list is far from exhaustive.

⁵⁸ Harry Saltzman, a Quebec-born entrepreneur, had settled in Britain after the war. Saltzman formed the production company Woodfall Productions in the late 1950s, with the television and theatre director Tony Richardson and the playwright John Osborne.

⁵⁹ Saltzman, Harry, ‘New Wave Hits British Films’, *Films and Filming*, April 1960, p.11.

⁶⁰ ‘Edwards, Bill, ‘Production’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 24 March 1960, p.16.

⁶¹ Saltzman, *Films and Filming*, April 1960, p.11.

pictures with a high entertainment quotient' and not to 'selling messages', was at odds with the critical establishment's desire to elevate the aspirations of British national cinema.⁶² Furthermore, these controversial themes were nothing new to Tenser, Klinger and Hartford-Davis, and had been regular features of the films Tenser had been distributing, and Hartford-Davis had been making, from the start of their careers. The connection between the themes of "kitchen-sink dramas" and low budget pictures is a lot closer than the critical consensus would perhaps have wanted. Tenser, Klinger, and Hartford-Davis would continually have to negotiate these tensions during the 1960s.

The promotion and marketing of "kitchen-sink dramas" was similar to many of the films distributed by Tenser and Klinger, and artistic prestige was frequently muted in favour of highlighting the controversial elements of the films, as well as taking advantage of the disreputable connotations associated with the X certificate. For example, *The Daily Cinema* pointed out that *Room at the Top*, 'in dealing with intimate situations, it recalls the best the Continent has to offer', and highlighted the 'provocatively uninhibited sex scenes, salty humour' in *A Kind of Loving*; the 'frankness towards sexual situations' in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*; the 'strong splicing of sex' in *The Entertainer*, and the 'sensationally uninhibited tale of the seamier side of North Country life' in *A Taste of Honey*.⁶³ *This Sporting Life* is 'arrestingly filmed, with pungent sex angle [...] a demanding film, but it's going to cause a stir that will reverberate in cinemas up and down the country'.⁶⁴

In *Kinematograph Weekly*, *Look Back in Anger* was described as 'a highly provocative film and one that could be just as aptly titled "Room at the Bottom"'.⁶⁵ *A Kind of Loving* 'devastatingly and entertainingly mirrors life as it is lived in the so-called "affluent-state." Put another way, the sexy, though salutary, distillation of stolen fruit, bottled on the spot, will be swallowed with avidity and savoured at leisure by all classes'.⁶⁶ *This Sporting Life* had an 'unadulterated sex angle, authentic backgrounds and obvious exploitation possibilities', and *The L-Shaped Room* possessed, 'some genuinely moving sequences [...]

⁶² Saltzman, *Films and Filming*, April 1960, p.11.

⁶³ 'Room at the Top', *The Daily Cinema*, 21 January 1959, p.8; 'A Kind of Loving', *The Daily Cinema*, 13 April 1962, p.4; 'Saturday Night and Sunday Morning', *The Daily Cinema*, 26 October 1960, p.11; 'The Entertainer', *The Daily Cinema*, 18 July 1960, p.13; 'A Taste of Honey', *The Daily Cinema*, 11 September 1961, p.11.

⁶⁴ 'This Sporting Life', *The Daily Cinema*, 4 February 1963, p.6.

⁶⁵ 'Look Back in Anger', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 14 May 1959, p.115.

⁶⁶ Billings, Josh, 'A Kind of Loving', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 19 April 1962, p.9.

but, for the most part, the film's sex glands are more active and stronger than its heartbeats'.⁶⁷

However, in publications like the *Monthly Film Bulletin* and *Sight and Sound*, film critics struggled with the controversial aspects of “kitchen-sink dramas” which appeared to undermine the “quality” aesthetic found within their literary or theatrical origins. For example, in addition to comparing *Room at the Top* with ‘Italian realists’ the *Monthly Film Bulletin* also reluctantly noted the films ‘slightly self-conscious determination to bring sex to the British screen’.⁶⁸ *Look Back in Anger* was viewed as ‘something new in British cinema’, and the actors in *The Entertainer* ‘suggest the freshness and candid intelligence which—for all its shortcomings—this film frequently and then boldly displays’.⁶⁹ The controversial aspects of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* – pre-marital sex, Brenda’s attempted abortion, the risqué sex-scenes, and explicit language – are significantly understated in the *Monthly Film Bulletin*’s review, in favour of stressing the ‘firm writing and close observation [...] the restraint and solidity’.⁷⁰

Likewise, Peter John Dyer also noted in *Sight and Sound* that *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* lacked, ‘the sublimity [*sic*] and universality of *Pather Panchali* and *Tokyo Story*’.⁷¹ In the review of *A Taste of Honey*, the controversial (for the time) sexual relationship between a black sailor and the schoolgirl Jo, her subsequent pregnancy, as well as the morally dubious sexual behaviour of Jo’s mother Ada, is mentioned in the synopsis, but entirely absent from the review; the film, is ‘tart and lively around the edges and bitter at the core’.⁷²

Similarly, the review of *This Sporting Life* downplays the brutal sex-scenes in favour of comparing the photography to the, ‘best Polish films’ and the ‘hypnotic, almost mid-European abstractness about several later scenes’.⁷³ George Stoner, in *Sight and Sound*, referred to the inter-racial love affair in *A Taste of Honey* as a ‘hop, skip and a jump it’s all over’.⁷⁴ However, Penelope Houston was one of the few critics from the quality press to note that *Room at the Top* ‘may climb to the top partly on its X certificate, its

⁶⁷ ‘This Sporting Life’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 31 January 1963, p.17; ‘The L-Shaped Room’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 15 November 1962, p.29.

⁶⁸ ‘Room at the Top’, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, February 1959, p.15.

⁶⁹ ‘Look Back in Anger’, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, June 1959, p.68; ‘The Entertainer’, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, September 1960, p.124.

⁷⁰ ‘Saturday Night and Sunday Morning’, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, December 1960, p.166.

⁷¹ Dyer, Peter John, ‘Saturday Night and Sunday Morning’, *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1960/61, p.33.

⁷² ‘A Taste of Honey’, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, October 1961, p.141.

⁷³ ‘This Sporting Life’, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, March 1963, p. 35.

⁷⁴ Stoner, George, ‘A Taste of Honey’, *Sight and Sound*, Autumn 1961, p.196.

heavy-breathing sales campaign and some dialogue calculated to jolt a few traditionalists used to the discreet reticence of sub-titles'.⁷⁵ This point was not lost on the distributors whose poster campaign for *A Kind of Loving* described the film as, 'A Kind Of Loving That Knew No Wrong Until It Was Too Late!'⁷⁶

Nevertheless, "kitchen-sink dramas" could still create controversy, for example, as the Secretary of the BBFC, John Trevelyan pointed out, the sex scenes in *Room at the Top* 'were regarded as sensational', and there was 'rather more frankness about sexual relations in the dialogue than people had been used to'.⁷⁷ Warwickshire County Council refused to allow *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, to be screened in local cinemas 'unless cuts were made in the sex-scenes', although the film had previously been passed uncut by the BBFC.⁷⁸ Furthermore, the 'frank [...] dialogue about sex', and 'a sex-scene which had implications of nudity' in *The L-Shaped Room* (Bryan Forbes, 1962), led to the studio consulting John Trevelyan at the pre-production stage of the film.⁷⁹

The impact these films had (as well as the controversy these films could generate) is revealed in the choice of the first three feature films produced at Compton. They are *That Kind of Girl* (Gerry O'Hara, 1963), a story about the dangers of promiscuous sex and venereal disease; *The Yellow Teddybears* (Hartford-Davis, 1963), which featured teenage sex, an unwanted pregnancy and abortion; and *Saturday Night Out* (Hartford-Davis, 1964), a compendium of short stories, including sexual blackmail, homelessness, sexual abuse, as well as an exposure of the seediness and sordid life of Soho nightclubs and clip-joints. Compton's films followed the freedoms to explore previously controversial subjects given to filmmakers after the early box-office success of films like *Room at the Top* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*.

Moreover, the obvious exploitation possibilities would have encouraged Tenser and Klinger's filmmaking ambitions. The success of *Room at the Top* (and subsequent "kitchen-sink dramas") proved to Tenser and Klinger that X certificate films could not only be financially viable at the domestic and international box-office, but also give the company increased respectability from within the industry, as well as assist in any plans for future growth – they just had to find the right product.

⁷⁵ Houston, Penelope, 'Room at the Top?', *Sight and Sound*, Spring 1959, p.58.

⁷⁶ 'A Kind Of Loving That Knew No Wrong Until It Was Too Late!', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 12 April 1962, p.14-5.

⁷⁷ Trevelyan, John, *What the Censor Saw*, London: Michael Joseph, 1973, p.106.

⁷⁸ Trevelyan, 1973, p.107.

⁷⁹ Trevelyan, 1973, p.107.

Exploiting the X Certificate

The BBFC introduced the X certificate in 1951 to allow the production of films with adult themes. The X certificate initially applied to ‘foreign films, which often contained more sex and violence than was permitted in British films’ and only children over the age of sixteen would be admitted to screenings.⁸⁰ Although Jeffrey Richards and James Robertson have argued that the X certificate quickly became ‘tarnished as a convenient label for more exploitative fare’, the award by the BBFC of an X certificate to *Room at the Top* signified a shift by the British censors, due in no small part to the liberalising and progressive efforts of John Trevalyan.⁸¹ Trevalyan hoped that the X certificate would allow filmmakers the creative space to make, ‘responsible films on serious adult subjects’.⁸² Nonetheless, Trevalyan found he had to repeatedly defend the X rating. “‘It is truly false’”, he argued in 1962, “‘to say that, because a picture has an X certificate, it must automatically contain, horror, sex or violence. The ‘X’ Certificate is NOT [emphasis in the original] a disreputable certificate’”.⁸³

Despite Trevalyan’s noble intentions, the X certificate continued to be associated with forbidden, unsavoury and disreputable entertainment. Brian Masters’ childhood memory of, ‘wearing a false moustache, and my chin still as soft as marshmallow!’ to see X-rated films and being ‘stupidly [...] excited by’ the daring of *Room at the Top*, was presumably not a unique experience for young people growing up in the 1960s.⁸⁴ For example, a cinema survey in Edinburgh, carried out in 1963, looked at the cinema tastes of 5,000 schoolchildren, this sample represented one third of the city’s children between 14 and 18 years old.⁸⁵ The children stated they would, ‘prefer to go to the cinema rather than watch television because television does not show the X type of film, but they like comedy best of all’.⁸⁶ The survey carried out by the Extra-Mural department of Edinburgh University also discovered that seventy-eight per cent of the children looked at the film category before they would attend the cinema and ‘they went to see sex films as “no one ever explains anything to you”’.⁸⁷ Noting the film category is important

⁸⁰ Richards, Jeffrey & Robertson, James C., ‘British Film Censorship’, in Robert Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book* 3rd Edition, London: British Film Institute, 2009, p.72.

⁸¹ Hutchings, Peter, ‘Beyond the New Wave: Realism in British Cinema, 1959–63’, in Robert Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book* 3rd Edition, London: British Film Institute, 2009, p.308.

⁸² Richards & Robertson, 2009, p.73.

⁸³ “‘X’ On Bingo!”, *The Daily Cinema*, 5 February 1962, p.8.

⁸⁴ Masters, Brian, *The Swinging Sixties*, London: Constable, 1985, p.35.

⁸⁵ ‘Cinema survey shows children prefer comedy and X films’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 29 June 1961, p.6.

⁸⁶ ‘Cinema survey shows children prefer comedy and X films’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 29 June 1961, p.6.

⁸⁷ ‘Cinema survey shows children prefer comedy and X films’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 29 June 1961, p.6.

because it suggests that the children were not interested in the stars of the film, an important marketing tool as far as the mainstream industry was concerned, but the type of film. For low budget filmmakers big stars would have been unaffordable, therefore, marketing exploitable X-rated films suited these young audiences as well as companies like Compton.

The Edinburgh children had an establishment ally in Dr M.S. Harvey, the Medical Officer for Health for Canterbury. In 1960, at the annual meeting of the Ashford District and the Marsh Moral Welfare Association, Harvey argued ‘that youngsters should be allowed to see “X” films and watch television programmes considered “not suitable for children,” provided their parents are present [...] children would see the calm reaction of their parents and follow their example’.⁸⁸ Nonetheless, Dr Harvey’s argument supported a viewpoint that was not accepted by the BBFC, this was highlighted by Trevelyan’s decision to award an X certificate to Hammer’s horror-drama, *Never Take Sweets from a Stranger* (Cyril Frankel, 1960). Although Trevelyan agreed the film could serve as a warning to children, “we thought it too alarming for children. The one thing we think we do know about children’s reactions is that they tend to identify themselves with children on the screen, and any child who saw the film might have regarded each old man he saw as a potential rapist”.⁸⁹ It is worth noting that Trevelyan’s argument was not based on any academic or industry evidence but on the combined views of the BBFC censorship board.

Confusion over the X film and the impact it was thought to have on the decline in cinema audiences was a concern for many in the industry. In 1961, Alfred Davis, president of the Cinematographers Exhibitors’ Association (CEA) argued that, ‘the class of entertainment provided [...] must be one that appeals to all members of the family. Producers must not think in terms of teenagers and “X” certificates but in terms of wholesome entertainment’.⁹⁰ The concern in the increase in X films was also described in a report by Councillor Leach from Rochdale Town Council, after he pointed out that ‘four of the five cinemas were that week showing “X” films’.⁹¹ Moreover, Leach enquired whether the ‘Watch Committee any longer exercised control over exhibitors’, to which he received the reply, ‘the reason there were so many “X” films being shown is because

⁸⁸ ‘Let Children See ‘X’ Films Says Doctor’, *The Daily Cinema*, 18 May 1960, p.13.

⁸⁹ McDougall, Gordon, ‘To Deprave and Corrupt? An Examination of the Methods and Aims of Film Censorship in Britain’, *Motion*, no.2, Winter 1961-2, p.7.

⁹⁰ ‘Help Producers By Exploiting Their Films’, *The Daily Cinema*, 6 February 1961, p.8.

⁹¹ ‘Agitated About ‘X’’, *The Daily Cinema*, 18 February 1963, p.6.

these are the kind of film that are most popular amongst teenagers, who are the ones to frequent the cinemas more than anyone else'.⁹² Even D.J. Goodlatte, the managing director of Associated British Cinemas (ABC), acknowledged the age demographic of post-war audiences; he noted that 'some people [...] continued to talk about the family audience. It no longer existed. The box-office successes are those where we get the youngsters in'.⁹³

The Edinburgh survey highlighted the disparity between large film producers, like the Rank Organisation, and cinema audiences. Throughout the 1960s, John Davis, the managing director of Rank, argued against the X film. At an Open Forum of a meeting by the CEA in 1960, Davis made clear his dislike of X films, he pointed out 'there were far too many "X" films of the wrong type being played at present: "I know some of you have made money out of playing some of these films—good luck to you!"'⁹⁴ In 1963, Davis told the *Guardian*, that 'although of a high artistic quality, many "X" features are unacceptable to "family" audiences "because of their basic concept"'.⁹⁵ Nonetheless, O'Callaghan observed that 'half the films given "X" certificates are foreign language pictures [...] destined for specialist halls and hardly likely, therefore, to drive away family audiences'.⁹⁶ In spite of Davis' objections, Rank cinemas did not wholly avoid exhibiting X films, and two X-rated films, *Sodom and Gomorrah* and *The L-Shaped Room*, appeared among the 'top ten money-earning Rank releases' of 1962.⁹⁷ Furthermore, as the *Guardian's* reporter noted, the big budget (X certificated) *Tom Jones* and *The Birds*, were distributed by Rank, and 'are breaking records everywhere'.⁹⁸ The public position taken by Davis, and others in the industry was often very different from the type of films distributed and exhibited in Rank's cinemas in the 1960s, a disparity that would reoccur throughout the decade.

Davis' negative attitude towards X films was supported by Robert Clark, president of the British Film Producers Association (BFPA), who argued, "in our drive for increased attendances, we producers should stop and consider what we mean when we say our films portray 'the British way of life.' Deliberately to produce a film depicting the sordid activities of a small and exceptional segment of society with a view to getting

⁹² 'Agitated About 'X'', *The Daily Cinema*, 18 February 1963, p.6.

⁹³ 'Let's have more American films which suit the tastes of British audiences'—Goodlatte', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 2 May 1963, p.9.

⁹⁴ 'A 'Silent Revolt' Against 'X'—Davis', *The Daily Cinema*, 3 June 1960, p.1.

⁹⁵ O'Callaghan, John, 'Certificate X', *Guardian*, 21 September 1963, p.5.

⁹⁶ O'Callaghan, John, 'Certificate X', *Guardian*, 21 September 1963, p.5.

⁹⁷ O'Callaghan, John, 'Certificate X', *Guardian*, 21 September 1963, p.5.

⁹⁸ O'Callaghan, John, 'Certificate X', *Guardian*, 21 September 1963, p.5.

an X certificate is not portraying the ‘the British way of life.’ It is misuse of the thinking which gave birth to the X certificate.”⁹⁹ Clark’s objection, I would suggest, was aimed at the way of life depicted in “kitchen-sink dramas”, all of which received X ratings from the BBFC. Clark’s views also mirror the negative reception given to Hartford-Davis’ documentary *Strangers in the City* which had been criticised for portraying aspects of British life believed to be undesirable.

Despite Davis’ objections, X-rated films continued to make up, as J.P.H. Walton General Secretary of the BFPA, ‘about a fifth of total availability of product’; a survey by *The Daily Cinema* confirmed that for the last six months of 1962, ‘45 out of a total of 164 features’ were rated X.¹⁰⁰ However, the production of films deemed by the BBFC to fit into the X category fluctuated during the early 1960s. For example, as a report in *The Daily Cinema* noted, ‘fewer “X” certificates were issued’ in the first six months of 1963, however, of the 41 X films released ‘some 25 were in the English dialogue commercial class compared with only 22 [...] for the previous year’.¹⁰¹ Davis’ negative attitude towards the X certificate was driven by a personal distaste, his belief that these films were driving audiences away, as well as the disreputable reputation the certificate had gained with several local councils. Although the certificate was meant to indicate that X films were not suitable for children, the CEA noted that ‘some local authorities were misinformed about this category. They seemed to think that X films were salacious films’.¹⁰²

The problem for cinema owners was further complicated by the additional powers granted to local authorities. Films granted an X certificate by the BBFC could face a later ban by local authorities. For example, in Birmingham ‘magistrates and representatives of local authorities in the area [...] banned two X films, the Swedish “Black Jackets” and the American “Private Property,” after attending a special preview’.¹⁰³ *Private Property* (Leslie Stevens, US., 1960) was also banned in Glasgow by the city magistrates, one of three films (the other two were *Black Jackets* and *Warsaw Ghetto*) that had not received a BBFC certificate, and was considered ‘not suitable for showing in

⁹⁹ ‘Clark urges more streamlining of distribution and booking’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 31 January 1963, p.5.

¹⁰⁰ ‘1 in 4 are ‘X’: BFPA ask about ‘AA’ again’, *The Daily Cinema*, 11 March 1963, p.1, p.8.

¹⁰¹ ‘Fewer ‘X’ films—but more in English!’ *The Daily Cinema*, 24 July 1963, p.3.

¹⁰² ‘CEA Branch Reports’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 9 March 1961, p.33.

¹⁰³ ‘Birmingham bans two X certificate films’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 29 June 1961, p.6.

the city'.¹⁰⁴ The banning of *Private Property* highlights how important the decision by Tenser to open a private cinema club was during this period because Stevens' film was screened un-cut at Compton's Soho cinema. Tenser and Klinger capitalised on the British public's willingness to view films which companies like the Rank Organisation found difficult to accept. By understanding this shift in the public mood, Tenser and Klinger could fully exploit the films procured for distribution and exhibition by Compton.

Tenser and Klinger may have courted controversy, and the company always faced the possibility of their films being banned in other UK cinemas. For example, *The Yellow Teddybears* was banned by representatives of the Blackburn Watch Committee (they had not actually viewed the film but had only read the synopsis). However, after previewing the film, the Committee overturned the ban and agreed that it was suitable for 'showing to audiences over the age of 16 years'.¹⁰⁵ An article in the *Guardian* later criticised the reaction of the Committee, arguing that the ban was an 'odd decision', and pointing out that 'the film is about as erotically suggestive as a suet pudding. There is so much earnest chat about teenage sex and promiscuity that we scarcely get a whiff of the product itself. Blackburn watch committee can count itself fortunate if it found anything exciting about it'.¹⁰⁶ Films like *The Yellow Teddybears* were not the only type of entertainment to concern Blackburn's moral guardians. In 1961, the Blackburn Free Church Council had set up a committee to 'prepare a report on "X" films and "sordid and salacious" posters', as well as 'investigate film literature and posters', and 'may attend showings of "X" films'.¹⁰⁷ It is worth noting that the committee only suggested attending X-rated films, this indicates that it was perhaps enough for a film to be awarded an X certificate in order to be potentially offensive or cause outrage.

A film that proved more controversial than *The Yellow Teddybears* was *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. Despite being passed by the BBFC, Warwickshire County Council banned the film. Following a further, private screening, the Warwickshire Cinematograph Licensing Committee decided to lift the ban on the condition that two cuts to the film were made. The two scenes to be cut included 'the first bedroom scene

¹⁰⁴ 'Glasgow Turns Down Three-Film Request', *The Daily Cinema*, 10 March 1961, p.3; There is no other information on *Black Jackets* and *Warsaw Ghetto* and it is possible they were films from Continental Europe that were retitled for UK distribution.

¹⁰⁵ 'Now They Can See "Teddybears"', *The Daily Cinema*, 24-25 February 1964, p.7.

¹⁰⁶ 'The Yellow Teddybears', *Guardian*, 20 January 1964, p.4.

¹⁰⁷ 'Concerned about "X"', *The Daily Cinema*, 3 March 1961, p.15.

in the film, and a scene showing the couple lying on the bed'.¹⁰⁸ David Kingsley, managing director of British Lion, and the producer, Tony Richardson, refused to cut the film.¹⁰⁹ Kingsley argued that, "These are very substantial cuts involving a very important scene and we just cannot agree to them—even if it means that the film will be banned in Warwickshire [...] This is a very important film and, to my mind, it is a work of art. We are not prepared to agree that a film of such outstanding merit should be re-edited by the Mrs. Grundys of the Warwickshire County Council'.¹¹⁰ Despite Kingsley's argument, they carried no weight with the Warwickshire Committee which continued to ban films, including the teenage delinquent drama, *Beat Girl* (Edmond T. Gréville, 1960), an irreverent farce, *The Green Mare's Nest* (*La jument verte*, Claude Autant-Lara, Fr.\It., 1959), a teenagers-in-love story, *Sins of Youth* (*Pêche de jeunesse*, Louis Duchesne, Fr., 1958), and the horror film *Peeping Tom* (Michael Powell, 1960).¹¹¹

Apprehension over the X certificate was not solely confined to Rank or local authorities; other institutions associated with the British film industry also articulated alarm. At the annual general meeting of the CEA, anxiety was expressed about 'the increasing number of X certificate films and the hooligans which this type of programme inevitably attracts'.¹¹² The Edinburgh and South East of Scotland section of the CEA, pointed out that 'the "X" category of films includes quite a number "of pseudo-scientific pictures which no longer horrify, but merely amuse" [...] because of this [...] the problem of "X" films is a "difficult one"'.¹¹³ The debate over X films was not confined to the cinema industry but was part of a wider discourse taking place within British society about the role of censorship. One such campaign, comprising of a group of forty MPs, and 'headed by Sir Cyril Black (Conservative, Wimbledon) [were] worried by what they regard as lower standards of morality in entertainment'.¹¹⁴ This group were, nevertheless, 'less worried about the cinema than by striptease shows and by brutality in television' and they wanted the Home Office to think about censorship categories 'modelled on the present cinema system'.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁸ 'British Lion refuses Warwickshire demand to cut 'Saturday Night'', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 26 January 1961, p.6.

¹⁰⁹ British Lion, along with Woodfall Film and Bryanston Films, had produced the film.

¹¹⁰ 'British Lion refuses Warwickshire demand to cut 'Saturday Night'', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 26 January 1961, p.6.

¹¹¹ 'Warwickshire bans four more', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 9 February 1961, p.1.

¹¹² 'CEA Warning to Unions', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 9 March 1961, p.3, p.33.

¹¹³ 'Go easy on the 'X'...', *The Daily Cinema*, 23 January 1961, p.1, p.10.

¹¹⁴ 'Commons Move for Debate on Censorship', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 9 March 1961, p.3.

¹¹⁵ 'Commons Move for Debate on Censorship', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 9 March 1961, p.3.

In addition to the banning of films by local authorities, cinema owners could also face fines if it was found that children were viewing X certificate films. For example, Lewis David Paul, the district supervisor and licensee of the Essoldo cinema in Salford was fined £40 and the cinema's manager, Arthur Williams, was fined £10 when 'police visited a cinema after a complaint from a Salford City Councillor and found 26 boys and girls watching 'X' films'.¹¹⁶ The Salford experience makes clear it was young people, and not the commonly held perception of the 'raincoat brigade', that were the primary audience for X films.¹¹⁷ This complicated, for low budget filmmakers, the attraction of their films to young audiences.

The BBFC may have believed that passing more X certificate films would encourage 'films for adults' nonetheless the provocative subjects, as well as the emphasis (by distributors and exhibitors) on the exploitable features of these films, attracted a younger audience keen to shift away from the restrictions and austerity of the immediate post-war period.¹¹⁸ A shift in opinion that some filmmakers were ready to exploit, as Trevelyan belatedly acknowledged, observing that 'the letter 'X' should not have been chosen in view of its value in exploitation advertising'.¹¹⁹ Tenser and Klinger recognised the importance of exploiting X certificate films and they had no qualms in exhibiting films the Rank Organisation were reluctant to show. As independent distributors and exhibitors, they made every attempt to exploit the appeal of the X certificate for cinemagoers.

The Compton Cinema Group: From Exhibition to Distribution and Production.

The Compton Cinema opened at 60-62 Old Compton Street, Soho, and was advertised as, 'London's Newest Luxury Theatre with Refreshment Room and Licensed Bar Service'.¹²⁰ The economic significance of London is important; many British film studios had their offices in nearby Wardour Street, and the highest proportion of cinema attendance and therefore higher box-office takings were also available in London. For example, the yearly box-office takings for London in 1961 was £18,077, after London

¹¹⁶ 'Fined After Juniors Saw 'X' Films', *The Daily Cinema*, 15 March 1963, p.12.

¹¹⁷ See Appendix C.

¹¹⁸ Trevelyan, 1973, p.51.

¹¹⁹ Trevelyan, 1973, p.53.

¹²⁰ 'Count on Compton', Supplement to *Kinematograph Weekly*, 19 November 1964, p.3; 'The Compton Cinema', *The Daily Cinema*, 25 January 1961, p.10.

came the North West region with £6,942, the smallest box-office was in Wales with £2,754.¹²¹

The decision by Tenser and Klinger to invest in the British film industry at a time when cinema admissions in the UK were declining could have been perceived as a risky business strategy. *Kinematograph Weekly* reported frequently on the decline in cinema audiences and noted the admission figures throughout year. In 1961, the year Compton's Cinema Club opened, the 'total cinema admissions [...] were 449,114,000, a drop of almost 14 per cent on the 521 million admissions for 1960'.¹²² Although by the beginning of 1962 the decline had only dropped to 11 per cent, previous records had recorded falls of 17 per cent in 1957 and 20 per cent in 1959.¹²³ The decline in cinema audiences was also mirrored in the growth of cinema closures, a trend that had started in the early 1950s. In 1951, '4,851 cinemas were open [...] by 1956 this had dropped to 4,391 and by 1960 to 3,034'.¹²⁴ Bearing in mind these figures, Tenser and Klinger's decision looked like an increasingly bad business strategy. Nevertheless, these figures fail to reveal the disparity in cinema ownership in Britain.

As mentioned in the introduction, two companies dominated cinema ownership in the UK at this time: the Rank Organisation – owners of the Odeon and Gaumont cinemas, and ABPC which owned the ABC chain (variously named Regal, Ritz, or Savoy). After the war these two companies gradually established and strengthened their hold on the most profitable cinemas in Britain, so that by 1963, as Penelope Houston reported, there were '2,429 cinemas operating in Britain, and 651 of these (26 per cent) belonged to the Rank and ABC circuits'.¹²⁵ Furthermore, 'over 40 per cent of the total seating capacity is concentrated in theatres owned by' Rank and ABC.¹²⁶ The concentration of cinemas owned by Rank and ABPC in London also accounted 'for more than a quarter of the national box-office takings'.¹²⁷

There were many other smaller cinema chains in Britain, and of the four largest chains, only three had any presence in London, the Stoll Circuit, the Essoldo Circuit, and Granada, the fourth largest circuit, Star Cinemas mainly owned cinemas in North England. Nonetheless, the other circuits' London-based cinemas were primarily located

¹²¹ 'BoT figures show the trend in cinema business', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 3 January 1963, p.6.

¹²² 'BoT figures show the trend in cinema business', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 3 January 1963, p.6.

¹²³ 'BoT figures show the trend in cinema business', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 3 January 1963, p.6.

¹²⁴ Hill, John, *Sex Class and Realism: British Cinema 1956-1963*, London: British Film Institute, 1986, p.37.

¹²⁵ Houston, Penelope, 'In the Picture: The Power of Circuits', *Sight and Sound*, Autumn 1963, p.174.

¹²⁶ Houston, Penelope, 'In the Picture: The Power of Circuits', *Sight and Sound*, Autumn 1963, p.174.

¹²⁷ Houston, Penelope, 'In the Picture: The Power of Circuits', *Sight and Sound*, Autumn 1963, p.174.

in suburban areas, for example the Granada Clapham Junction, or the Essoldo East Barnet, unlike Rank or ABC cinemas which were located in London's lucrative West End (ABC and Rank-owned cinemas also dominated other major city centres like Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester, and Nottingham). The importance of cinema ownership in London (and the unfair advantage held by the Rank and ABC circuit) was also recognised by other industry organisations. The FBFM noted that 'distributors need a Rank or ABC release because the combines dominate the London area. The London revenue is so important that their booking strength in London enables the combines to book the film for their provincial theatre as well, even in situations where the competing independent cinema is superior'.¹²⁸

The dominant position that Rank and ABC held over the development of the British film industry at this time was felt to be extremely damaging by several in the business. A point made clear by the filmmaker Norman J. Warren, who noted that 'Rank owned Pinewood Studios, Rank Laboratories, Rank Distributors, if you had a film it was almost impossible to get it shown if Rank didn't like it; the monopoly position was not good'.¹²⁹ Warren's observation was made earlier by Penelope Houston in an article for *Sight and Sound* in 1963, 'without a circuit release, through either the Rank Organisation or Associated British, no first feature made in this country [...] stands any real hope of getting its money back'.¹³⁰

Despite the success of Compton's cinema club, box-office takings could be limited if a nationwide release for films was not obtained. For example, the average return to distributors in 1961, as calculated by the Rank Organisation, was estimated to be the following: £90,000 for a Rank release, £80,000 from ABC, and £35,000 – £40,000 from a third circuit release.¹³¹ This inconsistency was noted by the director Norman J. Warren who argued:

It was easy if you had a good exploitable title and subject. Bigger movies had bigger names and they could sell themselves. You could get your films shown at the smaller cinema chains, like the Essoldo\Classic and the Star Group, but they were always small cinemas and you would not make a lot of money. You would make money if your film was shown in the big Rank or ABC cinemas.¹³²

¹²⁸ Filson, A.W., 'Memorandum to the Sub-Committee appointed by the Cinematograph Films Council from the Federation of British Film Makers', *The Daily Cinema*, 6 February 1963, p.7.

¹²⁹ See Appendix C.

¹³⁰ Houston, Penelope, 'Whose Crisis?' *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1963-4, p.26.

¹³¹ Baillieu, Bill & Goodchild, John, *The British Film Business*, Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2002, p.85.

¹³² See Appendix C.

The difficulty faced by Tenser and Klinger, and later Hartford-Davis, was how to make profitable films at a time when cinema audiences were falling, as well as avoid the problem of limited distribution for X films from the rest of the industry. One solution was to keep budgets as low as possible and reinvest profits into future film production. An indication of how much profit a filmmaker could receive was given in 1955 by Roger Manvell, the first Director of the British Film Academy. Manvell calculated the following breakdown of box-office receipts – Entertainments Tax 35.4%, Exhibitor's Share 41.6%, Distribution 7.1%, Newsreel Hire 2.1%, and Producer's Share 13.8%.¹³³ Tenser and Klinger, as producers, distributors and exhibitors of their films could capitalise on their share of box-office receipts. This strategy placed Tenser and Klinger in a relatively unique position when compared to other low budget filmmakers. For example, Hammer signed distribution deals with several major Hollywood studios; however, as a result of this arrangement, the company lost any future profits from the overseas distribution and subsequent sales to television, of their films.

Another solution, taken by Tenser and Klinger, was to take advantage of the notoriety associated with a particular film, and exploit any good or bad publicity. Tenser and Klinger, instinctively knew that any publicity was good for their product, a factor many in the rest of the industry gradually began to understand, but often failed to capitalise on. For example, a survey sponsored by the FBFM for *Kinematograph Weekly* found that 'for the great majority of cinema-goers, who form their ideas about a film and the desirability of seeing it, the local press is of much greater importance than the national press'.¹³⁴ The survey also discovered 43 per cent of audiences relied on posters outside the cinema; 23 per cent found the trailer to be the most important source of information; 16 per cent relied on word-of-mouth, and many regular cinemagoers missed stunts for forthcoming attractions.¹³⁵ All of these promotional devices would be used by Tenser and Klinger to maximise the potential profit of Compton's films.

Moreover, the liberal attitude of the BBFC, combined with the X rating, allowed British independent distributors and exhibitors like Compton to compete (albeit on a smaller scale) with the major American studios. The links Rank and ABPC had with Hollywood was only beneficial in so far as these companies had access to big budget

¹³³ Baillieu, 2002, p.80.

¹³⁴ Bittleston, J.R., 'Sources of information, programmes and films: Part Three of A study of attitudes and behaviour', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 28 May 1964, p.5.

¹³⁵ Bittleston, 28 May 1964, p.5.

American films. However, Compton's early success was built upon the purchase of American exploitation films and low budget Hollywood films, movies from Continental Europe which contained more explicit depictions of sex and nudity, as well as Compton's own productions which featured controversial themes and subject matter. The enthusiasm Rank and ABPC had for family friendly, non-X-rated films, as well as big budget Hollywood films, at a time when family audiences as regular cinemagoers was in decline, was a situation Tenser and Klinger successfully exploited.

Furthermore, following the initial release of a film, it could often suffer a delay of up to a year before it was distributed to cinemas in the rest of the country. It was a problem the trade press had recognised for some time, highlighted by *Kinematograph Weekly*'s response to the Rank Organisation's request for a further 100 colour prints to be made available from distributors for the company's new release schedule.

Kinematograph Weekly pointed out that this could only be a good thing, arguing that in the past 'the full potential of general releases would not be realised unless the public was given the opportunity to see films as soon as possible after the initial launching and while interest in the subject, created by promotional activities, was still alive in the public mind'.¹³⁶ By offering more prints to exhibitors, 'independent exhibitors must benefit by earlier booking dates. Producers stand to gain by an earlier return on their production investments [...] and the public will have less cause to complain that their local cinemas are showing old films'.¹³⁷

In contrast, Tenser and Klinger's strategy was not to compete with Rank or ABPC for up to date Hollywood films, but to offer a product that was different from mainstream fare. This position was made clear by Klinger in *The Daily Cinema*, 'we are not going out in opposition to existing cinemas. We are quite certain we have the product and are trying to set a new pattern. But we think they will be supplementary to other cinemas and will either pull in people not usually going or get other patrons going again'.¹³⁸

Compton cinema's first film presentation, as mentioned earlier was *Private Property*. The story outline in *The Daily Cinema* gives a description of the film, and offers a reason why it may have attracted the attention of Tenser and Klinger: 'Young degenerate Duke decides to set up a young girl for his homosexual friend, Boots, and sets about

¹³⁶ 'Long Shots...March of Progress', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 24 May 1962, p.4

¹³⁷ 'Long Shots...March of Progress', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 24 May 1962, p.4

¹³⁸ 'New, smaller cinemas, part of Compton-Cameo's plans, *The Daily Cinema*, 24 July 1963, p.12.

seducing a young housewife who is bored by her husband'.¹³⁹ This outline describes the version that was released after resubmission to the BBFC following additional edits, which might explain why the reviewer offered a less than favourable review, 'sexual nightmare of limited sensational appeal only [...] re-cut to gain a certificate, it might make the grade. But as it stands it's a very strange proposition that very few audiences would thank you for'.¹⁴⁰ However, the film was shown uncut at the Compton Cinema. Therefore, by showing un-certificated (and un-cut) films, Tenser and Klinger could offer to audiences a different cinematic experience to that of other exhibitors free of the restrictions imposed by the BBFC.

Because the Compton Cinema operated as a private club, it could circumvent the censorship restrictions placed on a film by the BBFC. Unlike mainstream cinemas, which could not show un-certified films, the type of films available to the club's audience could offer content that was a great deal more extreme and explicit. For example, another more prominent example of the type of film Compton offered to its members was *The Wild One* (Laslo Benedek, 1953) starring Marlon Brando, which had previously been banned outright by the BBFC on the grounds that it would provide 'a dangerous example to those wretched young people who take every opportunity of throwing their weight about'.¹⁴¹ According to Tenser, the film was 'a big hit with The Compton's clientele [*sic*], and with prominent members like John Trevelyan [...] and filmmakers like Bryan Forbes'.¹⁴²

Membership to the club was ten shillings a year and the purpose built cinema in the basement consisted of just fewer than two hundred seats. Ticket prices were set at seven shillings and six pence, ten shillings, and twelve shillings and six pence.¹⁴³ To put this fee into some form of context, the average British weekly wage in 1959 was eleven pounds and two shillings (there were twenty shillings in a pound), therefore the annual membership cost was well within the means of Compton's customers.¹⁴⁴ Nonetheless, ticket prices were higher than the mainstream cinema circuit. The amount audiences paid for cinema tickets varied a great deal depending on the location of the cinema seat (cinemas were divided into the lower priced stalls, and a range of higher priced circles –

¹³⁹ 'Private Property', *The Daily Cinema*, 23 September 1960, p.7.

¹⁴⁰ 'Private Property', *The Daily Cinema*, 23 September 1960, p.7.

¹⁴¹ Robertson, 1993, p.108.

¹⁴² Hamilton, 2005, p.11.

¹⁴³ Hamilton, 2005, p.11.

¹⁴⁴ Sandbrook, Dominic, *Never Had It So Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles*, London: Little, Brown, 2005, p.103.

the front circle, upper circle, royal circle, etc.). Cinemas on the Rank and ABC circuit generally charged higher prices because they had exclusive access to big budget Hollywood films. For example, Twentieth Century-Fox distributed through Rank's Gaumont and Odeon cinemas and ABPC had the rights to screen films from Warner Bros. in ABC cinemas.¹⁴⁵

Tickets were also more expensive in central London. Furthermore, the price of a ticket was not dependent on the size of the theatre. For example the Empire, Leicester Square which had a capacity of 2,778 seats, charged between three shillings and twelve shillings. The Odeon, Marble Arch, with 2,124 seats, charged between five shillings and twelve shillings. In North Finchley (a London suburb), the Gaumont, with 1,967 seats charged between two shillings and three pence to four shillings, the Odeon (1,248 seats) charged between two shillings and three pence to three shillings and nine pence, and the Rex Cinema (537 seats) charged between two shillings to three shillings and six pence. In the provinces, similarly sized cinemas to Central London theatres would charge lower prices. For example, in Boston, a small market town in Lincolnshire, the Odeon (1,592 seats) charged between two shillings and three pence to three shillings and nine pence, and the independently-owned Regal (1,348 seats) charged between two shillings to three shillings and six pence.¹⁴⁶ The higher ticket prices of Compton's cinema, and the willingness of cinemagoers to pay these prices suggests that the type of films shown by the company exploited a gap in the British marketplace.

Tenser's commitment to establish a new cinema was therefore based on the requirement to guarantee an exhibition outlet for the type of films that Rank and ABPC were reluctant to screen in their cinemas. Following the opening of Compton's Cinema Club, Tenser and Klinger created Compton Films, a distribution company that supplied a steady stream 'of product for the special market of so-called specialised cinemas catering for a public with a taste for Continental films'.¹⁴⁷ This was later followed by another distribution company, Compton-Cameo. The success of Compton's exhibition and distribution business was swiftly followed by a move into the production of films, 'with a determination to produce pictures with strong appeal, economically and efficiently'.¹⁴⁸ By

¹⁴⁵ Murphy, Robert, *Sixties British Cinema*, London: British Film Institute, 1992, p.104.

¹⁴⁶ All ticket prices are from the *Kinematograph Year Book 1961*, London: Oldhams Press Ltd., 1961.

¹⁴⁷ 'Count on Compton', Supplement to *Kinematograph Weekly*, 19 November 1964, p.3.

¹⁴⁸ 'Count on Compton', Supplement to *Kinematograph Weekly*, 19 November 1964, p.3.

1964, Compton had also increased their exhibition outlets to three more cinemas in the UK, as well as acquiring and converting London's Windmill Theatre into a cinema.¹⁴⁹

The films screened at Compton's Cinema, and distributed to other cinemas, demonstrate an eclectic range of films. These included re-titled horror films like Ricardo Freda's *The Spectre* (*Lo spettro*, Ricardo Freda, It., 1964) and *The Castle of Terror* (*La vergine di Norimberga*, Antonio Margheriti, It., 1964). Compton's films also repackaged non-horror films from Continental Europe including, *The Adventures of Remi* (*Sans Famille*, André Michel, Fr.\It., 1958), *The Captive* (*Vacances en Enfer*, Jean Kerchbron, Fr., 1961), and *A Taste of Love* (*Les Grandes Personnes*, Jean Valère, Fr.\It., 1961).¹⁵⁰ All these films were described as X films, and the poster campaign made use of the exploitable potential of the exotic and foreign. For example, *The Captive* introduces 'Sly...Sultry Sizzling Catherine Sola', and *A Taste of Love* announced 'Jean Seberg acts the French way' suggesting a more provocative, less inhibited style of screen performance.¹⁵¹

Compton's distribution strategy was not confined to X films, and the company also purchased films featuring Greek mythic heroes, including *War of the Trojans* (*La leggenda di Enea*, Giorgio Venturini, It.\Fr.\Yugoslavia, 1962), *Ulysses against Hercules* (*Ulisse contro Ercole*, Mario Caiano, It.\Fr., 1962), *Monster from an Unknown World* (*Maciste nella terra dei Ciciopi*, Antonio Leonviola, It., 1961), and *Colossus of the Stone Age* (*Maciste contro I mostri*, Guido Malatesta, It., 1962). These films were usually released as one half of a double feature with advertising campaigns designed to attract a wide variety of audiences. For example, *War of the Trojans* was released with a British low budget comedy, *The Chimney Sweeps* (Dudley Birch, 1963), and promoted as 'Fun Thrills & Excitement for all the family!' and *Ulysses against Hercules* was paired with *Five Guns West* (Roger Corman, US., 1955), and advertised as 'Breathtaking Action and Trigger Suspense!'¹⁵² All these films were released as U certificates, which meant they were suitable for all types of audience. Another U certificate film purchased by Compton was Alain Resnais' *Last Year in Marienbad* (*L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, Fr.\It., 1961), which was described by *The Daily Cinema* as 'an already celebrated intellectual "weirdie" [...] strictly for the art house crowd'.¹⁵³ Nonetheless, Compton took advantage of the film's art-house reputation and

¹⁴⁹ 'Compton Group Buys Windmill Theatre', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 8 October 1964, p.5.

¹⁵⁰ 'Trade Shows of the first big group from the Comptonship Company', *The Daily Cinema*, 17 March 1961, p.7.

¹⁵¹ 'Trade Shows of the first big group from the Comptonship Company', *The Daily Cinema*, 17 March 1961, p.7.

¹⁵² 'Compton-Cameo to Release Double Big-5 Programmes', *The Daily Cinema*, 19 June 1964, p.5.

¹⁵³ 'Last Year in Marienbad', *The Daily Cinema*, 26 February 1962, p.11.

promoted it as ‘The Film That Everybody Wants To See!’, and ‘No Other Film Has Ever Been Able To Advertise Like This!’¹⁵⁴

Tenser and Klinger also promoted and maximised the profit potential of the films produced by their production company by releasing them on a succession of double bills. Compton’s production of *Saturday Night Out* appeared on a double bill with the ghost story *The Spectre*.¹⁵⁵ *That Kind of Girl* was released twice, once with Roger Vadim’s *Satan Leads the Dance* (*Et Satan conduit le bal*, Roger Vadim, Fr., 1962), and secondly with the historical mini-epic, *Fury of the Vikings* (*Gli invasori*, Mario Bava, It.\Fr., 1961).¹⁵⁶ *The Yellow Teddybears* was released on a double bill with the necrophiliac gothic horror film *The Terror of Dr Hitchcock* (*L’orribile sergredo del Dr. Hitchcock*, Riccardo Freda, It., 1962) and also with a teenage romance, *The Girl with a Suitcase* (*La ragazza con la valigia*, Valerio Zurlini, It.\Fr., 1961).¹⁵⁷ This strategy also applied to non-Compton releases, for example when *The Call Girl Business* (*Anonima cocottes*, Camillo Mastrocinque, It., 1961) failed to perform well at the box-office, it was released with Compton’s first film *Naked – As Nature Intended* (George Harrison Marks, 1961), in a double bill that ‘looks like running for ever’.¹⁵⁸

Furthermore, the decision by Tenser and Klinger to establish a chain of cinemas that was independent of Rank and ABC’s booking policies, guaranteed an earlier cinema release for Compton’s films. They could also generate interest in Compton’s product through advance publicity as well as elaborate and spectacular marketing campaigns, and exploit the controversial subjects of their films. For example, a special screening of Compton’s second feature *The Yellow Teddybears* took place at the Cinephone Birmingham – ‘Over 120 pupils attended the screening and joined in an open discussion with a panel consisting of a doctor, a head teacher, a clergyman, a sociologist, a marriage guidance counsellor, and 17-year-old Annette Whitely, the young star of the film’.¹⁵⁹ As a result, the City education authorities voted that all their senior pupils should see the film. John Trevelyan, also ‘praised the “educated experiment” of showing this X certificate film to students’.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁴ “‘Last Year in Marienbad’”, *The Daily Cinema*, 5 March 1962, p.3; “‘Last Year in Marienbad’”, *The Daily Cinema*, 26 March 1962, p.2.

¹⁵⁵ ‘Saturday Night Out gets big backing’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 23 April 1964, p.6.

¹⁵⁶ ‘Compton Cameo Hits West End for Six’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 27 June 1963, p.22.

¹⁵⁷ ‘The Girl with a Suitcase’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 18 July 1963, p.16.

¹⁵⁸ Billings, Josh, ‘Your Films’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 2 August 1962, p.14.

¹⁵⁹ “‘The Yellow Teddybears’ – a study for teenagers”, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 21 November 1963, p.6.

¹⁶⁰ “‘The Yellow Teddybears’ – a study for teenagers”, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 21 November 1963, p.6.

Showmanship and exploitation also formed a key part of Compton's early marketing tactics. As Tenser pointed out in a promotional interview for *Kinematograph Weekly*, 'Compton-Cameo is keenly aware that film promotion plays a most important part in the achievement of the most successful results at the box-office'.¹⁶¹ Accordingly, Compton now included a 'full-time exploitation section' within its publicity department.¹⁶² The purpose of this section was to give exhibitors 'advice or the benefit of a visit by a qualified exploitation representative'.¹⁶³ The service also provided a 'full range of advertising and accessory materials suitable for every possible situation'.¹⁶⁴ Tenser reinforced this viewpoint when he referred to the publicity campaign for an upcoming release of *Monsters of the Stone Age*.¹⁶⁵ The campaign featured 'mobile, touring displays featuring huge cut-outs of prehistoric monsters, stone-age men and special throwaways'.¹⁶⁶ Extravagant marketing campaigns were not solely confined to Compton's cinemas, and Tenser's promotional instincts ensured that all Compton's films received extensive publicity at other cinemas. For example, after the release of *The Yellow Teddybears*, the film's star Annette Whitely, made a personal appearance at the Elite cinema in Nottingham, where Ron Crockett, the manager of the cinema, arranged a 'press reception, visit to Raleigh Industries, and an opportunity for the star to meet teenage personnel'.¹⁶⁷

In spite of Tenser's enthusiasm for promotional campaigns and spectacular opening nights, there was confusion within the mainstream industry regarding the validity of extravagant premieres. This opinion was expressed in an article which appeared in *Kinematograph Weekly* at the beginning of 1963. The article was written by the publicist Theo Richmond and the camera operator Gerry Lewis. They argued that, 'First nights—they're the nights we *most* [emphasis in the original] hope to miss. The preening premieres with their parade of familiar faces, polished smiles, tired gimmicks and synthetic glitter [...] so debased has the premiere become; that when the latest premiere

¹⁶¹ 'Compton-Cameo puts emphasis on expansion and promotion', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 30 May 1963, p.38.

¹⁶² 'Compton-Cameo puts emphasis...', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 30 May 1963, p.38.

¹⁶³ 'Compton-Cameo puts emphasis...', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 30 May 1963, p.38.

¹⁶⁴ 'Compton-Cameo puts emphasis...', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 30 May 1963, p.38.

¹⁶⁵ It is unclear whether this is an alternative title for Guido Malatesta's *Colossus of the Stone Age* [*Maciste contro i mostri* (1962)] or Antonio Leonviola's *Monster from an Unknown World* [*Maciste nella terra dei Ciciopi* (1961)], both films were distributed by Compton in 1963, or an unreleased film.

¹⁶⁶ 'Compton-Cameo puts emphasis...', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 30 May 1963, p.38.

¹⁶⁷ Ratcliffe, Frank, 'Showmanship', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 16 January 1964, p.20.

announcement lands on the Fleet Street news desk it produces only a king-sized yawn'.¹⁶⁸ The response from the industry divided opinion. Jack Worrow, Director of Publicity and Advertising at the independent production company Bryanston, speculated, 'does anyone outside of a mental home think that "I'm All Right Jack" or Only Two Can Play" suffered because they were not premiered!'¹⁶⁹ Lee Langley of Warner-Pathé distributors believed the article was 'negative nonsense! Of course there are dreary premieres; there are also dreary films. Do we stop making pictures because of the failures—or do we try to do better, and live up to the good ones?'¹⁷⁰ A letter signed Ars Gratis Artis (Art for Arts Sake the motto of MGM), appeared to support Richmond and Lewis, but the tone is weighted with sarcasm, 'These premieres fulfil a valuable public service, for time and time again I have been able to stop my friends from seeing a film on release after I had seen just how bad it was at the premiere'.¹⁷¹ Finally, Maurice Cowan from Chiltern Film Productions pointed out that, 'we will miss the ubiquitous bi-weekly picture of Snookie Squaretoes, leaning on her sprig of nobility. But we might console ourselves that the space could be put to better use'.¹⁷² Although Cowan's wife disagreed, 'My wife says that showmanship is an integral part of the film industry, and as long as crowds brave the elements to watch the premieres, we should carry on with them. When they don't, we'll be dead'.¹⁷³

Despite the confusion and reluctance towards premieres within the mainstream industry, Tenser's approach appealed to many other independent exhibitors as they desperately attempted to adjust to the commercial realities of the post-war marketplace and declining audiences. Tenser's enthusiasm for lavish publicity was shared by British audiences, as a survey of cinemagoers in 1964 found which stated that audiences 'longed for a return to the days when stunts were performed to advertise the forthcoming attractions'.¹⁷⁴ This demonstrates how often out of step the mainstream industry was to

¹⁶⁸ Richmond, Theo & Gerry Lewis, 'Nights We Hope To Miss In 1963', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 3 January 1963, p.5; Theo Richmond had worked as the publicity director on *Room at the Top* (Jack Clayton, 1958) and *I'm All Right Jack* (John Boulting, 1959). Gerry Lewis was a camera operator on several travelogues including *Springtime in Portugal* (Richard Carrickford, 1963) and *The Pescadores* (Carrickford, 1963).

¹⁶⁹ Worrow, Jack, 'Three cheers for 'Nights we hope to miss in 1963'', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 January 1963, p.5.

¹⁷⁰ 'Langley, Lee, 'Most revealing', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 January 1963, p.5.

¹⁷¹ Ars Gratis Artis, 'Do they realise...?', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 January 1963, p.5.

¹⁷² Cowan, Maurice, 'Heretics', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 January 1963, p.5.

¹⁷³ Cowan, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 January 1963, p.5.

¹⁷⁴ J.R.Bittleston, 'Sources of Information, Programmes and Films: Part Three of a Study of Attitudes and Behaviour', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 28 May 1964, p.5.

changes in the British film business, a problem that would continue throughout the 1960s.

Publicity, showmanship and marketing was an essential part of Tenser and Klinger's toolkit, which used trade publications like *Kinematograph Weekly* to promote the Compton group and their films. It was a technique used by many local cinema managers throughout Britain and celebrated in *Kinematograph Weekly*'s regular Showmanship column. For example, following the release of the first James Bond film *Dr No* (Terence Young, 1962), 'A.F. Daviss, of the Gaumont, Falkirk, had a car similar to the one used in the film touring the town, with a large display panel secured to the side, advertising the film', and that the stunt, although not original, 'gets people talking and thinking "cinema"'.¹⁷⁵ Viewers for Hammer's production of *The Curse of the Werewolf* (Terence Fisher, 1961) at the Majestic in Leeds were greeted by 'green lights, eerie music and [...] the piercing cry of the werewolf' before the start of the film.¹⁷⁶ For the promotional stunt of *Fury at Smugglers Bay* (John Gilling, 1961), M.H. Wall of the ABC, Harrogate, organised a three dimensional display in the foyer of his cinema, 'in the foreground, a cut-out of rocks and boulders was mounted in the centre of which was a painted seascape—the overall effect being a realistic impression of what one would see looking out from a smugglers cave'.¹⁷⁷ B.W.E. Nethercote the Ritz, Balham (in a stunt that would have appealed to Tenser) advertised *Baby Doll* (Elia Kazan, US., 1956) with 'a girl in baby-doll pyjamas posed in a cot in the foyer [...] the letter X brought to the fore in a large streamer over the front door. "An Xtraordinary, Xciting, double feature programme"'.¹⁷⁸ The emphasis on the X in the Ritz's campaign highlights the importance of this certificate in the promotion and marketing of these types of films. Therefore, there was a serious attempt, during the early part of the decade, by numerous cinema exhibitors to find a way to stem the decline in cinema audiences by promoting films as a special event, an aspect often missed by the mainstream industry.

The success of Compton's exhibition and distribution strategy led Tenser and Klinger to believe that moving into film production should be the next logical step. Compton's tentative move into the film production industry began with the financing of a short picture called *Naked – As Nature Intended*. Klinger had approached George

¹⁷⁵ Hazell, Frank, 'Showmanship', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 3 January 1963, p.16.

¹⁷⁶ Hazell, Frank, 'Showmanship', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 3 August 1961, p.19.

¹⁷⁷ Hazell, Frank, 'Showmanship', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 7 September 1961, p.22.

¹⁷⁸ Hazell, Frank, 'Showmanship', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 January 1963, p.18.

Harrison Marks, London's 'most notorious photographer' to direct the film and to star Marks' wife, the glamour model Pamela Green.¹⁷⁹

Naked – As Nature Intended was made to exploit the market for nudist films, a genre that had started in Britain with the production of *Nudist Paradise* (Charles Sanders, 1958) and which was in turn the British response to the release of an American nudist film called *Garden of Eden* (Max Nosseck, 1954) – a film that had been previously banned by the BBFC. Despite the BBFC ban, *Garden of Eden* was granted a certificate by the London County Council which 'declared there was absolutely nothing obscene' in the film.¹⁸⁰ Nonetheless, *Garden of Eden* was later banned by Gloucestershire County Council, which demonstrates the vagaries of the British system of censorship. Although *Naked – As Nature Intended* features similarities to the narrative and thematic content of the *Garden of Eden*, the differences in the reception of the two films on either side of the Atlantic, bring into focus the disparities in UK and American censorship. Following the film's American release, *Garden of Eden*, 'drew a significant amount of heat from censors', was screened in adult-only cinemas, and involved in several court cases.¹⁸¹ In spite of sharing a similar plot (*Naked – As Nature Intended* featured a group of women work friends who discover the joy of nudism while on holiday, and in *Garden of Eden* a young widow and her daughter escape to a nudist camp), Compton's nudist film was granted an A certificate by the BBFC, which deemed it 'suitable for practically all types of audience'.¹⁸²

The success of *Naked – As Nature Intended* (which showed for months at the Compton Cinema Club), as well as the lack of censorship problems the film encountered, demonstrated to Tenser and Klinger that investing in film production could be a profitable move for the company. As a result, Tenser and Klinger formed the film production company, Compton-Tekli, with the intention of funding the production of films 'by ploughing back profits into the business'.¹⁸³ The partners were not alone in setting up an independent production company, there were already several British independent film producers operating during the 1960s; however Compton was almost unique in that the business was vertically integrated, i.e. they controlled production,

¹⁷⁹ Long, Stanley with Simon Sheridan, *X-Rated: Adventures of an Exploitation Filmmaker*, London: Reynolds & Hearn Ltd, 2008, p.58.

¹⁸⁰ Sheridan, Simon, *Keeping the British End Up: Four Decades of Saucy Cinema*, Richmond, Surrey: Reynolds & Hearn, 2001, p.9.

¹⁸¹ Schaefer, Eric, "Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!" *A History of Exploitation Films, 1919-1959*, Durham, NC.: Duke University Press, 1999, p.300.

¹⁸² 'Naked as Nature Intended', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 16 November 1961, p.21.

¹⁸³ 'Count on Compton', Supplement to *Kinematograph Weekly*, 19 November 1964, p.3.

distribution and exhibition, along the lines of the major American film studios before the 1950s.¹⁸⁴

***That Kind of Girl* (1963)**

The choice of *That Kind of Girl* (O'Hara, 1963) as Compton's first feature length film was an attempt to take advantage of the relaxation in censorship, as well as appeal to audiences attracted by the sexual frankness of "kitchen-sink dramas". In an interview by Tenser, just as the film went into production, he revealed, "it's a new wave drama with a very strong subject and we're working closely with the censor [...] it's the story of an *au pair* [emphasis in the original] girl who comes to this country and gets herself into all sorts of trouble", however, he stressed the film was "not cheap or sensational".¹⁸⁵ By 1963, nudist films had begun to diminish in popularity and the popularity, as well as the financial success of "kitchen-sink dramas", would have demonstrated to Tenser that Compton could make an exploitable product that might appeal to the critics, and broaden the appeal of their next film. By stressing that the film would not be cheap or sensational, Tenser was attempting to shift away from the negative associations of the nudist picture, as well as reposition the film as part of the critically respectable British "New Wave". Nevertheless, the film was primarily intended to exploit the commercial possibilities and controversial X category content associated with "kitchen-sink dramas".

The plot of *That Kind of Girl* was based on a story outline by Jan Read (writing as Jan Reed) who had previously worked on Basil Dearden's crime/social problem film *The Blue Lamp* (Dearden, 1950). Read also worked on *Grip of the Strangler* (Robert Day, 1957), a film featuring Boris Karloff as a psychologically disturbed reporter who learns that he is the infamous Haymarket Strangler. Therefore, Read neatly incorporated two strands of late 1950s British film genres, social realism and lurid horror. Tenser encouraged Read to add, 'distinctly exploitative elements: promiscuity, rape, venereal disease and [...] political unrest', and in spite of Tenser's assurances that the film would not be cheap or sensational it was subsequently advertised as, 'The Shock Film of the Year!'¹⁸⁶ Furthermore, the exhibitor's campaign book featured several stills from the film which emphasised several exploitative elements; these included couples kissing or in passionate clinches, and a photograph of the main character, Eva in distress and with her clothing

¹⁸⁴ For an introduction to the American film industry during this "golden era", see Gomery, Douglas, *The Hollywood Studio System: A History*, London: British Film Institute, 2005.

¹⁸⁵ 'Production', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 30 August 1962, p.16.

¹⁸⁶ Hamilton, 2005, p.21.

torn. Below the headline, 'Never before has the screen dared to present this subject!' is a roughly-drawn picture of Eva on the floor and being attacked. The image is reminiscent of a style closely associated with the front covers of American pulp novels of the 1950s, as well as the earlier crude and sexually explicit Tijuana Bibles.¹⁸⁷

That Kind of Girl closely follows the narrative pattern and sanctimonious morality of an American exploitation film as defined by Eric Schaefer. According to Schaefer, the moralising in exploitation films takes the form of both exposé 'concentrated into titillation' and education which was 'reduced to a brand of moralizing pedantry', which is clearly demonstrated in *That Kind of Girl*.¹⁸⁸ The film explicitly foregrounds this morality from the opening shot whereby a title card displays the following message, "The producers gratefully acknowledge the assistance & co-operation afforded them by the members of the British Medical profession in the making of this motion picture". *That Kind of Girl* assumes the position of a sex-education picture, while at the same time exploiting the sexual encounters, as well as the bodies of the female actresses; as Schaefer has pointed out, 'exposé and education—were at the heart of the exploitation film'.¹⁸⁹ *That Kind of Girl* also makes extensive use of location shooting, a feature which draws the film closer to the distinctive visual aesthetic of "kitchen-sink dramas" and away from the studio-bound sets commonly associated with post-war low budget films. The film was shot in black and white, giving *That Kind of Girl* the type of gritty realism frequently linked to "kitchen-sink dramas".

The film relates the story of an au pair from Austria called Eva (played by the German topless model, Margaret-Rose Keil in her first acting role) who works in the home of a middle-class suburban English family, and depicts Eva's sexual encounters with three men. Eva's first sexual encounter is with the sleazy but charming Elliot, who after taking her to a strip-club, takes her virginity. Her next encounter is with Max an anti-nuclear protestor, although they do not have sex they do engage in some heavy-petting. Eva's final sexual encounter is with Keith who is also engaged to the sweet, virginal Janet. Elliot, jealous of Eva's relationship with Keith (who has temporarily broken up with Janet because she will not sleep with him) attempts to rape her. Following the attack Eva learns that she has contracted a venereal disease, presumably

¹⁸⁷ Tijuana Bibles were crudely drawn, sexually explicit 8-page booklets, popular in America during the 1920s. The booklets usually depicted cartoon characters like Popeye, Betty Boop, and Blondie, or real-life people like the gangster John Dillinger, in sexual situations.

¹⁸⁸ Schaefer, 1999, p.41.

¹⁸⁹ Schaefer, 1999, p.41.

from Elliot. As a result, everyone Eva has encountered needs to be informed (much to Eva's shame) and the film clearly places the blame not on Eva's attacker, but on her promiscuity. The film succeeds in conflating the controversial subject matter of casual sexual encounters with a safe and conservative morality that sought to warn and educate. Eva's promiscuity allowed the filmmakers to titillate and express shock at the character's behaviour as well as offer a warning, by the doctor in the film, of the dangers of unsafe sex.

The director of the film, Gerry O'Hara, had been suggested to Tenser and Klinger by Hartford-Davis.¹⁹⁰ O'Hara had never directed a film before, although he had worked as an assistant director at Elstree and Gainsborough Studios. Nevertheless, O'Hara had worked on big budget movies like *Anastasia* (Anatole Litvik, US., 1956) for Twentieth Century-Fox, *Exodus* (Otto Preminger, US., 1960) for United Artists, and the "kitchen-sink drama" *The L-Shaped Room* (Forbes, 1962), as well as working with well-known British directors like Carol Reed and Tony Richardson (O'Hara was working on Richardson's *Tom Jones* at the time and had to negotiate an early release to his contract). Tenser and Klinger therefore felt that O'Hara's film experience was better suited to the company's first feature.¹⁹¹ Although, according to O'Hara, Hartford-Davis had only suggested the first-time director because he wanted to make the film. However, Hartford-Davis was offered the role of producer, as well as having the final cut on the film. Hartford-Davis also suggested Peter Newbrook as the Director of Photography. The combined experience of these three filmmakers gives *That Kind of Girl* a polish that exceeds the limitations imposed by its £23,000 budget, as well as avoiding the 'threadbare look' of the American exploitation film.¹⁹² O'Hara returned to the company two years later as the writer and director of *The Pleasure Girls* (1965).

That Kind of Girl was not alone in exploring the problems of society, as Hill has argued, a series of films featuring young people and dealing 'with contemporary social issues' were made between 1950 and 1963; they include *The Blue Lamp* (Dearden, 1950), *Cosh Boy* (Lewis Gilbert, 1953), *Violent Playground* (Basil Dearden, 1958), *Beat Girl* (Gréville, 1959), *The Leather Boys* (Sidney J. Furie, 1963) and *The Party's Over* (Guy Hamilton, 1963) among many others.¹⁹³ Nonetheless, the "exploitative' impulse' that

¹⁹⁰ O'Hara, Gerry. 'Interview with Gerry O'Hara', *michaelklingerpapers.uwe.ac.uk*.

¹⁹¹ Hamilton, 2005, p.21.

¹⁹² For the budget figures see O'Hara, Gerry, 'Gerry O'Hara recalls making That Kind of Girl', *British Film Institute DVD Booklet*, 2010, p.10; Schaefer, 2009, p.42.

¹⁹³ Hill, 1986, p.67.

ensured a 'vitality to the club and seduction sequences' in *That Kind of Girl*, is rarely explored in other social conscience films referred to by Hill.¹⁹⁴ There are some notable exceptions – the steamy striptease sequences of *Beat Girl* or the seedy and sleazy party (including the implicit necrophilia) in *The Party's Over*. However, there are several sequences in *That Kind of Girl* that are worth drawing attention to because they demonstrate an enthusiasm by the filmmakers for exploiting sexual behaviour, desire and nudity, in a way seldom explored before in post-war British cinema.

The club where Eva meets her lovers appears several times, and features numerous shots of young women's legs as they dance. Like the young blonde protagonist Jenny in *Beat Girl*, the camera lingers on Eva's body as she dances and twists her body to the music. The long sequence at the cabaret club, Toliani's Latin Quarter, where Elliot begins his seduction of Eva is extremely sleazy. The camera frequently cuts between Elliot leering from Margo the striptease artiste to Eva. Eva up to this point has been portrayed as an innocent, young woman, and this sequence successfully conflates Eva's virtuousness with the naked body of Margo and the sweating sexual desire of Elliot. As if to reinforce the point, there is a shot of a young man carelessly groping the breast of a woman, while she, without showing any interest, watches the striptease. Later in the film, Eva strips down to her underwear to swim during a riverside party. The bright white of Eva's underwear contrasts with the slightly darker skin of her bare body, and when Eva is lying down, the camera slowly pans up her bare legs and body, and on to a close-up of her face, which is still wet with water from her swim. The water resembles beads of sweat, and when Eva finally draws Keith on top of her body and they begin to kiss, the sequence is far more explicit than, for example, the controversial seduction scene in *Room at the Top*, and demonstrates how far the liberalisation of cinema censorship had moved on.

Following Elliot's attack on Eva, a sequence that again exploits her body, as Elliot rips open her coat and dress to expose her bra, Eva is told that she has syphilis. It is at this point in the film that exposé is replaced by education. The earlier sequences of sexual encounters are replaced by several matter-of-fact explanations from Eva's doctor, about the effects of syphilis and gonorrhoea on the body, how to prevent and cure the diseases, as well as lessons on morality and the problems of casual sex. The film also further educates by dispelling myths; for example, Eva believes the only cure is to have

¹⁹⁴ Hill, 1986, p.119.

needles stuck into her, which then expand like umbrellas inside her body. Nonetheless, at times the information Eva is asked to provide is deliberately exploitative when she is asked to provide, in explicit detail, her sexual encounters. The moralising finishes with an educational message from the doctor who makes a plea for young people to be offered sexual advice (which the film is also providing) as well as an appeal for those indulging in casual sex to come into health clinics for regular check-ups. The doctors' point is forcefully made when he states that there were 140,000 new cases of sexually-transmitted diseases reported in the past year.

In terms of exploitation films, *That Kind of Girl* is very close in narrative structure to Schaefer's definition of American exploitation. However, this picture and American exploitation films are differentiated from each other in industrial terms, as well as exhibition strategy and critical reception. *That Kind of Girl* was marketed as a mainstream film, i.e. it was exhibited in cinemas other than Compton's, and although censorship cuts were demanded, 'all shots in which a girl's breast is visible' during the striptease sequence, as well as other minor cuts to scenes of kissing, the film appears to have experienced a lack of controversy following its release.¹⁹⁵ The film was also made by filmmakers closely associated with the British film industry, and did not operate on the margins of the business, unlike many of the American exploitation filmmakers referred to by Schaefer, for example, David F. Friedman, Dwain Esper, or Kroger Babb. Furthermore, *That Kind of Girl* was reviewed by the trade press, and other middlebrow critical publications, although the film may not have enjoyed an overwhelming positive reception, the film was not marginalised or ignored, and was viewed as a mainstream British product.

The Daily Cinema referred to the film as a, 'grisly, but fairly sober-minded warning of the dangers of casual promiscuity' and a 'highly exploitable "X" message picture for specialised halls', with Eva being referred to as a 'daft "au pair" girl' which gives an indication of some of the attitudes towards sexually active women at that time.¹⁹⁶ The *Monthly Film Bulletin* called the story, 'sheer melodrama, running the weird gamut of anti-nuclear demonstration, striptease, pre-marital intercourse, rape and improper use of the telephone'; this last observation refers to an obscene message left by Elliot for Eva.¹⁹⁷ *Kinematograph Weekly* referred to the film as a, 'highly commendable and exploitable

¹⁹⁵ Hamilton, 2005, p.277.

¹⁹⁶ 'That Kind of Girl', *The Daily Cinema*, 29 March 1963, p.8.

¹⁹⁷ 'That Kind of Girl', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, May 1963, p.70.

British X certificate offering [...] clinical melodrama [...] damaged goods story', and the blame once again is placed upon the character of Eva as the author of her misfortunes.¹⁹⁸ *The Daily Cinema* and *Kinematograph Weekly* highlighted the X certificate, as well as the exploitable elements of the film, in order to call attention to the features which could be used by cinema owners to market and promote the film. All these publications were intended for mainstream or industry readership and dealt with the film as a product intended for a national release, and not a film to be marginalised on to the fringes of the industry.

Demonstrating Tenser and Klinger's filmmaking ambitions, they proposed to follow *That Kind of Girl* with *Theirs is the Kingdom*, a film based on the 1916 battle of the Somme. The film was an ambitious project, with location work 'in Yugoslavia' and 'a proposed budget of £300,000 [...] to be filmed in CinemaScope from an original screenplay by Derek and Donald Ford'.¹⁹⁹ However, the budget for *Theirs is the Kingdom* was considered too high, and Derek Ford was asked for a more modestly budgeted script.²⁰⁰ Ford returned with a script that could be easily exploitable in terms of marketing, promotion, as well as featuring a controversial narrative.

***The Yellow Teddybears* (1963)**

According to the filmmakers, the story of *The Yellow Teddybears* was based on a newspaper article about a school in North London. The original story exposed the details of a group of girls who, after having sex, would wear a yellow golliwog as a visible display of their actions. The original title was *The Yellow Gollimog* and there are conflicting accounts as to why the title was changed. John Hamilton has argued that the British censors advised Tenser the title could be deemed racist and he was asked to change the title to the less racially charged *The Yellow Teddybears*.²⁰¹ However, Peter Newbrook, the cinematographer of the film, has disputed this account. Newbrook believed that Compton's lawyers contacted Robertsons, a successful marmalade manufacturer of the 1960s and whose marketing brand included a variety of golliwog dolls, after the film was made. Although there is no documentary evidence of a threatened law suit, Newbrook believed, 'the lawyers checked with Robertsons and they objected most strongly. I don't think they liked the idea of their product being associated with an exploitation film. I

¹⁹⁸ Billings, Josh, 'That Kind of Girl', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 17 January 1963, p.8.

¹⁹⁹ 'Production by Derek Todd', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 27 December 1962, p.11.

²⁰⁰ Hamilton, 2005, p.29.

²⁰¹ Hamilton, 2005, p.25.

think that was how it came about and the title was changed'.²⁰² Despite these conflicting accounts, the film began production on 18 March 1963 under the shooting title of *The Yellow Golliwog* at Shepperton Studios and was described in the trade press as a 'sensational story'.²⁰³ The dispute over the title is perhaps consciously alluded to when a character in the film points out how much more controversial the sight of young girls wearing golliwogs would be for the local newspapers.

The Yellow Teddybears retained some of the film crew responsible for *That Kind of Girl*, including Newbrook, and the camera operator Dennis Lewiston. Robert Hartford-Davis' role was expanded and included directing responsibilities as well as producer duties. As a result, the visual style is similar to the earlier film, and the black and white photography, as well as location shooting, again offers the type of realistic visual aesthetic usually associated with "kitchen-sink dramas". However, Hartford-Davis' direction is different from O'Hara's, and gives *The Yellow Teddybears* a noticeable visual energy during the dancing and party sequences. Whereas, O'Hara primarily allowed the camera to linger at a distance on the dancers in the club sequences, Hartford-Davis' camera is thrust directly into the action. Both films feature numerous shots of women's legs as they dance, however Hartford-Davis' camera focuses tighter and closer on the school-girl uniforms and the bodies of the young girls which gives a different emphasis to O'Hara's distant, observational style. Hartford-Davis' directorial technique is a style that reoccurs throughout his career and categorises his filmmaking technique which is also noticeable during the dance sequence, featuring extreme close-ups of young girls legs and the hands of the teenage rock band.

Nonetheless, and perhaps displaying a discomfort with associating his first full length feature film with the less reputable X certificate, Hartford-Davis was keen not to highlight the sensational and exploitative aspects of the film. This was likely to have put him into conflict with Tenser and Klinger, specifically when judged against the problems the director encountered with his last film for Compton. Hartford-Davis argued that he was a filmmaker and not a sociologist and he believed that all he was doing was, 'putting all the facts before the public', however, when he was accused of 'wilful titillation', Hartford-Davis' reply was 'short and unprintable'.²⁰⁴ 'I'm not making a salacious picture', he argued and he had removed scenes he thought might be 'dubious. And there were no

²⁰² See Appendix A.

²⁰³ 'Compton-Cameo film first in a US link-up, *The Daily Cinema*, 13 March 1963, p.5.

²⁰⁴ Todd, Derek, "Teddybears' Takes A Close Look At Teenage Troubles", *Kinematograph Weekly*, 18 April 1963, p.12.

bedroom scenes'.²⁰⁵ Derek Todd, interviewing Hartford-Davis and aware of the type of audience the film would be marketed at, pointed out that, 'a lot of people are going to be disappointed', surprisingly Hartford-Davis' reply was, 'I couldn't care less'.²⁰⁶

Nevertheless, and despite Hartford-Davis' attitude, *The Yellow Teddybears* contains many of the exploitative features previously viewed in *That Kind of Girl*. The contradiction of Hartford-Davis' statements gives an indication of the tension that existed in making a film that could be exploited and marketed, but also avoid the negative associations of X films.

The Yellow Teddybears takes place in the fictional Southern England suburban Peterbridge New Town: a reference to the towns built in England following the 1946 New Town Act (the Act established fourteen towns across the country, with eight forming part of a projected satellite ring around London).²⁰⁷ Peterbridge New Town as a signifier of middle-class respectability and characterised by 'a strong moralistic ethos', offered a shift away from the Northern locales of "kitchen-sink dramas".²⁰⁸ The teenage girls of *The Yellow Teddybears*, attend the local grammar school, they are middle-class, wealthier and benefit from numerous social advantages, in comparison to the protagonists of "kitchen-sink dramas". Therefore, it is perhaps more shocking that the girls' of *The Yellow Teddybears* should be sexually active, become pregnant, and seek abortions – events which at the time would have been more easily associated with the working-class characters of "kitchen-sink dramas".

Whereas, the activities of the working-class in "kitchen-sink dramas" were viewed as realistic slices of life, the sex-lives of middle-class grammar school-educated girls would be a great deal more provocative. The girls of *The Yellow Teddybears* were part of a privileged school system which usually 'had three times the resources of the average secondary modern, and usually the pick of the best teachers'.²⁰⁹ The children attending grammar schools 'were taught to see themselves as an elite', and the aspirations and ideals of the middle-classes were embraced by the system.²¹⁰ Not only could the sexual themes of *The Yellow Teddybears* be exploited, but the middle-class characters could also offer an additional aspect to the film's moralising. Whereas, Eva's promiscuity and

²⁰⁵ Todd, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 18 April 1963, p.12

²⁰⁶ Todd, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 18 April 1963, p.12.

²⁰⁷ Sandbrook, Dominic, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties*, London: Little, Brown, 2006, p.177.

²⁰⁸ Sandbrook, 2006, p.177.

²⁰⁹ Sandbrook, Dominic, *Never Had It So Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles*, London: Little, Brown, 2005, p.396.

²¹⁰ Sandbrook, 2005, p.397.

subsequent fate could be expected because she was foreign, the sexuality of the British middle-class teenagers in *The Yellow Teddybears* is unexpected.

The teenage schoolchild Linda is already pregnant by her boyfriend, the singer Kinky Carson, at the start of the film and she is considering, controversially for the time, an abortion. Abortions did not become legal in Britain until after the 1967 Abortion Act and up until that time, the only alternative was to risk the dangers of a back-street termination. Kinky offers Linda an ineffectual abortion pill, a quack cure that mirrors the remedy taken by the unfortunate Brenda in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (Brenda is persuaded to sit in a hot bath swigging from a bottle of gin). Furthermore, an unreliable back-street abortion was a risk many women in Britain were prepared to take because, as Sarah Street has pointed out, ‘the stigma of unwanted pregnancy was certainly a very real fear for many women in the early 1960s’.²¹¹ The broadcaster Joan Bakewell also remembered the shame which could be brought upon a young Grammar school girl who became pregnant, it was ‘the worst conceivable crime – she was expelled without fuss before she could contaminate the rest of us’.²¹² It is this fear of contamination that runs throughout the film, as Anne, the school’s science teacher, attempts to lecture the girls on the importance of forming loving relationships before embarking on a sexual liaison, and later defending sex education to the headmistress and board of governors.

Anne’s concern is also mirrored in the findings of the 1960 Albermarle Report on British teenagers and the increasing awareness of sex and sexuality amongst young people. The report noted that, ‘puberty is occurring earlier, and that the large majority of young people now reach adolescence [...] before the age of 15’.²¹³ Therefore, the film attempts to mediate the social concerns raised by contemporary social reports with a broad lecture on the morality of teenage sexuality and at the same time, exploiting the bodies of its young female characters. The lack of sex education offered to the schoolgirls in the film also expresses the reasons why teenagers were so keen on seeing X films because, as mentioned above, “‘no one ever explains anything to you’”²¹⁴

In addition to Linda’s pregnancy and attempted abortion, there are also several exploitable sequences in the film, which were later used in the poster campaign. For example, there is a shower sequence at a swimming pool featuring two women, although their nude bodies are obscured by a frosted glass panel, the outlines of their naked bodies

²¹¹ Street, 1997, p.81.

²¹² Quoted in Kynaston, David, *Austerity Britain 1945-51*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007, p.66-7.

²¹³ Quoted in Sandbrook, 2005, p.424.

²¹⁴ ‘Cinema survey shows children prefer comedy and X films’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 29 June 1961, p.6.

are clearly seen. The censors report indicates that the swimming pool sequence was originally more explicit; 'remove all shots where girls' bare bodies are practically seen through the window of swimming-pool'.²¹⁵ The film (similar to *That Kind of Girl*) also features a party however the party pushes at the limits of socially acceptable behaviour, and on-screen activities. Linda, Kinky and members of his pop group, several of the other sexually active schoolgirls, and June (a prostitute who tries to arrange an abortion for Linda) are at the party, as well as the naïve Pat (who is still a virgin), and her nice, but dull boyfriend, Mike.

The party is a far sleazier and sordid than the gathering featured in Compton's previous film. Schoolgirls sit on the laps of older men who leer at their bodies and there are several shots of drunken teenagers kissing and groping each other. The party gradually degenerates into a game of musical striptease, supervised by a lecherous old man. The atmosphere conveyed by this sequence is one of young people becoming corrupted, this is further emphasised when Kinky goads Mike into a drinking contest, much to Pat's discomfort. Mike is subsequently sick, passes out and Pat, now alone, is targeted by June who attempts to get her to come back to the game (in the background are several girls dancing in their bras and skirts). Once more, keen to exploit the female bodies at the party, this sequence was intended to be a great deal raunchier, however, censorship cuts were made, and the BBFC recommended the following, 'very considerably reduce the party scenes. The effect given should be no more than that there is a [sic] some drinking and leching'.²¹⁶

The plot of *The Yellow Teddybears* closely adheres to the template set by *That Kind of Girl*, as well as some of the themes explored in American exploitation cinema, as analysed by Schaefer – exposé followed by education.²¹⁷ These themes include the exploitation of young girls' bodies, underage sex, explicit displays of sexual activity, taboo subjects like abortion, teenage pregnancy and prostitution, as well as crude language (the word bastard is used twice), and are countered by the moral message of the story, which is featured twice in two long sequences. The first sequence occurs when Anne confronts her class about the wearing of teddy bear badges. Anne initially loses her temper with the schoolgirls before trying to explain to them that promiscuous behaviour and sex without

²¹⁵ Hamilton, 2005, p.277.

²¹⁶ Hamilton, 2005, p.277.

²¹⁷ The corruption of innocent young people, usually at parties, is also a feature of American exploitation films, for example *Reefer Madness* (Louis Gasnier, US., 1936), *H—The Story of a Teen-Age Drug Addict* (Larry Frisch, US., 1951), *One Way Ticket to Hell* (Lawrence Price Jr., US., 1954), and many others.

love is not responsible behaviour. The second sequence takes place at the disciplinary meeting of Anne (which is over ten minutes in length) during which the arguments for and against sex education, and who or what is to blame for the sexual activity taking place within the school, is discussed. The moral message of the film is clearly shown to be on the side of educating the schoolgirls; those against sex education are depicted as rude and unwilling to listen to reasoned arguments, while those in favour of teaching the schoolgirls are shown as being more prepared to listen to Anne's argument.

In terms of marketing, promotion and exhibition, the industrial mode of production of *The Yellow Teddybears* is different from Schaefer's analysis of American exploitation film. Despite an X certificate, the film was promoted as a significant, mainstream event and received its world premiere on the 11 July 1963 at the Cinephone, Oxford Street.²¹⁸ The Embers (the band featured in the film) provided live music in the cinema foyer and celebrities, including the actor Robert Mitchum and the Earl of Kimberley, were in the audience.²¹⁹ It is not reported whether The Embers performed the song "The Yellow Teddybears" which featured in the film however it would have been unusual if Tenser and Klinger had missed this promotional opportunity. In an earlier publicity stunt by Compton, the script was shown to the secretary of the National Union of Teachers, Sir Ronald Gould, who approved of the story during a visit to Shepperton studios.²²⁰ However, this did not prevent local councils like The Blackburn Watch Committee initially asking for the film to be banned, or Chester council only allowing a private showing of the film to 'council members, clergy, and representatives of medical, welfare, and probation organisations' before also banning the film.²²¹

Tenser and Klinger were also reported to have initiated 'one of the largest press coverages [*sic*] ever achieved by an independent release [...] for "The Yellow Teddybears" last week. Many national newspapers carried the story of a special showing [...] at the Cinephone, Birmingham, when the City education authorities and headmistresses of grammar and secondary modern schools voted that their senior pupils should see this film'.²²² Nonetheless, (in spite of the heavily promoted educational themes) the poster campaign fully exploited the film's sensational features. One poster described the film as "The story that SHOCKED THE NATION!! [emphasis in the

²¹⁸ 'Premiere of Second Tekli Production', *The Daily Cinema*, 10 July 1963, p.10.

²¹⁹ 'World Premiere for "Yellow Teddybears"', *The Daily Cinema*, 17 July 1963, p.5; The Earl of Kimberley was actually one of the Board of Directors at Compton, and was the director in charge of Public Relations.

²²⁰ 'Premiere of Second Tekli Production', *The Daily Cinema*, 10 July, 1963, p.10.

²²¹ 'Film banned', *Guardian*, 16 January 1964, p.4.

²²² "The Yellow Teddybears" – a study for teenagers', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 21 November 1963, p.6.

original]'.²²³ A larger poster displayed several shots from the party sequence, including a blindfolded young woman sitting on the lap of a man groping her body, while being watched by a group of young people (and an old man), a young couple kissing and tightly clutching each other, and two girls in school uniforms wearing teddy bear badges on their chests.²²⁴

For several weeks after the release of *The Yellow Teddybears*, Compton's publicity and exploitation department used articles in *Kinematograph Weekly* to record the financial success of the film. A 'fabulous opening... Bursting at the Seams' was recorded for the Essoldo, Brighton with the 'highest 'take' for over 12 months!'²²⁵ 'Box Office Records Smashed...' was reported for the Cinephone, Birmingham and the Chequers, St. Albans, and as part of the same advertisement, a telegram from Jacey Cinema was reprinted which announced, 'we have broken all records with "Yellow Teddy Bears" in Birmingham – We welcome sensation [*sic*] support from teenagers and schoolteachers alike'.²²⁶ The importance of *Kinematograph Weekly* in the promotion of Compton's pictures is evident from the less than enthusiastic response given to the film in areas of the press which the filmmaker's had less influence over. For example, in the *Guardian's* film listings the reviewer was disappointed when *The Yellow Teddybears* was screened for a fourth, then a further fifth week at the same cinema.²²⁷

The critical reception once again demonstrates the tension that existed between exploiting unsavoury and controversial features while at the same time promoting the responsible, educational parts of a film. The trade press were keen to express the exploitable elements of *The Yellow Teddybears*, and yet at the same time reduce any possible negative aspects associated with sleaze or salaciousness. *Kinematograph Weekly* believed the film was a, 'commendable drama that makes entertainment out of a serious social problem' and although the subject matter 'obviously bristles with dangers for the film producer [...] most of them have been avoided here. The most important absentee is sensationalism'.²²⁸ *The Daily Cinema* echoed *Kinematograph Weekly's* observations and

²²³ 'Compton Cameo – 2 Smash Hits', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 7 November 1963, p.2.

²²⁴ Hamilton, 2005, p.27.

²²⁵ 'Compton Cameo – 2 Smash Hits', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 7 November 1963, p.2.

²²⁶ 'Compton Cameo – The Tills Are Ringing!!', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 27 November 1963, p.27.

²²⁷ 'At the Cinema – Comedy 'amateurs' score again', *Guardian*, 3 February 1964, p.4; 'At the Cinema – A Roman grilling', *Guardian*, 10 February 1964, p.4.

²²⁸ 'The Yellow Teddybears', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 18 July 1963, p.14.

found a, 'strong moral-pushing and entertaining story carrying plenty of thought for teenagers and parents alike'.²²⁹

In contrast, the more critically focused *Monthly Film Bulletin* thought that the film was a, 'silly, sordid, and splendidly ludicrous cautionary tale [...] all the customary unsavoury ingredients are dragged in'.²³⁰ The national press echoed this view, the *Daily Mail* was concerned with the failure of the film to provide a satisfactory resolution to the problems raised and, 'as a result the reality of the serious issues raised concerning the responsibility of teachers and parents quite vanishes from site'.²³¹ The *Guardian* was relieved the film, 'avoids the trap of the controversial: it does not wallow in what it is supposed to condemn', although it felt that the characters, 'preach and lecture at each other as if they were cramming for "O" level in ethics'.²³² Nell Vyse in the left-wing *The Daily Worker* thought the schoolmistress was, 'tediously toffee-nosed [...] the scriptwriters manage to drag in every possible problem and complication without suggesting how a single one can be resolved'.²³³ *The Times* could only add, 'a likely contender of the year's funniest film' and refused to take the film seriously which may explain why the critic believed it was, 'a riotously unlikely view of secondary school life', missing the important grammar school setting.²³⁴ *The Times*, like the *Guardian*, also felt that the film contained, 'some possibly well-meant preaching about adult responsibility'.²³⁵ Whereas the trade press highlighted the marketing aspects of the film, the national press and the critics of the *Monthly Film Bulletin*, were primarily concerned with the quality of the product – in this case, the exposé weakened the educational message.

The Yellow Teddybears successfully exploited its controversial subject matter, and provocative displays of young women, that on the whole, avoided significant problems with either the censor or (apart from a few exceptions) banning by local authorities. Comparable to *That Kind of Girl*, the film also benefited from extensive location shooting, and crisp black and white photography, contributing to the picture's realistic aesthetic. However, the moral message, while perhaps awkward at times, balances some of the more outrageous and shocking sequences. *The Yellow Teddybears* succeeded in offering an

²²⁹ 'The Yellow Teddybears', *The Daily Cinema*, 10 July 1963, p.10 .

²³⁰ 'The Yellow Teddybears', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 1 August 1963, p.122.

²³¹ 'The Yellow Teddybears', *Daily Mail*, 10 July 1963, BFI microfiche.

²³² 'The Yellow Teddybears', *Guardian*, 13 January 1964, p.4.

²³³ Nell Vyse, 'The Yellow Teddy Bears', *Daily Worker*, 13 July 1963, p.3.

²³⁴ 'The Yellow Teddybears', *The Times*, 11 July 1963, p.15.

²³⁵ 'The Yellow Teddybears', *The Times*, 11 July 1963, p.15.

experience that pushed the boundaries of what was allowable on the cinema screen at the time. However, Compton's next feature film would only use some of the marketing and promotional features, as well as the controversial narratives that made *The Yellow Teddybears* such a success, and as a result the film did not succeed as well at the box-office.

***Saturday Night Out* (1964)**

Following the success of *That Kind of Girl* and *The Yellow Teddybears* the role Hartford-Davis played at Compton began to expand further. He was asked to 'liaise with the co-productions formulated in France, Italy and America', in June 1963 he was 'appointed executive in charge of all production' of Tekli Film Productions and subsequently joined the board of directors with Tenser and Klinger.²³⁶ This shift demonstrates how Tenser and Klinger wanted to improve the negotiation of co-productions with international film companies in order to make "“much bigger budget films”".²³⁷ Compton's next feature film, *Saturday Night Out*, was budgeted at £85,000, and was produced and directed by Hartford-Davis.²³⁸ This appointment was intended as part of a larger move by Compton to increase film production, as well as develop Hartford-Davis' role in the company, a move that was encouraged by Hartford-Davis in an interview for *Kinematograph Weekly*, 'I have a completely free hand with Tekli and I want to do four or five pictures a year'.²³⁹

Tenser and Klinger's intended shift away from the controversial subjects of their previous films towards comedy, can be interpreted as an eagerness to expand Compton's range of films, and to make the company more competitive, as well as help Hartford-Davis to develop his filmmaking experience; as John Hamilton has suggested, 'Hartford-Davis jumped at the chance of making a comedy'.²⁴⁰ Nevertheless, and in spite of *Saturday Night Out's* initial description as a comedy, the film contains some highly exploitative features, several provocative sequences, and resulted in an X certificate – with all the associated promotional and marketing opportunities this certificate allowed.

Unlike *That Kind of Girl* and *The Yellow Teddybears*, *Saturday Night Out* consists of five very loosely connected stories of five seamen, and one passenger, whose ship has

²³⁶ 'Compton-Cameo puts emphasis on expansion and promotion', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 30 May 1963, p.38; Todd, Derek, 'Production', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 13 June 1963, p.14.

²³⁷ 'New, smaller cinemas, part of Compton-Cameo's plans', *The Daily Cinema*, 24 July 1963, p.12.

²³⁸ Todd, Derek, 'Production', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 13 June 1963, p.14.

²³⁹ Todd, Derek, 'Production', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 13 June 1963, p.14.

²⁴⁰ Hamilton, 2005, p.29.

docked in London, over the course of one Saturday night. The narrative shifts from one story to the other before ending with everyone, except one of the seamen, returning to the ship. The stories can be divided into the following descriptions: Two comedies, one romantic drama that ends in a blackmail plot, another romantic “kitchen-sink drama”, and a controversial encounter (intended as a warning) in a Soho hostess club.

The first story is the briefest, and features the British character actor David Lodge who plays Arthur, a seaman, who it is implied might have a succession of “girls” in every port.²⁴¹ In London, the girl is a young, buxom blonde called Julie (Margaret Nolan aka. Vicki Kennedy). Nolan was a familiar face with many of the photographers working in Soho during the 1960s, posing topless for, among others, Stanley Long and Alfred Marks (who would both make controversial documentaries for Compton), as well as appearing in soft core stag films.²⁴² Nolan’s role in the film takes full advantage of her voluptuous figure, and she is first seen greeting Arthur wearing a black bra and panties. Nolan’s character, throughout this segment, is confined mainly to the bedroom wearing nothing but a flimsy nightdress. Nolan’s background in nude modelling also helped the international distribution of the film. In spite of the relaxation in British censorship, some restrictions remained on the depiction of nudity. However, other countries were more relaxed with nudity therefore to circumvent these restrictions British filmmakers would often film two versions of a scene, one for the domestic market and the other for international distribution. *Saturday Night Out* was no exception, as Lodge recalled, for the foreign version Nolan’s character was naked from the waist up, and the liberal use of ice cubes was used ‘over the shivering girl’s nipples’.²⁴³ Although Arthur’s story is the briefest and the plot is essentially one joke (Arthur refers to the visits he makes to Julie as a staying with his “mother”), the sexually explicit combination of a pot-bellied, older man and a semi-naked young woman, is very seedy. In defence, the segment draws on a longer British tradition of saucy seaside postcards and risqué music hall comedy acts, a characteristic which would resurface more explicitly with the British sex comedies of the 1970s.

²⁴¹ David Lodge is perhaps best known for his role in the patriotic war film *The Cockleshell Heroes* (Jose Ferrer, 1954). Lodge became a close friend of Hartford-Davis and made regular appearances in the director’s films.

²⁴² Margaret Nolan’s film career never progressed past that of a busty blonde. She appeared as Dink, one of James Bond’s female companions in *Goldfinger* (Guy Hamilton, 1964), and she made fleeting appearances in several *Carry On...* films, as well as occasional roles on British television.

²⁴³ Lodge, David, *Up the Ladder to Obscurity*, Bognor Regis, Sussex: Anchor, 1986, p.184.

Saturday Night Out also featured one of the largest casts gathered for a Compton film up to that time, and gives an indication of greater ambitions of the company. John Bonney played Lee an Australian seaman who falls in love with Penny, and he had previously played Anne's art teacher lover in *The Yellow Teddybears*. Penny was played by Heather Sears who had made her debut as Susan, the young, naïve girlfriend of Laurence Harvey's character, Joe Lampton in *Room at the Top* – Sears at this time was a minor star, and she featured heavily in the promotional material of the film.²⁴⁴ Bernard Lee played the passenger, George Hudson. Lee was a familiar face to cinema audiences from numerous appearances in post-war British films, as well as playing the MI6 boss M in the James Bond series. Appearing with Lee was the Austrian actress Erica Remberg who appears as an exotic femme fatale called Wanda.²⁴⁵ Also appearing in smaller roles were the well-known comic character actress Patricia Hayes, played an old drunk woman, and Nigel Green, was the seaman Paddy (a stereotypical comic Irishman) who spends the majority of the film in a pub, and becomes drunker as the night progresses.²⁴⁶

This longer comedy story features John Bonney's character, Lee and the relationship he forms following a meeting with a strange young woman called Penny. The story begins as a slapstick comedy with Lee the recipient of numerous pratfalls but it later turns into a conventional love story. Apart from Lee and Penny's developing relationship (which all takes place in one night), there is an emphasis on Penny's unique outlook on life, for example, she gets elected on to the local committee which has been setup to complain about her loud music. The sequence also highlights several unusual features in Penny's flat which include giant soft dice that she uses as furniture, African tribal masks disguising large music speakers, and behind a curtain in a small alcove is a mute, semi-naked man sitting in a large bowl, who stares into space as Penny empties water over his body. The overall effect is surreal, fantastical, and very strange, and this particular narrative style would later reappear in Hartford-Davis' pop-music-fantasy, *Gonks Go Beat*, as well as many of the "Swinging London" films of the mid-1960s, which used pop art, unconventional mise-en-scene, and "wacky" or "kooky" characters; for

²⁴⁴ Heather Sears had won a British Academy Award for her role in *The Story of Ester Costello* (David Miller, 1957), and was voted Top Actress by British Moviegoers in the same year.

²⁴⁵ Erica Remberg was a major star in West Germany where she had been appearing in films since the 1950s, and moved to Britain after marrying Sidney Hayers who had directed her in *Circus of Horrors* (1960).

²⁴⁶ Nigel Green's most memorable film roles include the tough, heroic Colour-Sergeant in *Zulu* (Cy Endfield, 1964), and the duplicitous spymaster in the first Harry Palmer film *The Ipcress File* (Sidney J. Furie, 1965). Irene Handel's film career mainly consisted of playing small roles as a loveable Cockney and she was a bigger star on British television.

example, *Modesty Blaise* (Joseph Losey, 1966), *Kaleidoscope* (Jack Smight, 1966), *Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush* (Clive Donner, 1967), and *Smashing Time* (Desmond Davis, 1967).

For me, the least interesting of the five stories is of the passenger, George Hudson, although the segment contains some interesting moments. Unlike the working-class seamen of the other stories, George is a middle-class, wealthy businessman, he is also not associated with the other characters. Therefore, his story appears to be out of place and conflicts with the more realistic, seedier locations of the other narratives. George meets an exotic French woman called Wanda in a hotel bar, and after taking her for a meal, they return to Wanda's house where they make love. It is later revealed that Wanda's business partner has taken photographs of their love-making, and he demands £1000 from George, otherwise he will send the pictures to George's wife. In a plot twist, George reveals that his wife has died some years earlier, but he agrees to buy the photographs for £10, to have proof to give to his work colleagues that his affair with a beautiful French woman actually happened.

In spite of Raymond Durnat's criticism that the plot is 'duller than an Edgar Wallace thriller', there are some features worth pointing out.²⁴⁷ Wanda plays a similar role to that of Alice, Joe Lampton's French lover in *Room at the Top*. Wanda, like Alice, is a signifier of the exotic, sexually available, foreigner, suggestive of the type of characters Compton's clientele would have been familiar with from screenings of numerous, sexually explicit (for the time) films from Continental Europe and Scandinavia. As Trevelyan pointed out, 'scenes of sex' were becoming 'increasingly frank, especially in films from France and Sweden'.²⁴⁸ This is further emphasised in an explicit sequence when Wanda seduces George by appearing at her bedroom door in a see-through nightdress. Wanda's body is lit from behind, and the outline of her naked body is clearly seen through the fabric of her nightdress. The shot is designed to be erotic and pushes at the boundaries of what was permissible for screen nudity in a British film at the time (similar to Hartford-Davis' previous films).

The remaining two stories are the most interesting in terms of exploitation and controversy and what they tell us about social and cultural conditions in Britain at that time. The fourth story is a gritty, downbeat love story, set against the background of bombed out London streets, crowded, loud and boozy pubs, and dreary boarding houses. Jamey, played by Colin Campbell in a role similar to Campbell's 'dull,

²⁴⁷ Durnat, Raymond, *Films and Filming*, April 1964, p.29.

²⁴⁸ Trevelyan, 1973, p.50.

conventional boy' in *The Leather Boys*, and his friend Harry, meet two women, Jean and Margaret in a pub.²⁴⁹ Harry leaves after realising that Margaret is a prostitute, and not content with a quick backstreet, "knee-trembler", travels to Soho in the hope of finding women with a, "bit more class". Margaret also leaves and Jamey stays with Jean (Francesca Annis). After leaving the pub, Jean reveals to Jamey that she has run away from her foster home because of the threat of sexual abuse by her foster father; and as a result Jean is now homeless. Jamey and Jean end the evening in a local bed and breakfast (Jamey spends the night in an armchair while Jean takes the bed). The following morning, Jamey jumps ship, and the couple run away to Scotland.

Despite the implausibility of the plot and melodramatic ending, Jamey and Jean's story is set against a background that offers a richness of detail and authenticity comparable to the best of the "kitchen-sink dramas". The depiction of London in this segment consists of broken walls, rubble, bombed out streets, at night old men fight in the street and old women sing drunkenly before collapsing in the gutter. The grim and drab bed and breakfast setting with a bowl of water for washing by the side of the bed, a bathroom down the hall, a gas meter for the fire, and the exoticism offered by the landlady of a continental breakfast, conveys a sense of squalid desperation. The final crane shot of the couple walking through a desolate, bleak industrial landscape reveals a London that has yet to experience the vibrancy traditionally associated with Britain during the 1960s.

The sequences in the pub also take a realistic approach, as Hartford-Davis' camera jostles and squeezes between the drinkers, and, as the evening progresses, weaves through the crowd as they become drunker and louder. By the time the pop group The Searchers appear, the bar (film set) is so crowded that Hartford-Davis' camera is forced into filming either extreme close-ups of the band or towards the back, shooting long shots at the rear of the pub, at one point resorting to filming the band from their reflection in a mirror on the wall because the room is too crowded – the effect is extremely exciting and effectively conveys the crush, claustrophobia and frenzy of a pub live band.²⁵⁰ The pub sequences in *Saturday Night Out* appears as authentic bustling, noisy hive of activity, which compares favourably to the similar pub sequence near the start of the *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*.

²⁴⁹ Murphy, 1992, p.129.

²⁵⁰ Obtaining the singing talents of The Searchers was a considerable coup for the producers. The group had already produced two number one hit singles before their appearance in the film.

The final story of Harry (Inigo Jackson) is also interesting in terms of what it reveals about the seedy and sleazier side of London nightlife. Harry travels to Soho to visit the hostess bars and clip-joints that had surfaced in the wake of the publication of the 1957 Wolfenden Report which led to 'The Street Offences Act of 1959. The Wolfenden Report may now be 'almost entirely remembered for recommending the legalization of homosexuality' it was, as historian Peter Hennessy has pointed out, however, originally intended to deal with the 'anxiety about the number of prostitutes on the streets of London'.²⁵¹ The hostess bars Harry visits had been a feature of the documentary, *West End Jungle* (Arnold L. Miller, 1961), and according to the film's co-producer/co-writer and cinematographer Stanley Long, was made overtly in response to the 1959 Act, which had effectively brushed 'vice under the carpet'.²⁵² The Act stated that any woman caught soliciting on more than three occasions would be sent to prison. Furthermore, as Long argued, the Act forced women from the streets of London, and into 'dingy cellar clubs, fake massage parlours, clip-joints and so-called 'near-beer' clubs where pretty girls offered men expensive 'champagne' in the form of lemonade'.²⁵³ It is this association with the sleazy and unsavoury reputation of these clubs that this story in *Saturday Night Out* intended to exploit.

It is at one of these "near-beer" clubs (the exotically named The Garden of Eden) that Harry eventually completes his night out.²⁵⁴ After paying an annual membership fee of five shillings, Harry buys copious amounts of a drink called a Cuban Punch for two hostesses, Marlene and Arlene. Despite the price changing from round to round, twenty shillings for two drinks, fifteen shillings for one drink, and the obviously negligible alcoholic content, Harry remains unaware of the true nature of the club. Harry ends the night robbed of his wallet, beaten up by a bouncer and thrown out of the club into the street. The Garden of Eden bears a suitably seedy and unwholesome resemblance to the real clip-joints depicted in *West End Jungle* and it is likely that the authenticity of The Garden of Eden would have been drawn from the strip clubs Michael Klinger had owned. The tawdry atmosphere also benefits from the performance of Caroline Mortimer as Marlene. It is a particularly world-weary and cynical

²⁵¹ Hennessy, Peter, *Having it So Good: Britain in the Fifties*, London: Penguin Books, 2006, p.501.

²⁵² Long, Stanley with Simon Sheridan, *X-Rated: Adventures of an Exploitation Filmmaker* (London: Reynolds & Hearn Ltd, 2008) p.72.

²⁵³ Long, 2008, p.72.

²⁵⁴ It is tempting to speculate that the filmmaker's drew inspiration for The Garden of Eden's name from Max Nosseck's film discussed earlier. However, it is likely that the name was used more as a signifier of nudity – the opportunity to show the naked female form of Eve in Eden makes frequent appearances in classical art.

performance and contributes a great deal to the sense of desperate, sleazy and sordid atmosphere. In the background, greasy, sweaty men grope the breasts and legs of the hostesses, who sway around on high heels and tight, low-cut dresses. Several close-ups of Marlene's breasts also accentuate the air of immorality and corruption of the club, as well as emphasising the controversial subject matter.

The combination of different stories in *Saturday Night Out* was an attempt to include a mixture of film genres that had proved successful at the box-office. It is also possible that the title, *Saturday Night Out*, was deliberate reference to another "kitchen-sink drama", the enormously successful *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, and was an attempt to capitalise on the film's critical respectability and market value. The poster campaign for *Saturday Night Out* not only recalls the gritty realism of "kitchen-sink dramas" (far removed from the original announcement of a light-hearted comedy) but also the exploitative elements Compton was associated with. For example, the poster depicts the sultry figure of actress Caroline Mortimer, her leg is resting at right angles against a doorframe, and she looks alluringly towards the viewer as the sweaty, distressed face of Harry tries to escape.²⁵⁵ It is a deliberate attempt to foreground the sleazier aspects of the film. The poster campaign for *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* used similar exploitative iconography. One of the film's posters features the actor Albert Finney. Finney as Arthur Seaton is placed in the centre of the frame with his fists raised, to his left and right are scenes from the film showing Seaton in bed with his two lovers.

However, the emphasis on sleaze compounded the confused marketing and reception of *Saturday Night Out*, resulting in Compton's comedy receiving an X rating. According to *Kinematograph Weekly*, the newspaper campaign by Compton's publicity department for *Saturday Night Out* was larger than the promotion given to *The Yellow Teddybears*, and the film was launched 'with one of the largest promotion and advertising campaigns ever mounted by an independent company'.²⁵⁶ Additional marketing campaigns included a competition in the music magazine *Record Mirror* which invited 'the winning entries to a "Saturday Night Out" date with the top pop group "The Searchers"', and the film's story was serialised in *Top Boys* magazine.²⁵⁷ Theatres and bookstalls received 'thousands of posters' promoting the competition, and Pye records

²⁵⁵ "A Slice of Life in the Raw!" *Kinematograph Weekly*, 9 April 1964, p.7.

²⁵⁶ "Saturday Night Out' gets big backing", *Kinematograph Weekly*, 23 April 1964, p.6

²⁵⁷ "Saturday Night Out' gets big backing", *Kinematograph Weekly*, 23 April 1964, p.6.

‘co-operated even further by window displays and contests’.²⁵⁸ A showmanship competition was announced ‘for managers for the most comprehensive campaign embracing many products detailed in a special promotion supplement’ and Francesca Annis promoted the spring outfits of the clothing company Lewis Separates.²⁵⁹ The showmanship competition also encouraged cinema managers ‘to stimulate their own ideas, magazine contests, ballroom promotions, magazine serialisations of the story, national fashion tie-up arrangements and many other promotional aids’.²⁶⁰

Tenser and Klinger wanted to secure a nationwide release for the film, underlined by a special screening the company arranged in which theatre managers from ‘Rank, ABC, Granada, Essoldo and Shipman’ were invited.²⁶¹ The managers also received ‘many promotion items for theatre exploitation’.²⁶² Compton’s determination to ensure greater financial success for the film extended to the world premiere at the Rialto, London – which was a star-studded affair. Among the guests were the singers Dusty Springfield, Eden Kane, and “Big” Dee Erwin, tap dancers The Clarke Brothers, the actresses, Sheila Hancock and Zena Marshall, the stars of the film, as well as *The Searchers*.²⁶³ The popularity of *The Searchers* was further exploited by the release of the song “Saturday Night Out” – the B-side to the group’s top ten hit “Needles and Pins”. Tickets available for the public sold out and ‘disappointed patrons remained in queues at the entrance, hoping to catch sight of the celebrities’.²⁶⁴ Despite the emphasis placed by Compton on the promotional campaign, Peter Newbrook, noted that there was a row about the quality of the print used for the premiere, which would have proved a major source of discomfort and annoyance for Tenser and Klinger.²⁶⁵

The critical reception to *Saturday Night Out* was mixed. *The Daily Cinema* judged the variable success of each plotline arguing that the film was an, ‘entertaining collection of sexual, comic and poignant anecdotes [...] competently staged, briskly paced and brightly acted’, and the episode set in the clip-joint displayed ‘a kind of sexual shrewdness [...] and informs the tawdrier aspects of the story’, the performances of Caroline Mortimer and Vera Day as the hostesses were ‘particularly striking’.²⁶⁶ *Kinematograph*

²⁵⁸ “‘Saturday Night Out’ gets big backing’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 23 April 1964, p.6.

²⁵⁹ ‘Special Screening to Promote Compton Film’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 2 April 1964, p.6.

²⁶⁰ Tenser, Tony, ‘Our Promise Has Been Fulfilled’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 7 May 1964, p.66.

²⁶¹ ‘Special Screening to Promote Compton Film’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 2 April 1964, p.6.

²⁶² ‘Special Screening to Promote Compton Film’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 2 April 1964, p.6.

²⁶³ “‘Saturday Night Out’ mid-week’, *The Daily Cinema*, 28 February 1964, p.11.

²⁶⁴ “‘Saturday Night Out’ Premiere’, *The Daily Cinema*, 4 March 1964, p.9.

²⁶⁵ See Appendix A.

²⁶⁶ ‘Saturday Night Out’, *The Daily Cinema*, 4 March 1964, p.6.

Weekly described it as an, ‘adventure, comedy and romance’ that is ‘extremely well made and almost continuously entertaining picture’. The performances of Campbell and Annis ‘make a happy ending believable’ however, there was note of caution with Heather Sears role, the ‘deliberately eccentric Penny is a theatrical character and, accordingly not easy to translate into credibility’.²⁶⁷

Raymond Durnat in *Films and Filming* compared *Saturday Night Out* to Ealing’s gritty thriller *Pool of London* (Basil Dearden, 1950) arguing that, ‘a comparison with this film leaves us in no doubt that the British cinema has since discovered (a) the working classes, (b) the ‘new morality’ and (c) idiomatic dialogue’ and a ‘run-of-the-mill Armchair Theatre’.²⁶⁸ The *Monthly Film Bulletin* was similarly unimpressed, a ‘routine multi-stranded story [...] both script and direction, though striving hard to inject a flavouring of sex and wit, are colourless’²⁶⁹

Variety’s reviewer thought the film was a, ‘poorly constructed pic with some reasonable thesping [*sic*] and directorial talent socked [*sic*] by tawdry predictable situations and weak dialog [*sic*]’.²⁷⁰ The reviewer referred to Mortimer and Day as ‘cheap nightclub come-on girls’, and argued that the scriptwriters failed to ‘throw no light on a situation in which many suckers have found themselves’, the ‘blackmailing affair has a mildly neat twist [...] Campbell and Miss Annis provide a few moments of likeable wistfulness, [but the] lark between Miss Sears [...] has a satirical edge which unfortunately becomes over pretentious’.²⁷¹ Technically, ‘Peter Newbrook’s camerawork is okay’, and Hartford-Davis’ direction was described as ‘routine but uninspired’.²⁷²

The portmanteau narrative structure of *Saturday Night Out*, combined with an uneasy mix of comedy, modest thrills, romantic melodrama, and sleazy nightlife confused both critics and audiences alike. Despite the promotional campaign, the film failed to repeat the financial returns of Compton’s previous features, although in some areas the film managed to beat the average take of *The Yellow Teddybears* on the independent circuit.²⁷³ *Saturday Night Out* attempted to reproduce the success of “kitchen-sink dramas” and combined segments of broad comedy with occasional shifts towards social realism and sensationalist, risqué stories. Schaefer has argued, in terms of American exploitation

²⁶⁷ ‘Saturday Night Out’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 5 March 1964, p.9.

²⁶⁸ Durnat, Raymond, ‘Saturday Night Out’, *Films and Filming*, April 1964, p.29.

²⁶⁹ ‘Saturday Night Out’, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, May 1964, p.77.

²⁷⁰ ‘Saturday Night Out’, *Variety*, 18 March 1964.

²⁷¹ ‘Saturday Night Out’, *Variety*, 18 March 1964.

²⁷² ‘Saturday Night Out’, *Variety*, 18 March 1964.

²⁷³ ‘Box-Office Business’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 23 April 1964, p.8.

films, that ‘classical exploitation films centered on some form of forbidden spectacle that served as their organizing sensibility — at the expense of others’.²⁷⁴ In terms of exploiting *Saturday Night Out*, the film fails to have any ‘organizing sensibility’ and the shocking, explicit themes of the sexually transmitted diseases in *That Kind of Girl* and schoolgirl sex in *The Yellow Teddybears* is noticeably absent (with the exception of the seedy Soho nightclub scene). By attempting to combine social realism and “kitchen-sink drama”, provocative ingredients as well as comedy, the result was a confused product that Compton found hard to coherently exploit or promote.

Conclusion

David McGillivray has called the first two films produced by Compton ‘sexploitors’.²⁷⁵ However, as this chapter has demonstrated the end products incorporate a far more complex structure. Compton’s decision to shift into the production of films was a commercial decision based on the success of “kitchen-sink dramas” like *Room at the Top* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. Reisz’s film made £100,000 in London alone on a relatively low budget and this was something that could not be ignored by the directors at Compton.²⁷⁶ Tenser and Klinger, because of their respective backgrounds, were receptive to exploitable products that could take advantage of the relaxation in film censorship and offer previously difficult, controversial and provocative subject matter to enter into the mainstream film market. Fortuitously, “kitchen-sink dramas” successfully bridged the gap between mainstream respectability and exploitable subjects.

Furthermore, the shift of the X certificate from a rating intended ‘to be a category of films for adults’ had rapidly become associated with controversial, provocative subjects and graphic, forbidden pleasures.²⁷⁷ Combined with a decline in mass audiences and a growth in young audiences, Compton’s films were ideally positioned to take advantage of this changing market. Hartford-Davis’ *That Kind of Girl* and *The Yellow Teddybears* exploited successfully challenging and notorious features which were clear, unambiguous and could be clearly promoted. Furthermore, the moral messages in the film could help to placate the British censors, as well as the majority of

²⁷⁴ Schaefer, 1999, p.5.

²⁷⁵ McGillivray, David, *Doing Rude Things: The History of the British Sex Film 1957 – 1981*, London: Sun Tavern Fields, 1992, p.24.

²⁷⁶ Sandbrook, 2005, p.194.

²⁷⁷ Trevelyan, 1973, p.51.

local authorities. However, this formula is largely absent in *Saturday Night Out*, and the exploitable features were either incoherent or secondary to the comedy.

Are these films exploitation? In terms of narrative structure there is a similarity between American products of the same type. For example, *Naked – As Nature Intended* was an imitation of American cinema’s “nudie-cutie” popular cycle of films, and one of a similar series of British nudist films.²⁷⁸ However, unlike the American nudist films, these British pictures were screened in high street cinemas and rarely incurred censorship problems or banning. This difference can be traced to the release of *Garden of Eden*, and the decision by BBFC ‘that the rigid policy of not allowing nudity on the screen must be abandoned [...] after careful consideration it was decided that we should accept nudity, without pubic hair or genitals being visible, provided the setting was recognisable as a nudist camp or naturist reserve’.²⁷⁹ Furthermore, nudist films were categorised, not as X films, but as A-rated films which meant children could see the film, as long as they were accompanied by an adult. This is a crucial difference between the American and British exploitation genre film because the A rating (as BBFC Secretary John Trevelyan later argued) was awarded to avoid exploitation.²⁸⁰ Moreover, *Naked – As Nature Intended* was intended as a mainstream release, and not consigned to obscure screenings in private cinema clubs, or adult-only cinemas.

That Kind of Girl and *The Yellow Teddybears*, also follow this pattern. In narrative structure, the films are similar to the American exploitation method of exposé and education however they enjoyed publicity and promotion in mainstream publications, the national press, the trade press, and included additional marketing with music companies like Decca Records and Pye as well as high street shops and other well-known British-based manufacturers. Produced to capitalise on the financial success of “kitchen-sink dramas”, as well as controversial narratives, explicit language, sexual situations and nudity, brought about by an increasingly liberally minded society (and censorship board), *That Kind of Girl* and *The Yellow Teddybears* were intended to be products of mainstream British cinema. *Saturday Night Out* failed to be as successful as other Compton productions because the formula that had previously worked so well was lacking – in other words it was the exploitable, marketable features that were missing. Nonetheless, in

²⁷⁸ Initially inspired by the success of the *Garden of Eden*, the British nudist cycle included *Nudist Paradise* (Nat Miller, 1958), *Travelling Light* (Michael Keating, 1959), *The Nudist Story* (Ramsey Herrington, 1960), *World Without Shame* (Donovan Winter, 1961), and many others. See Sheridan, Simon, *Keeping the British End Up: Four Decades of Saucy Cinema*, (London: 2001) for a comprehensive list of British nudist films.

²⁷⁹ Trevelyan, 1973, p.95.

²⁸⁰ Trevelyan, 1973, p.95.

terms of what these films say about British society and culture, they are important contributors to our understanding of the period.

Chapter Two: Enter Polanski: “Art House”, Horror, Marketing & Publicity

‘[H]orror for intelligent people’

Michael Klinger, 1964.¹

Introduction

Although “kitchen-sink dramas” like *Room at the Top* (Jack Clayton, 1959) and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (Karel Reisz, 1960) had shown that films with a distinctive English flavour could be successful overseas, there was no guarantee the picture could recoup its production costs, a factor crucial to the production methodology at Compton. Consequently, Compton’s production strategy shifted towards large-scale ambitious projects combined with low budget films. Compton’s next feature film, the gothic horror *The Black Torment*, was to be the start of bigger budgeted, more lavish productions. The film was intended, as Peter Newbrook remembered, to put Compton into ‘a much bigger league’.²

Nonetheless, Tony Tenser and Michael Klinger would not completely abandon the type of pictures that had proved so successful for the company. During the production of *The Black Torment*, Tenser and Klinger’s distribution company, Compton-Cameo, announced a “‘big 5” release programme’ for 1964.³ The programme was intended to ‘provide the widest exploitation possible with a variety of topics, international stars and powerful fast action stories to grip audiences of all ages. Here is a further opportunity for theatres everywhere to achieve the greatest results at the box-office and win even larger numbers back to the cinema’.⁴ The films offered by Compton comprised of (as usual) an eclectic mix of horror, westerns, and thrillers from a range of international production companies. For example, the Italian horror film, *I Married a Werewolf* (*Lycanthropus*, Paolo Heusch, It., 1961) was paired with the British *Where Has Poor Mickey Gone?* (Gerry Levy, 1964) described as ‘bizarre study in retribution’ – both films were X-rated.⁵ Other films released included two British films, the crime thriller *The Flying Scot* (Compton Bennett, 1957), and the comedy, *The Chimney Sweeps* (Dudley Birch, 1963), and the French\Italian co-production *The Big Risk* (*Classe tous risques*, Claude Sautet, Fr.\It., 1960).

¹ Todd, Derek, ‘Production—Compton-Tekli Gets a Gilt Complex About “Torment”’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 20 February 1964, p.12.

² See Appendix A.

³ ‘Compton-Cameo to Release Double Big-5 Programmes’, *The Daily Cinema*, 19 June 1964, p.4.

⁴ ‘Compton-Cameo to Release Double Big-5 Programmes’, *The Daily Cinema*, 19 June 1964, p.4.

⁵ ‘Compton-Cameo to Release Double Big-5 Programmes’, *The Daily Cinema*, 19 June 1964, p.4.

However, Compton's ambitious production and exhibition schedule offer a contrast to the continued decline in cinema attendance in Britain. In January 1964, *Kinematograph Weekly* announced that 'admissions to cinemas during November 1963, were at a weekly average of 6.8 million', for November 1962 the figure had been 7.2 and for 1961 the weekly average was eight million.⁶ These figures do not offer a completely accurate picture of the state of audience attendances which fluctuated a great deal throughout the decade, as an analysis carried out in 1966 concluded. The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising National Readership Survey found that there was 'an increase of a million in the British cinemagoing population' between July 1965 and June 1966. However, despite this increase, and more importantly, it was the frequency with which audiences went to the cinema that had fallen.⁷ Tenser and Klinger's priority would have been to find a way of not only stemming infrequent drops in audiences, but also try to increase the frequency of cinema admissions. By providing programmes consisting of low budget British quota productions, cheap Continental Europe and Scandinavian films, as well as older re-releases from America, Compton could provide a variety of cinematic attractions. These films, when combined with extensive marketing and promotional campaigns, were designed to generate interest among cinemagoers.

The yearly decrease in cinema admissions prompted the FBFM to embark on a survey of cinemagoers. The six part report, 'Cinemagoing in London, 1963: A study of Attitudes and Behaviour', was published in *Kinematograph Weekly*, and gives an insight into what metropolitan audiences thought about British cinemas and going to the cinema.⁸ The report surveyed one thousand adults aged between sixteen and forty-five in the Greater London Area during the spring of 1963, and was 'concerned with the practical problems of how to increase cinema attendance—or [...] how to halt the decline in admissions'.⁹ The report offered a clear indication of how seriously the industry took the fall in the numbers of cinema audiences. The survey examined the patterns of cinemagoing, the cost and decision-making process, the sources of information for films, attitudes towards cinemas and staff, how satisfied were audiences with films screened in cinemas, what audiences felt competed for their entertainment needs, as well as what they thought the future of cinema would be.

⁶ 'Admissions down but takings increase', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 23 January 1964, p.5.

⁷ 'Million more filmgoers—but more selective', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 6 October 1966, p.5.

⁸ Bittleston, J.R., 'Cinemagoing in London, 1963, A study of attitudes and behaviour: Part One: Patterns of Cinemagoing', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 14 May 1964, p.5.

⁹ Bittleston, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 14 May 1964, p.5.

The survey found that ‘a high proportion of cinema-goers consists of young people, who are also the most the most frequent cinema-goers. Ten years ago 85 per cent. of all admissions were made by those going at least once a week; even today the figure is 67 per cent. [...] and most of these regular admissions are contributed by the young’.¹⁰ The most frequent and highest proportion cinemagoers were aged between 16 and 24 years old. This only served to reiterate the findings of Edinburgh University referred to in the previous chapter that it was young people who were going to British cinemas.

Despite falling numbers, going to the cinema continued to fulfil an important role in the entertainment needs of the British public. Moreover, going to the cinema remained a cheap form of entertainment. The survey found that ‘two-thirds of people spend less than 6s. a head on their visit to the cinema’, and visits continued to form a major part of the weekend as one interviewee pointed out, “‘When I first started work I used to go every Saturday, Sunday and Monday. I saw everything that was on [...] Now we have got two cinemas—they closed the Gaumont—we go twice a week, near enough every Sunday afternoon.’”¹¹ It is worth pointing out that the Rank Organisation owned Gaumont cinemas, and the closure (or conversion to Bingo halls) of cinemas by the company continued at an increasing rate throughout the 1960s. Compton’s decision to acquire, as well as reopen cinemas can be interpreted as an attempt to compete (albeit on a smaller scale) with Rank. Tenser and Klinger’s acquisition policy (as noted above) of purchasing and exhibiting low budget films, and yet maximising potential profit from generating public interest via localised marketing campaigns, allowed Compton to compete successfully with other cinemas.

Of similar importance was Tenser and Klinger’s strategy of distributing their films as double-features, a move which was against the prevailing opinion of some in the industry. The producer\director Roy Boulting had expressed the view earlier in the decade that, “‘The industry as a whole has to decide whether it is going to go on encouraging the production of second features to build up its programmes or whether it will be better to give audiences one feature and a supporting programme made up of shorts.’”¹² Boultings’ main concern was the quality of second features, a viewpoint supported by a survey carried out by the Birmingham Mail, which found that out of 500

¹⁰ Bittleston, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 14 May 1964, p.5.

¹¹ Bittleston, J.R., ‘The Cost and the Decision: Part Two of A study of attitudes and behaviour’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 21 May 1964, p.5.

¹² Boulting, Roy, ‘The Industry has to Decide—Roy Boulting’, *The Daily Cinema*, 15 February 1961, p.1.

letters received by the newspaper, '87½ per cent who wrote were completely against second features. The remaining 12½ per cent said that second features they had seen were 'bad,' 'rubbish,' 'muck,' etc.'"¹³ However, FBFM's larger and more comprehensive survey found that cinemagoers, although aware that some second features might be of low quality, believed that having a second film available constituted good value, as one respondent pointed out:

"If you get a really good film the second film isn't so good, because they hardly ever show two good films together, but I still like to have two films on. I go to see the complete programme not just the main film and if we were late and hadn't time to see the film we should probably go on a different night so that we could see the two. I'd rather not go than only see one film as I don't think it's worth paying the money and only seeing one film."¹⁴

Boulting's viewpoint can be interpreted, not only as a response to the concern in the decline in cinema audiences, but also as a move to promote the quality of British films, as Boulting told *The Daily Cinema*, "It is my belief there is a widespread resentment at the quality of the second feature that is being offered. *"This is damaging the industry at a time when it cannot afford to have damage done to it [emphasis in the original]."*"¹⁵ Tenser and Klinger's decision to promote double-features was based on commercial reasons, this did not mean they were not concerned with the quality of their films (far from it), however, value for money counted far more than opinions of quality. As far as Compton's publicists were concerned, the majority of the company's films were high value products that could offer an exciting entertainment experience. Boulting's objections to double-features also echoed the industries concern over elaborate film premieres which demonstrates again how out of touch the mainstream British industry appeared to be when compared to Compton's on-going successful business strategy.

The growth of television is frequently blamed for the decline in post-war cinema audiences, however the film industry at the time did not perceive television as a great threat, as the findings of the FBFM survey appeared to confirm. The survey established that, 'Six out of ten cinema-goers agreed that television is no substitute for the cinema', however this was due in part to deficiencies in current technology, because, as the survey found, 'the advantage of coloured [*sic*] television would make it equal to the cinema [...]

¹³ Boulting, *The Daily Cinema*, 15 February 1961, p.1.

¹⁴ Bittleston, J.R., 'Sources of information, programmes and films: Part Three of A study of attitudes and behaviour', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 28 May 1964, p6.

¹⁵ Boulting, *The Daily Cinema*, 15 February 1961, p.7.

if tv had up-to-date films it could come very near to doing so'.¹⁶ In 1964, (the year the FBFM survey was published) thirteen million households had access to a television set.¹⁷

Despite the gradual increase in television ownership, TV companies and the British film industry had yet to come to an agreement regarding the length of time between cinema screenings and subsequent television transmission. Therefore, the delay between a new film appearing at the cinema and a television screening was often several years. Indeed, the matter was considered so important to the industry that in 1958 the Film Industry Defence Organisation (FIDO) was set up in response to the plans by Ealing Studios 'to sell a hundred films to television'.¹⁸ FIDO was funded by a levy on box-office receipts which it used to pay 'film-makers a nominal sum to sign a covenant binding them not to sell their films to television'.¹⁹ FIDO eventually collapsed in the mid-1960s, unable to withstand the pressure from American and British producers.

Moreover, the majority of television sets in Britain during the 1960s still received black and white pictures, and even by the early 1970s colour television had still to reach over 2 million households.²⁰ Even filmmakers like Tony Tenser, whose judgement of audiences up to then had been reasonably accurate, argued that 'the public want to go out to the cinema again. They have become too familiar with the goggle box'.²¹ A survey carried out at the beginning of the decade had also established that television was not a major contributor to falling audiences, and that owning a television failed to significantly effect the cinemagoing habit. The survey, which was commissioned by the Screen Advertising Association (SAA), had sampled 11,565 cinemagoers, and established that '80 per cent [...] without tv go to the cinema at least once a fortnight, compared with 73 per cent of those with ITV [*sic*] sets'.²²

Furthermore, the actual cause of declining audiences was far more complex, as revealed by the FBFM survey. Two-thirds of the sample had visited the cinema in the last year, and while 'one-third had been to a dance hall, 16% to a public bingo hall and 14% to a tenpin bowling alley' [...] *Among cinema-goers*: [emphasis in the original] 40% had been

¹⁶ Bittleston, J.R., 'Attitudes and satisfactions: Part Five of A study of attitudes and behaviour', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 11 June 1964, p.6.

¹⁷ Sandbrook, Dominic, *Never Had It So Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles*, London: Little, Brown, 2005, p.361.

¹⁸ Baillieu, Bill & Goodchild, John, *The British Film Business*, Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2002, p.88.

¹⁹ Baillieu & Goodchild, 2002, p.88.

²⁰ 'Philips' VCR to be launched in UK next spring', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 21 August 1971, p.3.

²¹ 'Commentary By Observer', *The Daily Cinema*, 22 February 1964, p.5.

²² 'TV does not keep cinema fans away', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 23 March 1961, p.1.

to a dance hall, 17% to bingo and 17% to bowling'.²³ In other words, cinemagoers were more likely to take part in a greater variety of social activities than non-cinemagoers. This was a point understood by Compton, and the company's marketing strategy was based on how the leisure activities of regular cinemagoers had changed. As Michael Klinger pointed out, Compton's entrance into the film business was:

at a critical period for the British film industry, when many in the production and exhibition fields were putting up the shutters and abandoning the race in favour of television, bingo, bowling centres and other forms of rival entertainment. We at Compton had faith in films and in the potential which still lay ahead, and it was this burning enthusiasm which drove us on.²⁴

Although Klinger's statement should be considered as part of a bombastic publicity and marketing strategy, Tenser and Klinger's task was to offer an additional social outlet for that section of the British public who were already taking part in activities away from the home. The type of films Hartford-Davis was making at Compton was an important part of this strategy.

These surveys might have established that television did not reduce cinema audiences however Tenser argued that the type of product television was offering was likely to keep cinemagoers at home. This might explain why Tenser had suggested that it was time for the X certificate to be abolished. Although Compton's films had traded on the attraction of the X certificate (as discussed in the previous chapter), Tenser declared, 'what an outcry from the youngsters and their parents would result if an X certificate were clamped on TV shows. Yet these youngsters are prevented from seeing much watered down sex and sadism at the cinema compared with what goes out every night right into the home as family TV entertainment'.²⁵ Tenser was not really arguing for the abolition of the X film, because he knew it was the attraction of the X rating that was bringing audiences into his cinemas. What Tenser wanted was stronger content to compete with television. Tenser's real argument was that either harder, more explicit material on television should be rated, or (and this is more likely) that X-rated television programmes had no place in the home. Tenser knew that it was the difference associated with X films (the attraction of the X certificate) that made these films appealing to audiences. Furthermore, the Edinburgh survey had clearly shown that young people

²³ Bittleston, J.R., 'Competition and the Future: Part Six of A study of attitudes and behaviour', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 18 June 1964, p.6.

²⁴ Klinger, Michael, 'Our pledge is to support the British film industry', Supplement to *Kinematograph Weekly*, 19 November 1964, p.4.

²⁵ 'Commentary By Observer', *The Daily Cinema*, 22 February 1964, p.5.

wanted to see X rated films because they offered the type of subject matter they could not get anyway else.

The attraction of the X film was also beginning to be recognised, albeit reluctantly and slowly, by other British filmmakers. In 1964, the decision of the British production team, Frank Launder and Leslie Gilliat, to make a big budget X certificate comedy – *Joey Boy* (Launder, 1965) gives an indication of this shift. Launder and Sidney Gilliat (Leslie’s brother) were, as Brian McFarlane has pointed out, ‘along with Powell and Pressburger, the most distinctive and talented British film partnership, writing, producing and directing perceptive, witty, and sympathetic films’, in the ’40s and ’50s, and Launder’s recognition of the importance of the X certificate is significant.²⁶ When asked if the X certificate would restrict the box-office potential of Launder’s new film, the director replied, “‘In my opinion, the subject with restricted box-office potential is an A. You must either go for an X or a U, because teenagers today think an A is below them: kids all try to see X certificate films’”.²⁷ Launder cited the reaction of his son to a viewing of *Only Two Can Play* (Sidney Gilliat, 1962), “‘What was all the fuss about?’” was his response to the X-rated comedy.²⁸

Only Two Can Play, a mild, but risqué, comedy about a timid librarian, played by the comedian Peter Sellers, trying to consummate an illicit love affair, and *Joey Boy*, a comedy drama about East End criminals selecting National Service over prison, and which featured several well-known British comedians, including Harry H. Corbett, Reg Varney, Stanley Baxter, Bill Fraser, and many more, were both released as X films and made by British Lion. British Lion was an independent distribution and production company, that tried, as Robert Murphy has pointed out, to balance riskier output (like the X-rated “kitchen-sink dramas” *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and *The L-Shaped Room*) with more commercially safe films.²⁹ However, the X-rated *Only Two Can Play* and *Joey Boy* demonstrated how far the X film had shifted away from the controversial subjects of “kitchen-sink dramas” and towards comedy films. Launder and Gilliat are British filmmakers not usually associated with the type of picture that is now linked to Compton’s output, and were considered part of the respectable mainstream end of the British industry. Nonetheless, Launder’s recognition (along with Tenser) that the adult-

²⁶ McFarlane, Brian, ‘Launder and Gilliat’, in Brian McFarlane (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of British Film* Third Edition, London: Methuen, 2007, p.423.

²⁷ Todd, Derek, ‘Production—There is lot more in this ‘Joey Boy’ than meets the eye’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 15 October 1964, p.12.

²⁸ Todd, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 15 October 1964, p.12.

²⁹ Murphy, Robert, *Sixties British Cinema*, London: British Film Institute, 1992, p.111.

oriented content of X-rated films was important in the choice of young people's cinemagoing habits, would continue to have an influence on the British industry throughout the 1960s.

***London in the Raw* (1964): Shocking Documentaries as Mainstream Entertainment**

Compton's business strategy for 1964 was three-fold: continue the distribution of low budget films from Continental Europe, Scandinavia and America, increase the purchase of cinemas, and (for film production) combine low budget, short pictures with more ambitious feature films targeted towards international distribution. The first of these short films was *London in the Raw* (Miller, 1964), directed and produced by Arnold L. Miller for his production company Searchlight Films. Miller, with Searchlight and his business partner Stanley Long (as mentioned earlier) had made the controversial *West End Jungle* (Miller, 1961), which had been banned by the BBFC, *Nudist Memories* (Miller, 1959), *Nudes of the World* (Miller, 1961), and many similar, low budget films. The filmmakers already had a reputation for making quick, financially successful, exploitable films, and a production partnership with Compton would be beneficial for both companies. According to John Hamilton, it was Derek Ford, inspired by the success of the recently released Italian documentary, *Mondo Cane* (Paolo Cavara, Gualtiero Jacopetti & Franco E. Prosperi, It., 1962), who had proposed to Long that making a British version would be an ideal product for both Searchlight and Compton.³⁰

Mondo Cane had originally been refused a BBFC certificate because, as John Trevelyan noted, the film 'contained some quite revolting scenes of cruelty'.³¹ A viewpoint echoed by Philip Strick in *Motion*, who argued it was a film 'for addicts of violence and sadism, this is the film of their sickest dreams'.³² Despite the BBFC's decision, several local authorities allowed *Mondo Cane* to be screened, and the censor, after some cuts, released the film with an X certificate. *Mondo Cane* juxtaposed images from around the world in order to maximise the picture's shocking footage. For example, wealthy pet owners were featured burying their dogs in exclusive pet cemeteries, followed by a sequence in a Taiwanese restaurant which is serving a dog delicacy after the poor creature had been skinned alive. Other scenes featured the mobbing of the Italian

³⁰ Hamilton, John, *Beasts in the Cellar: The Exploitation Film Career of Tony Tenser*, Godalming, Surrey: FAB Press, 2005, p.39.

³¹ Trevelyan, John, *What the Censor Saw*, London: Michael Joseph, 1973, p.173.

³² Strick, Philip, 'Mondo Cane', *Motion*, no.4, February 1963, p.36.

actor, Rossanno Brazzi by his fans and having his shirt ripped away, a Tokyo massage parlour for drunks, the artist Yves Klein painting with nude models, the beheading of bulls, and many other short sequences. *Mondo Cane* was an international success and led to succession of similarly themed films, as well as the establishment of the Mondo genre.

Nevertheless, aspects of *Mondo Cane* are firmly located within an earlier tradition of American exploitation film. *Mondo Cane*, in using the aesthetics of documentary filmmaking, was able to approach the filming of strange and obscure practices throughout the world, with the eye of a detached, but interested observer. By presenting the traditions of foreigners as bizarre and outlandish, the filmmakers could adopt an attitude of superiority. This method of patronising, or fearing foreign cultures, is a feature found in several American exploitation films, which Schaefer has referred to as the exotics. For Schaefer ‘the exotic exploitation films that emerged in the early 1930s presented an Other who was nonwhite, non-Western, and “uncivilized”’.³³ In films like, *Ingagi* (William Campbell, US., 1930), *Blonde Captive* (Paul Withington & Clinton Childs, US., 1932), and *Jaws of the Jungle* (aka. *Jungle Virgin*, Eddy Graneman, US., 1936), ‘nudity and shocking rituals or other forms of behaviour that could be labeled primitive were the qualities that made the exotic viable as an exploitation genre’.³⁴ Furthermore, as Schaefer has argued, ‘exotics addressed the unease that mainstream Americans felt about race, sex, and modernity’.³⁵ The exotics mixed faked documentary footage, reconstructions, and scenes of wildlife (usually animals in the act of eating each other), and *Mondo Cane* clearly borrowed from this tradition.

The attraction of making a low budget film with non-actors, low cost location shooting, the potential to perform very successfully at the box-office, as well as encouraged by the critical reception the film received by the trade press – ‘New angle to stranger than fiction subject, and tremendous exploitation possibilities’, announced *Kinematograph Weekly* – led to Tenser and Klinger financing a British version of *Mondo Cane*.³⁶ In what sense (if any) is *London in the Raw* different from the American exploitation exotics? In terms of content, *London in the Raw* (as the title suggests) presents not exotic locations from around the world or strange foreigners, but footage shot in London; documenting the bizarre (beatniks drinking methylated spirits, nude drawing

³³ Schaefer, Eric, *"Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!" A History of Exploitation Films, 1919-1959*, Durham, NC.: Duke University Press, 1999, p.265.

³⁴ Schaefer, 1999, p.269.

³⁵ Schaefer, 1999, p.269.

³⁶ ‘Mondo Cane’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 15 November 1962, p.30.

sessions, people eating cat food), the shocking (a gory hair transplant, a drug user waiting for a Piccadilly chemists to open), and the sleazy (prostitutes, striptease, showgirls, clip-joints and hostess bars). The content of *London in the Raw* is similar to the handful of American exploitation films Schaefer identified that ‘constructed some groups within the United States as sufficiently exotic to qualify for exploitation treatment [...] small, remote groups who, according to moviemakers, suffered from some sort of misplaced sexual energies’; for example the now controversial underage sex drama *Child Bride* (Raymond Friedgen, US., 1941).³⁷

In place of *Mondo Cane*’s peculiar foreigners, it is London of the 1960s that is presented as strange and exotic, but also familiar. For example, the clubs in *London in the Raw*, Churchill’s and the 21 Club, were famous nightspots patronised by the famous (TV celebrities and film stars), as well as the notorious (South London gangsters like Billy Howard and “mad” Frankie Fraser). In this respect, for British cinemagoers, audience identification is complicated not only by the familiar London locations, and the subject matter, but also the voiceover by the Canadian radio broadcaster, David Gell. Gell’s non-British accent relocates the film’s voice of authority, and in place of the film asking for the audience to view the bizarre as something exotic and “Other”, the audience (especially Compton Cinema’s London viewers) are looking at aspects of their neighbours. The question to ask here is why would the filmmakers highlight the behaviour of Londoners as shocking and bizarre to a domestic audience? I would suggest that it was the possibility of international sales (and crucially the North American market) that allowed the filmmakers to present Londoners as “Other”. *London in the Raw* is constructed so that it is possible for non-British audiences to view the peculiar activities on screen as sufficiently remote, strange, and foreign, reinforced further by Gell’s voiceover. The film would also allow British viewers to adopt a position of superiority over their less salubrious neighbours, as well as view the nudity on screen.

Furthermore, *London in the Raw*, as far as Compton’s marketing department was concerned, was a mainstream film (unlike American exploitation exotics). ‘Nudity and shock’, as Schaefer has argued, ‘were the factors that clearly set exploitation exotics apart from the jungle epics and movies made by Hollywood’, nevertheless, it was the nudity and shock value of *London in the Raw* that allowed Compton to promote the film as part of a package of mainstream programme releases for 1964.³⁸ Described as an ‘Eastman

³⁷ Schaefer, 1999, p.282.

³⁸ Schaefer, 1999, p.269.

Colour documentary drama [and offering] a new insight into the strip clubs, the jazz cellars, arty restaurants, shows the difference between the nice and the naughty, the brazen and the bizarre. Colourful, captivating and capricious', *London in the Raw* was released as a double feature with the Spanish\Italian western, *Gunfight at High Noon (El sabor de la venganza)*, Joaquín Luis Romero Marchent, Sp.\It., 1964), and intended for release on cinema screens throughout Britain.³⁹

It is also worth noting that Miller and Long intended the film to be a great deal more graphic, as the cuts specified by the BBFC make clear. For example, the filmmakers were asked for a total of six cuts, including, 'remove whole sequence in which men watch women in static poses on a stage [...] remove entire sequence in Pink Elephant Club in which female impersonator appears [and] in the montage at the end, remove all close shots of naked or semi-naked nude women and of the female impersonator'.⁴⁰ This example demonstrates the vagaries of the BBFC's censorship process, for example it is unclear what was so objectionable about a female impersonator – such acts had been popular on the stage as well as on film – although there are questions to ask of realism and fantasy, as well as the differences in stage censorship and film censorship. Long had also made plans to include the filming of a sex change operation, however, after a surgeon had been found and contracts signed, 'the patient suddenly got cold feet [...] saying he wanted to preserve his dignity and anonymity'.⁴¹ The sequence was replaced by an extremely graphic hair transplant operation.⁴² There was an intention, therefore, by the filmmakers to make a more controversial and explicit film in order to maximise the exploitative promotional possibilities, and to attract audiences. Nevertheless, the film was marketed, distributed and exhibited as a mainstream picture, unlike the film's American exploitation counterparts.

The London premiere of *London in the Raw* was as spectacular as Compton's previous first night performances. Held at Compton's recently purchased Jacey Cinema, Picadilly, the premiere was designed to showcase not only a new film from Compton, but also the opening of a brand new London cinema. The opening night featured 'twelve glamorous girls from "Churchill's Club," followed by beautifully dressed German blondes and brunettes, from the "Rheingold Club." "The Paint-Box Club" contingent

³⁹ '26 from Compton', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 7 May 1964, pp.66-7.

⁴⁰ Hamilton, 2005, p.277.

⁴¹ Long, Stanley, with Sheridan, Simon, *Adventures of an Exploitation Filmmaker*, London: Reynolds & Hearn, 2008, p.101.

⁴² Audiences had to wait until 1979 and the release of *Let Me Die a Woman* from the American exploitation filmmaker, Doris Wishman, before they could see the gruesome footage of a real sex-change operation.

delighted the crowd, while “The Whiskey a Go-Go” had two girls in their costumes as Miss Bikini of 1964, and runner-up’.⁴³ The interior of the Jacey was ‘transformed into a night club for the occasion, with music by the Don-Claude Quartet from “The Blue Angel”, and Barry Kent from “Churchill’s Club,” introduced the cabaret’.⁴⁴ Celebrities and stars attending the premiere included composer and musician Noel Harrison (the son of distinguished English actor Rex Harrison), television actor Peter Reeves, and the singer Joy Marshall. According to *Kinematograph Weekly*, ‘the glamorous and exciting night [...] bought a tremendous ovation from the large show business crowd’.⁴⁵ *Kinematograph Weekly*’s enthusiasm for *London in the Raw* extended to its critical coverage, pointing out that ‘the producers have kept a pretty good balance between a natural temptation towards titillation and a desire to give a reasonably accurate picture of aspects of life in London’.⁴⁶ *The Daily Cinema* noted:

exploitable behind-the-London-scenes peepshow; vividly filmed, loosely documented, with a strong emphasis on the seamier side [...] The film’s attempt to branch out into “isn’t life beastly?” *Mondo Cane* [emphasis in the original] territory doesn’t really achieve the right jaded and cynical air. Though, visually the transplanting of healthy hair cells to a bald patch is almost as unpleasant as anything in that previous film.⁴⁷

London in the Raw was given an additional boost in publicity when it was reported that six men had collapsed during a screening in Birmingham, and ‘at the Moulin Rouge Cinema in Nottingham several groggy male audience members staggered out after seeing only 25 minutes of the movie’.⁴⁸ This prompted Miller and Long, with the support of Graham Whitworth, Compton’s Promotion Manager, to travel to the late night premiere of the film at the Cinephone, Birmingham where they ‘witnessed for themselves [...] the phenomenon of men collapsing as they hurriedly left their seats’.⁴⁹ The publicity for the film was further exploited when the Birmingham *Evening Mail* reported that ‘more than two hundred people had to be turned away when the doors of the cinema had to be closed and the ‘house full’ notices went up’.⁵⁰ The box-office success of *London in the Raw* led to a sequel, *Primitive London* (Miller, 1965) which featured a similar mixture of sensation sequences, nudity and sexual themes.

⁴³ ‘The Crowds were out for ‘London in the Raw’’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 16 July 1964, p.13.

⁴⁴ ‘The Crowds were out for ‘London in the Raw’’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 16 July 1964, p.13.

⁴⁵ ‘The Crowds were out for ‘London in the Raw’’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 16 July 1964, p.13.

⁴⁶ ‘London in the Raw’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 16 July 1964. p.7.

⁴⁷ ‘London in the Raw’, *The Daily Cinema*, 10 July 1964, p.8.

⁴⁸ Long, 2008, p.103.

⁴⁹ “‘London in the Raw’ box office in Birmingham’, *The Daily Cinema*, 5 October 1964, p.8.

⁵⁰ “‘London in the Raw’ box office in Birmingham’, *The Daily Cinema*, 5 October 1964, p.8.

Compton's distribution and production schedule was not solely confined to low budget documentaries like *London in the Raw*, but the company's ambitions began to shift towards seeking production deals with the United States, and potential access to the lucrative North American market. Tenser and Klinger had travelled to the States at the beginning of the year to find additional funds for *The Loch Ness Monster*, a film Compton had already spent £8,000 on research and pre-production costs, as well as obtaining a co-production deal for *The Battle of the Somme*, intended as a big budget war film.⁵¹

Compton's First World War film is evidence of the company pushing towards bigger and larger productions. The film, originally called *Theirs is the Kingdom*, had been intended to follow *That Kind of Girl* as Compton's next production, as mentioned in the previous chapter. However, the projected budget of the film was too large for a company the size of Compton at that time, and the film was put on hold, until it was announced, in January 1964, that Warwick Films (an independent British production company) were about to enter into a deal to co-produce the film, now known as *The Great Offensive—Somme '16*.⁵² Warwick Films were ideal co-production partners for Compton because of Warwick's distribution deal with the Hollywood studio Columbia – an arrangement that had made Warwick one of the most successful of Britain's low budget production companies of the time.

Compton's ambitious production plans were frustrated by the size of the domestic industry, and access to the significantly larger North American market was crucially important if the company was to grow. As Tenser told *The Daily Cinema*, 'he hoped the time would come when they would be able to prevent the closing of small cinemas, either by buying them or by programme deals with the exhibitor. To achieve this they needed more product and they had got to have income from abroad by the sale of their product in the States'.⁵³ Therefore, the decision to follow *London in the Raw* with a new film by Hartford-Davis, the horror film *The Black Torment*, was intended to significantly broaden the appeal of Compton's product, as well as increase funding for future productions.

British Horror Cinema in the 1960s

⁵¹ 'The Compton Group chiefs are off to US for film deals', *The Daily Cinema*, 21-22 February 1964, p.3.

⁵² Todd, Derek, 'Irving Allen Joins Tekli Team for a War Film', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 16 January 1964, p.14.

⁵³ 'The Compton Group chiefs are off to US for film deals', *The Daily Cinema*, 21-22 February 1964, p.3.

The history of the horror film in Britain has suffered from an uneasy relationship with film critics. Unlike the critical reaction by most critics to “kitchen-sink dramas”, Compton’s plans to make a horror film, although offering exploitation possibilities, would increase the likelihood of problems with the censors, as well as negative reactions from the critics. In Britain, as David Pirie has argued, horror films were often regarded with ‘suspicion and scorn’.⁵⁴ British critical discourse had resulted in the valorisation of the realist aesthetic in British national cinema, and ‘the dismissal and denigration of those films deemed un- or non-realist’.⁵⁵ Julian Petley has argued that British critics frequently judged horror films ‘by wholly inappropriate standards and roundly condemned for not being what they never set out to be in the first place’.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, as Peter Hutchings has pointed out, critical response to horror films at the time was ‘not as controversial as some histories of horror have suggested’.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the differences in critical reception to British and non-British horror films complicate British critical discourse towards this genre in the 1960s. Before moving on to a discussion of Compton’s production of two horror films – *The Black Torment* and *Repulsion* – I want to briefly examine the complex position the horror genre held within Britain in the 1960s. Mapping out this relationship will help to explain why the films received different critical receptions, as well as contextualise their place within the horror genre, as well as the films subsequent impact on the development of horror films in Britain.

The treatment meted out to the screening of horror films in Britain was due in no small part to the self-appointed role of the BBFC as guardians of public morality. From the silent era until the 1930s, British filmmakers avoided the horror genre to prevent either severe censorship or a ban. Historically, as Mark Kermode has argued, ‘In Britain [...] the answer has been clumsily to neutralize and anaesthetize cutting-edge horror movies, blunting their point and, more often than not, stripping them of whatever radical power they once possessed’.⁵⁸ The emergence and subsequent popularity of horror films from America resulted in a compromise by the BBFC, and in 1933, the H

⁵⁴ Pirie, David, *A Heritage of Horror: The English Gothic Cinema 1946-1972* (London: The Gordon Fraser Gallery Ltd, 1973) p.8.

⁵⁵ Petley, Julian, ‘The Lost Continent’, in Charles Barr (ed.), *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema*, London: British Film Institute, 1986, p.98.

⁵⁶ Petley, Julian, ‘A crude sort of entertainment for a crude sort of audience’: the British critics and horror cinema’, in Steve Chibnall & Julian Petley (eds.), *British Horror Cinema*, London: Routledge, 2002, p.34.

⁵⁷ Hutchings, Peter, *Hammer and Beyond: The British Horror Film*, Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1993, p.4.

⁵⁸ Kermode, Mark, ‘The British Censors and Horror Cinema’, in Steve Chibnall & Julian Petley (eds.), *British Horror Cinema*, London: Routledge, 2002, p.10.

certificate was introduced, 'to be reserved for movies of a 'horrific' nature', this decision followed the heavy editing of Rouben Mamoulian's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (US., 1931), as well as the banning of Tod Browning's *Freaks* (US., 1932), and Erle C. Kenton's *Island of Lost Souls* (US., 1932).⁵⁹

In 1951, the H certificate was replaced by the X category, nonetheless, the production of British horror films continued to be sporadic until Hammer Studios adaptation of Nigel Kneale's extremely popular television serial, *The Quatermass Experiment* (UK: BBC, 1953) – renamed for the cinema as *The Quatermass Xperiment* (Val Guest, 1954) to take full advantage of the new X certificate. The box-office success of *The Quatermass Xperiment* convinced Hammer to produce two more science-fiction films, *X the Unknown* (Leslie Norman, 1956), and a *Quatermass* sequel, *Quatermass 2* (Guest, 1956); both films received X certificates. Despite the domestic popularity of Hammer's foray into X-rated material, it was not until a shift into the production of horror films that the company experienced their first significant international success with *The Curse of Frankenstein* (Terence Fisher, 1957), swiftly followed by *Dracula* (Fisher, 1958). Hammer's horror films were not only successful in Britain but crucially they were extremely popular at the American box-office. Hammer Studios are now synonymous with a particular type of British horror film; however, it is worth noting that it was the introduction of the X certificate which allowed the company to take advantage of the more explicit content this rating allowed, as well as the publicity and promotional opportunities of an X category film. In a similar way that Hartford-Davis' "kitchen-sink dramas" had used the X rating, as detailed in the previous chapter.

The success of Hammer's films was also due to the shrewd marketing skills of the company's Chairman, James Carreras and his negotiations with several major American film studios. Hammer's early success in the highly competitive North American market was supported by the distribution deals made with Hollywood companies. For example, the American distribution for *The Curse of Frankenstein* was by Warner Bros., and *Dracula* (retitled for the American market as *Horror of Dracula*) was distributed by United Artists. In 1960, Carreras announced a five-year contract with Columbia Pictures under which the company would produce 'a minimum of five films a year', as well as a co-production with Associated British Picture Corporation (ABPC) – the crime drama *Hell is a City* (Guest, 1960) – distributed in the UK by Warner Pathé and

⁵⁹ Kermode, 2002, p.11; Conrich, Ian, 'Traditions of the British Horror Film', in Robert Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book* 3rd Edition, London: British Film Institute, 1997, p.69.

in America by Columbia.⁶⁰ In addition, Hammer's domestic competitiveness was aided by access to the lucrative Rank and ABC cinema circuits. For example, *The Curse of Frankenstein* was distributed in the UK by Warner for ABC cinemas; *Dracula* – and the sequel, *The Brides of Dracula* (Fisher, 1960) – were distributed by Rank. Hammer's distribution strategy was later imitated by Amicus, the company's main British rival producer of horror films: Amicus' first two horror films *Dr Terror's House of Horrors* (Freddie Francis, 1965), and *The Skull* (Francis, 1965) were distributed in America by Paramount.

The success of Hammer's films in the US was, as an American film publicist informed Carreras, because “in America the pictures made by Hammer are not looked upon as British”.⁶¹ In support of this viewpoint, Carreras noted, ‘We have made American exhibitors forget all the old arguments they used to trot out about English accents in films. Today they are fighting to play our Hammer pictures. Not in so-called “art theatres” or in “flea tents,” but on all top major circuits—nation wide [*sic*]’.⁶² This was a neat reversal of the British critics frequent objections to American accents found in British films, as Hartford-Davis had experienced in the criticism of his earlier short film *Dollars for Sale*. If American exhibitors believed that Hammer's films were not thought of as British, then this complicates the viewpoints put forward by supporters of British horror films – Julian Petley and David Pirie, among others. Indeed, Pirie's argument ‘that the horror genre, as it has been developed in this country by Hammer and its rivals, remains the only staple cinematic myth which Britain can properly claim as its own’, is open to question if the international success of Hammer's horror films was based on the impression that these films were considered not to be British by American distributors.⁶³ Furthermore, as Carreras pointed out, Hammer's films were not intended to be played on the traditional American exploitation circuit but in mainstream American cinemas – highlighting the difference between American exploitation films and British films popularly referred to as exploitation movies. The blurring effect between British low budget exploitation films and the mainstream industry would have an increasing impact on the American film industry, as further chapters will examine.

⁶⁰ Carreras, James, ‘Commercial? Of Course We Are!’, *The Daily Cinema Preview*, 1960, p.38.

⁶¹ Carreras, *The Daily Cinema Preview*, 1960, p.38.

⁶² Carreras, *The Daily Cinema Preview*, 1960, p.38.

⁶³ Pirie, David, *A Heritage of Horror: The English Gothic Cinema, 1946-1972*, London: Gordon Fraser Gallery Ltd, 1973, p.9.

Hammer's success did not mean that horror films received widespread acceptance from the critical establishment, or indeed the British censors. However, Carreras' acknowledgement that, 'the critics have not always seen eye to eye with us', as well as the orthodox view that British critics often vilified horror films, is open to question.⁶⁴ Furthermore, there are differences within the critical discourse that reveal more complex questions regarding the position of the horror film within British culture.

The trade press were generally more receptive to British horror films, whereas publications like *Sight and Sound* and the *Monthly Film Bulletin* tended to take a more critical viewpoint. For example, the *Monthly Film Bulletin* noted that in *The Curse of Frankenstein*, 'the immense possibilities of the Frankenstein story have here been sacrificed by an ill-made script, poor direction and performance and, above all, a preoccupation with disgusting—not horrific—charnelry [*sic*].⁶⁵ However, following the release of Hammer's *Dracula*, the *Monthly Film Bulletin*'s position had shifted in line with the recognition of the studio as producers of a particular type of British horror film. The reviewer pointed out that 'photographed in colour by Britain's specialists in horror fantasy, this new adaptation of Bram Stoker's classic achieves effective climaxes, and the staging could hardly be better'.⁶⁶ *Kinematograph Weekly* had written enthusiastic reviews for Hammer's horror films from the start. *The Curse of Frankenstein* was described as an 'excellent British X certificate shocker [...] skilful acting and direction, realistic thrills', and *Dracula*, a 'stylish spine-chiller [...] versatile team, clever treatment, gripping finale, box-office title, outstanding camera work'.⁶⁷ Even Hammer's earlier science fiction films had been received favourably, for example *Quatermass II* was a 'first-rate British X certificate shocker'.⁶⁸

Sympathetic reviews for Hammer's films continued throughout the 1960s, for example, *The Daily Cinema*'s reviewer noted that in *The Taste of Fear* (Jimmy Sangster, 1961) 'the Hammer horror specialists have come up with a chilling refinement of distilled terror [...] the thriller's bound to be a winner with audiences who enjoy having their spines chilled (and what audience doesn't?)'.⁶⁹ *Kinematograph Weekly*'s review for *The Evil of Frankenstein* (Freddie Francis, 1964), which is now regarded as one of the studio's less

⁶⁴ Carreras, *The Daily Cinema* Preview, 1960, p.38.

⁶⁵ 'Curse of Frankenstein', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, June 1957, p.70.

⁶⁶ 'Dracula', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, July 1958, p.88.

⁶⁷ 'The Curse of Frankenstein', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 2 May 1957, p.18; 'Dracula', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 22 May 1958, p.22-3.

⁶⁸ 'Quatermass II', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 2 May 1957, p.18.

⁶⁹ 'Taste of Fear', *The Daily Cinema*, 29 March 1961, p.14.

successful horror films (Jonathan Rigby has argued the film is ‘a perplexing aberration’), was a ‘good “monster” offering’ and ‘the expertise of the Hammer team at this kind of thing is again evident in the shock title scenes and the speed with which one horror incident follows another’.⁷⁰ *The Gorgon* (1964), was a ‘macabre Hammer fright-frolic; handsomely mounted with generous helpings of Gothic chills, weird sound and visual effects, nervy suspense and climatic shocks [...] The whole thing has been elegantly decked out in Hammer’s best gothic style’.⁷¹ It is important to note how quickly Hammer was identified with a particular type of horror film, and this “Hammer” house style allowed critics to differentiate the studio’s films from other British horror films – which I would suggest explains the *Monthly Film Bulletin*’s positive review of Hammer’s *Dracula*.

Sight and Sound’s position towards the popularity of horror films, was made clear by film critic Derek Hill in 1958. Hill argued that, ‘only a sick society could bear the hoardings, let alone the films. Yet the displays, the posters and the slogans have become an accepted part of the West End scene. So, too, have the queues. The horror boom, despite occasional trade rumours, is still prospering. Why?’⁷² Hill made a distinction between earlier horror cycles and the current series of horror films; referencing Germany’s silent period – which produced films like F.W. Murnau’s *Nosferatu – eine Symphonie des Grauens* (1922) – Hill argued that, ‘German productions derived from legend, the supernatural and national mysticism’, as well as Universal’s horror films of the 1930s which ‘had strong literary origins and relied on stylised fantasy’.⁷³ Hammer’s films for Hill were, ‘marked by a total disregard for the qualities of the original James Whale films of the ’thirties. Instead of attempting mood, tension or shock, the new Frankenstein productions rely almost entirely on a percentage of shots of repugnant clinical detail’.⁷⁴

Hill’s concerns mirrored many in the mainstream British film industry as represented by figures such as John Davis of the Rank Organisation. According to Hill, Davis had analysed ““thousands of letters” [which showed] that more than ninety per cent of the correspondents are disturbed about current horror and sex trends’.⁷⁵ Questions about horror films were also raised by Members of Parliament. In May 1960,

⁷⁰ Rigby, Jonathan, *English Gothic: A Century of Horror Cinema* Second Edition, London: Reynolds & Hearn, 2002, p.105; ‘Evil of Frankenstein’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 23 April 1964, p.13. p.23.

⁷¹ ‘The Gorgon’, *The Daily Cinema*, 26 August 1964, p.9.

⁷² Hill, Derek, ‘The Face of Horror’, *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1958-9, p.6.

⁷³ Hill, *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1958-9, p.8.

⁷⁴ Hill, *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1958-9, p.9.

⁷⁵ Hill, *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1958-9, p.11.

‘Mr. Philip Goodhart (Cons., Beckenham) asked the Home Secretary [...] to inform the new President of the Board of Film Censors of increasing concern about the substantial number of “so-called horror films,” [but was informed by] ‘the Parliamentary Secretary [...] the Home Secretary had no responsibility for censorship’.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, and in spite of perceived public anxiety about the genre, horror films continued to be a popular attraction for cinemagoers throughout the 1960s, and well into the 1970s.

Hammer was not the only producer of British horror films at this time, and there were other horror films that proved to be more problematic for the BBFC, as well as the critics. *Horrors of the Black Museum* (Arthur Crabtree, 1959) was made by the British independent production and distribution company Anglo Amalgamated, and was the first of what Pirie has referred to as ‘a trilogy of truly Sadian films’ made by the company.⁷⁷ Trevelyan described *Horrors of the Black Museum* as ‘both sadistic and nasty’, and one ‘scene in which a girl who had been given a present of binoculars had her eyes spiked when she tried use them’, was particularly memorable.⁷⁸ The *Monthly Film Bulletin* was similarly unimpressed, ‘for all its contemporary setting, the plot of this lurid melodrama relies almost entirely on hackneyed Gothic paraphernalia’.⁷⁹

The second film in Pirie’s trilogy, *Circus of Horrors* (Sidney Hayers, 1960), created a similar stir. The *Monthly Film Bulletin* noted the film had ‘a plot that only a simple-minded sadist would take seriously’.⁸⁰ The critic noted the ‘anthology of gory killings and maimings—by lion, bear and gorilla, careless surgery, bombing, stabbing, motor accident and falling from a height. Bandages are torn from unhealed wounds, whips slashed at snarling beasts, the bare thighs of the mad doctor’s lovely victims spread-eagled across the screen’, and found that ‘the film’s main concern is with satisfying those who find imaginary mutilation entertaining’.⁸¹ *The Daily Cinema* wrote that *Circus of Horrors* was a ‘grisly, no-close-ups barred drama specially geared for the more-gore customers [...] The picture has exploitation angles galore, so many broken bodies it seems at times like a coloured Belsen’.⁸² In *Kinematograph Weekly* the reviewer thought the film was, ‘the “goriest” and gaudiest show on earth, it’s right up the masses’ street. Cast-iron British

⁷⁶ ‘A Question of Horror’, *The Daily Cinema*, 16 May 1960, p.4.

⁷⁷ Pirie, 1973, p.99.

⁷⁸ Trevelyan, 1973, p.159

⁷⁹ ‘Horrors of the Black Museum’, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, May 1959, p.59.

⁸⁰ ‘Circus of Horrors’, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, June 1960, p.83.

⁸¹ ‘Circus of Horrors’, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, June 1960, p.83.

⁸² ‘Circus of Horrors’, *The Daily Cinema*, 20 April 1960, p.5.

box-office blood curdler [...] tremendously exploitable title'.⁸³ Anglo Amalgamated, keen to exploit all marketing possibilities, released the song featured in the film, "Look for a Song", in Britain and America where it 'soared to second place in the American Hit Parade'.⁸⁴ However, the critical reception given to these two horror films could not have prepared the company for the reaction to the third in the series, Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960).

Trevelyan, on receiving the script for *Peeping Tom*, initially 'thought that the film would contribute to a public understanding of mental illness'.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, Trevelyan was unhappy with the finished film and demanded several cuts before awarding an X certificate. Modern accounts of the controversy created by *Peeping Tom* often fail to take into account that the film was intended as a mainstream film. *Peeping Tom* was given a 'glittering World Premiere [...] at the Plaza, Picadilly' and extensive trade press publicity, as well as a nationwide release on the ABC circuit.⁸⁶ However, the critical reception towards the film was so vociferous it effectively ended Powell's career.⁸⁷ Nina Hibbin, in the *Daily Worker*, argued that Powell's film, 'wallows in the diseased urges of a homicidal pervert, and actually romanticizes his pornographic brutality'.⁸⁸ The *Monthly Film Bulletin* pointed out, 'any doubts that this is an authentically *Sadiste* [emphasis in the original] film can be dispelled by a reference to the *120 Journées de Sodome* [...] It is only surprising that while the Marquis' books are still forbidden here after practically two centuries, it is possible, within the commercial industry to produce films like *Peeping Tom*'.⁸⁹

Nonetheless, not all reviews were negative. In an article which covered violence and sadism in the cinema published in *Motion*, Ian Johnson argued that, 'the script by Leo Marks, is remarkably intelligent, and embodies almost certainly the most sophisticated monster plot ever devised [...] For all its sickness, and despite its undoubted and doubtful commercial intentions, *Peeping Tom* is a sad and beautiful film'.⁹⁰ Johnson's positive review suggests a tension within the critical consensus towards Powell's horror film and his reputation as a serious filmmaker. The trade press also reviewed *Peeping Tom* positively. *Kinematograph Weekly* noted the film was 'thoughtful, as well as sensational, it

⁸³ 'Circus of Horrors', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 7 April 1960, p.24.

⁸⁴ 'Anglo Film Has Hit 'Pop' Song', *The Daily Cinema*, 31 May 1960, p.7.

⁸⁵ Trevelyan, 1973, p.159

⁸⁶ 'Peeping Tom' World Premiere', *The Daily Cinema*, 11 April 1960, pp.8-9.

⁸⁷ For a full account of the critical reaction to *Peeping Tom*, see Christie, Ian, 'Criticism: The Scandal of Peeping Tom', in Ian Christie (ed.), *Powell, Pressburger and Others*, London: British Film Institute, 1978.

⁸⁸ Quoted in Petley, 2002, p.36.

⁸⁹ 'Peeping Tom', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, May 1960, pp.65-6.

⁹⁰ Johnson, Ian, 'Pin to see the Peepshow, A', *Motion*, no.4, February 1963, p.37.

should fascinate and grip the majority [...] First-rate British “shocker.” [...] terrific exploitation angle’.⁹¹ *The Daily Cinema* wrote, ‘compelling exploitation subject on title, theme and certificate [...] That expert movie-maker Michael Powell has invested it with a maximum of technical excellence and all the quality of which he is capable’.⁹²

Why was the critical reception in some areas so negative towards *Peeping Tom* (supported by the reaction of the BBFC), and what does this tell us about attitudes towards British horror films? Furthermore, in what way did the attitudes of film critics influence the type of horror films Tenser and Klinger made at Compton? I have already noted how critical reaction to Hammer was mixed, in addition Carreras argued that the American success of the company’s films was driven by the belief that they were not looked upon as British. In addition, the domestic critical reception to horror producers from America, like Roger Corman, gives an indication of why British critics treated horror films made by some British filmmakers differently. Furthermore, Petley has argued that critical reception to horror films reflected a ‘class dislike’ and ‘betray a barely concealed dislike of popular culture in general and popular cinema in particular’.⁹³

In 1964, Peter John Dyer wrote a sympathetic article in *Sight and Sound*, in which he initially dismissed Corman’s *The Man with the X-Ray Eyes* (Corman, 1963) as ‘trash, and degrading trash at that’, before comparing the horror film, *The Masque of the Red Death* (Corman, 1964) to Ingmar Bergman’s medieval allegory, *The Seventh Seal* (*Det sjunde inseglet*, Bergman, Swe., 1956).⁹⁴ Corman’s adaptations of stories by Edgar Allan Poe are technically categorised as British films, nevertheless, and echoing the point made about Hammer’s films, Dyer argued that Corman used, ‘British technicians (notably the photographer Nicolas Roeg) who have succeeded in making a refreshingly un-British (or at any rate non-Hammer) British horror movie’.⁹⁵ Dyer’s viewpoint was supported by Derek Todd in *Kinematograph Weekly*, where, after noting Corman’s use of symbolism, asked the filmmaker, ‘Is this, then, why he does not just make “ordinary” horror films?’⁹⁶ Furthermore, Dyer’s description of Corman as a Z filmmaker, was intended as a compliment, and also extended to other non-British horror filmmakers like Riccardo Fredo, Mario Bava, and Sergio Corbucci.⁹⁷

⁹¹ ‘Peeping Tom’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 7 April 1960, p.24.

⁹² ‘Peeping Tom’, *The Daily Cinema*, 1 April 1960, p.5.

⁹³ Petley, 2002, p.37.

⁹⁴ Dyer, Peter John, ‘Z Films’, *Sight and Sound*, Autumn 1964, p.179-80.

⁹⁵ Dyer, *Sight and Sound*, Autumn 1964, p.180.

⁹⁶ Todd, Derek, ‘Production’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 30 July 1964, p.11.

⁹⁷ Dyer, *Sight and Sound*, Autumn 1964, p.181.

Therefore, I would suggest that Corman's cultural re-evaluation by Dyer constitutes an early example of what Peter Stanfield referred to as the 'transvaluation of pulp'.⁹⁸ In other words, Corman as an American filmmaker routinely associated with lowbrow trash culture, could be rehabilitated by the British critical establishment, whereas, with Michael Powell, a British filmmaker previously associated with "quality" filmmaking, the position was far more complex. As far as the critics were concerned, Anglo Amalgamated's Sadian trilogy was too closely associated with the sadistic excesses of crude American films; and, Powell as a British filmmaker, was deemed unsuitable to make the transition from "quality" filmmaker to Z filmmaker because this represented a shift in the wrong direction (thus Corman's move towards cerebral, un-British-like, horror films becomes acceptable).

It was this dichotomy that Compton's producers had to negotiate when the company decided to produce their first horror film. Compton's immediate concern was to capitalise on the immediate international success of British horror films. Tenser and Klinger also wanted to find a product that would have the potential to help the company to expand, to make films with bigger budgets, and to compete domestically with Rank and ABPC. Although Compton was not adverse to controversy, Tenser and Klinger would have wanted to avoid the problems *Peeping Tom* had encountered. Not only had *Peeping Tom* led to a severe curtailment of Michael Powell's career, crucially (as far as Compton was concerned) the film had failed at the domestic box-office. Nevertheless, the success of Anglo Amalgamated's previous horror films, *Horrors of the Black Museum* and *Circus of Horrors* in America (where they were both distributed by American International Pictures – a company which specialised in the distribution of low budget horror and science fiction films) convinced Compton that a film like *The Black Torment* – a period horror film, made in colour, and set in the 18th Century, and that took its visual aesthetic from Italian horror films (which were in turn imitating the style of Hammer's gothics) – would have a chance at the American box-office. As Compton's publicity department hopefully pointed out, 'there will always be a market for first class horror films'.⁹⁹

***The Black Torment* (1964)**

⁹⁸ Stanfield, Peter. *Maximum Movies—Pulp Fictions: Film Culture and the Worlds of Samuel Fuller, Mickey Spillane, and Jim Thompson*, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2011, p.10.

⁹⁹ 'Compton-Cameo puts emphasis on expansion and promotion', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 30 May 1963, p.38

Before production had started on *Saturday Night Out*, Tenser and Klinger had announced an Anglo-French co-production of *I Would Rather Stay Poor*, an adaptation of a novel by the popular thriller writer James Hadley Chase.¹⁰⁰ Chase's popularity with filmmakers was well-established, and his books, which often contained amoral heroes, violence, crime, frequent gunplay and murder, had already provoked controversy. Chase's *Miss Callaghan Comes to Grief* (1941), had been banned in Britain, and the British adaptation of *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* (St. John L. Clowes, 1948) had incurred severe critical condemnation.¹⁰¹ It is easy to see why Chase's story of an unscrupulous bank manager planning to steal \$300 from his own bank, framing his secretary (who he later murders), and the subsequent fallout with his ex-alcoholic lover, would have been an attractive product for Tenser and Klinger. Furthermore, a French co-production would have given Compton their 'most ambitious budget yet', as well as star names, and result in a more extravagant production than the source novel would initially suggest.¹⁰² Planned to start production in the autumn of 1963, the film was never made, but it continued to feature as part of the company's future production schedule for the rest of the year - intended by Tenser and Klinger to maintain on-going interest in Compton's products.¹⁰³

As far as future expansion plans were concerned, Compton's intention was to enter into co-production deals with foreign companies, as Klinger pointed out to *The Daily Cinema*, with the assistance of other companies 'they would be able to go in "for much bigger budget films to the benefit of this country"'.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, co-production deals involved the slow process of negotiating with the countries concerned. The decision to make *The Black Torment* as an independently financed Compton production allowed the company to maintain a presence in British cinemas at the same time that co-production deals were being made. *The Black Torment* was, as Peter Newbrook, the film's cinematographer pointed out was Compton's 'first colour picture [...] they rented the stages at Shepperton Studios, and built bigger sets, and employed better artists. We had

¹⁰⁰ 'Compton-Cameo puts emphasis on expansion and promotion', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 30 May 1963, p.38.

¹⁰¹ For a full account of the controversy the film created, see McFarlane, Brian, 'Outrage: No Orchids for Miss Blandish', in Steve Chibnall & Robert Murphy (eds.), *British Crime Cinema*, London: Routledge, 1999.

¹⁰² 'Expansion on all fronts is Compton's policy', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 17 October 1963, p.6.

¹⁰³ Chase's novel was eventually filmed as *Pittsville – Ein Safe voll Blut* (aka. *The Catamount Killing*, Krzysztof Zanussi, WGer., 1975).

¹⁰⁴ 'New, smaller cinemas, part of Compton-Cameo's plans', *The Daily Cinema*, 24 July 1963, p.12.

Heather Sears, John Turner from the National Theatre. The picture must have cost a lot more money'.¹⁰⁵

Robert Hartford-Davis was asked to produce and direct the film from his screenplay, which was based on an original story by Donald and Derek Ford.¹⁰⁶ The film was initially described as '*Torment*, a psychological horror drama', before going through several title changes including, '*Bed of Torment*, a psychological horror film', and '*Man of Torment*, a psychological horror thriller'.¹⁰⁷ In October 1963, the film had once again reverted to '*Torment*', before eventually entering into production, in February 1964, with the title '*The Black Torment*'.¹⁰⁸ What does the frequent change in title tell us about Compton's attitude towards the film? Rather than suggesting anxiousness about the product, I would argue that it indicates an attempt by Compton to explore the maximum exploitation and marketing potential of the film. A film's title was a part of Compton's promotional strategy and would be an important feature of the film's publicity once it was released. For example, once finalising *The Black Torment* as the title, Klinger announced, 'this is horror for intelligent people. The film will present the audience with puzzles it will want to solve but can't. We aim to make every person in the auditorium feel the same *black torment* [emphasis added] which plagues the characters in the film'.¹⁰⁹ There was an attempt by Klinger (and Hartford-Davis), to differentiate their film, not only from Compton's previous low budget features, but also from the negative overtones associated with some British horror films as detailed in the previous section. Hence the frequent description of *The Black Torment* as a psychological drama – a description Hartford-Davis was also keen to emphasise:

This is a psychological drama about two people trying to drive a third out of his mind. But I'm trying to do it all very lightly—to get away from the dark oak beams [...] I've slowed down all the camera movement so that everything flows gracefully, in keeping with the period.¹¹⁰

The sedate pace described by Hartford-Davis focused on the higher budget and associated quality of the film to set it apart from other horror films. According to

¹⁰⁵ See Appendix A.

¹⁰⁶ 'Production—Wise "Shepperton"', *The Daily Cinema*, 14-15 February 1964, p.10.

¹⁰⁷ Todd, Derek, 'Production', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 13 June 1963, p.14; 'New, smaller cinemas, part of Compton-Cameos' plans', *The Daily Cinema*, 24 July 1963, p.12; 'Compton-Cameo's expansion plans', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 25 July 1963, p.3.

¹⁰⁸ 'Expansion on all fronts is Compton's policy', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 17 October 1963, p.6; Todd, Derek, 'Production—Compton-Tekli Gets A Gilt Complex About "Torment"', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 20 February 1964, p.12.

¹⁰⁹ Todd, Derek, 'Production—Compton-Tekli...', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 20 February 1964, p.12.

¹¹⁰ Todd, Derek, 'Production—Compton-Tekli...', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 20 February 1964, p.12.

Hartford-Davis, the antique furniture used to dress the set was worth £100,000 and had cost £12,000 to hire; the lavish and elaborate set comprised ‘a hall with a grand staircase, a library, a bedroom and usual connecting corridors—quite a complex’.¹¹¹

Despite the ambitious plans for *The Black Torment*, the tension of dealing with a bigger budget, for a small company like Compton, was felt by the filmmakers. As Klinger pointed out to *The Daily Cinema*, ‘When you’re behind a picture you’ve got to be on the spot’, which was his explanation for visiting Shepperton studios (where the film was being made) at 7:45 am; “‘Tony and I try to go down each day [...] and see the rushes before we come to work in Old Compton Street. If you don’t they think they’re making an epic’”.¹¹² Klinger’s comments indicate the stress of running over budget, and trying to control the filmmaking ambitions of (in this case) Hartford-Davis. According to Derek Ford, these concerns appear to have led to problems on the set:

Bob was getting so carried away with having this magnificent set and all these wonderful costumes that he was indulging himself and we were running about three days behind schedule. Tony and Michael came down in the second week and said, ‘What’s happening? How many pages are you behind? Bob said, ‘About ten I suppose’ And so—I’ll never forget this, Tony picked up the script, ripped out ten pages and said, ‘There you are, you’re back on schedule.’¹¹³

Ford’s account has been reproduced several times and has been used to criticise Hartford-Davis’ filmmaking skills.¹¹⁴ However, Ford’s account is different to Newbrook’s diary entries made during the shooting of the film. According to Newbrook, the problems occurred on location because of the bad weather:

We were cursed with fog, absolutely awful, thick, murky fog and it put the picture back two or three days at least. And then Michael Klinger came down and he was so beside himself. I don’t know whether they took out insurance or not I don’t know. He didn’t know what to do because they were so far behind. There is a story, which I think is apocryphal, having said to Bob, “‘Oh! You’re behind schedule; tear up a few pages of the script?’” It’s a good story.

I don’t remember it like that. The technical crew on the picture were first class. There was no problems during the shooting. We had no problem with it at all. The fog business was a nuisance and put the picture behind

¹¹¹ Todd, Derek, ‘Production—Compton-Tekli...’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 20 February 1964, p.12.

¹¹² ‘Commentary by Observer’, *The Daily Cinema*, 22 February 1964, p.5.

¹¹³ McGillivray, David, ‘High Blood Pressure’, *Shivers*, January 1994, no.10, p.13

¹¹⁴ See Hanks, David, ‘The Black Torment’, *Shivers*, May 1997, no.41 p.4; and Hamilton, 2005, p.37. David McGillivray also repeated the story to me, see Appendix B.

three days, and then Michael Klinger left to go away on business, and Tony took over and that's where the hurry up and rows started.¹¹⁵

Nevertheless, (whatever the truth behind Ford's story) there were problems during the making of *The Black Torment*, as Newbrook has confirmed. Furthermore, Klinger's reputation for interfering on film sets was not confined to *The Black Torment*. According to Stanley Long (who worked as an un-credited cinematographer on Compton's next film, *Repulsion*), Klinger clashed with Roman Polanski, and 'started tearing pages out of the script, saying Polanski needed to save time'.¹¹⁶ It is clear from these accounts that both Klinger and Tenser must have been under some pressure during this period, following the financially demanding schedule announced the previous year. Compton (through their production company Tekli) had already committed to producing a minimum of four pictures a year, had expanded their fulltime staff to include Hartford-Davis as producer-director, Terry Glinwood as production controller, and Bob Stern as production manager, as well as eight territorial managers – six to cover England, Scotland, Wales, and two to cover Northern Ireland.¹¹⁷ In addition, Compton had purchased the Globe cinema in Putney, Greater London, as well as building a new cinema, the Scala in Birmingham. The company were also planning to open 'a new luxury, 300-seater basement cinema' in Oxford Street, London.¹¹⁸

Furthermore, Compton's earlier and successful strategy of purchasing foreign made films for domestic distribution was, according to Tenser, becoming less popular with British audiences. Tenser pointed out, 'that sub-titled films were having less and less appeal and we have been reluctant to acquire any more. We are now buying only English-speaking films'.¹¹⁹ A reduction in films was not an ideal situation for the company, and lack of product would only have added to the pressures on Tenser and Klinger. Despite Tenser's announcement, throughout the 1960s Compton's link with movies from Continental Europe would continue with the purchase of dubbed films. In Rome, the company (to avoid the problems of foreign made films for domestic audiences) had also put 'a Welshman on the payroll who supervised the dubbing and ensured where possible that actors spoke English during shooting, although all sound

¹¹⁵ See Appendix A.

¹¹⁶ Long, 2008, p.115.

¹¹⁷ 'Compton-Cameo's expansion plans', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 25 July 1963, p.3, p.33. In the original *Kinematograph Weekly* article, Glinwood's name is spelt incorrectly as Grinwood.

¹¹⁸ 'Compton-Cameo's expansion plans', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 25 July 1963, p.33.

¹¹⁹ 'New, smaller cinemas, part of Compton-Cameo's plans', *The Daily Cinema*, 24 July 1963, p.3, p.12.

was dubbed. However, because it was mouthed first in English it gave a more realistic accent in the cinema'.¹²⁰

The pressures faced by the Compton directors, explains why Hartford-Davis (and later Polanski) faced interference by both Tenser and Klinger, as noted by Newbrook in his diary during the making of *The Black Torment*, “2 March, Michael Klinger leaves for America. Tony Tenser in charge, more hurry up than ever, snow, much confusion, rows breaking out now and again. Everyone very low.” I suspect there must have been some row about the money'.¹²¹ For a low budget, independent production company like Compton, long shooting schedules, budget overruns, and self-indulgent directors, was a luxury the company could not afford.

After filming was complete, and in the tradition of previous Compton promotions, a special screening of *The Black Torment*, was held at the ‘annual Compton-Cameo sales conference’ on the 11 and 12 September, which also included a visit to Twickenham Studios, to advertise the shooting of *Repulsion*.¹²² The lavish premiere, at the Rialto cinema in London’s West End featured ‘the spectacle of eight Windmill girls arriving at the Rialto in their brief costumes and eye-catching head-dresses’, as well as the editor of *Kinematograph Weekly*, William Altria – thus ensuring maximum publicity from the trade press.¹²³

Compton’s successful showmanship was mirrored by the attempts of other cinema managers throughout the country, to also use different promotional gimmicks for the film. For example, at the Gaumont cinema in Bradford, there was a ‘midnight screening challenge; “ghostly” girls; and a “character” on horseback riding through the auditorium [...] every evening, during the credits of the film, a young lady, in “ghostly” outfit, walked across the stage’.¹²⁴ The horse used by Gaumont’s manager was not a fake, and the poor creature was taken ‘through the auditorium each day after the trailers for “The Black Torment” had been shown’, as well as walking ‘miles in and around Bradford, carrying publicity material pinned to his back’.¹²⁵ In addition, Bradford’s local

¹²⁰ ‘The Compton Group chiefs are off to US for film deals’, *The Daily Cinema*, 21-22 February 1964, p.7.

¹²¹ See Appendix A.

¹²² ‘Compton-Cameo sets conference date’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 13 August 1964, p.7.

¹²³ ‘Champagne send-off for ‘Black Torment’’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 22 October 1964, p.6.

¹²⁴ Ratcliffe, Frank, ‘Showmanship—Catching the mood of the film’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 25 March 1965, p.14.

¹²⁵ Ratcliffe, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 25 March 1965, p.14.

Co-operative store was given ‘a full window paint display [...] and serviettes [were] distributed to cafes and restaurants’.¹²⁶

The Black Torment, as Jonathan Rigby has noted, contains ‘distinct echoes of *Jane Eyre* and *Rebecca*’, as well as resembling the plot of Patrick Hamilton’s play, *Gas Light: A Victorian Thriller* (1938), but with the roles reversed.¹²⁷ The protagonist plagued by terrible events in *The Black Torment*, is not the usual helpless heroine of Hammer’s gothic pictures, or indeed other horror narratives, but is a man, Sir Richard Fordyke (John Turner); and it is the character’s new wife, Lady Elizabeth (Heather Sears), who helps him to unravel the mystery that is threatening to drive Fordyke insane. It is Sir Richard who is the focus of increasingly neurotic behaviour, hysterical outbursts, and gradual mental disintegration.

In addition to the gender switch, *The Black Torment* contained features not commonly associated with British period horrors, but instead referenced earlier Compton films. For example, during the opening credits (white titles over a solid black background) there is the sound of a woman breathing heavily, suggestive of sexual activity, before the film begins with a close-up of the breasts of a young woman in low-cut blouse. However, the woman’s heavy breathing is a result of fear, not pleasure, and after a brief chase, she is strangled by a black-gloved, unknown assailant. During the rest of the film, another young woman is murdered, and once again the camera focuses on the character’s breasts as she struggles to escape. Although Hammer’s films often contained thinly veiled eroticism, the company’s films rarely linked explicit sexual imagery and death in quite the same way as *The Black Torment* (Hammer would gradually increase the quotient of nudity and sex in their films towards the end of the decade). This suggests that Hartford-Davis was willing to apply a more explicit approach, not only to differentiate his film from other British horrors like Hammers’ films, but also to take advantage of a feature that had worked so successfully in Compton’s previous features, i.e. the nudity and sexual suggestion of *That Kind of Girl* and *The Yellow Teddybears*.

David Hanks has argued, that if *The Black Torment* had ‘borne the name Hammer, or even Amicus, the word ‘classic’ may well have been attached to it’, nevertheless, I would argue that Hartford-Davis’ horror film is very different from Hammer’s gothic Manichaeism, as well as the type of visual aesthetics usually employed by the company.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Ratcliffe, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 25 March 1965, p.14.

¹²⁷ Rigby, Jonathan, ‘The Black Torment: Review’, *Shivers*, May 1997, no.41, p.6.

¹²⁸ Hanks, David, ‘The Black Torment’, *Shivers*, May 1997, no.41, p.7.

Hammer's horror films of this period drew upon the technical style of Terence Fisher, who directed many of the studios early pictures, and Fisher's consistent approach is embedded in these films. For example, Pirie has argued that 'once one begins to look at Fisher's films closely, it becomes clear that [...] they appear to embody a recognisable and coherent *Weltanschauung* [emphasis in the original]. The universe in which they are set is strictly dualistic, divided rigidly between ultimate Good and ultimate Evil, Light and Darkness, Spirit and Matter'.¹²⁹ In Hartford-Davis', *The Black Torment*, the distinction between good and bad is notably absent, and the narrative is structured so that the audience is left to decide, for a major part of the film, if the main protagonist is either mad and delusionary, or a psychotic rapist and murderer.

Furthermore, in terms of visual aesthetics, *The Black Torment* shifts away from the luxuriant and sumptuous green and red colour schemes used by Hammer, and incorporates a palette which consists primarily of shades of dark blue, white and black. This visual style, as Mike Wathen has suggested, is inspired by the horror films of Italian director Riccardo Fredo, and that Hartford-Davis' direction offered, 'the interesting spectacle of a British director trying to imitate Freda imitating Terence Fisher', an argument also supported by Jonathan Rigby.¹³⁰ Hartford-Davis would presumably have been familiar with Freda's horror films because they were a feature of Compton's distribution and exhibition strategy of the 1960s: *Saturday Night Out* was released with Freda's *The Spectre*, and *The Yellow Teddybears* with the director's *The Terror of Dr Hitchcock*. In spite of these similarities, *The Black Torment* has more in common with the mise-en-scene of Gainsborough's melodramas of the 1940s (utilising the period and costumes of the Queen Anne\early Regency period rather than Hammer's Victorian or faux "Middle-European" era), albeit with the addition of more bare flesh.

The Black Torment was released with an X certificate following one cut from the BBFC, 'all shots (in the pre-credit sequence) from the moment the man first stretches out his hand towards his victim' should be removed.¹³¹ This suggests that the censors were uneasy about the sexual violence implied by the opening sequence. Following the film's release, Compton's ambitions for *The Black Torment* failed to meet the filmmakers' higher expectations for a more prestigious or respectable product. Moreover, the

¹²⁹ Pirie, 1973, p.51.

¹³⁰ Wathen, Mike, 'For Adults Only! Home Grown British Crud, 1954 – 1972', in Stefan Jaworzyn (ed.), *Shock Xpress 2: The Essential Guide to Exploitation Cinema*, London: Titan Books, 1994, p.100; Rigby, Jonathan, *English Gothic: A Century of Horror Cinema* Second Edition, Richmond, Surrey: Reynolds & Hearn, 2002, p.113.

¹³¹ Hamilton, 2005, p.277.

reception of the trade press was lacklustre. For example, *Kinematograph Weekly* found that, ‘this story of conventional ghost and ghoulish stuff, is neatly put over by a talented cast and should please in all but snooty circles. Very useful double programmer [...] the plot is fringed with loose ends, but the direction takes it along just fast enough to make them forgettable’.¹³² *The Daily Cinema* showed more enthusiasm for the film, noting the differences in production, ‘elegantly staged and handsomely photographed mystery melodrama, set in eighteenth century England: plot cockeyed, but suspense holding, thrills effective and performances persuasive. Good box-office “spine-chiller” for popular halls’.¹³³ In addition, the review noted the ‘beautifully posh production [...] and elegantly matched interiors [...] each shot looking like something you’d find on a quality calendar. There’s a real feeling for period in the costumes, décor, even the hair-styles’.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, the review also pointed out the film’s exploitable features, ‘a plush chiller with saleable title and the sort of exploitable features that look great on posters (all those frightened ladies in plunging necklines), it’s a box-office “natural” for horror fans’.¹³⁵

However, the *Monthly Film Bulletin* was dismissive, ‘this film has virtually nothing to offer. The script signals its plot points (the existence of the brother, for instance) with massive insistence, and Robert Hartford-Davis appears to have no idea what to do with his camera, leaving it focused pretty much at random on anything that happens to be at hand. The actors mouth their Olde Englishe [*sic*] dialogue with fervent embarrassment’.¹³⁶ The *Guardian* wrote ‘it is one of those maddening, tormenting nonsense thrillers that frightens the susceptible man even when he knows quite well that it is nonsense [...] There are as many loose ends in the plot as a covey [*sic*] of octopuses has tentacles, but until the torment is over it demands concentration and strength of character not to jump out of one’s plush seat’.¹³⁷

The Black Torment was intended as a start for Compton to move away from the low budget films, and, if not to compete seriously with the Rank or ABC cinema circuit, offer a viable alternative. As Tenser pointed out during a trade press conference, ‘Compton had found a method of not only of existing in the independent market

¹³² ‘The Black Torment’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 22 October 1964, p.8.

¹³³ ‘The Black Torment’, *The Daily Cinema*, 14 October 1964, p.10.

¹³⁴ ‘The Black Torment’, *The Daily Cinema*, 14 October 1964, p.10.

¹³⁵ ‘The Black Torment’, *The Daily Cinema*, 14 October 1964, p.10.

¹³⁶ ‘The Black Torment’, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, December 1964, p.175.

¹³⁷ ‘A spot of tormenting nonsense’, *Guardian*, 9 November 1964, p.4

“between the two circuits” but of expanding in that field. Even if they got circuit backing for some pictures they would still make pictures for the independent’.¹³⁸

***Repulsion* (1965): Horror and “Art” Cinema**

Tenser and Klinger’s ambitions to increase the domestic market share of Compton’s products, as well as gain access to international markets, was often thwarted by the need to find suitable material to turn into films. Therefore, when both Gerry O’Hara and the Polish director Roman Polanski approached Compton for help towards financing their films, it came at the right time for the company. O’Hara’s script, *A Time and A Place*, was based on his experience of ‘the Chelsea scene’, and characters like the notorious landlord Peter Rachman.¹³⁹ Rachman owned numerous properties in Notting Hill, and took advantage of Caribbean immigrants looking for cheap accommodation. Inadvertently helping Rachman’s illegal activities was the 1957 Rent Act which permitted landlords ‘to evict long-standing tenants of unfurnished rooms in order to install furnished lettings’.¹⁴⁰ Rachman took advantage of this by evicting white tenants at lower rents to make way for the new immigrants and charge them higher rents. If the occupants refused to leave, ‘Rachman usually sent in a gang of wrestlers and boxers to persuade them to think again’.¹⁴¹

A Time and A Place incorporated the portmanteau device previously used in *Saturday Night Out*, as O’Hara explained, ‘what I did was, I populated a rooming house with characters. I had a gay couple on the ground floor, who [*sic*] one of them was the brother of one of the girls, and I had the girls on the next floor’.¹⁴² Nevertheless, and despite O’Hara’s original intentions, Tenser and Klinger insisted that the individual stories concentrate on the sexual encounters of the four young women sharing the house. The film was released as *The Pleasure Girls*, and emphasised the controversial features of the narrative, which featured two severe beatings, a Rachman-like gangster who has an affair with one of the women, a topless scene (cut from the British distribution print), and an explicit, for the time, lovemaking sequence, as well as references to abortion, gambling, and prostitution. Highlighting the exploitation possibilities, *The Pleasure Girls* was described as “centred around a number of young

¹³⁸ ‘The Compton Group chiefs are off to US for film deals’, *The Daily Cinema*, 21-22 February 1964, p.7.

¹³⁹ O’Hara, Gerry. ‘Interview with Gerry O’Hara’, *michaelklingerpapers.uwe.ac.uk*.

¹⁴⁰ Sandbrook, 2005, p.313.

¹⁴¹ Sandbrook, 2005, p.313.

¹⁴² O’Hara, Gerry. ‘Interview with Gerry O’Hara’, *michaelklingerpapers.uwe.ac.uk*.

provincial girls and dramatically illustrates their ‘dolce vita’ existence — their desires, their loves and their heartbreaks” [...] has all the hallmarks of a highly-exploitable film.’¹⁴³ The premiere of *The Pleasure Girls* emphasised the glamorous and spectacular, the pop group 3 Pin Square, performed in the foyer of the cinema, and included a ‘1910 Vintage Traction Engine which toured the West End with a bevy of “Pleasure Girls” on board’.¹⁴⁴ Points of appeal, according to *Kinematograph Weekly*, were, ‘sex, pretty girls, saucy title’.¹⁴⁵ The review in *The Daily Cinema* reported the ‘superior screen treatment of a titillating, girls-on-the-loose-in-London theme: crisply scripted, stylishly directed and intelligently acted by an excellent young cast. Very good—and obviously exploitable—popular box-office proposition’.¹⁴⁶ Compton’s film also received a positive review in the *Monthly Film Bulletin* which argued that ‘Gerry O’Hara has an excellent ear for dialogue, and [...] a nice quiet way with his camera, so that much of the film is engaging and exact’.¹⁴⁷

The Pleasure Girls may not have signalled much of a departure from Compton’s previous products, nonetheless, it offered the type of product that Tenser and Klinger could easily promote. Furthermore, like Hartford-Davis’ films it pushed the barriers of mainstream respectability and the limits of social acceptability. However, it was an offer from the young Polish director, Roman Polanski, that would give Compton the opportunity to make a different, more critically respectable, type of film, and which could help the company shift their image from low budget producers to big budget international filmmakers.

Polanski’s earlier film, *Knife in the Water* (1962), had won a prize at the Venice Film Festival, and was nominated for the Best Foreign Language Film at the American Academy awards. Despite the critical success of *Knife in the Water*, Polanski was having problems finding money to finance his next film, described by the director as, ‘a story of a married couple [...] he is very rich but she is ruining him slowly by her extravagance; she is crazy, but he’s in love with her. A wounded gangster falls into the house’.¹⁴⁸ Polanski had travelled to England because he was unable to obtain funding from the

¹⁴³ Todd, Derek, ‘Production: 1965—a year of bounding expansion’, Supplement to *Kinematograph Weekly*, 19 November 1964, p.6.

¹⁴⁴ ‘Swingin’ date for ‘Pleasure Girls’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 3 June 1965, p.8.

¹⁴⁵ ‘The Pleasure Girls’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 3 June 1965, p.17.

¹⁴⁶ ‘The Pleasure Girls’, *The Daily Cinema*, 28 May 1965, p.6.

¹⁴⁷ ‘The Pleasure Girls’, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, July 1965, p.112.

¹⁴⁸ Weinberg, Gretchen, ‘Interview with Roman Polanski’, *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1963-64, p.33.

Polish government, ‘nobody would give you money to criticise the regime’.¹⁴⁹ Polanski had initially approached American studios based in London, however, Hollywood executives had come to associate the director with art house films, and the director was not considered to be a reliable commercial prospect. Gene Gutowski, Polanski’s friend and business partner, initially asked James Carreras at Hammer if he was interested in the director, before finally approaching Compton.¹⁵⁰ Tenser rejected Polanski’s script, *When Katelbach Comes*, in the belief that it was not saleable enough. However, Tenser was keen to retain the filmmaker’s services, and he suggested that Polanski should write a contemporary horror story.¹⁵¹ Polanski’s outline, *Lovelihead*, was eventually developed into the screenplay for *Repulsion*.¹⁵²

In June 1964, Tony Tenser announced to *Kinematograph Weekly* the company’s new production, *Repulsion* ‘the first commercial art film’, which Tenser believed ‘should “win awards at festivals and break box-office records”’.¹⁵³ Later in the year, *Repulsion* was described by Tenser as ‘highly exploitable’, and was ‘the most expensive film Compton has ever made, having a slight edge on the currently showing “The Black Torment”’.¹⁵⁴ Tenser was therefore acutely aware of the exploitative possibilities of combining the critical respectability of the art film, as well as the commercial prospects available to horror films.

Although Polanski’s art film credentials were useful to Tenser and Klinger his painstaking filmmaking methods would lead to problems. Gene Gutowski pointed out to Derek Todd, in *Kinematograph Weekly*:

“It’s a fantastically exciting thing to watch a director like Roman, who’s never shot an English-language picture before, and a first class English crew working together.

“There isn’t a bad frame of film: he cuts his picture in the camera, everything he shoots goes on the screen. He’s shooting in a completely unorthodox manner, in long fluid takes—none of this cliché of master-shots, close-ups, reverses, etcetera. One take, a scene with Patrick Wymark, lasted four minutes”.¹⁵⁵

At some point during the shoot, Polanski’s approach altered. According to Stanley Long, Michael Klinger asked Long to complete the cinematography on the film

¹⁴⁹ Weinberg, Gretchen, ‘Interview with Roman Polanski’, *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1963-64, p.33.

¹⁵⁰ Hamilton, 2005, p.37.

¹⁵¹ Polanski’s script for *When Katelbach Comes* was eventually filmed by Compton as *Cul-De-Sac* (1966).

¹⁵² Hamilton, 2005, p.38.

¹⁵³ ‘Long Shots...’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 16 July 1964, p.4.

¹⁵⁴ Todd, Supplement to *Kinematograph Weekly*, 19 November 1964, p.6.

¹⁵⁵ Todd, Derek, ‘Director Roman Polanski talks to Derek Todd about...’*Repulsion*’ a study of madness’, Supplement to *Kinematograph Weekly*, 24 September 1964, p.15.

because ‘the movie had gone wildly over its £80,000 budget and production had to be halted for three months until they raised more money to resume shooting’.¹⁵⁶ ‘Polanski’, Long wrote, ‘couldn’t give a damn about budgets. All he cared about was making a film’.¹⁵⁷

Polanski’s cavalier approach to budgets must have created difficulties between Tenser, Klinger and the director. Nonetheless, Tenser and Klinger would not have wanted to stop the film at this point, the financial loss would have been too great. Furthermore, the filmmakers must have felt that they had a possible commercial and critical success on their hands, based on Polanski’s reputation, as well as the positive reception given to the director, not only from publications like *Sight and Sound* and *Kinematograph Weekly*, but also from the British censors.

Kinematograph Weekly had already reported Polanski’s collaboration with the BBFC before filming began:

“We showed the finished script to John Trevelyan, the censor, for his comments. He liked it, but showed it to a psychiatrist—Dr. Black, who was technical adviser on John Huston’s ‘Freud’—to check on how it might affect possibly psychotic people in the audience. The psychiatrist said it was frightening, every symptom was so accurate, and asked me if I had studied the subject”.¹⁵⁸

Trevelyan had wanted to know if the film could be harmful ‘if the film were seen by someone on the edge of insanity’, although not completely reassured, his advisor argued the film should be passed, ‘since some people who saw it could learn something of value about mental illness’.¹⁵⁹ Therefore, Trevelyan could argue that the film was carrying out a public service, if it later ran into controversy – and avoid the problems *Peeping Tom* had brought on to the censor.

In addition to Trevelyan’s favourable attitude towards the film (he wrote later that *Repulsion* was a ‘brilliant film’), *Sight and Sound* the previous year had carried an article emphasising the artistic credentials of Polanski.¹⁶⁰ The article explored Polanski’s attitude towards experimental films, his thoughts on Godard’s *Les Carabiniers*, if the director liked Hollywood films, as well as his opinions on making films in Poland, and theories on filmmaking.¹⁶¹ The *Sight and Sound* article, stressed Polanski’s art film credentials, a

¹⁵⁶ Long, 2008, p.113.

¹⁵⁷ Long, 2008, p.114.

¹⁵⁸ Todd, Supplement to *Kinematograph Weekly*, 24 September 1964, p.14.

¹⁵⁹ Trevelyan, 1973, p.111.

¹⁶⁰ Trevelyan, 1973, p.160.

¹⁶¹ Weinberg, Gretchen, ‘Interview with Roman Polanski’, *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1963-64, pp.33-4.

situation Tenser and Klinger could take advantage of. Polanski's reputation at this point, allowed Compton to cross the divide between critical acceptability and (it was hoped for) commercial viability.

Repulsion, like *Saturday Night Out* and *The Black Torment*, featured several familiar faces from British films, including Ian Hendry, Patrick Wymark, John Fraser, and Yvonne Furneaux. The main role of the young woman who gradually descends into madness was played by the unknown (to British audiences) French actress, Catherine Deneuve. *Repulsion* was filmed in black and white (in contrast to the colourful *The Black Torment*), and the film looks and feels different in tone to previous Compton productions. Despite the difference in tone and aesthetic, Tenser ensured that *Repulsion*'s publicity campaign took full advantage of any exploitation possibilities, as his description to *Kinematograph Weekly* of the film as 'the story of a young girl's mental disintegration as her mind is overcome by her sensual repressions', clearly demonstrates.¹⁶² Furthermore, following *Repulsion*'s release in 1965, Compton ran a series of trade advertisements on the front page of *Kinematograph Weekly* announcing the film as 'one of the most vibrant and daring films ever made', and 'Sensational Repulsion'.¹⁶³

Despite Trevelyan's enthusiasm, Tenser and Klinger's aspirations, as well as Polanski's artistic reputation, the film was disparaged by Peter John Dyer in *Sight and Sound*. Dyer, who had written positively about Roger Corman's horror films the year before, wrote that *Repulsion* was, 'an irresponsible fiction, compounded of chic reticence, sundry melodramatics [...] and an overall rhythm that is intolerably lethargic and portentous. The ending is especially facile'.¹⁶⁴ Dyer failed to notice the socially responsible message Trevelyan had thought so compelling, because 'none of the characters is drawn in any depth, it is impossible to accept the film as a tract in social responsibility. Partly this is due to stiff dialogue [...] partly to Polanski's failure to observe his Londoners convincingly', and the film 'has that gurgling, soapy sound of muffed intentions going down the plug hole like bath water'.¹⁶⁵ It could be argued that Polanski's association with Compton contributed to Dyer's negative review and that despite the director's previous association with art cinema, the combination of horror and Compton was enough to sway the critic – in other words, Dyer was always going to display some resistance towards viewing *Repulsion* in a positive way.

¹⁶² Tenser, Tony, 'Variety is the keynote of Compton's line-up', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 17 June 1964, p.67.

¹⁶³ 'Repulsion', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 20 May 1965, p.1; 'Repulsion', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 1 July 1965, p.1.

¹⁶⁴ Dyer, Peter John, 'Repulsion', *Sight and Sound*, Summer 1965, p.146.

¹⁶⁵ Dyer, *Sight and Sound*, Summer 1965, p.146.

The trade press was more positive, with *Kinematograph Weekly*'s review pointing out that the murders in the film were 'guaranteed to transfix the toughest of audiences, but it takes a long while getting to them. Real horror fare'.¹⁶⁶ *The Daily Cinema* recognised *Repulsion* was different from other horror films, and argued that the film was a 'superb study of a psychotic girl: direction strong; camerawork and editing off-beat and gripping [...] First-rate adult attraction for specialised halls [...] careful exploitation could and should bring it to the attention of more selective filmgoers'.¹⁶⁷

Raymond Durnat in *Films and Filming* also noted the slower pace of the film arguing that, 'everybody must have wondered how it would *feel* [emphasis in the original] to go, slowly, mad'.¹⁶⁸ However, Durnat argued that the film was different from 'mere showmanship (like William Castle's or Hammers)', nevertheless, 'if the film fails to make the very front rank, it's because Polanski's detachment tends to underplay the pain and struggle of the sane part of the girl's mind. For all that it's quite as interesting intellectually as it's erotically sensational'.¹⁶⁹ By the time Albert Johnson in America had reviewed *Repulsion* for *Film Quarterly* the following year, Polanski's film had gained significant artistic and critical credentials, having received the Special Jury Award Silver Bear, as well as the International Critics Grand Prize at the Berlin Film Festival, and the critical consensus (as far as America was concerned) began to shift in Polanski's favour. Polanski was, according to Johnson, 'a one-man embodiment of total cinema, from initial idea to final print'.¹⁷⁰ In contrast to Dyer's review, 'its psychological implications and mastery of social criticism are very intact. Polanski has chosen *his* [emphasis in the original] London with an understanding eye, and what we see is true to life as far as the context of the story is concerned'.¹⁷¹

Repulsion was an enormous commercial success, both domestically and in America. Furthermore, *Repulsion*'s distribution deal in America with Columbia Pictures and Toho in Japan, as well as deals in Germany, France and Italy, secured the film's international position, and reputation.¹⁷² Klinger, when promoting the film proudly, pointed out that at the Cannes Film Festival, "There were 1,200 applications for the 500

¹⁶⁶ 'Repulsion', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 June 1965, p.15.

¹⁶⁷ 'Repulsion', *The Daily Cinema*, 11 June 1965, p.10.

¹⁶⁸ Durnat, Raymond, 'Repulsion', *Films and Filming*, August 1965, p.28.

¹⁶⁹ Durnat, Raymond, 'Repulsion', *Films and Filming*, August 1965, pp.28-9.

¹⁷⁰ Johnson, Albert, 'Repulsion', *Film Quarterly*, Spring 1966, p.44.

¹⁷¹ Johnson, Albert, 'Repulsion', *Film Quarterly*, Spring 1966, p.44.

¹⁷² 'Worldwide interest in Compton', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 3 June 1965, p.3.

seats available when the film was shown”¹⁷³. In spite of Tenser and Klinger’s uneasy relationship with Polanski, the filmmakers agreed to finance Polanski’s next project, *Cul-De-Sac*, ‘a black comedy’, which was based on the screenplay the director had originally presented to Compton.¹⁷⁴ However, *Cul-De-Sac* failed to replicate the commercial or critical success of *Repulsion* (despite winning the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival) and Polanski left Britain to work in Hollywood.

Conclusion

At the beginning of 1963, Tenser and Klinger’s ambitions for expanding Compton into a significant force within the British film industry, large enough perhaps to compete on level terms with the Rank Organisation and ABPC had still not been achieved by the end of 1965. Despite of the success of *Repulsion*, which had opened up the North American market, Compton’s search for a suitably profitable and commercially viable follow-up product failed to materialise. *The Black Torment* failed to replicate Hammer Studio’s success in America, and although Tenser and Klinger continued to announce to the trade press distribution deals in Japan, Canada, America, and Germany, as well as co-production plans with Yugoslavia and Italy, Compton never matched the success of *Repulsion*.¹⁷⁵

The uneasy relationship British horror films had with the critical establishment as well as the BBFC was always going to be difficult for Compton to negotiate, nonetheless, any potential problems would be outweighed by commercial success. As Tenser pointed out, “Our aim is to make commercial films [...] we don’t make films for the gratification of the press, the national press!”¹⁷⁶ Nonetheless, the impact the negative press had on *Peeping Tom* and the film’s failure at the box-office was a situation Tenser would have wanted to avoid. *The Black Torment* was made as a way into the lucrative North American market, as well as an indication of the bigger filmmaking ambitions of Compton. For Tenser and Klinger the failure of *The Black Torment* to make a significant impact internationally and to mirror Hammer’s transatlantic success led the company to fall back on the type of films that had proved so successful for the company in the past. In the

¹⁷³ ‘Worldwide interest in Compton’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 3 June 1965, p.3.

¹⁷⁴ Todd, Derek, ‘Production: 1965—a year of bounding expansion’, Supplement to *Kinematograph Weekly*, 19 November 1964, p.9.

¹⁷⁵ ‘Worldwide interest in Compton’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 3 June 1965, p.3.

¹⁷⁶ Todd, Supplement to *Kinematograph Weekly*, 19 November 1964, p.9.

search for commercial products, Compton's films went back to capitalising on the type of subject matter that the company had previously exploited, i.e. sex and nudity.

Compton's filmmaking ambitions, although thwarted by the lack suitable product, continued with their expansion plans, and in 1964 they purchased the famous Windmill Theatre in London to convert into a cinema – the first screening on 2 November was *Nudes Las Vegas* (Bunny Yeager, US., 1964), which gives an indication of the type of product Compton were continuing to offer.¹⁷⁷ Tenser and Klinger also fully capitalised on their acquisition of the theatre by producing the lurid melodrama *Secrets of a Windmill Girl* (Miller, 1966), 'a behind-the-scenes glimpse of life at London's famous Windmill Theatre', which offered numerous exploitation possibilities.¹⁷⁸

Nonetheless, the films that Compton produced and purchased for distribution during 1966 suggests that the company's previously successful strategy of making and exhibiting controversial, X rated films was in crisis. Furthermore, this might explain why Tenser announced a new schedule of films for that year, and that, 'Compton has gone away from the 'X for sex' type of film: we hope to find a new image [...] these films are for family audiences'.¹⁷⁹ In addition, the company 'was actively preparing a big programme of a minimum of a dozen British films to be co-financed with American companies', intended 'for family audiences'.¹⁸⁰ The intended family-friendly line-up of films included:

"Alice in Wonderland." Envisaged as a "Mary Poppins" type subject, in 70mm, with a two million dollar budget, this would feature live actors and puppets with two or three ballet sequences. Other projects include [...] "The Legend of Loch Ness," a £500,000 production, the script of which had been read and approved by George Pal [...] "Beau Brigand," a Foreign Legion story to star Patrick Allen and Peter Cushing, and to be shot in Tunisia [...] "Embryo", a science fiction drama about a method of accelerating human growth; "The Headsman," a murder mystery; "The Outcast," about a girl wrongly kept in an asylum [...] and "The Missing Link."¹⁸¹

I would suggest that Compton's move away from X-rated films towards family friendly films mirrored a general shift by the mainstream British film industry. Rank and ABPC's links to Hollywood studios gave the companies access to big budget entertainment like *The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise, US., 1965) which was produced by

¹⁷⁷ 'Compton Group Buys Windmill Theatre', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 8 October 1964, p.5.

¹⁷⁸ 'Thrills, chills—and backstage secrets', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 26 May 1966, p.101.

¹⁷⁹ 'Compton seeks 'new image'', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 March 1966, p.3.

¹⁸⁰ 'Compton seeks 'new image'', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 March 1966, p.3.

¹⁸¹ 'Compton seeks 'new image'', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 March 1966, p.3.

Twentieth Century-Fox, and Walt Disney's *Mary Poppins* (Robert Stevenson, US., 1964) as well as the James Bond films which were financed by United Artists – *Thunderball* (Terence Young, 1965) the latest Bond film had broken British box-office records on its release. The film soundtrack of *The Sound of Music* alone remained at the number one spot in British album chart for an incredible sixty-nine weeks.¹⁸²

Furthermore, following the enormous success of Tony Richardson's *Tom Jones* (1963), which had been financed by United Artists but made in Britain, Hollywood studios began to invest in big budget British films. However, although this encouraged the British film industry, the inflow of money and interest had a detrimental effect on independent companies like Compton which found it increasingly difficult to compete effectively. Without access to the type of resources available to Rank and ABPC, through American studios, Tenser and Klinger had to fall back on the type of low budget products the company had started with. Tenser's final film at Compton was *The Projected Man* (Ian Curteis, 1966), a science fiction\horror film reminiscent of Hammer's earlier *The Quatermass Xperiment*, albeit with the added attraction of the blond starlet Tracy Crisp, who featured in numerous Compton publicity shots wearing only her underwear. Compton were keen to offer pictures that continued to be exciting and sensational, and as Alan Kean, Compton's director and general manager, was eager to point out, the company would continue to 'present a whole range of films, some of them controversial in content, all of them exciting in nature'.¹⁸³ Nonetheless, despite Kean's enthusiasm, Tenser was already speaking of 'our tired and jaded industry', and on 13 October 1966 he announced his resignation from the board of Compton.¹⁸⁴

Compton's successful short history of film production demonstrates that for a time independent companies could compete with the Rank\ABPC duopoly; in offering films that capitalised on the greater liberalisation of censorship (initiated primarily by the BBFC's John Trevelyan), and exploiting as much as possible the promotional potential of their films. These films, although now referred to as exploitation films (and thus marginalised critically and academically), were intended as mainstream products to be released if possible throughout the UK on a national circuit. Marketed, promoted and exploited as X films, these films attracted young audiences who now made up the bulk of British cinemagoers at this time.

¹⁸² Sandbrook, Dominic, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties*, London: Little, Brown, 2006, p.390.

¹⁸³ Kean, Alan, 'Controversial—But Always Exciting', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 26 May 1966, p.101.

¹⁸⁴ Tenser, Tony, 'When will we ever learn?' *Kinematograph Weekly*, 26 May 1966, p.6; Hamilton, 2005, p.89.

However, the combined weight of Rank and ABPC on the domestic market, as well as the financial strength of Hollywood, and the downward trend in cinema-going in Britain, made it difficult for Tenser and Klinger to shift into bigger budgeted productions. Klinger retained his position at Compton and continued to distribute and exhibit the type of films the company had always found popular, before becoming an independent producer in the 1970s. Tenser, after leaving Compton, formed the independent production company Tigon, which had some sporadic success in the late 1960s with a series of horror films; for example, Michael Reeves' *Witchfinder General* (1968). Hartford-Davis and Peter Newbrook left Compton after the release of *The Black Torment* to set up their own independent film company, and the next chapter will examine the problems of making films in the mid-1960s as British filmmakers began to search, with variable success, for audiences.

Part Two: “Story Tellers in Celluloid”: The Titan Films – From Musicals & Comedies to Horror and Sex, 1965 – 1969

Chapter Three: From Lulu to Wisdom: Searching for Audiences with Rank

‘That’s all we are, we’re story tellers...in celluloid’.

Robert Hartford-Davis, 1968.¹

Introduction: After Compton

Sometime after the completion of *The Black Torment*, Robert Hartford-Davis left Compton and set up the independent production company Titan International with Peter Newbrook. The reasons for Hartford-Davis’ departure from Compton are unclear. According to John Hamilton, it was Hartford-Davis’ decision to leave Compton, and that after the final cut of *The Black Torment* was finished, ‘Robert Hartford-Davis had cleared out his desk and turned his back on Compton once and for all’.² However, according to Peter Newbrook, it was Tenser and Klinger who had decided to end the company’s association with Hartford-Davis, ‘I was only told that Bob came into the office one morning at Compton and found his desk was locked and all his papers had been taken out and he was fired, or they parted company. I don’t know. Obviously it wasn’t a very friendly parting’.³ I would suggest that Tenser’s interpretation – as told to Hamilton – is possibly terser with the truth because Newbrook’s version is far more critical of Tenser and Klinger. Nevertheless, Hartford-Davis departure from Compton meant that the benefits from the company, in terms of production facilities, as well as the security of distribution and exhibition, had been removed. This insecure situation would have an impact on the filmmaker’s subsequent career.

The benefits of working for Compton were significant. Compton’s chain of cinemas, as well as the company’s distribution deals with other independent cinema chains, guaranteed distribution and exhibition rights for the films Hartford-Davis made at Compton. Moreover, Tenser and Klinger’s filmmaking ambitions ensured that (as long as the product was right) financial investment, as well as production facilities, was easy to secure – as we have seen from the bigger budget given to *The Black Torment*, and the risk taken by Compton on the commercially untried Roman Polanski. Therefore, finding a

¹ See Appendix D.

² Hamilton, John, *Beasts in the Cellar: The Exploitation Film Career of Tony Tenser*, Godalming, Surrey: FAB Press, 2005. p.46.

³ See Appendix A.

distribution deal was one of the main priorities for a filmmaker working in the British industry. This attitude was emphasised by Peter Newbrook:

Distribution in the end has been a curse of British production since the day one. People can put pictures together, sometimes they are good, sometimes they are bad but if you don't have a distribution deal you might as well go down the pub and spend your money there, because it is not going to go anywhere. That is always the key to it. Anybody can make a motion picture; as long as you have enough money anyone can make a movie.⁴

Compounding the problems with the unbalanced structure of the British film industry, cinema admissions in the UK continued to fall. *Kinematograph Weekly* reported 'a decline of 6.4 per cent in cinema admissions for the first six months' of 1964.⁵ An additional concern for the industry was the instability of box-office takings, reported as 0.96 million in June 1964, an increase from 0.89 million in June 1963, but a drop from 0.99 million in June 1962.⁶ Therefore, Hartford-Davis' decision to setup an independent production company with Newbrook, without the security of Compton (similar to Tenser and Klinger's earlier business decision) was a risky strategy. Nonetheless, and despite the problems facing the British industry, establishing his own production company would allow Hartford-Davis the freedom and independence to make the type of films he wanted to make, a situation similar to the beginning of his filmmaking career. The situation was not all negative, because as noted in the previous chapter, there was increasing interest, in the domestic film industry by Hollywood studios, and there was some renewed optimism (albeit somewhat reservedly) from some within the industry.

The history of Hollywood's involvement in the British film industry during this period has already been covered by Alexander Walker in *Hollywood England*, and Robert Murphy in *Sixties British Cinema*. The orthodox view of this period tends to support Walkers' argument whereby, 'the positive aspect is that American confidence lent the British industry drive and impetus and gave its film-makers a far wider creative horizon than anyone thought available in the previous decade'.⁷ Moreover, as Robert Murphy has pointed out, 'United Artists' success with *Doctor No*, *Tom Jones* and *A Hard Day's Night* heralded a new era. The energy and panache of the Beatles and Bond films, the success of British pop music, and the development of the myth of Swinging London made

⁴ See Appendix A.

⁵ 'Admissions down in first half of 1964', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 September 1964, p.6.

⁶ 'Admissions down in first half of 1964', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 September 1964, p.6.

⁷ Walker, Alexander, *Hollywood England: The British Film Industry in the Sixties* Paperback Edition, London: Michael Joseph, 2005, p.462.

British society suddenly exciting, charismatic and fashionable'.⁸ *Tom Jones* had won Best Director and Best Picture at the 1964 Oscars, and the first Bond film *Dr No* (Terence Young, 1962), thought initially by United Artists, as a potential flop was, by the end of 1962, 'the second-highest grossing British film of 1962', and making back its production costs 'on the strength of the British receipts alone'.⁹ The second film in the series, *From Russia with Love* (Young, 1963) was even more successful and was 'released to the most lucrative opening week in British cinematic history'.¹⁰ *A Hard Day's Night* was a similar commercial success breaking 'all records for a pop musical'.¹¹ The success of these films, as Murphy has argued, 'gave substance to the British claim to be in the vanguard of a new, dynamic, youthful culture' and investment by American film studios made perfect commercial sense.¹²

However, as this chapter will bring to light, the situation for independent filmmakers like Hartford-Davis was often very different from that of the mainstream companies like the Rank Organisation. The financial benefits bought by the major American studios was felt by only a few British filmmakers, for the rest there was a continuous struggle to find adequate distribution, as well as any effective form of nationwide screenings on the major circuits. As Newbrook pointed out:

Getting it on the screen to get people to go and see it, that is another thing altogether. Rank owned Gaumont\Odeon, what was left was Essoldo and Star. In the end you needed to get into Rank cinemas to get a good distribution release and unless you could get that. There were a lot of independent cinemas but they didn't take much money, they were small houses playing to small audiences. But that was the key always to making motion pictures, money and distribution. Making a picture is almost secondary.¹³

This chapter will examine the production of three films Hartford-Davis made during the mid-1960s, and question the effectiveness of Hollywood's influence on the British film industry, as well as argue that collaboration between the major American studios and the mainstream British film industry frequently stifled, or limited the ambitions of some independent British filmmakers. Furthermore, this chapter (and the following two chapters) will open up for debate the efficiency of the structure of the

⁸ Murphy, Robert, *Sixties British Cinema*, London: British Film Institute, 1992, p.257.

⁹ Sandbrook, Dominic, *Never Had it so Good: A History of Britain from Suez to The Beatles*, London: Little, Brown, 2005, p.559.

¹⁰ Sandbrook, 2005, p.593.

¹¹ Sandbrook, Dominic, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties*, London: Little, Brown, 2006, p.380.

¹² Murphy, 1992, p.114.

¹³ See Appendix A.

mainstream British film industry as represented by the Rank Organisation and Associated British Picture Corporation.

The Rank\ABPC Duopoly

The preceding chapters have referred to a Rank\ABPC duopoly based on the dominant position these two companies held within the British film industry. The structural strength in terms of production, distribution and exhibition of Rank and ABPC should not be underestimated. The Rank Organisation's production facilities included Pinewood, Denham and Amalgamated Studios; the company's distribution facilities included General Film Distributors, and exhibition outlets included Odeon and Gaumont-British cinemas. ABPC owned Elstree Studios where the company primarily financed the production of small budget films (Hammer, after moving from Bray Studios, was one of the beneficiaries of this arrangement). ABPC's distribution division, Warner-Pathé Distributors, was owned by Warner Bros., an arrangement that meant ABPC would exhibit Warner Bros. films in its ABC cinemas, and Warner Bros. would agree to screen ABPC's films in the United States. Furthermore, ABPC also had access to films distributed by Paramount Studios, Universal, and MGM; Rank had the rights to show films from Disney Studios, Columbia Studios, United Artists, and Twentieth Century-Fox.¹⁴

Despite the reported drop in cinema admissions, the Rank Organisation continued to make profits, as *Kinematograph Weekly* pointed out, 'profits of The Rank Organisation have jumped this year by £4,680,000 to a record figure of £16,977,000', and the chairman, John Davis predicted, "'a satisfactory increase" next year and "even more" in future years'.¹⁵ Nonetheless, Rank's most profitable sectors did not come from the company's investments in the domestic film industry, but from non-cinema related activities. These activities 'amounted to 58 per cent. of the total compared with 51 per cent. last year', and primarily came from the increased sales of Rank's Xerox copying machines, which had increased from a modest 5,696 in June 1963 to 15,470 a year later.¹⁶ This is not to say that Rank's interest in the British film industry had disappeared, as the company's involvement with a new funding arrangement with National Film Finance

¹⁴ Eyles, Allen, 'Exhibition and the Cinemagoing Experience', in Robert Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book* 3rd Edition, London: British Film Institute, 2009, p.82.

¹⁵ 'Rank Profits are up by £4.6 million', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 September 1964, p.6.

¹⁶ 'Rank Profits are up by £4.6 million', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 September 1964, p.6.

Corporation (NFFC) would later demonstrate (an arrangement covered later in this chapter).

However, the duopoly position Rank held with ABPC continued to create concern, and the British government asked the Monopolies Commission to prepare a report into the situation – specifically the supply of films to cinemas. In response, a committee was setup by the BFPA ‘to prepare answers to any questions’ asked by the Commission.¹⁷ The committee included the independent film producer Lord Brabourne, James Carreras (Hammer Studios), Maurice Wilson, (Grand National Productions), and Maxell Setton (Mayflower), but with no representatives from Rank or ABPC, which suggests that the BFPA was concerned about the influence these companies might have on the committee. The report by the Monopolies Commission was published in October 1966, and, as Robert Murphy later argued, ‘proved to be a clear and incisive indictment of the monopoly influence exerted by the two big corporations’.¹⁸

Despite the problems faced by the British film industry there was still confidence in the cinema business, as Peter King, CEA president declared, “‘The silver screen still has a golden future’”.¹⁹ King argued, “‘There is no decline today [...] so far as the modern well run cinema, able to show the right kind of entertainment, is concerned’”.²⁰ Furthermore, and with a thinly veiled critique at companies like Compton, King pointed out:

[It] was not the industry’s role to try and parallel the mundane monotony of television’s grey and white, often sub-standard offerings, on a sub-miniature screen. Nor must it try to force upon the public the sort of film that the public shows no inclination to accept. Equally it is not the cinema’s role to pander to the more gullible members of the public by the screening of catch-penny films, often so-called specialist cinemas, the only object of which is to provide the maximum of titillation with minimum of satisfaction.

People who present this type of film [...] appear to confuse exhibition with exhibitionism.²¹

King’s optimism was shared by Andrew Filson, director of the Federation of British Film Makers (FBFM). Filson pointed out that the 1963 crisis in production had

¹⁷ ‘Monopolies’: BFPA gets ready’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 September 1964, p.6.

¹⁸ Murphy, 1992, p.107.

¹⁹ ‘A Golden Future for the Silver Screen’ – Peter King’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 29 October 1964, p.6.

²⁰ ‘A Golden Future for the Silver Screen’ – Peter King’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 29 October 1964, p.6.

²¹ ‘A Golden Future for the Silver Screen’ – Peter King’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 29 October 1964, p.6.

been replaced by ‘a welcome air of activity’.²² Nevertheless, Filson noted, ‘the increase in American production has meant greater pressure on the two circuits and there are many American films waiting for release’.²³ This problem was exacerbated by the on-going closures of cinemas. In 1950 there were 4,600 cinemas in Britain, by 1959 this had dropped to 3,600 and by the mid-1960s the number had fallen below 2,000.²⁴ Moreover, the ‘Rank and ABC circuits between them could only take 104 first features a year’ therefore, there would have been a great deal of pressure on independent filmmakers like Hartford-Davis to find a product to attract either Rank or ABPC, and secure a distribution deal.²⁵

As noted in the previous chapter, in spite of evidence that X films appealed to many cinemagoers, many in the British film industry continued to make films for family audiences. The film industry’s decision might appear obstinate nevertheless, there were good reasons why family-friendly films appeared to be an attractive proposition. Although X-rated “kitchen-sink dramas” had performed well at the domestic box-office, and the low production costs of such films resulted in a good financial return for production companies, these films could not compete, in terms of the financial success, of the Bond series or the first Beatles film. A popular subject or star(s), and a big budget, large-scale marketing campaign for an A or U certificate film, released on the Rank or ABC circuit, with the guarantee of US distribution, was an enormous incentive for British film producers. For example, the sex and violence in *Dr No* was deliberately reduced by the producer, Harry Saltzman, after discussions with the BBFC’s John Trevelyan, who had advised Saltzman that an X certificate ‘would reduce his viewing audiences’.²⁶ It is arguable whether the Bond series would have continued to perform as well at the box-office as X films, and the series may not have remained as popular beyond the 1960s.

The links Rank and ABPC had with the major American studios also influenced the decision by British filmmakers to pursue family audiences, because, as Elmo Williams, managing director of European productions for Twentieth Century-Fox, pointed out:

²² Filson, Andrew, ‘What Happened to the Crisis in Production?’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 17 October 1964, p.4.

²³ Filson, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 17 October 1964, p.4.

²⁴ Baillieu, 2002, p.63, p.86.

²⁵ Baillieu, 2002, p.86.

²⁶ Trevelyan, John, *What the Censor Saw*, London: Michael Joseph, 1973, p.90.

I firmly believe that screen entertainment can be hugely successful without sinking to the level of smut and sadism. Some of that is probably necessary because it is part of life, and no film-maker can wholly ignore it. Where some of us go wrong, however, is when the exploitation angle is uppermost in mind and quality is rated at the bottom of the heap [...] Occasionally, we must stand back and re-examine what the motion picture is all about as a force for education, enlightenment and goodwill among men.²⁷

Moreover, Williams cited the following pictures as examples of the type of film the industry should be making, “Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines,” a very funny comedy [...] “Zorba the Greek,” a sensitive drama photographed in Crete: “Up From the Beach,” a war story, [and] “A High Wind in Jamaica,” a story of high adventure’.²⁸ Therefore, there was a tendency within the British film industry, driven partly by Hollywood, that a move towards family-oriented entertainment was the way forward. The shift by Hartford-Davis into musicals and comedies, as we shall see below, and away from the type of X-rated products he made at Compton, was influenced by commercial reasons. Without the support of Compton, Hartford-Davis was unlikely to find a national distributor to back his films.

Gonks Go Beat (1965)

Hartford-Davis’ new company was called Titan Film Productions (later renamed Titan International Pictures for their production of *The Sandwich Man*), with offices and a production suite based in Shepherds Bush, London.²⁹ The first problem faced by the new company was to find suitable, filmable material. As Newbrook pointed out, ‘the real trouble, which one doesn’t realise until you get into that line of business, is to find a good script. And that was the trouble; we didn’t really know what to do first’.³⁰ Hartford-Davis’ solution was write a story about two rival islands at war, Beat Land and Ballad Isle – with musical instruments in place of weapons. Hartford-Davis’ outline was developed into a screenplay called *Gonks Go Beat* (gonks were popular soft, furry toys), and intended to capitalise on the popularity of pop musicals. However, as Newbrook later remarked, ‘Of course in retrospect we should have realised that everybody and their brother was

²⁷ Williams, Elmo, ‘The Public Wants Variety in Films’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 17 December 1964, p.5.

²⁸ Williams, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 17 December 1964, p.5.

²⁹ See Appendix A.

³⁰ See Appendix A.

making musicals, I mean they were coming out of people's ears. So many of them were being made, and in the end, at that time [*Gonks*], was just another small project musical'.³¹

The music featured in *Gonks Go Beat* is a mix of soft rock ballads and trad jazz instrumentals, which by that time were beginning to fade in popularity, replaced largely by the harder rock-based guitar sound of The Beatles, as well as the group's many imitators. Therefore, given Hartford-Davis' background at Compton, and the exploitation of current trends in his films, why did the filmmaker decide to avoid the perceived popularity of rock 'n' roll?

Rock 'n' roll is often thought of as the dominant form of popular music from the 1950s onwards however an analysis of the British music charts from that period demonstrates a diverse mix of jazz, swing, skiffle, as well as brass bands, and family-oriented ballads. Furthermore, at the end of the 1950s, the future of rock 'n' roll was far from assured, as Dominic Sandbrook has argued, it was unclear what 'form that the music of the sixties would take'.³² Moreover, by the end of the 1950s, former rock 'n' roll singers like Tommy Steele and Cliff Richard, had quickly become absorbed by the mainstream entertainment business. For example, Christmas 1958 saw the debut appearance of Steele as Buttons in the pantomime *Cinderella*, and by 1961 he was appearing as Humpty Dumpty in *Liverpool*.³³ Furthermore, the path of Steele's film career gradually transformed the once mildly controversial singer into a wholesome, family entertainer with starring roles in big budget musicals like *Half a Sixpence* (George Sidney, UK\US., 1967), and *Finian's Rainbow* (Francis Ford Coppola, US., 1968). Cliff Richard, who was originally thought of as being 'too sexy for television', also successfully made a transition from 1950s teenage rebel to safe, middle-of-the-road performer by the mid-1960s.³⁴

The popularity of rock 'n' roll films also followed shifts in popular musical trends. After the success of *Rock Around the Clock* (Fred F. Sears, US., 1956), starring Bill Haley and The Comets, Freddie Bell and His Bellboys, and many others, Anglo Amalgamated began exploiting the popularity of British pop stars. Before moving into family entertainment, Tommy Steele, 'Britain's first rock 'n' roll star', was exploited in *The Tommy Steele Story* (Gerard Bryant, 1957).³⁵ Two more films starring the singer quickly

³¹ See Appendix A.

³² Sandbrook, 2005, p.437.

³³ Sandbrook, 2005, p.448.

³⁴ Sandbrook, 2005, p.446.

³⁵ Kynaston, David, *Family Britain 1951-57*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009, p.661.

followed – *The Duke Wore Jeans* (Gerald Thomas, 1958), and *Tommy the Toreador* (John Paddy Carstairs, 1959). The big screen success of Steele led other British production companies to develop films that either took advantage of the singing skills of their stars, for example Cliff Richard in *Expresso Bongo* (Val Guest, 1959), or used the singer's acting skills in straight roles, for example Jess Conrad's doomed burglar in *Rag Doll* (Lance Comfort, 1960); and, in the case of Adam Faith, both his acting and singing talents were used as the violence-averse teenage delinquent in *Beat Girl* (Edmond T. Gréville, 1959). In 1957, the BBC transmitted the corporation's first live popular music show *Six-Five Special* (UK: BBC, 1957-8), which featured 'rock and roll, skiffle, folk, blues and jazz music', and at the programme's height, attracted more than 'ten million viewers'.³⁶ A year later, commercial television's rival music show, *Oh Boy!* (UK: ATV, 1958-9) featured early appearances by the British pop star Marty Wilde, as well as Cliff Richard.

Nonetheless, by 1960 rock 'n' roll's early popularity had been replaced by trad jazz, and musicians like Chris Barber, Kenny Ball and Acker Bilk were 'suddenly thrust from beer cellar obscurity into the limelight'.³⁷ Moreover, the popularity of trad jazz replaced rock 'n' roll films, and was subsequently exploited in British features, like *Band of Thieves* (Peter Bezencenet, 1963) with jazz clarinettist Acker Bilk, *It's Trad Dad!* (Richard Lester, 1962) also with Acker Bilk, and jazz trumpeter Kenny Ball, and to lesser extent *Jazz Boat* (Ken Hughes, 1960) which features ballads, as well as swing, jazz, and jive played by the Ted Heath Orchestra. Such was the popularity of trad jazz that by the beginning of 1962, 'most record executives agreed that rock and roll music and its derivatives were destined to be remembered only as quaint relics of the later fifties'.³⁸ The revival of rock 'n' roll music began with the success of "Please Please Me" by The Beatles in February 1963 after the single reached number one in the British pop charts.³⁹ In March, another Liverpool group, Gerry and the Pacemakers, also recorded a number one hit with "How Do You Do It", and by the end of the year, 'the momentum clearly lay with electrically amplified guitar groups'.⁴⁰ Following the success of *A Hard Day's Night*, films featuring rock 'n' roll groups began to appear, for example, *Catch Us If You Can* (John Boorman, 1965) with the Dave Clark Five, and *Ferry Cross the Mersey* (Jeremy Summers, 1965) starring Gerry and the Pacemakers.

³⁶ Sandbrook, 2005, p.436-7.

³⁷ Murphy, 1992, p.135.

³⁸ Sandbrook, 2005, p.449.

³⁹ MacDonald, Ian, *Revolution in the Head: The Beatles' Records and the Sixties* Third Revised Edition, London: Vintage, 2008, p.64.

⁴⁰ Sandbrook, 2005, p.478.

Hartford-Davis' *Gonks Go Beat* began production at a time when the type of music featured in the film began to shift back towards the harder sound of rock 'n' roll guitar groups, and away from swing, skiffle, trad jazz, ballads, and jive. Although family-oriented music remained popular, for example among the bestselling UK singles, between 1960 and 1969, is the comedian Ken Dodd's version of the melancholic "Tears (Tears for Souvenirs)", and at number nine is the ballad "Green Green Grass of Home" by Tom Jones, nonetheless, for teenagers (who were the largest group of regular cinemagoers) a variety of popular music, including rock 'n' roll, was the preferred style of music.⁴¹

Many of the acts in *Gonks Go Beat* are not commonly associated with rock 'n' roll, and the musicians in the film represent a broad range of musical styles. The Graham Bond Organisation play rhythm and blues, Iain Gregory, Barbara Brown, Alan David, the brother and sister duo Elaine and Derek, all sing ballads, and the drum battle featuring eight drummers, including Ginger Baker, Bobby Graham, John Kearns and Ronnie Verrall (among others), was inspired by a similar musical battle played by the jazz drummers Gene Krupa and Buddy Rich which Newbrook had seen on the musical show, *Jazz at the Philharmonic*.⁴² Only the opening song, "Choc Ice", by Lulu and The Luvvers, and "Love is a Funny Thing", played by The Long and the Short could be described as rock 'n' roll, or beat music. This eclectic musical range suggests that this was a deliberate attempt by Hartford-Davis and Newbrook to appeal to a broader family audience, as well as teenage cinemagoers.

Moreover, as discussed in the previous section, there was a move by the mainstream British film industry towards family-oriented entertainment. Hartford-Davis would have wanted to offer to distributors like Rank, the type of film the domestic industry persistently believed would bring back regular cinemagoers (despite numerous evidence to the contrary). Furthermore, in addition to the musical acts in the film, *Gonks Go Beat* includes a great deal of variety and broad music-hall comedy, represented by comic actors such as Kenneth Connor and Terry Scott, as well as the ex-boxer Arthur

⁴¹ Sandbrook, 2005, p.436-7.

⁴² Ginger Baker was a member of The Graham Bond Organisation before moving to Cream; Bobby Graham was the drummer in Joe Brown and The Bruvvers, and had been approached by The Beatles manager, Brian Epstein, to replace Pete Best as drummer in the group; John Kearns was the drummer for The Vaqueros and continued to play in a number of bands throughout the 1970s; Ronnie Verrall was a very well respected session musician and had played with both the Ted Heath Orchestra and the Syd Lawrence Orchestra.

Mullard; allowing the film to appeal to a wide range of audiences and age groups.⁴³

Newbrook had also tried to get The Rolling Stones (who were starting to make a significant impact on the British music scene) to appear in the film. As Newbrook remembered:

The only people we didn't get were The Rolling Stones. I went to see them, we had a long meeting with them at Wimbledon Palais where they were playing, and we couldn't come to terms with them. They had just broken through and they wouldn't do it for what we could pay them, and at the eleventh hour they pulled out. It was a shame and Bob was forever cursing.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, The Rolling Stones, from their first performance in February 1963, had gradually created a controversial reputation, 'they were far more aggressive than most rhythm and blues groups', and whether the group could have successfully integrated into *Gonks Go Beat* as well as appeal to the mainstream, family audiences intended for the film is questionable.⁴⁵

The decision to make *Gonks Go Beat* was not only intended to exploit the box-office success of pop musicals, but the film could also give an opportunity for the two filmmakers to capitalise on their previous experience in the music business. Peter Newbrook had set up England's first independent music company (one of his early signings was Lulu and The Luvvers) and, as he pointed out, 'I was classically trained. I can read a score, compose, arrange'.⁴⁶ Hartford-Davis, like Newbrook, was involved in the music business, and although, according to Newbrook, 'Bob wasn't musically literate at all. He couldn't read a note. He couldn't sing. He couldn't play an instrument. He couldn't read a score', music is an important feature in the director's career.⁴⁷

Hartford-Davis had formed the beat group 'The Long and The Short, and arranged a recording deal for the band with Decca. Hartford-Davis had also discovered a young singer called Paul Raven performing in a Soho club, and arranged a recording contract for the singer, also with Decca.⁴⁸ Moreover, pop music had been a regular

⁴³ Both Kenneth Connor and Terry Scott made numerous appearances in the *Carry On...* comedy film series. Connor also had a successful radio career, and Scott made a transition to British television where he was the star of several, very popular, situation comedies.

⁴⁴ See Appendix A.

⁴⁵ Sandbrook, 2006, p.138.

⁴⁶ See Appendix A.

⁴⁷ See Appendix A.

⁴⁸ See Appendix A; Personal Conversation with Edward Newbrook, 10 October 2009; Paul Raven's early career was relatively mediocre until he changed his name to Gary Glitter in the early 1970s. His success during the glam rock era was enormous but it came to abrupt end following his conviction in 1997 for possession of child pornography.

feature of Hartford-Davis' previous films, and would continue to appear in his films. For example, The Embers and Iain Gregory (one of the stars of *Gonks Go Beat*) had featured prominently in *The Yellow Teddybears*, The Searchers had appeared in *Saturday Night Out*, and the singer Maxine Barry sang two songs in Hartford-Davis' last horror film, *The Fiend*. Hartford-Davis also co-wrote two of the songs performed in *Gonks Go Beat* – "Broken Pieces" and "Love is a Funny Thing".

After completing the script for *Gonks Go Beat*, Hartford-Davis and Newbrook had to find a company willing to finance the film. Although Titan's first feature film was intended to exploit the popularity of pop music, funding should have been easy to find, as *Kinematograph Weekly* pointed out, 'Film-makers have not been slow to divert for their own purposes part of the rushing stream of young pop music talent which is bubbling through the country'.⁴⁹ The original backer for the film was Butcher's Film Service, a long-running independent production and distribution company. However, as Newbrook remembered, 'the trouble was we were let down by finance. We were originally promised financing by Butcher's Films. John Phillips was running the company and he promised to finance the picture, and it got very far advanced in the production of course to the point where we couldn't stop it. I mean we could have done, but I mean we got a script. We got a lot of the cast assembled'.⁵⁰ Newbrook is referring to Jack Phillips and not his son John, who took over from Jack as director of Butcher's in August 1965 (after the release of *Gonks Go Beat*) following his father's semi-retirement.⁵¹

The breakdown of the deal with Butcher's was potentially disastrous for the new company. Leaving Hartford-Davis and Newbrook in a difficult and damaging position and with the cast signed up for film but without funding, Titan could have collapsed. Fortunately for the filmmakers, alternative funding was provided by Anglo Amalgamated. Newbrook's account of how the new financing arrangement was secured, offers some insight into the difficulties faced by independent filmmakers at this time. After the deal with Butcher's fell through, Newbrook:

[K]new somebody at Anglo Amalgamated, someone I had been in the army with, and I went to see him and he would introduce me to Nat Cohen, who was head of Anglo Amalgamated. He said, "I would put up a third of the production costs". And we always used Humphreys Laboratories at the time, and they started a company called Humphreys

⁴⁹ Todd, Derek, 'Anglo Taps Teenage Talent With 'Gonks' And 'Horse'', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 8 October 1964, p.16.

⁵⁰ See Appendix A.

⁵¹ 'Butcher's on the move', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 12 August 1965, p.5.

Film Financing. It was quite a smart move [on their part] because they would put money into pictures as long as it was produced and printed at their office. And they put up a third, and we got some private finance, and we put up some money ourselves for the other third, and that is how *Gonks Go Beat* was made. It wasn't a very smart move really because the way it was rigged was, Humphreys and Anglo Amalgamated came out first, and anybody else who was in the line, stood in line and still are.⁵²

Gonks Go Beat was one of two pop musicals funded by Anglo Amalgamated at the time; the other film was *I've Gotta Horse* (Kenneth Hume, 1966) starring Billy Fury.⁵³ The financing arrangement with Anglo Amalgamated should have been a good move for Hartford-Davis because of Anglo's distribution deal with Warner-Pathé, and through them an exhibition release on the ABC cinema circuit. However, *Gonks Go Beat* received a terrible critical reception, both from the trade press, as well as publications like the *Monthly Film Bulletin*, and the film does not appear to have had a cinema release. Hartford-Davis later declared it was a 'musical ahead of its time'.⁵⁴ However, he had to admit, 'at the time we made it was not a particularly financial success, which we backed with our own money, but today some eight years later, or six years later, the picture is beginning to reap its benefits; from American television, strangely enough'.⁵⁵

In comparison to Anglo Amalgamated's *I've Gotta Horse*, *Gonks Go Beat* does not have any obvious marketing or exploitation potential in terms of recognisable pop stars – only Lulu and The Luvvers had made any significant impact on the British music charts with "Shout" in April 1964 which reached number seven, nevertheless, Lulu's presence in the film is limited to a single appearance at the end – she sings over the credits at the beginning of the film but is not seen.⁵⁶ In contrast, *I've Gotta Horse* showcased the talents of Billy Fury, whose popularity had been established in the late 1950s after his first single, "Maybe Tomorrow", immediately went into the Top Twenty. In a survey for the music newspaper, *New Musical Express*, Fury was voted one of the top six acts of 1962, along with Elvis Presley, Cliff Richard, Frank Ifield, the Shadows, and Acker Bilk.⁵⁷ Furthermore, in the film, Fury's limited acting range was supported by well-known comic actors like Michael Medwin, Bill Fraser, John Pertwee, and Fred Emney, as well as Amanda Barrie whose appearance in films like *Carry on Cabby* (Peter Rogers, 1963), *Doctor*

⁵² See Appendix A.

⁵³ Todd, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 8 October 1964, p.16.

⁵⁴ See Appendix D.

⁵⁵ See Appendix D.

⁵⁶ 45cat.com. *www.45cat.com*, <http://www.45cat.com/record/f11884>.

⁵⁷ Sandbrook, 2005, p.478.

in Distress (Ralph Thomas, 1963), and *Carry on Cleo* (Rogers, 1964) had firmly established her comic acting credentials. The straightforward narrative is structured around the singer's rehearsals on stage in Great Yarmouth (where Fury punctuated his live performances with his acting role), and includes appearances by Fury's racehorse, Anselmo, as well as his four pet dogs. *I've Gotta Horse* also features over ten songs by Fury, as well as performances by the popular Irish group The Bachelors, and The Gamblers. Therefore, *I've Gotta Horse* does not represent a radical break from earlier pop musicals, and was an easier product to promote and market because of the presence of Billy Fury and simple narrative. A point made clear by the film critic in *Kinematograph Weekly*, who pointed out that 'finding a film formula to suit the personality of an established pop star is not as easy as it appears, but the producers here have done very well by Billy Fury'.⁵⁸ The star presence of Fury was also noted by *The Daily Cinema*, 'though Billy Fury has appeared in a couple of films before, this is the one that's going to put him on the screen map'.⁵⁹

Gonks Go Beat's plot of two musical islands at war is unusual however the narrative also includes a weak, Romeo and Juliet sub-plot. Furthermore, the comedy elements are by far the weakest parts of the film, a genre not suited to Hartford-Davis' style, a point that was highlighted by the critics. *The Daily Cinema* pointed out, 'the infusion of outer space goonery and laboured comedy seems a serious misunderstanding of what the teenagers go for. Youngsters who are mad about the flip humour of the Beatles and their many imitators surely aren't the audience for the older-fashioned music hall style [...] smartly staged, with plenty of lively pop music and routines tied to a feeble comedy plot'.⁶⁰ In *Kinematograph Weekly*, the reviewer wrote, 'this is another case of a bright idea not coming off as well as it might have done. The basic plot is entertaining, but teenagers, for whom, presumably, the film was principally made, would surely have appreciated jokes not quite so juvenile'.⁶¹ The *Monthly Film Bulletin* noted, 'an unusually uninventive script and dialogue containing hardly a trace of wit defeat even Kenneth Connor's comedy expertise'.⁶²

Despite the weakness of the comedy sections, *Gonks Go Beat* contains three musical sequences that suggest the Hartford-Davis and Newbrook were attempting to

⁵⁸ 'I've Gotta Horse', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 18 March 1965, p.16.

⁵⁹ 'I've Gotta Horse', *The Daily Cinema*, 24 March 1965, p.12.

⁶⁰ 'Gonks Go Beat', *The Daily Cinema*, 21 July 1965, p.6.

⁶¹ 'Gonks Go Beat', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 22 July 1965, p.11.

⁶² 'Gonks Go Beat', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, September 1965, p.136.

differentiate their film from earlier pop musicals. The first of these sequences features The Graham Bond Organisation (with an instrumental piece called “Harmonica”) and was filmed on an airstrip, with the band playing their instruments on top of convertible sports cars that race down the runway; the drum battle referred to above consists of a bewildering succession of rapid edits, extreme close-ups, and colour-coded drum kits which contributes to the excitement and enthusiasm of the drummers; and finally the musical battle on the beach features guitars held like machine-guns, and trombones with saxophones and maracas used like hand grenades. This sequence uses several tracking shots as well as overhead shots, imitating contemporary war films in a bizarre fusion of music and falling bodies.

Hartford-Davis’ argument that *Gonks Go Beat* was ahead of its time and (according to the director) its success on American television, could be supported by the changes that had occurred since the film’s original production. By 1968 (the date of Hartford-Davis’ interview) pop music had shifted from beat music and rock ’n’ roll, and the influence of psychedelic drugs, the hedonism of the counterculture, and pop art had changed popular music, exemplified on American small screens by the popularity of *The Monkees* (US: NBC, 1966-68) television show. Structurally, and in terms of kitsch and camp value, it is understandable why Hartford-Davis would point out that *Gonks Go Beat* had become more successful on American television.

***The Sandwich Man* (1966)**

In 1965, the Rank Organisation entered into a co-financing agreement with the National Film Finance Corporation (NFFC) for British feature film production. This arrangement came at the end of a series of crisis which were having a serious impact on the running of the NFFC. Despite announcing losses of £701,129 the previous year, the NFFC had been prepared to advance £500,000 for British feature film production on the condition that ‘British Lion, or any other group, put up a similar amount’.⁶³ Moreover, the financial position of the NFFC was further impaired by the failure of the British government to agree to a request for funding, and that the Corporation ‘needed at least a further £2 million to adequately fulfil its function’.⁶⁴ The NFFC’s annual report also noted ‘the tendency for British independent producers to work increasingly with American companies or their British subsidiaries. The financial facilities which the

⁶³ ‘NFFC has new finance plan to boost production’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 17 September 1964, p.6.

⁶⁴ ‘NFFC has new finance plan to boost production’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 17 September 1964, p.6.

Americans have made available have been of immense value, but the Corporation believes that British finance should play a larger role in film production'.⁶⁵

One year later and the financial situation had still to be fully resolved. The NFFC's annual report pointed out that:

“Over the past few years there has emerged a new pattern of film financing which has also had an effect on the Corporation's policy. Talented film-makers are now increasingly able to obtain the finance they need from a single investor, usually the UK subsidiary of a major US distributor.

“Though welcome within limits, this growing involvement in the financing of British films by the US distributors, if allowed to expand unchecked, represents a threat to the continuance of a truly British film production industry.”⁶⁶

The arrangement between the Rank Organisation and the NFFC was intended to 'strengthen the position of British film-makers' by offering up to £1,000,000 – Rank were committed to £500,000 and the remainder would be provided by the NFFC.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the new funding agreement was not intended for the production of big budget feature films, as John Terry the managing director of the NFFC pointed out, 'big films should be financed on a 50-50 basis between British and US companies'.⁶⁸ It could be argued that Terry's decision was taken in recognition of the inability of the British film industry to sustain an on-going production cycle of big budget films. Nonetheless, Terry's choice had the effect of limiting the type of films independent producers could make under this scheme.

The first three films selected to take part in the scheme – “I Was Happy Here,” “Romeo and Juliet,” and “The Sandwich Man” – were selected from 80 other submissions which were otherwise 'thought lacking in qualities of entertainment necessary to attract modern cinema audiences'.⁶⁹ The first film made under the agreement, *I Was Happy Here* (Desmond Davis, 1964), was an adaptation of *A Woman by the Seaside* by Edna O'Brien, a melancholic story of a woman, played by Sarah Miles, who is pursued by her bullying husband to her home in the Republic of Ireland.

How *The Sandwich Man* became the second film under the Rank\NFFC co-financing arrangement reveals once more the vagaries, and sometimes sheer luck, that

⁶⁵ 'NFFC has new finance plan to boost production', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 17 September 1964, p.6.

⁶⁶ 'NFFC: More funds for joint finance?', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 30 September 1965, p.3.

⁶⁷ 'NFFC: More funds for joint finance?', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 30 September 1965, p.6.

⁶⁸ Terry, John, 'Turning point in our history', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 30 September 1965, p.11.

⁶⁹ 'NFFC: More funds for joint finance?', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 30 September 1965, p.6.

British filmmakers had to contend with. The idea for *The Sandwich Man* came after a meeting between Hartford-Davis and Michael Bentine. The meeting was arranged by the actor David Lodge, who had remained friends with Hartford-Davis after the production of *Saturday Night Out*. Lodge was a close friend of Peter Sellers who had worked with Bentine on the popular radio comedy show, *The Goon Show* (UK: BBC Radio, 1951-60).⁷⁰ Sellers had already made a successful transition to film and Bentine was making regular television appearances with surreal comedy programmes like *It's A Square World* (UK: BBC, 1960-64).⁷¹ However, Bentine had only appeared in a few films, and had yet to match the big screen success of Sellers.

Bentine's move to the big screen was a natural career progression for many television comedians at that time. For example, the pint-sized comedian Charlie Drake made three films, *Sands of the Desert* (John Paddy Carstairs, 1960), *Petticoat Pirates* (David MacDonald, 1961) and *The Cracksmen* (Peter Graham Scott, 1963); Benny Hill made two films *Who Done It?* (Basil Dearden, 1956) and *Light up the Sky* (Lewis Gilbert, 1960) but failed to repeat his television success; Tony Hancock had starred in *The Rebel* (Robert Day, 1960) and *The Punch and Judy Man* (Jeremy Summers, 1962); and Eric Morecambe and Ernie Wise were about to make their feature film debut in *The Intelligence Men* (Robert Asher, 1965).

Hartford-Davis and Bentine began working on a script about a day in the life of Horace Quilby, a sandwich board man, which was to be played by the comedian. Unlike previous films featuring comedians, the sandwich board man in the film required Bentine to assume a passive role however this decision failed to emphasise the actor's comedy talents. It is not clear if this was a deliberate choice by Bentine but it was an unusual choice. The variable big screen success of comic actors like Tony Hancock and Charlie Drake (who were extremely popular television stars) may have led Hartford-Davis and Bentine to stay with the comedy sketch-like format Bentine was familiar with, and not to attempt to construct a more ambitious screenplay. Nonetheless, Bentine's absence from much of the action – the comedian has no comedy routines in the film – meant that any publicity for the film could not exploit Bentine's comedic appeal.

Bentine's sandwich board man wanders through familiar London locations and silently observes a series of comic sketches which was intended to feature a cast of

⁷⁰ Peter Sellers with Bentine, Spike Milligan and Harry Secombe first appeared as The Goons in the BBC radio show *Crazy People* before moving on to *The Goon Show* where the show became hugely popular with British audiences.

⁷¹ Peter Sellers had signed a five-picture deal with the Boulting Brothers in 1959.

several well-known British comedians and actors. However, the large cast required for the film needed a large budget, and as Newbrook pointed out 'It would obviously be an expensive picture with that kind of a cast. So, who do I know in the bigger league, who would be interested in a British picture because there was no question it would be American, no point in going to Paramount or Warners'.⁷² American studios were not averse to using British comedians, for example Twentieth Century-Fox were filming the big budget comedy, *Those Magnificent Men In Their Flying Machines* at Pinewood, with several British comic actors, including Terry Thomas, Eric Sykes, Fred Emney, Benny Hill and Tony Hancock, (however, with an eye on the US box-office the film's main star was the American actor, Stuart Whitman).⁷³ Furthermore, Michael Bentine was unknown to American cinema audiences and unlikely to attract the attention of any major American studios. Moreover, the story of a sandwich board man might have offered a familiar comic character to British audiences however the character was unlikely to appeal to American audiences. Therefore, Hartford-Davis and Newbrook felt that funding for the film had to come from British sources.

The Sandwich Man came to the attention of the Rank Organisation through a series of coincidences, as Newbrook later remembered:

my wife knew the secretary at Rank, who was the secretary to Freddie Thomas, who was the director of production at Rank, and we spoke to her and she said she would fix up an appointment to see Mr Thomas; and at that time Rank had just come to an agreement with the National Film Finance Corporation to co-finance British pictures. They had done one, the girl with the little green dress or something. [Newbrook is confused with *The Girl with Green Eyes* which was produced by Woodfall Films.] They had done one picture and they were looking for more product. So we went along to see Freddie Thomas, and he said it sounded like a good idea and he would put it to the board of the National Film Finance Corporation and see what they think of it. And the head of the National Film Finance Corporation was a man called John Terry [...] I lived in Cobham in Surrey and John Terry was a senior churchwarden at my local church. So I knew two people involved in the film business who I had nothing to do with at all at that time in the business; Freddie Thomas, through his secretary and I knew NFFC through John Terry through my local church. Anyway, they put the idea together, and they did agree to it, and we had a meeting and a drink; and that is how *The Sandwich Man* got made.⁷⁴

⁷² See Appendix A.

⁷³ 'The cameras roll on nine new features', Supplement to *Kinematograph Weekly*, 24 September 1964, p.13.

⁷⁴ See Appendix A.

It is this story of back room deals that offers an insight into the small scale nature of the British film industry. Large film companies, like the Rank Organisation, would meet with smaller producers to arrange financing deals for both large and small films, and in the case of *The Sandwich Man*, an all-star production with anticipated huge box-office appeal. It was a situation that continued to exist well into the 1970s, as Norman J. Warren pointed out:

We all used to go to a pub called “The Intrepid Fox”, just around the corner from here. A whole mixture of people from the film business used to go there, editors, cameramen. I picked up a lot of work there. Someone would come up to me and say, “Norman, I’ve heard about an editing job and I think you would be suitable” and I would take the job. I also used to do the censor cuts for the BBFC. If the BBFC wanted cuts I would do that. And we never worried about payments or signing contracts. It all used to be done with the shake of a hand, not like now.⁷⁵

In September 1965, the *Guardian* wrote that *The Sandwich Man* was the second film to receive ‘100 per cent backing’ under the NFFC scheme with a budget under £250,000, and *Kinematograph Weekly* described the film as ““a comedy of our time, for the family audience””.⁷⁶ The description of the film as suitable for the family audience is important because, as far as John Terry was concerned, the British industry needed ‘a real winner’.⁷⁷

In terms of box-office success the two biggest films of 1964 and 1965, were the U-rated family musicals, *Mary Poppins* and *The Sound of Music*. Geoff Conway, the West End Controller for the Rank Organisation, told *Kinematograph Weekly*, ““In all my 30 years’ experience I have never known anything like it; this must be a national record””, following the release of *Mary Poppins*, with ‘advance bookings for the [Rank] theatre at present extend well into June’.⁷⁸ *The Sound of Music* also broke box-office records, and by February 1966, almost one year after the film’s American release, the musical had amassed ‘a total of 56,889,727 dollars in worldwide box-office receipts’.⁷⁹ If a NFFC funded British film could replicate the success of these musicals, then the financial crisis facing the Corporation would be reduced, and, as the NFFC’s annual report pointed out,

⁷⁵ See Appendix C.

⁷⁶ ‘100 p.c. backing for independent film venture’, *Guardian*, 2 September 1965, p.3; ‘Rank-NFFC scheme: second film is ‘Sandwich Man’’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 2 September 1965, p.3.

⁷⁷ Terry, John, ‘Turning point in our history’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 30 September 1965, p.3.

⁷⁸ ‘Poppins’ Pops Records’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 29 April 1965, p.3, p.17.

⁷⁹ ‘Sound of Music’ year’s best – could be all-time top grosser’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 24 March 1966, p.18.

“larger funds should be made available to us for the purpose, inter alia, of increasing the size and range of such schemes”⁸⁰

Although Hartford-Davis’ *The Sandwich Man* could not hope to match the ambitious big budget musical sequences, production values and special effects provided by Disney for *Mary Poppins*, or Twentieth Century-Fox’s *The Sound of Music*, the family-friendly film mirrored by Rank’s policy of making films for family audiences, as discussed in previous chapters, and securing an important mainstream circuit release. Furthermore, Rank’s future production schedule for 1966 clearly demonstrates the type of film the company were interested in making, they included Norman Wisdom’s first film in colour, *The Early Bird* (Robert Asher, 1966), the second Morecombe and Wise comedy, *That Riviera Touch* (Owen, 1966), another film in the Doctor series, *Doctor in Clover* (Ralph Thomas, 1966), the directing debut of actor John Mills, *Sky West and Crooked* (Mills, 1966), as well as the third Rank\NFFC co-production, the filmed ballet, *Romeo and Juliet* (Paul Czinner, 1966) with Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev.⁸¹ As Newbrook pointed out to *Kinematograph Weekly*, *The Sandwich Man* was ‘a picture that no one can object to. It’s got no bad language, no violence, no political bias and no knocking of any race group or establishment of any kind’ – the film was clearly designed for a large family audience.⁸²

Similar to Compton’s marketing strategy, enthusiasm for the film was built up by Hartford-Davis and Newbrook within *Kinematograph Weekly* and the main publicity centred on the cast appearing with Bentine, which now included ‘Dora Bryan, Harry H. Corbett, Bernard Cribbens, Ian Hendry, Stanley Holloway, Lionel Jeffries, Terry Thomas, Reg Varney, Sir Donald Wolfitt’, and introducing Tracey Crisp (who would later work at Compton on *The Projected Man*).⁸³ Another important name to join the cast was Norman Wisdom, who signed up for the film in October 1965 as shooting was on-going.⁸⁴

Wisdom had been a successful television star before signing a seven year contract with the Rank Organisation where he made six films with the director John Paddy Carstairs. Wisdom’s first film for Rank, *Trouble in Store* (Carstairs, 1953) was a huge box-office hit, and was followed by *One Good Turn* (Carstairs, 1955), two years later. The success and popularity of Norman Wisdom on the big screen was such that, as Robert

⁸⁰ ‘NFFC: More funds for joint finance?’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 30 September 1965, p.6.

⁸¹ Thomas, F.L., ‘Every taste—from farce to thriller’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 26 May 1966, p.7.

⁸² Todd, Derek, ‘Production—Family Fare’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 18 November 1965, p.10.

⁸³ ‘Rank-NFFC scheme: second film is ‘Sandwich Man’’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 2 September 1965, p.3.

⁸⁴ ‘Sandwich Signing’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 21 October 1965, pp.14-5.

Murphy has argued, the comedian became ‘the backbone’ of Rank’s production programme throughout the 1950s.⁸⁵ After his contract with Rank ended, Wisdom continued to make films for the company on a ‘film-by-film basis’.⁸⁶ Wisdom’s role in *The Sandwich Man* is an extended comic sketch (he plays a boxing vicar at a young boy’s club) intended to exploit the comedian’s physical comedy. According to Newbrook, Wisdom was reluctant to take a small part in the film however after a script rewrite, which expanded the comedian’s role, he agreed to appear in the film.⁸⁷

The final cast for *The Sandwich Man* featured over 25 British comedians and actors; some appearing for just a few minutes, for example, Diana Dors, Anna Quayle, and Frank Finlay are briefly seen near the beginning of the film, in a sequence at Billingsgate Fish Market, and Earl Cameron makes a fleeting appearance as a bus conductor who refuses to let two Sikh jazz musicians on to his bus. The large cast was also highlighted by Rank’s pre-release publicity, ‘think of all the funniest people on the stage and in films in the United Kingdom and you have the cast of *The Sandwich Man*’, pointed out F.L. Thomas, Rank’s Managing Director.⁸⁸

The Sandwich Man’s premiere on July 1966 at the London Pavilion, Picadilly, attracted huge crowds with ‘the arrival of some of the country’s funniest men’, as well as personal appearances by Norman Wisdom, Michael Bentine, and ‘a fine turnout of Pearly Kings and Queens’, presumably to emphasise the London locations featured in the film.⁸⁹ The Rank Organisation’s plans included worldwide distribution however the film received terrible reviews, and as Newbrook pointed out, ‘did not live up to our expectations financially’.⁹⁰ Rank later changed the title to *That Swinging City* when it was released overseas; an attempt by the company to exploit the current reputation of “Swinging London”.

The Daily Cinema noted the film was ‘scrappily scripted and aimlessly directed [...] and, while some of the characters are hilarious, others don’t seem to know what they’re doing or why they’re there’.⁹¹ *Kinematograph Weekly* pointed out the film was ‘funny in parts and pathetic in others this film never quite justifies the terrific comic talent lurking in the huge cast [...] there is always a tendency to carry on just a wee bit too long with

⁸⁵ Murphy, 1992, p.108.

⁸⁶ Wisdom, Norman, *My Turn: Memoirs written with William Hall*, London: Arrow Books, 2003, p.226.

⁸⁷ Newbrook, Peter, ‘Commentary’, *The Sandwich Man*, Network DVD, 2008.

⁸⁸ Thomas, F.L., ‘Every taste—from farce to thriller’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 26 May 1966, p.7.

⁸⁹ ‘London Greet “The Sandwich Man”’, *The Daily Cinema*, 3 August 1966, p.2; ‘Crowds out in Piccadilly for ‘Sandwich Man’’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 4 August 1966, p.3.

⁹⁰ Newbrook, Peter, ‘Commentary’, *The Sandwich Man*, Network DVD, 2008.

⁹¹ ‘The Sandwich Man’, *The Daily Cinema*, 10 August 1966, pp.8-9.

the visual jokes'.⁹² *Variety*'s reviewer argued that 'the gags and situations do not add up to satisfactory comedy', and criticised the Rank and NFFC's decision to finance the film, 'The combo will have to get its sights on to more nourishing fare if the scheme is to click'.⁹³ Furthermore, the reviewer thought the film 'is like a documentary in drag [...] Overseas prospects seem glum'.⁹⁴

The *Monthly Film Bulletin* complained that, 'Robert Hartford-Davis' direction displays an astonishing lack of imagination—hackneyed cutting, elementary slips in continuity [...] and virtually every scene being introduced by having the camera tilt down familiar London landmarks'.⁹⁵ The review also echoed *Variety*'s criticism of the Rank and NFFC finance scheme – 'The *Sandwich Man* is the second film to be made under the auspices of the N.F.F.C./Rank scheme to aid independent producers: one can only hope that the scheme's future films will be better than this'.⁹⁶ Finally, Raymond Durnat in *Films and Filming* was, 'disappointed to see Rank-NFCC [*sic*] set-up subsidising substandard material better examples of which have never had any difficulty in finding finance from the usual sources'.⁹⁷ Norman Wisdom's role also suffered significant criticism. *The Daily Cinema* thought 'his sequence runs on beyond the point of no return', also noted by *Variety*'s reviewer, and Durnat argued that Wisdom 'positively *grinds* [emphasis in the original] laughs out of a grindingly dull routine'.⁹⁸

The Sandwich Man can be viewed as an attempt by Hartford-Davis to shift away from low budget, independent filmmaking, and break into the larger mainstream cinema industry. The Rank Organisation's control over some of the most profitable parts of the British film industry, as well as the company's access to the North American market, and larger budgets, would help Titan to grow, and to produce bigger films. However, the benefits of more money and a spectacular cast of well-known actors failed to translate into financial success. Moreover, the underwhelming box-office performance of *The Sandwich Man*, as well as the negative press reaction, meant that Hartford-Davis' ambitious plans for Titan became more difficult to realise.

The Sandwich Man is a mainstream comedy film that does not try to offer anything other than the opportunity to showcase a series of comedy routines. Nevertheless, the

⁹² 'The Sandwich Man', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 11 August 1966, p.10.

⁹³ 'The Sandwich Man', *Variety*, 17 August 1966.

⁹⁴ 'The Sandwich Man', *Variety*, 17 August 1966.

⁹⁵ 'The Sandwich Man', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, September 1966, p. 143.

⁹⁶ 'The Sandwich Man', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, September 1966, p. 143.

⁹⁷ Durnat, Raymond, 'The Sandwich Man', *Films and Filming*, November 1966, p.57.

⁹⁸ 'The Sandwich Man', *The Daily Cinema*, 10 August 1966, p.9; 'The Sandwich Man', *Variety*, 17 August 1966; Durnat, Raymond, 'The Sandwich Man', *Films and Filming*, November 1966, p.57.

closing credits of *The Sandwich Man* give an indication that perhaps Hartford-Davis' preferred filmmaking style continued to be influenced by the type of films he had previously made at Compton. The sequence, which Newbrook described as a private joke, is an extremely well-choreographed and brutal wrestling sequence, which is filmed partly in slow-motion (to highlight fists or feet crushing into faces) and is quickly intercut with shots of a young blonde woman wearing a mini-skirt and white knee-high boots dancing. There are extreme close-ups of her pouting lips, her bottom, and her eyes which wink suggestively at the audience. The sequence appears out of place from the rest of the mild comedy in the film and arguably demonstrates Hartford-Davis' preference for shooting scenes of sex with violence – glimpsed earlier in *The Black Torment*; even *Gonks Go Beat* (despite the film's family friendly intentions) featured a police force of young women provocatively wearing knee-high black boots, a short black tunic, black tights and black underwear.

Press for Time (1966)

During the filming of *The Sandwich Man*, Hartford-Davis announced Titan's new production schedule for 1966. The first film was provisionally called *The Other Side of the Door*, and reunited Hartford-Davis with Donald and Derek Ford, who wrote the script. The film, according to Hartford-Davis, was about the 'pill and its implications [...] It's about young people and the way they live in the modern world, the completely paradoxical age we live in'.⁹⁹ The film had, as noted by Derek Todd in *Kinematograph Weekly*, 'a theme with something in common with "The Yellow Teddy Bears," but conceived on a larger scale'.¹⁰⁰ A film about the contraceptive pill was a return to the controversial and exploitable subject matter Hartford-Davis had made for Compton, and signifies a shift away from family friendly films like *Gonks Go Beat* and *The Sandwich Man*.

The contraceptive pill was a provocative subject for a film – first prescribed by doctors in January 1961, by the summer of 1962, 'about 150,000 women were taking it, rising to an estimated 480,000 in 1964'.¹⁰¹ The claims for the contraceptive pill as a cause of the sexual permissive is debatable, for example Brian Masters has argued that, 'sexual partners were snapped up and discarded without ceremony, provided they had the newly-available contraceptive pill in their pocket or hand-bag', however the 'common method

⁹⁹ Todd, Derek, 'After 'Sandwich Man' — the pill', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 30 December 1965, p.14.

¹⁰⁰ Todd, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 30 December 1965, p.14.

¹⁰¹ Sandbrook, 2006, p.462.

of birth control in the sixties was still the condom'.¹⁰² Nevertheless, Hartford-Davis could exploit the pill's associations with sexual permissiveness. The film was never made however the controversy generated by the pill was exploited two years later in the British sex comedy, *Prudence and the Pill* (Fielder Cook, Ronald Neame, 1968) which was distributed by Twentieth Century-Fox.

Hartford-Davis also announced *The Corvin Affair*, which was based on an original story by the filmmaker and Peter Newbrook. The film was described as 'an unusual spy story, this is about a racing driver who crashes his car, in which he has invested all his money, and is then approached by a girl secret agent who offers to get him out of his financial difficulties—but not for nothing, of course'.¹⁰³ *The Corvin Affair* was intended to be a much bigger production than Hartford-Davis' previous films, with extensive location shooting planned 'all round Europe—with stars from Germany, Italy and France, with an American in the lead'.¹⁰⁴ 1966 was the height of the spy film boom, and it is likely *The Corvin Affair* was intended to capitalise on their popularity, in the same way that *Gonks Go Beat* was intended to exploit pop musicals.¹⁰⁵

Hartford-Davis' third announcement was *Theirs is the Kingdom*, a big budget 'Panavision 70 and colour' production of the Battle of the Somme; originally intended as a Compton production.¹⁰⁶ *The Corvin Affair* was later described as a 'thriller comedy', and *Theirs is the Kingdom* was renamed to a more marketable title, *The Battle of the Somme*, with an intended budget of £2,500,000.¹⁰⁷ Although these films were never made, Hartford-Davis' next film *Press for Time*, a comedy starring Norman Wisdom, was intended for family audiences, and was, according to the filmmaker, "a typical Norman Wisdom subject", with the comedian's image remaining '*virgo intacta* [emphasis in the original]'.¹⁰⁸

According to Peter Newbrook, the idea for *Press for Time* came from Wisdom who thought Angus McGill's comic novel, *Yea, Yea, Yea* (1963) could be adapted into a

¹⁰² Masters, Brian, *The Swinging Sixties*, London: Constable, 1985, p.35; Sandbrook, 2006, p.461.

¹⁰³ Todd, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 30 December 1965, p.14.

¹⁰⁴ Todd, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 30 December 1965, p.14.

¹⁰⁵ In 1966 spy films in production or ready for release in Britain included two new Bond films, *Thunderball* (Terence Young, 1966) and *You Only Live Twice* (Lewis Gilbert, 1967), the Bond spoof *Casino Royale* (John Huston, et al., 1967), *The Liquidator* (Jack Cardiff, 1966), *Funeral in Berlin* (Guy Hamilton, 1966), *The Quiller Memorandum* (Michael Anderson, 1966), *Modesty Blaise* (Joseph Losey, 1966), and in America *The Silencers* (Phil Karlson, 1966) and *Our Man Flint* (Daniel Mann, 1966), as well as films based on *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.* (NBC: US., 1964-68) television series.

¹⁰⁶ Todd, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 30 December 1965, p.14; Although *Theirs is the Kingdom* was never made, a small-scale recreation of the Battle of the Somme apparently features at the beginning of Hartford-Davis' final British film, *Nobody Ordered Love*.

¹⁰⁷ Todd, Derek, 'Production—Beaconsfield Open', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 7 July 1966, p.14.

¹⁰⁸ Todd, Derek, 'Norman Wisdom won't be playing 'Hamlet' —yet', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 9 June 1966, p.14.

film which would make use of the comedian's talents. Rank agreed to co-finance and distribute the film with Hartford-Davis as director, and Newbrook as producer and cinematographer. However, as Newbrook recalled:

The night before we started to shoot, Rank got cold feet about Bob doing the direction of the picture. I don't know if it was Rank entirely or whether it was Norman, seemed to lose confidence in Bob directing. I don't know if it was because of his work on *The Sandwich Man* but there was a lot of horse-trading going on. In the end, all of them decided for the good of the picture that Bob would step down [...] It was very acrimonious, a lot of disputes and very unpleasant at times. There were endless meetings and rewrites. I thought the picture would collapse.¹⁰⁹

Newbrook agreed that Hartford-Davis could stay on the film as producer, and Rank selected the director Robert Asher, who had worked with Wisdom on several films during the early 1960s. It was a decision that Hartford-Davis found difficult, as Newbrook pointed out, 'I don't think he really accepted it because he was always telling Bob [Robert Asher] to do this and do that and so forth'.¹¹⁰ It is hard to judge if Hartford-Davis had any influence over Asher's direction. It is only during a beauty contest, where there is a focus on the bodies of the women taking part, that any resemblance to Hartford-Davis' earlier films can be noticed.

Press for Time does not represent a new comic approach for Wisdom – possibly due to Asher's presence and previous working relationship with the comedian. The script (which was co-written by Wisdom) used the comedian's regular big screen persona of the hapless Norman Pitkin, here renamed Norman Shields, the unlikely grandson of the Prime Minister. Nonetheless, Shields (like Pitkin) is prone to causing havoc and chaos wherever he goes – he creates riots at the town council meeting and a beauty pageant, as well as destroying the local council's 1,000th new house. Wisdom also took the opportunity to play three different roles – Shields, the Prime Minister Sir Wilfred Shields, and the Norman Shield's grandmother, the suffragette Emily Shields.

Press for Time's conservative and safe approach is highlighted by the reviews for *Press for Time*. *Variety* pointed out, 'Though never the critics' lover-boy, Norman Wisdom has built up a solid, profitable reputation as a slapstick comic with a certain wistful appeal'.¹¹¹ *The Daily Cinema*, noted that it was a 'typical Wisdom romp: a non-stop collection of howlers, impersonations, slapstick crises, knock-about larks, teary

¹⁰⁹ See Appendix A.

¹¹⁰ See Appendix A.

¹¹¹ 'Press For Time', *Variety*, 14 December 1966.

interludes, topped by a serious plea to be nice to each other [...] But basically, it's the formula much as before [...] well, you can't lose with Wisdom, can you?'¹¹² However, the *Monthly Film Bulletin*, was tired of this, 'relentlessly dispiriting Norman Wisdom comedy featuring the usual round of crude slapstick as the little man with the big heart pits himself against the rest of the world [...] and Wisdom duly takes his customary plunge into pathos'.¹¹³

Despite the reviews, *Press for Time* had grossed, according to Hartford-Davis, over £400,000 domestically by 1968.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, Hartford-Davis and Newbrook had arranged a deal with the distributors for a percentage of the profits, 'it did very well. I mean we all had percentages of it and it has been a good earner that picture, very good indeed'.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, it was Wisdom's last successful feature film, as Newbrook pointed it was, 'Norman's swansong in the major league'.¹¹⁶ After shooting was complete, Wisdom went to America to prepare for his Broadway debut in the stage musical *Walking Happy* which was based on the play *Hobson's Choice*. The move was intended to, as *Kinematograph Weekly* pointed out, 'open up America for Wisdom and develop him from an international star into a worldwide one'.¹¹⁷ Wisdom made one film for United Artists, the risqué comedy *The Night They Raided Minsky's* (William Friedkin, 1968), before returning to Britain. Wisdom's final feature film appearance was in the X-rated sex comedy, *What's Good for the Goose* (Menahem Golan, 1969), which was produced by Tigon, the company Tony Tenser formed after leaving Compton.

In November 1966, Hartford-Davis and Newbrook met with the American film distributor Jules Bricken, and together they announced a three-picture deal with Bricken's production company, Oakshire Films. The descriptions of these films demonstrate a shift by Hartford-Davis, away from the mainstream British film industries preference for family films, towards the type of adult subject matter the director was more familiar with. The first co-production announced was *The Mask of Innocence*, a story of a 'broken marriage and a child's possessive attachment to her father', the second film was called *We the Guilty*, which was based on a story by Hartford-Davis and Bricken, and was 'a strong drama about the pursuit of two prison escapees all over Britain, ending in

¹¹² 'Press For Time', *The Daily Cinema*, 2 December 1966, p.4.

¹¹³ 'Press For Time', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, January 1967, p.12.

¹¹⁴ See Appendix D.

¹¹⁵ See Appendix A.

¹¹⁶ See Appendix A.

¹¹⁷ Todd, Derek, 'Norman Wisdom won't be playing 'Hamlet' —yet', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 9 June 1966, p.14.

their deaths'.¹¹⁸ The article in *Kinematograph Weekly* did not reveal any details about the third film. The first two films were never made, however, the story of a child's attachment to her father, and the story of two escapees appeared in Hartford-Davis' production of *The Smashing Bird I Used to Know* (1968). Nevertheless, Titans' future production schedule had shifted within the space of a year, from a globe-trotting comedy spy thriller, and big budget war film, to smaller, low budget X-rated dramas.

Conclusion

After leaving Compton, Hartford-Davis' shift into independent film production had struggled for several reasons. Without the production, distribution, and exhibition facilities of Compton, Hartford-Davis had to find a way to negotiate funding deals to make his films, as well as separate deals for distribution and exhibition. Without the financial security of Compton, one of the few ways for Hartford-Davis to make films was to approach British companies like the Rank Organisation. Nonetheless, this led to a shift towards family films and away from the controversial and provocative subjects that had been a feature of Hartford-Davis' earlier films.

The decision by companies like the Rank Organisation to continue making family films was driven by the belief that X-rated films were driving away families, and as a result, X films were responsible for the decline in cinema audiences. Rank's decision was supported by the decision of Hollywood studios to make big budget family friendly musicals like *Mary Poppins* and *The Sound of Music*: a choice that would later have an impact on American film industries financial difficulties later in the decade. Therefore, British filmmakers faced a difficult choice in the mid-1960s, they could either continue to make small budget, independently produced films without easy access to the distribution and exhibition facilities of the mainstream British industry, or they could agree to make the type of films companies like Rank wanted to make, but lose control of any subsequent marketing, publicity and exploitation possibilities.

It is unlikely that *Gonks Go Beat*, *The Sandwich Man* and *Press for Time* would be described as exploitation films in the way the term is currently applied. Nonetheless, the narrative of how and why these films were made, emphasise the problems experienced by some low budget independent filmmakers during the mid-1960s. Exploitation, in terms of marketing, publicity and showmanship, had been one of the essential, successful

¹¹⁸ Todd, Derek, 'Titan partners in US for talks on three-picture deal', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 26 November 1966, p.16.

features of Hartford-Davis' films at Compton. Major Hollywood studios may have increased investment in the British film industry at this time however this did not mean that everyone within the domestic business benefited from renewed American financial arrangements or interest. Moving into the mainstream highlighted, for filmmakers like Hartford-Davis, the confusion felt by the industry at this time. Low budget, X films were popular with cinemagoers however companies like Rank and ABPC insisted on producing large or modestly budgeted, family friendly films, driven in part by contemporary critical reception towards the "quality" and an aversion towards the X category, as well as by the influence of the major Hollywood studios. Hartford-Davis' negative experience with the Rank Organisation would lead back to low budget independence and greater financial success.

Chapter Four: Mad Doctors and Schoolgirl Killers: Independence and the American Connection

‘We’ve made comedies, we’ve made dramas, we’ve problems with a social background, the kitchen-sink kind of drama’. Robert Hartford-Davis, 1968.¹

Introduction

After the release of *Press for Time*, Robert Hartford-Davis and Peter Newbrook travelled to America on a promotional tour as well as search for new filmmaking opportunities. On their return to Britain, Newbrook wanted to go back to ‘making small pictures, to discover new talent. Pictures which would not break the bank’.² Newbrook also believed he had found a way to offer a new and alternative way of exhibiting films:

Another idea I had [...] which I spent a lot of money on, was a concept of what I call the store front cinema. Whereby you take over a large shop, somewhere like a Marks and Spencers that had become disused and turn it into a walk-in cinema with a cafeteria. The film would run continuously throughout the day and you could sit and watch a movie with tea and cakes, a completely new concept. [...] We got GLC [Greater London Council] permission. We even got permission from the LCC [London County Council] fire brigade. They tried to get financing from the head of Rank, John Davies, but were refused, “From now on all we are going to make are big, big pictures.” The film Rank made next was the *North West Frontier* which bombed.³

John Davis, as noted previously, believed that the future for the British film industry was in the production of more U-rated films, as well as finding opportunities to attract family audiences back into cinemas. It is arguable whether Newbrook’s walk-in cinema would have been financially viable however the concept is similar to Compton’s private cinema club (which was continuing to attract audiences), and might have succeeded in some city centre locations. Newbrook, aware that the majority of British films could not compete with big budget Hollywood productions, was arguing for an alternative to the domination of high street locations by Rank and ABPC. A small chain of store front cinemas would have provided an additional exhibition space for

¹ See Appendix D.

² Newbrook, Peter, AHRC Anglia Television Oral Histories. *Peter Newbrook*, Interviewed by Richard Taylor and Louise Lawrence, [Tape] East Anglian Film Archive, Norwich, 31 July 2007.

³ Newbrook, Peter, AHRC Anglia Television Oral Histories. *Peter Newbrook*, Interviewed by Richard Taylor and Louise Lawrence, [Tape] East Anglian Film Archive, Norwich, 31 July 2007.

distributing and viewing films, and might have brought back the type of casual cinemagoer which had been identified by Leonard Citron, the honorary secretary of the Screen Advertising Association (SAA).

In 1966, the SAA presented the findings of a cinema audience survey to the Uptake conference of cinema owners. The survey found that ‘sixty-six per cent of the average audience was aged 34 or under and the cinema was a major medium for 16-34 year olds. [...] In the 16-24 age group nine out of 10 were cinemagoers, and on average they went 26.4 times a year. For most of them the cinema was still the favourite “out of home” meeting place despite competitive leisures’.⁴ As far as the SAA was concerned the biggest problem for the industry was ‘frequency of attendance [...] What had happened was that although more people were going to the cinema at *some* [emphasis in the original] time, those additional ones were very infrequent attenders, and even those who can be termed as regular were going less frequently. This accounted for the admissions decline’.⁵ These findings echoed the earlier conclusion of the six part survey of British cinemagoer habits referred to in the previous chapter. The store front cinema had the potential to improve the visibility of British films by widening the number of exhibition spaces, as well as increasing the amount of times audiences would go back to the cinema. Despite the findings of the SAA survey, Davis’ refusal to fund Newbrook’s project was, arguably, driven by commercial reasons. For example, it is unlikely that Davis would have wanted to introduce a city centre competitor that could threaten the dominant box-office position of the company’s chain of cinemas.

The problems faced by the British film industry were compounded by Rank’s control over the type and volume of films seen in Britain, and the detrimental effect this had on smaller cinema owners. A letter published in *Kinematograph Weekly* in 1968 by G.T. Kitching, director of Thompson’s Enterprises Ltd., and owner of the Majestic cinema in Middlesbrough, made clear the problems faced by independent cinemas. Kitching argued that there was no need for an increase in cinemas because there were not enough films available. Kitching pointed out that ‘the only first-run product we are offered consists of (a) films which do not obtain a major circuit release [...] or (b) films which the circuits are able to omit [...] The rest of the films available are subsequent runs’.⁶ In reply, *Kinematograph Weekly* argued that ‘the Majestic is a classic example of the difficulties of a

⁴ Citron, Leonard, ‘Our biggest potential: the casual cinemagoer’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 13 October 1966, p.18.

⁵ Citron, Leonard, ‘Our biggest potential...’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 13 October 1966, p.18.

⁶ ‘Teesside Cinemas’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 18 May 1968, p.16.

good, independent cinema in opposition to top-class theatres of the two major circuits, because there are not enough top-quality general releases to satisfy the needs of all three outlets'.⁷

The top-quality films *Kinematograph Weekly* referred to were big budget Hollywood films, or American funded British films, and the reason why cinemas like the Majestic could not screen these “top-quality” films was because of Rank’s and ABPC’s duopoly over first-run films. There may not have been enough products to go around however, as companies like Compton had demonstrated, there were a great number of low budget films British audiences were prepared to see. It was the restrictive distribution practices of Rank and ABPC, as well as the preferences of some cinema owners like Kitching, that prevented an increase in the exhibition of a greater variety of films. This was a point made by Rowland Hill, vice-president of the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association. Hill argued that it was:

ridiculous that the independent should have to wait a long time, sometimes months, for a large circuit hall to play a film before he can play the same film at his theatre many miles away. I also think it is quite wrong that renters, who expect independent’s support when they are having a run of box-office flops, promptly refuse the independent a chance at a winner unless he pays about twice his normal terms.⁸

Newbrook’s store front cinemas could never have competed with the major UK cinema chains however low budget films did have a market at this time (as the success of Compton’s films demonstrated), and could have offered an additional, low cost alternative to the major circuits. Nonetheless, the British industry found it difficult to ignore the enormous success of *Mary Poppins* (Robert Stevenson, US., 1964) and *The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise, US., 1965), films which had attracted large numbers of family audiences, and continued to invest in and promote big budget, family oriented films.

Compounding the problems of the British industry was the continued and misguided belief that adult X films reduced the numbers of audiences because they kept children away from the cinema, and prevented the growth of a regular cinema-going habit. The argument against X films continued to be made by the film industry, despite the evidence offered by the 1966 SAA survey. M. O’Reilly, an independent cinema owner, argued at the 1966 Uptake conference, that ‘too many films were being made

⁷ ‘Teesside Cinemas’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 18 May 1968, p.16.

⁸ Hill, Rowland, ‘The independent can succeed—given a chance’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 8 June 1968, p.4.

with adult themes which prevented young people coming to the cinema, and prevented young people from developing the cinema habit. Films like “Mary Poppins” and “The Sound of Music” showed there was a tremendous demand for family entertainment’.⁹ O’Reilly’s viewpoint was supported by other independent exhibitors including, A. Spencer-May who ‘suggested people could fall into the trap of saying that youngsters—people from 16-35—were the main cinemagoers’, and Derek Eckhart who though ‘statistics were misleading. It’s only when there is a family picture audiences go above the teenage residue market’.¹⁰

These viewpoints from cinema owners, suggest a failure to recognise that films like *Mary Poppins* and *The Sound of Music* were unique events and could not be sustained by the industry on a frequent basis. This was demonstrated by the numerous attempts of Hollywood to replicate the success of these films, and the production of big budget musicals and comedies throughout the rest of the decade. For example, films like *Doctor Dolittle* (Richard Fleischer, US., 1967), *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (Ken Hughes, 1968), *Star!* (Robert Wise, US., 1968), *Oh! What a Lovely War* (Richard Attenborough, 1969), *Monte Carlo or Bust!* (Ken Annakin, Sam Itzkovitch, 1969), *Hello Dolly!* (Gene Kelly, US., 1969), *Sweet Charity* (Bob Fosse, US., 1969), and *Darling Lily* (Blake Edwards, US., 1970); all failed to match the box-office performance of *Mary Poppins* and *The Sound of Music*. Only the movie adaptation of the stage musical *Oliver!* (Carol Reed, 1968) resisted this trend, and was one of the few big budget family oriented films produced in the late 1960s to become a significant box-office hit.

Despite the evidence that regular cinemagoers were aged between sixteen and thirty-four (and not the family audience), and the type of film this audience preferred to see were X-rated films, the industry continued to dislike the X category. In 1967, *Kinematograph Weekly* reported that ‘there was some concern in the industry about the number of X films being made and it is suggested that this may be a cause of declining admissions’.¹¹ Nonetheless, the article pointed out that although the box-office surveys by *Kinematograph Weekly* showed many of the most successful films fell into the A and U categories, ‘they also show that some X films have been very successful on general release or in the specialised market’.¹² A year later, Derek Todd predicted that ‘the next vogue in films [...] will be the tough, police/private eye/gangster/murder drama’, and

⁹ ‘Too many adult films keep children away,’ *Kinematograph Weekly*, 13 October 1966, p.18.

¹⁰ ‘Too many adult films keep children away,’ *Kinematograph Weekly*, 13 October 1966, p.19.

¹¹ ‘X films highlight need for fuller research,’ *Kinematograph Weekly*, 23 December 1967, p.4.

¹² ‘X films highlight need for fuller research,’ *Kinematograph Weekly*, 23 December 1967, p.4.

cited the box-office success of (in Britain) X-rated films like *Bonnie and Clyde* (Arthur Penn, US., 1967), *In Cold Blood* (Richard Brooks, US., 1967), *No Way to Treat a Lady* (Jack Smight, US., 1967), *Point Blank* (John Boorman, US., 1967), and *The Boston Strangler* (Richard Fleischer, US., 1968).¹³ This list also reveals the gradual influence of British X-rated films of the type Hartford-Davis had made earlier on the American film industry – this point will be explored in greater depth in later chapters.

Nonetheless, Hollywood studios could afford (at that time) to invest in big budget musicals and films while at the same time making adult orientated films. Although Hollywood had announced the studios preference for family films (as noted in the previous chapter), the larger resources available to American film studios meant they could invest these films, as well as adult entertainment – a luxury the British industry could not match. The lack of funding for larger, riskier projects in the British film industry was belatedly recognised by John Terry, managing director of the NFFC, towards the end of the decade when he pointed out that ‘generally speaking, multi-million dollar films are not for British companies [...] American corporations can absorb some disasters, but a single failure of this order might be catastrophic for a British company’.¹⁴

Hartford-Davis’ X-rated films for Compton had been box-office successes on the independent cinema circuit – as well as gradually finding their way on to Rank owned Odeons or in ABC’s – however of the three family-friendly films Hartford-Davis made for Rank, only *Press for Time* had been a financial success (likely due to the on-going popularity of the film’s star, Norman Wisdom). *Gonks Go Beat* and *The Sandwich Man*, despite featuring a large pool of comedy and musical acting talent, had received disappointing box-office returns. Therefore, Hartford-Davis’ return to X-rated films can be interpreted as a way of returning to the type of subjects the filmmaker was not only familiar with, but crucially, these films had been more successful at the box-office. Moreover, Hartford-Davis could also retain some form of control over production, distribution, marketing and exhibition, albeit with the problem of operating away from the financial and industrial resources of the Rank Organisation or ABPC.

Corruption (1967)

¹³ Todd, Derek, ‘Should we be exploiting...The harmonics of horror’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 1 June 1968, p.12.

¹⁴ ‘Time Right for British Finance’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 15 March 1969, pp.6-8.

In July 1967, Hartford-Davis began filming *Corruption* at the Isleworth studios, London, from a script by Donald Ford, with Peter Newbrook as the film's producer and director of photography. *Corruption* was described as 'a psychological thriller about a top fashion model whose beautiful face is marred by a crashing lamp during a wild party at a photographer's studio in swinging London'.¹⁵ *Corruption*'s initial publicity was intended to capitalise on the status of "Swinging London", a reputation that had gradually increased from 1964 onwards, and which reached its height in 1966 following the publication of an article in *Time* magazine in April of that year. *Time*'s story coined the term Swinging City, and published a map of Central London for the magazines' American readership which was 'labelled 'The Scene', indicating where the most fashionable shops, restaurants, nightclubs and galleries were to be found'.¹⁶

Nevertheless, by 1967 the phenomenon was starting to wane, and, as Robert Murphy has pointed out, many of the "Swinging London" films – '*Nothing But the Best*, *The Knack*, *Morgan*, *Georgy Girl*, *Kaleidoscope*, *Alfie* – had already been made and in most cases released by the spring of 1966'.¹⁷ Furthermore, as shooting commenced on *Corruption*, 'films as different as Antonioni's *Blow Up* (1967), Michael Winner's *I'll Never Forget What's 'Is Name* (1967) and David Greene's *Sebastian* and *The Strange Affair* (both 1967) show a middle-aged suspicion of Swinging London'.¹⁸ *Corruption* may have emphasised "Swinging London" in its early publicity, nonetheless, some of the cynicism, disillusionment and vacuous revelry associated with the end of the period found its way into the opening party sequence of the film.

Unusually, unlike Titan's films for Rank, *Corruption* was financed primarily by Hartford-Davis and Newbrook. Furthermore production began without a distribution deal in place. Newbrook contributed, 'about £40,000 towards my end of it and Bob did something similar. We picked up the rest from people all over the place'.¹⁹ Nonetheless, without a distribution deal, Hartford-Davis and Newbrook had no guaranteed way of recouping their production costs. As Newbrook pointed out, 'it was the only time we made a picture without securing a distribution deal. We hadn't got a distribution deal. We

¹⁵ Todd, Derek, 'Production— 'Corruption' thriller', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 15 July 1967, p.14.

¹⁶ Sandbrook, Dominic, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties*, London: Little, Brown, 2006, p.246.

¹⁷ Murphy, Robert, *Sixties British Cinema*, London: British Film Institute, 1992, p.140.

¹⁸ Murphy, 1992, p.140.

¹⁹ See Appendix A.

must have been crazy...must have been crazy, because it was the last major money I had at the time'.²⁰

Newbrook has not revealed why these experienced filmmakers made the decision to invest money in a film without a distribution deal. However, a possible reason might be found in the co-production deal Titan formed with Oakshire Productions which was a newly formed independent production company owed by an American television producer, Jules Bricken. Bricken's only previous filmmaking experience was as the producer on the big budget co-production, *The Train* (John Frankenheimer, Fr.\It.\US., 1964), a war film starring Burt Lancaster and released through United Artists. Previous to this, Bricken's early career had been in American television – his production credits include episodes of the Western drama *Riverboat* (US: NBC, 1959-61), as well as making episodes for the long-running anthology series *The Ford Television Theatre* (US: NBC\ABC, 1952-57). After *Corruption*, Oakshire Productions made only one other feature film, *Danny Jones* (Bricken, 1972), a love story set in Britain, about a relationship between a working class man and an upper class woman. Bricken's inexperience in film production (compared to Hartford-Davis and Newbrook) might explain why he agreed to the riskier strategy of agreeing to co-produce *Corruption* without a distribution deal in place.

In the absence of a clear explanation from Newbrook, apart from admitting they must have been 'crazy', I would like to suggest that their decision may have been taken for the following reasons. Firstly, because Hartford-Davis and Newbrook could not obtain funding in Britain, they would need to use their profits from *Press for Time* to quickly put into production a new film and maintain the visibility of Titan's profile within the industry, and secondly, their faith in the product outweighed any reservations they may have had. Of course, this is speculation; nonetheless, Hartford-Davis was conscious of the Rank Organisation's hold over the distribution resources within the British industry. Hartford-Davis should also have been aware of the success companies like Hammer, Amicus, as well as Tony Tenser's new production company Tigon, were having with X-rated horror films. Obtaining a distribution deal with an independent distributor for an adult horror film may have been 'crazy' nevertheless it was not impossible, and held the potential to at least recoup their production costs and possibly secure a profit.

An additional asset in *Corruption's* favour was the presence of Peter Cushing in the starring role. Cushing by this time was an international star following his appearances

²⁰ See Appendix A.

in a number of horror films throughout the late 1950s and 1960s, and was well-recognised within the genre. Although Cushing did not like the final film – he thought *Corruption* ‘was gratuitously violent, fearfully sick’ – the actor’s horror personae was a bonus, in terms of publicity for domestic and overseas markets.²¹

In order to maximise profit outside of the UK, *Corruption* was made in two versions, ‘one for the home market, the other for export to Scandinavia, South American and the Far East’.²² As noted in previous chapters, shooting different versions for export markets was standard practice within the industry – the additional scenes usually included more violence or nudity. Different versions were not limited to the horror genre, for example, in the export version of Compton’s *The Pleasure Girls* (O’Hara, 1965), there is a brief shot of the character of Dee’s breast, the sequence was darkened for the domestic version, and the brutal beating that the Rachman-like Nikko Stalmar (Klaus Kinski) receives is a great deal more explicit and longer. For the export version of *Corruption*, the role of the prostitute (played by Jan Waters in the British version) was replaced by Marianne Collins, and as Jonathan Rigby has noted, Collins ‘has fewer lines – also fewer clothes’ – for the brutal murder sequence with Cushing, she is topless.²³

After *Corruption* had finished shooting, the problems of finding a suitable distributor had still not been resolved. Newbrook knew that Rank would not be interested in the film, ‘it wasn’t their cup of tea at all’, so he contacted the American producer, Sam Spiegel.²⁴ At that time, Spiegel was working for Columbia Pictures which had experience of distributing British horror films in the US through an earlier association with Hammer Studios. Furthermore, in Britain, Columbia also distributed films through the Rank Organisation. If a distribution deal could be reached with Columbia, then not only could Hartford-Davis’ film obtain the marketing, as well as exhibition resources of a major American studio, but also access to Rank’s cinemas in the UK (therefore exposing the incongruity of the British film distribution system).

Newbrook had worked with the producer during the filming of *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (David Lean, 1957) and *Lawrence of Arabia* (Lean, 1962). Newbrook, keen to promote the film, explained to Spiegel that *Corruption* was:

a horror film, which might have a niche market in America. So he set up a screening at the Columbia theatre, with two Columbia executives who

²¹ Quoted in Miller, David, *The Peter Cushing Companion*, London: Reynolds & Hearn, 2000, p.116.

²² ‘Corruption’ versions’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 12 August 1967, p.22.

²³ Rigby, Jonathan, ‘Bloody Murder in Swinging London’, *Shivers*, May 1997, no.41, p.20.

²⁴ See Appendix A.

were running Columbia, and we ran the picture, and Spiegel was absolutely knocked out by it, he got so excited. He said, "C'mon get this picture sorted. I will ring my chap in New York." Anyway, they bought it for a handsome sum plus a handsome sum of percentage profits off the gross, which I negotiated, not the net.²⁵

Negotiating a percentage of gross box-office revenues, from a financial viewpoint, was an ideal position for the filmmakers to be in because producers would not normally receive any profits until after the exhibitor and distributor had collected their share. Furthermore, retaining as much of the final film (including rights to the negative) also secured access to any potential profit, either from box-office takings, if the film was rereleased or future sales to television companies. This point was made clear by Hartford-Davis in 1968, just before *Corruption* had secured a distribution deal. Hartford-Davis explained to the television presenter Bernard Braden, the background to a new filmmaking partnership the filmmaker had made with a City finance group, Triumph Investment Trust Ltd., and Columbia Pictures:

Tom Whyte [Triumph Investment Trust Ltd.] has arranged a situation whereby he participates with an American major as a complete 50\50 partner. So that at least 50 per cent comes back to this country whereby in the past only the producer's profit which is always at the end of the film used to come back here. Now at least 50 per cent of the profits of the picture will come back because he is participating in 50 per cent in perpetuity of the negative ownership. [...] I think that if we can get hold of negative ownership in this country of good British films, they are without doubt one of the biggest dollar earners that this country could ever have.²⁶

Hartford-Davis' point about the importance of retaining negative ownership had a significant bearing on the control British studios and producers had over their films. Losing ownership of a film's negative was something Hammer Studios' Michael Carreras (the son of the previous director, James Carreras) discovered to his cost, after he became director of the company in 1973. Carreras found that 'the rights to most of Hammer's films were owned by the companies that had financed them'.²⁷ Moreover, Hammer's assets 'amounted to little more than £200,000. "80 percent [*sic*] of what I thought was there wasn't there at all".²⁸

²⁵ See Appendix A.

²⁶ See Appendix D.

²⁷ Meikle, Denis, *A History of Horrors: The Rise and Fall of the House of Hammer*, Lanham, Maryland, and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1996, p.269.

²⁸ Meikle, 1996, p.269.

The arrangement with Triumph Investment Trust Ltd. led to the formation, in January 1968, of a new company, Titan International Film Distributors Ltd., which was the parent of the Titan Group of companies which included Titan International Productions Ltd., and Titan Music Ltd. Titan's board of directors included Hartford-Davis, Newbrook, Roland de Rougemont and George Piper from Triumph, as well as Robert Sterne who was appointed as the Executive in charge of production.²⁹ G. T[om]. Whyte and Leonard Richenberg from Triumph joined the board in March 1968 and the initial capital for the company was set at £100,000.³⁰

Newbrook explained to Derek Todd in *Kinematograph Weekly* more details about the decision behind the deal:

it seemed to me a long time ago that for an independent British company to survive it needed financing of its own [...] Rather than have to keep on going to one of the majors for finance, literally cap in hand, we decided to make an affiliation which would keep us financially free and give us the permanent backing for scripts and properties which is always so difficult. Hence our association with Triumph. This way you can develop a subject at length and see its qualities, see if it's going to work, and having done that, you can put a picture into work yourself.³¹

[It] was so structured that, when we wanted to make a picture we were not allowed to go anywhere else for finance but the Triumph Investment Trust and, by the same token, if they wanted to get involved in motion pictures they could only do so through us. It was like golden handcuffs, we were both handcuffed to each other; which was very good because if we wanted a hundred thousand to make a picture that was it, finished. There was no argument, nor discussion. That was the deal.³²

Newbrook's viewpoint was reinforced by Todd, who argued that 'Hartford-Davis and Newbrook were in a much stronger position than most independent film-makers when it came to seeking a long-term affiliation with an American distributor'.³³ By shifting away from relying on American film studios, they could secure the financial independence of Titan International. This was a factor recognised by the NFFC's John Terry a year later, when he argued that an 'alternative British source of finance is needed

²⁹ 'New Titan group with City backing', *The Daily Cinema*, 12 January 1968, p.3, p.10.

³⁰ Todd, Derek, 'Titan takes giant stride in link with Columbia', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 9 March 1968, p.18; 'New Titan group with City backing', *The Daily Cinema*, 12 January 1968, p.3

³¹ Todd, Derek, 'Titan takes giant stride in link with Columbia', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 9 March 1968, p.18.

³² See Appendix A.

³³ Todd, Derek, 'Titan takes giant stride in link with Columbia', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 9 March 1968, p.18.

[...] for two reasons'.³⁴ Firstly, 'the possibility that American finance may be reduced' and secondly, 'it is wrong for an industry [...] to be wholly dependent on foreign finance'.³⁵

As Hartford-Davis and Newbrook were securing a financial deal for Titan International, the Rank Organisation was in the process of rationalising parts of its company structure. In a move that demonstrated the company's gradual shift away from the film business and into other leisure activities, they merged the Rank's Leisure Services Division, which included 'ballrooms, bowling, skating, catering and motorsports', with the Organisation's Theatre Division (which included the company's chain of cinemas).³⁶ Hartford-Davis and Newbrook were trying to find ways to make films, at a time when the largest (and most dominant) British film company was gradually reducing their filmmaking assets.

As a result of the arrangement with Triumph and of benefit to the filmmakers, 'an exclusive multi-film deal' was made between Titan and Columbia Pictures.³⁷ These films included *Corruption*, an action film called *The Freebooters* (to be filmed on location in South Africa), and *The Smashing Bird I Used To Know!*³⁸ Columbia's involvement with Hartford-Davis' new film included all of the publicity and marketing prior to *Corruption's* release into cinemas. Hartford-Davis and Newbrook went to New York where:

[We] met a man called Bob Ferguson who was head of promotions and publicity [at Columbia]. And he put together a marvellous campaign. It opened in New York. I forget how many cinemas they opened it in [...] I know it took so much money. It recovered the budget in about two or three weeks. And the picture to date has grossed I don't know how many millions of dollars. It has done fantastically well.³⁹

Corruption was released in America as an R-rated horror film (persons under 16 had to be accompanied by an adult), and Columbia's marketing department publicised the film with the type of shock tactics commonly associated with earlier American exploitation and horror films (the film went under the titles of *Carnage* and *Lazer Killer*).⁴⁰ American cinema and TV trailers, as well as the posters for the film declared, "No single

³⁴ 'Time Right for British Finance', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 15 March 1969, p.8.

³⁵ 'Time Right for British Finance', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 15 March 1969, p.8.

³⁶ 'Rank combine Theatres with Leisure Services Division', *The Daily Cinema*, 12 January 1968, p.3.

³⁷ 'Columbia—Titan deal', *The Daily Cinema*, 15 January 1968, p.3.

³⁸ 'The Titan Organisation', *The Daily Cinema*, 17 January 1968, p.4.

³⁹ See Appendix A.

⁴⁰ The censorship and classification of films in America operated differently from the British system. Films were censored according to the Motion Picture Production Code and the classification of films was resisted by the industry. Only a system of advisory ratings was available. In November 1968, a new industry body the Code Seal and Rating Office, introduced the following film classifications: G (General), M (Mature), R (Restricted), and X (No one under 16 admitted). M was later replaced by GP (General Audiences, but parental guidance was suggested) – See Trevelyan, 1973, pp.181-198.

women allowed in this theatre alone.” Columbia’s marketing campaign also encouraged cinema owners to ‘employ a man, wearing dark clothes and a top hat, to walk along local streets with a female mannequin’s head under one arm and a doctor’s bag under the other [as well as] have female mannequin heads hanging by their hair from cinema lobby ceilings’.⁴¹ *Corruption* was released in Britain at the end of 1968, by the Rank Organisation with a similar marketing campaign to the one Columbia had used in America. Posters for the film declared that “‘Corruption’ is not a woman’s picture! Therefore: No woman will be admitted alone to see this super-shock film!”, and it was released as an X film with the spaghetti western, *Dead or Alive (Un minute per pregare, un instante per morire*, Franco Giraldi, It., 1968).⁴²

Derek Ford’s script contains similarities to both Georges Franju’s *Eyes Without a Face (Les yeux sans visage*, Franju, Fr.\It., 1959), as well as *The Awful Dr Orloff* (aka. *The Demon Doctor, Gritos en la noche*, Jesús Franco, Spain, 1962) – although it could be argued Franco was exploiting the success of Franju’s earlier film with a low budget imitation. Ford claimed later he had not seen Franju’s horror film, and ‘his inspiration came from an article in the *New Scientist* which speculated on the use of lasers in surgery’.⁴³ The influences of Franju’s and Franco’s films on *Corruption* may have been coincidental nevertheless Cushing’s portrayal of the tortured doctor is notably similar to an earlier, more famous role played by the actor. Cushing’s single-minded surgeon, Sir John Rowan, resembles the fanatical and murderous Baron Frankenstein which the actor had first created for Hammer Studios in a series of films throughout the late 1950s and 1960s.

Corruption begins with Sir Rowan and his young fiancée, the fashion model Lynn Nolan (Sue Lloyd) preparing for a party held by Lynn’s employer Mike, a sleazy photographer (Anthony Booth). At the party, Rowan becomes weary of the vacant young partygoers and increasingly irritated by the loud rock music. He becomes jealous of Mike’s lecherous advances towards Lynn and starts a fight with the photographer. During the fight, an arc lamp is knocked over and lands on Lynn’s face which burns her and results in terrible facial scarring – effectively ending her career as far as Mike is concerned.

Rowan finds a cure for Lynn’s condition when he injects her with enzymes taken from the pituitary gland of a dead woman. Unfortunately, the cure is not permanent and

⁴¹ Del Vecchio & Johnston, Tom, *Peter Cushing: The Gentle Man of Horror and His 91 Films*, Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 1992, p.226.

⁴² “‘Corruption’ is not a woman’s picture...”, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 7 December 1968, p.13.

⁴³ McGillivray, David, ‘High Blood Pressure’, *Shivers*, January 1994, no.10, p.14

Rowan concludes that only the pituitary glands from a fresh, recently-killed woman will work. The surgeon embarks on a killing spree and removes the heads of a prostitute and a young woman on a train to obtain access to the necessary gland. The couple decide to move to their house by the sea where the pair kill a young woman they have befriended, unaware that her boyfriend is the leader of a psychotic biker gang. By the end of the film, Rowan, Lynn, all of the biker gang, as well as Lynn's sister and her boyfriend (who have turned up uninvited at the house) are dead, after Rowan's surgical laser malfunctions and kills everyone. This is followed by a cut to Rowan waking up at his London home – intended to show that the previous events have been a dream. However, the film ends with Rowan and Lynn walking into the same party seen at the beginning, and the sound of Lynn's screams (as she is burnt again by the arc lamp) is heard over a close-up of Rowan's face. As the credits begin to roll, it is left to the audience to decide whether Rowan is still dreaming or whether the events are about to reoccur.

The critics, according to Newbrook, 'kicked it to death' nevertheless *Corruption* was a huge success for Titan.⁴⁴ Hartford-Davis, in promoting the film, commented, "it makes Frankenstein look like Noddy and Dracula a toddler."⁴⁵ Furthermore, *Kinematograph Weekly's* review of *Corruption* emphasised the difference between Titan's first horror film and Hammer's earlier interpretations of the Dracula and Frankenstein stories. The reviewer wrote, 'this film will appeal to all who like their entertainment medically bloodstained [...] It is all blatantly sensational and sick, made especially for a blood thirsty audience'.⁴⁶ By way of contrast, *Kinematograph Weekly's* review of Hammer's latest vampire film, *Dracula Has Risen From the Grave* (Freddie Francis, 1968), was described as 'another dollop of the old malarkey [*sic*]', and demonstrates how the studio's horror films represented (in the views of the trade press) dependable, conventional and routine fare.⁴⁷ Other critics noted how *Corruption* had shifted the bar in terms of horror and depictions of explicit gore and violence. For example, *The Daily Cinema's* Majorie Bilbow reinforced *Corruption's* stronger tone and differences in style:

An exceedingly gruesome horror story, made all the more nerve racking by reason of its inherent plausibility and the recognisable ordinariness of the characters. With its explicit scenes of facial surgery and gory murders it is decidedly not for those with weak stomachs [...] Cinema managers

⁴⁴ See Appendix A.

⁴⁵ 'Commentary by Observer', *The Daily Cinema*, 22 January 1968, p.4.

⁴⁶ 'Corruption', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 9 November 1968, p.10.

⁴⁷ 'Dracula Has Risen From the Grave', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 9 November 1968, p.10.

would be well advised to replenish their stocks of sal volatile before showing this one!

The skilful blend of realism—often lighthearted and frequently witty—with the always pertinent use of distorting lenses during the murder scenes makes this a film to be admired as well as shuddered at. Although much of the bloodshed is uncompromisingly visual, even more is implied. We do not see as much as we think we do, and the director ensures that our own imaginations work overtime on his behalf.⁴⁸

The *Guardian* reported that *Corruption* was a, ‘repellent and ridiculous shocker’, and in rural Somerset, the *Western Daily Press* wrote, ‘an ill-directed, ill-photographed piece of work in excruciatingly bad taste’.⁴⁹ *Variety*’s reviewer noted the film was a ‘fair horror pic for exploitation duals [...] a draw for gore fans’, but ranked ‘after the Hammer and Amicus films’.⁵⁰ The *Monthly Film Bulletin* highlighted the sleazier, sexual aspects of the film, and argued that *Corruption*:

finds its inspiration in such divergent sources as *Blow-up* and *Penthouse*. Murders and surgical operations are shown in lingering detail (with an anamorphic squeeze to establish atmosphere), and the elements of suspense and horror derive not from any subtly created mood or logical sequence of monstrosities but from the bludgeoning emphasis on physically unpleasant details, like the severed head kept in the refrigerator in a polythene bag next to the butter.⁵¹

Nevertheless, *Corruption* (since its initial release) has gradually gained a reputation among horror fans, as well as with several critics and academics. For example, David McGillivray has argued that, ‘*Corruption* was a masterpiece of Grand Guignol with the most uproarious climatic mayhem ever seen in a British film’.⁵² McGillivray has continued to maintain his interest in the film, declaring ‘that *Corruption* was head and shoulders above the rest of the dross’.⁵³ Jonathan Rigby referred to *Corruption* as ‘an unpleasant but weirdly mesmerising film which deserves recognition as a small class of sleazy Grand Guignol’.⁵⁴ Ian Conrich has suggested that *Corruption*’s, ‘gratuitous violence, graphic surgery and nudity, made it unpalatable to most critics, yet it represents an important strand’ within the British horror film tradition.⁵⁵ Despite the re-evaluation of

⁴⁸ Billow, Majorie, ‘Corruption’, *The Daily Cinema*, 18 November 1968, p.4.

⁴⁹ ‘Films’, *Guardian*, 2 December 1968, p.4; Quoted in Del Vecchio, 1992, p.229.

⁵⁰ ‘Corruption’, *Variety*, 11 December 1968.

⁵¹ ‘Corruption’, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, December 1968, p.199.

⁵² McGillivray, David, ‘High Blood Pressure’, *Shivers*, January 1994, no.10, p.14.

⁵³ See Appendix B.

⁵⁴ Rigby, Jonathan, ‘Bloody Murder in Swinging London’, *Shivers*, May 1997, no. 41, p.21.

⁵⁵ Conrich, Ian, ‘Traditions of the British Horror Film’, in Robert Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book* 3rd Edition, London: British Film Institute, 2009, p.101.

Corruption, the importance of the film's place in the development of the British horror film, as well as what the film's unorthodox production tells us about the domestic industry is often overlooked, in favour of emphasising the movie's exploitative credentials.

The US success of *Corruption* represents a key moment in the impact and influence of British low budget exploitation films on the American film industry. A year after the release of *Corruption*, changes in the American horror film, with an emphasis on the explicit depiction of gore, sex and nudity, was echoed by the US release of *Night of the Living Dead* (George A. Romero, US., 1968) and *Rosemary's Baby* (Roman Polanski, US., 1968). Kim Newman has argued that the 'English Gothic cinema was fatally wounded by the bullet in Duane Jones's head', (Jones played Ben, the main character in Romero's film).⁵⁶ Nevertheless, I would argue that films like *Corruption*, as well as several of the British horror films that followed, had already shown the direction the genre was moving in. For example, Tigon's production of *The Sorcerers* (Michael Reeves, 1967) features a murderous rape and a blood-soaked knife attack, and Tigon's black-magic horror film, *Curse of the Crimson Altar* (Vernon Sewell, 1968) contains fleeting glimpses of nudity for domestic audiences, and more explicit shots for the overseas market. Michael Reeves' *Witchfinder General* (aka. *The Conqueror Worm*, Reeves, 1968) also features topless women for the international version, as well as scenes of rape, sadism, torture and murder for both the domestic and export markets. Furthermore, explicit violence was seeping into mainstream films from Hollywood, the blood soaked climax to Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) starring the mainstream actor Warren Beatty is indicative of this shift.

The break from the earlier gothic horrors of Hammer is emphasised by Cushing's portrayal of Sir John Rowan. As David McGillivray has pointed out, during the first murder sequence in *Corruption*, Cushing's character, 'deliberately puts his bloody hands on her naked breasts, and then graphically slits her throat. Discovering the first gentlemen of Horror behaving like a slasher in a video nasty is akin to finding Katie Boyle in a porno movie'.⁵⁷ This shift was later mirrored by Hammer in Cushing's next performance in *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* (Terence Fisher, 1969), a film that increased the level of sadism and brutality in the character, culminating in Frankenstein's rape and murder of his character's landlady – the closest Cushing's Baron had come to murder in

⁵⁶ Newman, Kim, *Nightmare Movies, The New Edition: A Critical History of the Horror Film, 1968–88*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing Limited, 1988, p.13.

⁵⁷ McGillivray, *Shivers*, January 1994, p.14.

previous films in the series, was the murder of a feeble, old professor in *The Curse of Frankenstein* (Fisher, 1957).

The success of *Corruption* and the nudity and brutality of Tigon's horror films shifted Hammer's production output and the company began to significantly increase the depiction of sex, nudity and violence in many of their films throughout the 1970s. For example the lesbian vampire trilogy *Countess Dracula* (Peter Sasdy, 1970), *The Vampire Lovers* (Roy Ward Baker), and *Lust for a Vampire* (Jimmy Sangster, 1971), emphasised nudity as well as developing sexual situations involving young women and vampires (*Lust for a Vampire* takes place in a school for girls). In *Twins of Evil* (John Hough, 1971), which starred twins Mary and Madeline Collinson (their claim to fame began as Playboy Playmates), not only featured the naked bodies of the sisters but also featured scenes of young, semi-nude woman being burnt at the stake. Finally, the creatures in *Vampire Circus* (Robert Young, 1971) included a nude leopard woman, and several gratuitous shots of topless women, and, during the pre-credit sequence, the shocking murder of a young girl by vampires. Tigon's next horror film, following the success of *Witchfinder General*, was the demon possession film, *Satan's Skin* (aka. *Blood on Satan's Claw*, Piers Haggard, 1970) which featured rape, explicit nudity, violence, and (what is possibly a first for a British horror film) a dimly-lit, and very brief, oral sex scene that managed to bypass the BBFC censors.

Hammer's rival in the British horror film market, Amicus, avoided excessive nudity and sex. However, the company increased the amount of gore, sadism, and bloody violence in films such as *Tales From the Crypt* (Freddie Francis, 1971) which has Joan Collins' character bludgeoning the skull of her unsuspecting husband with a poker before being raped and murdered by a sexual psychopath dressed as Santa Claus; and the sadistic Major Rogers' (Nigel Patrick) harsh military regime at a home for blind men, ends with Rogers' forced to negotiate a maze studded with razor blades, before he is trapped and torn to pieces by his starving pet Alsatian. In the company's bizarre *Scream and Scream Again* (Gordon Hessler, 1969), a jogger collapses and wakes up in a hospital, where (during the course of the film) he has his limbs removed one by one; another character rips his own hand off before diving into an acid-filled vat.

Therefore, *Corruption* represents an early shift away from the traditional gothic Hammer horrors, and towards more extreme depictions of violence, sex and nudity within the British film industry, as well as predating the move by Hollywood towards explicit horror films. Although American exploitation films had already pushed the

barriers of gore, violence and nudity throughout the 1960s – with films by Herschell Gordon Lewis, Russ Meyer, Ray Dennis Steckler, Joseph E. Sarno, and Doris Wishman – these films existed on the margins of the US film industry like earlier American exploitation films. Lewis and Steckler’s horror films, Sarno and Meyer’s sexploitation films, and Wishman’s 1960s “roughies” – a genre which primarily featured sexual assault, rape, and the beating of women – signal the beginning of a shift later echoed by the mainstream US industry towards greater depictions of sex and violence during the 1970s, resulting in the acceptance of hard core pornographic movies like *Deep Throat* (Gerard Damiano, US., 1972) and *Behind the Green Door* (Mitchell Bros., US., 1972) by orthodox American society.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, I would argue, it was the international success of *Corruption* that led the field in preparing audiences, both domestically and abroad, for the commercial viability of X-rated films in the mainstream cinema industry. This shift was embraced more forcefully by Hollywood filmmakers but failed to secure a position in the British film industry from organisations like Rank.

As *Corruption* was being prepared for release by Columbia, Hartford-Davis and Robert Sterne travelled to South Africa to find locations for *The Freebooters*, described by the company as, ‘Tough men! Real men!—the mercenaries. Fighting for a cause—hard cash!’⁵⁹ *The Freebooters* was intended to be bigger in scale than *Corruption*, as the announcement in *Kinematograph Weekly* at the end of 1967 had made clear, ‘wide-screen, colour and stereophonic sound system, Panaphonic 70’.⁶⁰ Although Newbrook believed in making smaller pictures, this only applied to films financed in Britain, and the considerable financial advantages of working in South Africa during the apartheid era meant Titan could consider making a bigger budgeted, more ambitious film:

We wanted to do a film in Africa about people like Idi Amin, about one of these dictators that arisen. It was a very good script, we went to South Africa, we went to Johannesburg and we did a lot of recce all around, because we could get money in South Africa. They were in financial trouble, they were making by the ton but they couldn’t remit it back to the UK. The way you could do it was to make a movie and send it back.

⁵⁸ Herschell Gordon Lewis’ horror films include *Blood Feast* (1963) and *2000 Maniacs* (1964), Steckler starred in and directed the bizarre *The Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed-up Zombies* (1963). Russ Meyer switched from “nudie cuties” to sexploitation with *Lorna* (1964) and *Mudhoney* (1965), and Joseph Sarno made a number of sexploitation films including *Sin in the Suburbs* (1962), *Sin You Sinners* (1963), and *Flesh and Lace* (1964). Doris Wishman, like Meyer began making “nudie cuties”, for example, *Nude on the Moon* (1962) before moving on to films which mixed mild nudity and sexual assault. Wishman’s “roughies” include *Bad Girls Go To Hell* (1965), *Another Day Another Man* (1967) and *Indecent Desires* (1968).

⁵⁹ ‘Thoroughly Modern’, *The Daily Cinema*, 3 January 1968, p.12.

⁶⁰ ‘Production Round-Up’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 16 December 1967, p.151.

So we went to South Africa. The picture was called *The Freebooters*. It was about a bunch of renegades, Michael Caine types, who would go out there and liaise with these villains.⁶¹

However, by March 1968 (and because of problems in Hartford-Davis' personal life) the film had collapsed, and production switched to *The Smashing Bird I Used To Know*, as well as preparation for a future project called *Girl*, from a script by Donald and Derek Ford.⁶²

The Smashing Bird I Used To Know (1969)

The original pre-publicity for *The Smashing Bird I Used To Know* described the film as 'a modern drama concerning the problems of the young and their environment'.⁶³

Three months later, the film was now 'a sensitive study of a beautiful 16-year-old girl who gets involved in a series of disenchanting personal relationships—each one a kind of prison to her—until at last she finds freedom and happiness in her own way'.⁶⁴ By May 1968, the story had changed to 'a teenager's guilt complex following the death of her father in a fairground accident. She grows up with the feeling that she is responsible, and her mother's affair with a handsome ne'er-do-well does nothing to help, eventually driving the teenager to violence'.⁶⁵

Like many of Hartford-Davis' previous films, the description of *The Smashing Bird I Used To Know*, resembles that of several films released during the 1960s which stressed greater sexual liberalisation but also emphasised some of the problems associated with these freedoms. These films highlighted young women and their sexual relationships in way seldom dealt with by post-war British cinema of the 1940s and 1950s, but at the same time these films also contain warning messages, as well as lessons in morality. For example, *A Taste of Honey* (Tony Richardson, 1960), *A Kind of Loving* (John Schlesinger, 1962), *The World Ten Times Over* (Wolf Rilla, 1963), *That Kind of Girl* (Gerry O'Hara, 1963), *The Yellow Teddybears* (Hartford-Davis, 1963), *The Pleasure Girls* (O'Hara, 1965), *Georgy Girl* (Silvio Narizzano, 1966), *Baby Love* (Alastair Reid, 1968), *Joanne* (Mike Sarne, 1968), and *A Nice Girl Like Me* (Desmond Davis, 1968), feature young women and their relationships (often with older men). Nevertheless, despite the sometimes progressive subject matter, many of the women's relationships in these films end with unwanted

⁶¹ See Appendix A.

⁶² Todd, Derek, 'Titan takes giant stride in link with Columbia', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 9 March 1968, p.18.

⁶³ 'New Titan group with City backing', *The Daily Cinema*, 12 January 1968, p.10.

⁶⁴ Todd, Derek, 'Titan takes giant stride in link with Columbia', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 9 March 1968, p.18.

⁶⁵ 'Titan start', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 11 May 1968, p.16.

pregnancies, abortions, sexually transmitted diseases, attempted suicide, abandonment, disillusionment, or marriages of convenience. These films may have celebrated female sexual independence nonetheless they also convey a message that there was a price to be paid for these freedoms.

Rod Cooper in *Kinematograph Weekly* remarked on one particular feature of these themes (the sexual activity of young girls) during the production of *The Smashing Bird*...:

'In the blue corner, 'Lolita', precocious, teenaged nymphet who delights her stepfather with her sexual appetite; in the red corner from 'Baby Love', Luci, precocious, teenaged tart, out to seduce her mother's lover. On my left, recently on location in London, 'Twinky', sixteen-year-old schoolgirl, crossing the sexual threshold and in love with an older man; on my right, from 'I Start Counting' [...] fourteen-year-old schoolgirl, crossing the sexual threshold and in love with an older man.⁶⁶

Furthermore, Hartford-Davis not only capitalised on the exploitative potential of a young girl's sexuality, but Newbrook's title was intended to associate the film with London's reputation as "Swinging". Nonetheless, despite the film's title, the end result is extremely downbeat, and features attempted murder and rape, lesbianism, imprisonment, and the death of the lead character.

Before shooting began, and in an attempt to provide publicity for the film, Hartford-Davis and Newbrook held a campaign to find an unknown actress to play the part of Nicki, the disturbed schoolgirl:

We ran a promotion to find a new star. Which our casting director set up and we went into a small studio in Soho, the West End, with a video camera and we must have tested thirty, forty girls all reading scenes from the picture. [...] I think I was the one who picked Madeleine [Hinde]. [...] We groomed her. We gave her new hairstyle, new teeth, gowns, wardrobe, signed her to a long-term contract.⁶⁷

Hinde was later interviewed by Robert Ottaway for *Kinematograph Weekly*. Although the interview reveals several unsavoury aspects of the unreconstructed attitudes towards women that existed during the 1960s, the interview also demonstrates how Titan, as an independent company, retained more control over the pre-publicity and marketing of the film. Ottaway wrote:

[My] mission was to discover whether, beneath the pink veneer of a girl who takes too many healthy walks, Miss Hinde runs a high temperature within. When she came in, looking like an ad for home baking, my first instinct was to send her to fetch my golf clubs. [...] She was chosen from

⁶⁶ 'Those precocious little schoolgirls again...?', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 8 March 1969, p.25.

⁶⁷ See Appendix A.

around 2,000 aspiring chicks for her part in the movie [...] How did she get the role? I asked hoping for some revelation of having to strip to the buff. “Nothing like that,” she said, as if I’d insulted the Pope. [...] She had, I am pleased to report, warmed up on a few glasses of the hard stuff. “An English rose”, as her producers proudly call her, had shown signs of possessing thorns. The cookie had begun to crumble. What the film should reveal, if it lives up to its fanfare, is the Madeline Hinde who doesn’t say “I like men with good manners, who open doors” [...] but the one who opines that “they must have a sense of threat”. [...] Madeline Hinde has the equipment, but we don’t yet know whether it’s in good working order.⁶⁸

Ottaway’s article, as part of the pre-publicity campaign for Hartford-Davis’ film, conflated Hinde’s real-life background as the ‘daughter of a Surrey farmer’ with frequent references to her desirability and sexuality, as well as Hinde’s identification with Nicki, ‘she is some sort of mixed-up swinger [...] if I can’t fathom this character, then I might as well pack up and go back to the horses’.⁶⁹ Ottaway’s comments carry the idea of an innocence corrupted, both real (Hinde), as well as fictional (Nicki), and helps to build up a picture of somewhat unsavoury sexuality which the film’s publicity department exploited. In Britain, women may no longer have been expected to stay at home and wash dishes however as far as sexual relationships was concerned the 1960s were still dominated by men’s desires. As Nicola Lane, self-styled hippie-chick has argued, ‘you had to fill so many roles: you had to be pretty and you had to be ‘a good fuck’, that seemed very important [...] It was paradise for men in their late twenties: all these willing girls’.⁷⁰

After shooting on the film was complete, a deal was arranged with the British company GNP to distribute the film in the UK, with foreign distribution handled by a subsidiary company of Titan International, Euro London Films.⁷¹ GNP also ‘appointed PR and advertising agents Vernons to devise ‘a total marketing and advertising campaign for the film—using the contemporary techniques necessary for 1969’.⁷² Ronald Wilson of GNP told *Kinematograph Weekly* (in an echo of Tony Tenser and Michael Klinger’s announcements during their time at Compton), ‘with the huge amount of money we

⁶⁸ Ottaway, Robert, ‘Hinde Sight’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 7 June 1969, p.9.

⁶⁹ Ottaway, Robert, ‘Hinde Sight’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 7 June 1969, p.9.

⁷⁰ Green, Jonathon, *Days in the Life: Voices from the English Underground 1961–1971*, London: Pimlico, 1998, p.418.

⁷¹ See Appendix A; Grand National Pictures was a British production and distribution company founded in 1938 by Maurice J. Wilson. Wilson was also responsible for the construction of Highbury Studios which was used for GNP film production; the studio was also leased out to other film companies (Rank made several B films there). By the 1950s, GNP was primarily operating as a distribution company.

⁷² ‘Total campaign for “Smashing Bird”’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 24 May 1969, p.22.

have budgeted for promotion of “Smashing Bird” we considered it vital that the advertising and promotion should be something which will make the trade sit up and take notice’.⁷³ Furthermore, Wilson arranged ‘a full ABC circuit release’, and, as part of the marketing campaign, “we are going to flood the country with “I’m a Smashing Bird” lapel badges and “I’m going to see a “Smashing Bird” car stickers. Our advertising schedule is going to make Smashing Bird a cult from September onwards. Madeline Hinde, who plays the title girl, is currently on a 60-town nation-wide tour for editorial publicity”.⁷⁴

Encouraging cinema showmanship also formed part of the promotional campaign for the film. Jeff Mudge, ABC Dover, was pictured ‘on the front pages of two Kent papers [...] surrounded by Smashing Birds’, and the Manager of the ABC Southend, P. J. Weller:

had a very effective little campaign which cost under £8. It consisted of making the most of book and record links in four shop displays and utilising the Afga-Gevaert tie-up fully, in addition to having a street stunt every day of the run and getting a good composite page in the local paper. The Agfa display in the foyer was attractively arranged with the ‘£50 a bird’ posters prominently mounted. A Smashing Bird [sic] distributed stickers (‘I’m going to see a Smashing Bird’) to men in the busy shopping areas and lapel badges (‘I’m a Smashing Bird’) to the girls throughout the playweek. The composite page had advertisement links with shoes, clothes, florist shop, wig boutique and photographic supply store.⁷⁵

The advertising strategy for *The Smashing Bird I Used To Know* resembled the promotional and marketing gimmicks previously employed so successfully at Compton and exploited the film’s young female star. The film also received additional publicity following its US release when Patrick Mower, who played the sleazy conman Harry Spenton, discovered that an American tabloid newspaper, the *National Enquirer*, had published ‘pictures of Madeline and myself under the heading ‘Actor rapes starlet on set’’.⁷⁶ Mower, against his wishes, was advised not to sue nonetheless this unexpected publicity did not appear to have helped the film’s box-office appeal.

Furthermore, the sleazier, sexual aspects of the story were not used by the company in the UK, an odd exclusion which is emphasised by the different publicity

⁷³ ‘Total campaign for “Smashing Bird”, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 24 May 1969, p.22.

⁷⁴ “Smashing Bird’ for ABC circuit’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 2 August 1969, p.8.

⁷⁵ ‘Campaign Round-Up’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 11 October 1969, p.19; ‘Showmanship’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 4 October 1969, p.23.

⁷⁶ Mower, Patrick, *My Story*, London: John Blake Publishing Ltd., 2007, p.138.

campaign used for the film's American release. In the UK, GNP's publicity marketed Hartford-Davis' film as a light-hearted romp featuring "a Smashing Bird" nevertheless in the US it was re-titled *Girls of Shame* (the film was also later renamed *School for Unclaimed Girls*). The shift from "Smashing Bird", and its connotations of a cheerful, upbeat "Swinging London", to a "Girl of Shame", is similar to the "bad-girl" genre of American exploitation film from the late 1950s; a cycle that by the mid-1960s had been replaced by teenage beach\surfing movies. These films invariably consisted of narratives involving juvenile delinquent young women, robbery, murder, prison (or remand institutions), and either the redemption or death of the lead character. Furthermore, as we can see from the following titles: *Girls in Prison* (Edward L. Cahn, US., 1956), *The Green-Eyed Blonde* (Bernard Girard, US., 1957), *The Wayward Girl* (Lesley Selander, US., 1957), *Girls on the Loose* (Paul Henreid, US., 1958), and many others – the film's American title shows the type of audience the American distributors were targeting. GNP's UK marketing campaign failed to exploit the more salacious, sexual themes in the film.

The story of the *The Smashing Bird I Used To Know* is about a young girl, Nicki Johnson, who is tormented by guilt over the death of her father. In an opening dream sequence, we see Nicki as a child placed on to a merry-go-round ride by her father. Unfortunately, Nicki is scared of the ride, and as her father (played by David Lodge) tries to rescue his daughter, he falls underneath the mechanical horses of the fairground ride and is killed by hoofs striking him on the head. Although an accident, Nicki blames herself for her father's death. Nicki, now a sixteen year-old schoolgirl, is living with her mother, Anne (Renée Asherson) who is planning to marry Harry Spenton, much to Nicki's dismay. Harry is actually a confidence trickster who is planning to con Anne out of £500 which he needs to divorce a fictional wife, as well as to purchase a non-existent launderette.

After falling from her horse as a result of a flashback to her father's death, Nicki returns home and is attacked by Harry, who tries to rape her. Nicki, believing she has killed Harry, is sent to a remand home where she becomes friends with one of the other inmates, Sarah (Maureen Lipman). Sarah falls in love with Nicki (although she does not return Sarah's affections). During an escape attempt, Sarah is caught but Nicki escapes and finds a place to stay with Peter, a friend from school. Peter (Dennis Waterman) arranges for Nicki to stay in the basement of his antiques shop until she can make a decision about what to do. While waiting in the basement, Peter's business partner Geoffrey (Derek Fowlds) tries to rape her. Peter arrives, and after a brief fight, Geoffrey

tells Nicki she has to leave. Nicki decides to face up to her problems, and asks Peter to drive her back home. On the journey back to her mother, Peter, avoiding a lorry, crashes through a bridge, his car explodes and the couple are killed.

Patrick Mower has referred to the film as ‘an unmitigated load of old tripe’, and Dennis Waterman has argued it ‘must be in the running as the worst film ever made, period’.⁷⁷ However, I would suggest that their detrimental descriptions (written many years after the film’s release) is motivated more by Mower and Waterman’s desire to be associated with their later critically regarded film and television projects, rather than with a movie which is now described as a low budget British sexploitation film (Waterman is particularly scathing). It also demonstrates the conventional assessment routinely given towards to low budget horror and exploitation films by many in the film industry in the UK, in addition to contemporary critical reaction.

Despite Mower and Waterman’s assessments, *The Smashing Bird I Used To Know* contains several interesting sequences that are worth highlighting. The opening sequence cuts rapidly between: Nicki in her bed, the mother next door making love to Harry, and Nicki’s dream about the death of her father. The rapid editing appears to imply a link between the death of Nicki’s father and sexual desire. Nicki’s conflation of sex with her father’s death runs throughout the film, and is clearly referenced during the two attempted rape scenes. During Harry’s attempted rape of Nicki, he hits her, and there is a cut to the young girl’s father reaching to grab her during the fairground ride. When Nicki stabs Harry, there is a close-up of his agonised face that cuts to a similar close-up of her father’s face, streaming with blood – connecting the young girl’s guilt over the death of her father with the attempted murder of Harry. Later, when Geoffrey is trying to kiss Nicki, there is a rapid sequence of cuts between Nicki kissing her father and Geoffrey kissing Nicki, which gradually develops into an attempted rape by the young man. Nicki’s initial passionate kiss with Geoffrey is disturbingly cut with the young girl kissing her father as a child, and as Geoffrey’s kisses become more insistent, the father’s kiss of Nicki are also more prolonged.

Psychological trauma as a result of the family structure (albeit more extreme in Nicki’s case), had gradually gained popular following throughout the 1960s, due in part to the teachings of the controversial psychiatrist R.D. Laing. Laing’s ‘pioneering ideas – on the ‘divided self’ under threat from others’, as the historian Dominic Sandbrook has

⁷⁷ Mower, 2007, p.137; Waterman, Dennis, *ReMinder*, London: Hutchinson, 2000, p.81.

pointed out, 'were all the rage' in the mid-1960s.⁷⁸ Laing 'explained madness as the alienated reaction of a confused young man or (more typically) woman to the tyrannical repression of the family'.⁷⁹ *The Smashing Bird I Used To Know* can be viewed as one of a few films made at this time to loosely take the opportunity to explore Laing's ideas. Karel Reisz's, *Morgan, a Suitable Case for Treatment* (1966) is an earlier examination of Laing's thesis, followed some years later by Ken Loach's *Family Life* (1972). Despite the subtext of possible child abuse, incest and madness, these themes are never fully explored (or exploited) in the film, and are largely absent during Nicki's counselling sessions with Dr Sands at the remand home. Following Nicki's incarceration, the film swaps psychological complexity for gratuitous shots of topless young women in the shower and numerous shots of ripped clothing, breasts and bums during a fight in their dormitory.

The film was not a success, according to Newbrook it 'about broke even', and he believed there were two main reasons why the film failed at the box-office.⁸⁰ Newbrook thought the film 'probably wasn't rough enough. The girls' dormitory was more like jolly hockey sticks'.⁸¹ The other problem was the casting of Madeline Hinde, 'I think in retrospect I made a mistake. She was too English. She was too country rose. I think we should have picked someone more, maybe when I say middle class, or maybe lower class. I don't know what it was, but I think I made a mistake in that sense — maybe not quite so feminine as Madeleine'.⁸²

In comparison to similar "bad-girl" films of the 1950s, the film consists of two distinctive narratives which together, in this case, serve to undermine each other. The serious psychological melodrama combined with the juvenile delinquent sequences would have been difficult to market and promote, as shown by the contradictory publicity campaigns in Britain and America. Furthermore, unlike *Corruption*, this film has no unifying narrative to exploit. This problem is compounded by the title which fails to show to potential audiences what the film is about. Similar to Hartford-Davis' earlier film *Saturday Night Out*, *The Smashing Bird I Used To Know* failed to have what Eric Schaefer referred to as an 'organizing sensibility'.⁸³ In other words, the film does not have a coherent subject or narrative that could be easily or obviously exploited. Moreover,

⁷⁸ Sandbrook, Dominic, *State of Emergency the Way We Were: Britain, 1970-1974*, London: Allen Lane, 2010, p.434.

⁷⁹ Sandbrook, 2010, pp.434-5.

⁸⁰ See Appendix A.

⁸¹ See Appendix A.

⁸² See Appendix A.

⁸³ Schaefer, Eric, *"Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!" A History of Exploitation Films, 1919-1959*, Durham, NC.: Duke University Press, 1999, p.5.

Hinde's acting style is more suited to the innocent but psychological disturbed young schoolgirl from the first part of the film, and the part demanded a harder, more cynical approach following the arrival of the Nicki in the remand home – Maureen Lipman's portrayal of the pessimistic and unhappy lesbian, Sarah, is far more successful during this sequence.

The critical reception of the film reflected this confusion. *Kinematograph Weekly* referred to the film as 'a modern, weepie melodrama, in which a sad time is had by all. Heavy tear-jerker. [...] It should, however, appeal to audiences who like their entertainment highly coloured and its motives simple. [...] Madeline Hinde plays Nicki with some sympathy: she may do better with a better part. [...] Sex melodrama, tragic theme'.⁸⁴

The more normally sympathetic Majorie Billow in *Today's Cinema* noted, 'Accents are an illogical hotchpotch of posh genteel and corblimey [*sic*]; performances of even the most experienced are forced and unconvincing. [...] Souped-up "did she fall or was she pushed" melodrama, with lavish helpings of nudity, and a dollop of the "in" subject of lesbianism. [...] Highly exploitable kinky thrills for the young and uncritical'.⁸⁵

The reviewer in the *Monthly Film Bulletin* thought the film was a 'preposterous blend of cheap melodrama and pat psychology, with a large slice of life after lights out in a girls [*sic*] remand home thrown in for good measure. [...] The story is trite, the dialogue almost unbelievably banal, and the acting generally feeble, with the possible exception of Maureen Lipman as one of the less unlikely remand home inmates'.⁸⁶

Variety noted that the 'title is misleading, suggesting a 'with-it' romp through the tired old pastures of Swinging London. In fact, it's a rather drab meller [*sic*] with some sex and violence interlarded. Pic introduces Madeline Hinde, a pretty English-rose type, but so far lacking in personality. [...] producer Newbrook [...] and Hartford-Davis have proved before that their talents are worthy of better stuff than this minor effort'.⁸⁷

The Smashing Bird I Used To Know, if it had focused on the psychology pressures experienced by Nicki and the hints of the incestuous relationship with her father, may have resulted in a more coherent and exploitable (if not more controversial) film. Moreover, if the film had concentrated on emphasising the sleazier aspects of the scenes in the remand home, it could have been promoted as a British "bad-girl" film – along

⁸⁴ 'The Smashing Bird I Used To Know', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 16 August 1969, p.15.

⁸⁵ Billow, Majorie, 'The Smashing Bird I Used To Know', *Today's Cinema*, 15 August 1969, p.7.

⁸⁶ 'The Smashing Bird I Used To Know', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 1 October 1969, p.219.

⁸⁷ 'The Smashing Bird I Used To Know', *Variety*, 3 September 1969.

with all the associated exploitation possibilities. However, Hinde was miscast, and she does not display any of the sultry, sexy or sulky attitudes needed for the role, unlike earlier similar British films, like Gillian Hills in *Beat Girl* (Greville, 1960) or even Sylvia Syms in *My Teenage Daughter* (aka. *Teenage Bad Girl*, Herbert Wilcox, 1957).

The disappointing box-office performance of *The Smashing Bird I Used To Know* demonstrates how delicately balanced the individual components of a film need to be. Columbia's marketing of *Corruption*, combined with the title, reflected what type of film the company were publicising. However, as the reviewer of *Variety* noted, the title of Titan's follow up was misleading, indicating that the film was possibly a comedy about or set in "Swinging London". Furthermore, *Corruption's* plot – mad scientist murders young women – is unambiguous and easily marketable, whereas, the mix of social realist psycho-drama, nudity and violence would have been difficult to successfully sell to cinema audiences. This is highlighted by the relatively tame publicity campaigns carried out by British cinema owners.

Conclusion

After Robert Hartford-Davis' experience of working with the Rank Organisation, his company decided to invest in the production of more adult drama. Hartford-Davis and Newbrook took the unusual decision of putting into a production a feature film without a distribution deal. The mainstream American and British film industries' preference for family-friendly films were inconsistent with the success independent producers were having with low budget X-rated horror and adult films. Hartford-Davis and Newbrook's decision to self-finance a violent horror film without a distributor may have been unusual but the advantages, if the film was successful, were extremely beneficial to the filmmakers. Moreover, it was an environment that favoured low budget independent producers, as David McGillivray has argued:

The big budget flops and there were some at that time were all those that were funded by America. Most of the studios were putting money into British cinema and it was very, very hit and miss. I know Paramount and MGM, Columbia. They all had British outlets but not all the films made money. They misjudged the market regularly. I supposed it evened up because they did have some big hits but you couldn't take that risk in the independent sector. There was no element of risk at all. The slightest suggestion of something that wasn't going to appeal to the public and it was written out. We can't have this. The public won't like it. The guys in

charge, the producers and directors generally knew what their market wanted. It was very safe.⁸⁸

Furthermore, the appeal of X films continued to be attractive to British cinemagoers and, with the right subject matter and marketing, a film could make enough money from the domestic market alone. A point made by McGillivray:

I think it's a misconception in that it was possible for a long time, even before I started working, to make a lot of money, just from the British market. Just because they weren't popular abroad didn't mean they weren't financially successful. And you know, even before my time, people like George Formby and Gracie Fields, their films made huge amounts of money, just from British cinemas.⁸⁹

The success of *Corruption* was boosted by Columbia Pictures decision to distribute the film in the US. In addition, Columbia's links with the Rank Organisation led to the UK distribution of the film through the cinemas owned by Rank. In making the decision not to approach Rank for a distribution deal, paradoxically Hartford-Davis and Newbrook were actually in a better and more favourable position to sell their film. The Rank Organisation may have been the largest film company in the UK (as well as the major vertically integrated studio at this time) nevertheless this situation was often a disadvantage to independent filmmakers like Hartford-Davis. Although *The Smashing Bird* *I Used To Know* was distributed on the lucrative ABC circuit, failure to take full advantage of the exploitable possibilities of the film resulted in modest box-office takings.

Hartford-Davis' experience with making films for Rank (*The Sandwich Man* and *Press for Time*) demonstrated to the filmmaker that more control and therefore more profit was available in the production of low cost, X-rated, adult entertainment, for which there was a regular (albeit relatively small) market. The success of *Press for Time* was an anomaly sustained by the status of the film's star, Norman Wisdom, although a film star's box-office profitability could end at any time. By the late 1960s, even Wisdom's popularity had begun to wane and his last feature film, the X-rated sex comedy *What's Good for the Goose* (Golan, 1969), failed to rejuvenate his career, as mentioned earlier. As a result Wisdom switched to British television – even Wisdom's fans balked at the actor's transition from a loveable fool to a middle-aged man sleeping with topless young women.

⁸⁸ See Appendix B.

⁸⁹ See Appendix B.

Rank and ABPC may have given filmmakers the opportunity to gain access to the US market, as well as the companies' cinema circuits however this was no guarantee of success. With the right product and suitable marketing campaign, it was possible for independent production companies like Titan to make successful films without the financial assistance of the mainstream British film industry, or funding from Hollywood. Hartford-Davis and Newbrook had demonstrated that films could be made in the UK without the assistance of major American studios, a point that others in the British film industry were unwilling to accept. For example, the film producer Lord Brabourne and chairman of British Home Entertainment Films Ltd., argued in 1969, that 'there is no such thing as a British-financed film production industry—it is British production financed by American money'.⁹⁰ Furthermore, Brabourne pointed out that 'anybody who just goes in for one production will be taking a risk; backing single films is a dangerous business'.⁹¹

Brabourne's lack of confidence in the domestic market was driven by his support for "quality" British films – despite the success of companies like Hammer, Amicus and Compton, as well as other film companies discussed in this thesis – influential figures like Brabourne continued to promote the idea of the "quality" film. Brabourne's viewpoint was reinforced by Dimitri de Grunwald, the founder and chief executive of the International Film Consortium, an organisation setup to distribute British films overseas. Grunwald argued that 'production directed at the home market alone has floundered. So it is only by uniting and making films of high quality that we can be strong enough to satisfy and profit from the world-wide demand for good films'.⁹² Furthermore, and contrary to the success of Titan, Grunwald believed that 'the days of home industries standing on their own feet in their own market are long past'.⁹³

Hartford-Davis and Newbrook had continued demonstrate that it was possible for a British independent company to make films without the financial help of Hollywood. Furthermore, the British domestic market was far from exhausted, and with the right type of film, profitable films could be made. This situation would continue well into the 1970s, as the filmmaking careers of David McGillivray and Norman J. Warren later demonstrated.

⁹⁰ 'There should be a box-office in the home', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 5 April 1969, p.6.

⁹¹ 'There should be a box-office in the home', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 5 April 1969, p.6.

⁹² 'The International Outlook in Film Finance', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 May 1969, p.6.

⁹³ 'The International Outlook in Film Finance', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 10 May 1969, p.6.

Chapter Five: Corrupted, Tormented & Damned: Exploiting the Market with Sex and Horror

‘He was truly corrupted’.

Peter Newbrook, 2009.¹

Introduction

As ever, cinema audiences continued to fall throughout the remainder of the 1960s. However, despite the continuing decline in cinema audiences – the weekly admissions to cinemas in July 1969 was 4.17 million, down from 4.63 million for the same period the previous year; box-office receipts also fell, from £1.10 million to £1.07 million – major American film studios continued to invest in British film production.² Nevertheless, the messages coming from Hollywood about the type of films they were willing to fund, was often contradictory. Furthermore, the reduction in funding by the NFFC, as well as the British Government’s reluctance to become involved in giving aid to the domestic film industry, continued to contribute to uncertainty among British filmmakers. This chapter will look at some of the primary concerns of the film industry during 1969, and raise questions about both the decisions made by the mainstream film industry (represented by Hollywood’s British studios and the Rank Organisation) during this period, as well as the filmmaking decisions of Hartford-Davis and Peter Newbrook during the making of their final film together.

Throughout the 1960s, interest in the domestic film industry from successive British Governments had frequently failed to react to the problems the industry was facing – an argument made by Paul Rotha in 1966 for an article published in *Films and Filming*. Rotha argued that the Government was blind ‘to the film as a creative medium for interpreting the life and thoughts of the people it represents. A new and imaginative attitude to films and their effect on the public is what is urgently needed in official circles’.³ To support his argument, Rotha pointed out that the President of the Board of Trade, Douglas Jay, had told a meeting of the film technicians trade union that ‘American investment helps sterling quite materially and if this leads in turn to films with export earnings it helps our balance of payments’.⁴ However, Rotha noted that Jay did not

¹ See Appendix A.

² ‘Admissions down’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 11 October 1969, p.3.

³ Rotha, Paul, ‘Paul Rotha’, *Films and Filming*, June 1966, p.66.

⁴ Rotha, Paul, ‘Paul Rotha’, *Films and Filming*, June 1966, p.66.

comment on the ‘number of foreign film-makers now making ‘British’ films with American finance in Britain. Such films are not shown overseas as British films’.⁵ This situation meant that any overseas profit did not filter back to the British film industry but stayed with American distributors, this also explains why Hartford-Davis was so keen on retaining ownership of a film’s original negative.⁶

Successive British Governments (both Conservative and Labour) seldom reacted to the problems within the domestic film industry, believing that it should (and could) resolve any crisis internally. British Governments were also willing to allow American investment to dominate film production in the UK – the financial responsibility for the British film industry could therefore be delegated, in part, to Hollywood or other funding sources. This point was made clear by Sir Keith Joseph, the Conservative Shadow President of the Board of Trade, when asked by Derek Todd in *Kinematograph Weekly*, if the idea of State involvement ‘offended the Conservative philosophy of free enterprise’.⁷ Joseph replied:

It is, in principle, offensive, [...] It strikes us as odd, to put it mildly, that an industry which encapsulates in such an extreme form the elements of private enterprise—risk, excitement, vitality, change, panache, charisma, drama, high profits, high losses—should look outside itself! But we still think that, given the right tariffs climate, private enterprise finance can look after it.⁸

The stance taken by British governments was in contrast to state interventions used by governments in Continental Europe to protect their domestic film industries during this period. For example, French cinemas had to show French films for five weeks out of thirteen; in Italy, Italian films had to be shown at least twenty-five days per quarter (exhibitors who showed only Italian films received a tax rebate), and in Spain, for every three weeks of foreign films, one week of Spanish films had to be shown. Although the quota system in Britain allowed for a minimum of 30 per cent of screen time to be allocated to British films, this was circumvented by the establishment of Hollywood studios in Britain making low budget films which counted towards their quota but were never intended to compete with big budget feature films from their American studios.⁹

⁵ Rotha, Paul, ‘Paul Rotha’, *Films and Filming*, June 1966, p.66.

⁶ See Appendix D.

⁷ ‘The Conservatives and the film industry: A Helping Hand—Not a Wooden Leg’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 14 March 1970, p.6.

⁸ ‘The Conservatives and the film industry...’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 14 March 1970, p.6.

⁹ ‘States & Cinemas: a Sight and Sound Enquiry’, *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1966/67, pp.26-7.

In France, money for films was raised through a local tax of up to 8½ per cent and an entertainment tax, raised by local authorities. There was also an additional charge on ticket prices, as well as subsidies based on net box-office returns (if a film performed particularly well the subsidy could be increased). In Italy, an entertainment tax was based on the seat prices which ranged from 5 per cent to 45 per cent. A film could also be granted a subsidy, equal to 13 per cent of the gross box-office takings (for a period of five years from the first screening), as well as a special fund for grants towards interest payments on film production loans. In Spain, there were several different rates of entertainment tax, '5% for the education of children; 2% business traffic; 0.70% local tax [...] Subsidies to aid Spanish production [were] financed out of the dubbing rights paid for the circulation of foreign films in Spanish versions (one million pesetas for an American feature)'.¹⁰ In Britain, a similar entertainment tax had been repealed in 1960.

West Germany, Sweden and Denmark did not have a quota system however, similar to other Continental European countries, there were different government funding schemes. For example in West Germany, the entertainment tax was 10 per cent, and subsidies were granted directly by the Government. In Sweden, there was a 10 per cent levy on cinema admissions to finance aid schemes and subsidies offered by the Swedish Film Institute, as well as an additional subsidy based on box-office receipts. In Denmark, there was a 15 per cent levy on cinema tickets which contributed towards a system of loans awarded by the Danish Film Fund. In Britain, Government subsidies came from the NFFC and from the British Film Production Fund which was financed by a 7¼ per cent levy on cinema admissions.¹¹ Nonetheless, the money given by British Governments to the NFFC had not kept pace with the rising costs in film production, and funding continued to be reduced in real terms throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s.

The introduction of a new Films Bill by the Board of Trade in 1970 was designed to address some of the funding concerns of the industry. Nonetheless, no new or radical solutions were sought by the Government, and as Penelope Houston pointed out, the Bill settled 'broadly for the *status quo* [emphasis in the original]. Quota remains [...] the British Film Fund (Eady Money) stays; the National Film Finance Corporation is relieved of crippling interest payments on some long-lost-money, and gets the financial resources

¹⁰ 'States & Cinemas: a Sight and Sound Enquiry', *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1966/67, pp.26-7.

¹¹ 'States & Cinemas: a Sight and Sound Enquiry', *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1966/67, pp.26-7.

to carry on as ‘bank of last resort’.¹² Moreover, in spite of an additional five million pound loan given to the NFFC by the Labour Government, enthusiasm for the continued existence of the organisation had begun to wear thin, and there were indications from the Conservatives that any future Tory Government would be in favour of reducing the role of the NFFC.

The attitude of the Conservatives towards the NFFC was made clear when Sir Keith Joseph was asked about his views on refunding the NFFC, “Well, that’s the heart of the matter. That we’re tolerating for the moment. You see, I think that one day the NFFC may be bought by a privately organised consortium to do the same job”.¹³ Although the NFFC and the Eady Levy survived the election of Edward Heath’s Conservative Government in June 1970, Heath’s successor to the Tory leadership, Margaret Thatcher, disliked the idea of government subsidies as much as Sir Keith Joseph. By 1985, Thatcher’s government had abolished the Eady Levy, as part of The Films Act 1985, and replaced the NFFC with British Screen, a private company made up of four shareholders: Channel 4, Granada Television, United Artists Screen Entertainment, and Rank.

The funding crisis that was about to strike the British industry was disguised by Hollywood’s unremitting enthusiasm for film production in Britain. In April 1969, at a John Player lecture for the National Film Theatre, Jack Valenti, President of the Motion Picture Association of America, told the audience that American producers would continue to invest in British films because ‘audiences worldwide, and particularly in the United States, were becoming more and more ready to accept the sort of off-beat, intelligent cinema Britain could provide’.¹⁴ Valenti’s optimism was challenged by film critic, John Russell Taylor, who pointed out that from the list of successful British films Valenti used to support his claim: these films included *Alfie* (Lewis Gilbert, 1966), *The Bliss of Mrs. Blossom* (Joseph McGrath, 1968), *The Bofors Gun* (Jack Gold, 1968), *Charlie Bubbles* (Albert Finney, 1967), *How I Won the War* (Richard Lester, 1967), *Inadmissible Evidence* (Anthony Page, 1968), *To Sir, With Love* (James Clavell, 1967) *Up the Junction* (Peter Collinson, 1968), *Georgy Girl* (Silvio Narizzano, 1966), and *Poor Cow* (Ken Loach,

¹² Houston, Penelope, ‘Films Bill’, *Sight and Sound*, Spring 1970, p.72.

¹³ ‘The Conservatives and the film industry...’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 14 March 1970, p.7.

¹⁴ Taylor, John Russell, ‘Backing Britain’, *Sight and Sound*, Summer 1969, p.113.

1967), none had recouped their cost.¹⁵ Furthermore, seven of the films were at least over two or three years old, and had still not recovered their production costs.

Jay Kanter, who had been in charge of European feature film production for Universal, believed there was a ‘reservoir of talent: actors, writers, directors. And of course some financial advantages’ to making films in Britain.¹⁶ Kanter’s viewpoint was supported by Michael Flint, chief executive of Paramount Studio’s European productions. Flint argued, ‘if you are going to make films with exotic backgrounds, as everyone does nowadays, Britain is the best place after Hollywood to do it: you have the studios, the equipment, the talent, and they all speak English. And it is still a bit cheaper than in America’.¹⁷

The enthusiasm American filmmakers had for British production did not reflect the situation within UK feature film production. At the same time that American studios were promoting the advantages of film production in Britain, the industry began to note that fewer films were being made in British studios. Despite a burst of activity at the beginning of 1969 – Pinewood was the location for the latest Bond film, *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service* (Peter Hunt, 1969), and at Elstree, Hammer were shooting *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* (Terence Fisher, 1969) – by the end of the year, any optimism initially felt by the industry had begun to falter. As Bill Altria reported in *Kinematograph Weekly*:

Between 10 and 12 pictures will be completing shooting in Britain up to the Christmas recess. After that the situation is grim; cause for grave concern for the studios and unions. [...] The situation is more serious than the previous ‘crisis’ in recent years, which proved to be hot-air rather than fact. It is directly attributable to the upheaval among the US majors, the retrenchment of Universal, Paramount, and 20th Century-Fox, and the hiatus resulting from the change in control of MGM and Warner Bros.¹⁸

Nevertheless, despite these warnings, there were many in the mainstream film industry who found it difficult to believe the problems would lead to a long term crisis. The film producer and managing director of the production company British Lion, John Boulting, acknowledged there was a crisis, nonetheless, ‘one hates to use these words because they become so debased. And they’re used so frequently to describe situations

¹⁵ Taylor, John Russell, ‘Backing Britain’, *Sight and Sound*, Summer 1969, p.113.

¹⁶ Taylor, John Russell, ‘Backing Britain’, *Sight and Sound*, Summer 1969, p.115.

¹⁷ Taylor, John Russell, ‘Backing Britain’, *Sight and Sound*, Summer 1969, p.115.

¹⁸ Altria, Bill, ‘Long shots – The production crisis and the trends’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 16 November 1966, p.4.

that are by no means critical'.¹⁹ E.A.R. (Kip) Herren, managing director of Rank's film production division, argued at the end of 1969:

I think the resurgence in the film industry throughout the world will start in Britain, that we shall be the first to be really active and that the others will follow [...] we shall recover before Easter. The finance will be mostly American. You see, there's no doubt at all that, when the Americans start again, the big pictures, for a while, will not be made over there. The big pictures, if they're made at all, will be made over here because of the cost.²⁰

However, this optimism was not shared by some filmmakers working in low budget and independent film production, and towards the end of 1969 funding began to dry up. As Norman J. Warren pointed out, in the mid-1960s 'money was pouring in. It was very easy to get work', however, for Warren, 'things started to go wrong in about 1969 when the money started to disappear'.²¹ The type of profit independent filmmakers could make during the mid-1960s is demonstrated by Warren's experience of his first feature film. Warren's *Her Private Hell*, 'the first British sex movie with a story' was released in 1967, and according to Warren, 'in some cinemas it would play ten times a day. It ran for twenty-four months in the Cameo, Charing Cross. It cost £18,000 to make and was making £5,000 a week'.²²

Nevertheless, with less money coming into the industry, as well as the restrictive practices of distribution companies operating in the UK, funding became increasingly scarce. An additional contributing factor to the difficulties experienced by British filmmakers was the way distribution companies took advantage of the structure of the film industry. Unlike the American system, whereby the Hollywood majors were often vertically integrated and production was linked to distribution, in Britain the Rank Organisation had dominated the UK distribution circuit. Other film producers had to rely on often adverse negotiating positions with distributors working in the UK supported by unfavourable Government legislation. As Warren pointed out:

Another problem at that time was the Eady Levy which was abused by the distributors, and others. If you made a British film, it was good because a certain percentage of films shown in cinemas had to be British. For the first year of a film's release, you would get a pound for every pound taken at the box office and this would go to the producer, which meant that you would get your money quicker. The distributors would

¹⁹ 'The Stable Dour after the (US) force has gone', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 6 December 1969, p.5.

²⁰ 'Resurgence in British Production – By Easter', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 27 December 1969, p.6.

²¹ See Appendix C.

²² See Appendix C.

not distribute your film unless the producer would agree to pay them a percentage of the box office. They were getting your money for doing nothing.²³

Warren's experience was not unique to low budget filmmaking, for example, John Boulting referred to the distribution industry as being 'beset by the presence of too many insecure human beings'.²⁴ The British director, John Boorman, who in 1969 was working on a script for a production of Tolkein's *Lord of the Rings* for United Artists, was resigned to a film distribution system that 'lives in a permanent state of collapse. It dictates what we make, and what we fail to make. It is always behind the times, unadventurous, greedy. I don't like the system, but it's all we've got'.²⁵

As money became more difficult for other British filmmakers to find, some began to look outside Britain for alternative funding sources. For example, Kevin Billington, who had made *Interlude* (1968), a successful "Swinging London" film, only found funding for his second film, the satirical comedy *The Rise and Rise of Michael Rimmer* (1970) two years later. Unable to find money in Britain, Billington's next film, *The Light at the Edge of the World* (1971), became a 'Spanish-French-Italian co-production', and was financed, not by a film studio, but by a foreign bank – a funding arrangement that also involved '23 co-production deals' with numerous overseas distributors.²⁶

In addition to the difficulties of funding, as well as the on-going problem of distribution, the perception that X films contributed to declining audiences had still not disappeared. This opinion not only continued to be supported by some in film industry but also other outside organisations. In May 1969, The Bishop of Lichfield, Dr Arthur Stretton Reeve, told the 'Lichfield Diocesan conference in Stoke that the time had come for people to get together to call a halt to 'loose attitudes''.²⁷ The Bishop argued that 'it was the duty of the Church to give a lead to reverse the present trends', and had noted that 'in April 57 per cent of all films being shown in the West End had X certificates'.²⁸

The Bishop's viewpoint was supported a year later by the BBFC's John Trevelyan, who, at an ABC managers' awards dinner, had 'warned that the industry faced the risk of putting itself out of business if it goes to the extremes in the exploitation of

²³ See Appendix C.

²⁴ 'The Stable Dour after the (US) force has gone', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 6 December 1969, p.8.

²⁵ 'The Crisis We Deserve', *Sight and Sound*, Autumn 1970, p.175.

²⁶ 'The Crisis We Deserve', *Sight and Sound*, Autumn 1970, p.174.

²⁷ 'Bishop deplores the X trend', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 31 May 1969, p.3.

²⁸ 'Bishop deplores the X trend', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 31 May 1969, p.3.

permissiveness in films'.²⁹ Trevelyan had recently returned from the Cannes Film Festival and had noted the increase in both 'sexploitation and so called pornographic films'.³⁰ It is worth pointing out that Trevelyan's definition of a pornographic film included simulated and not hard core sex. A distinction made clear when he wrote about Twentieth Century-Fox's move 'towards pornography with two films – *Myra Breckinridge*, in which there was symbolic buggery [...] and *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* [...] we had to cut this film extensively, particularly in its last half-hour which could be described as an essay in the pornography of sex and violence': both films were released in 1970.³¹ It is also worth pointing out that Trevelyan's use of the term sexploitation was increasingly used by the wider industry as a generic term, although exploitation continued to remain absent from discussions of British films.

X films and sexploitation films remained, as far as the mainstream industry was concerned, a problem for the business. When asked if there was anything unworthy or shameful in showing sexploitation pictures, Kenneth Rive, CEA president, replied, 'Yes I do. At the moment it's got to a stage where I think it's positively deplorable. As for the cinema club, I think it's a complete parasite. I see nothing wrong with a sex film provided it's done in a certain way and that you sell it a certain way. Sexploitation for the sake of it is I think, short lived, anyway'.³² A year later, John Davis noted the 'dangerous image and its long-term effect' of X films, in a report for the Rank Organisation; a viewpoint supported by Southend County Council which had 'decided to demand six weeks' notice of a cinema's intention to show an "X" film'.³³

The concerns in Britain mirrored some of the reports coming from the American film industry which implied that the sexploitation film was 'on the way out'.³⁴ According to Joseph M. Sugar, the president of Cinerama International Releasing Organisation (an American distribution company), 'the young people in America [...] are definitely turning away from them. They are no longer interested in seeing sex, for the sake of sex, on the screen'.³⁵ A year later, James Aubrey, the new president of MGM declared, "What we will *not* [emphasis in the original] do any more is to make sex-exploitation films. Nor films of pornography. Nor films of profanity. We will not make message pictures and we

²⁹ 'The industry will survive trend', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 23 May 1970, p.4.

³⁰ 'The industry will survive trend', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 23 May 1970, p.4.

³¹ Trevelyan, John, *What the Censor Saw*, London: Michael Joseph, 1973, p.118.

³² 'Life is Short, Let's Be Nice To Each Other', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 6 June 1970, p.34.

³³ 'The effects of a dangerous image', *Today's Cinema*, 26 March 1971, p.13.

³⁴ 'On way out', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 23 May 1970, p.4.

³⁵ 'On way out', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 23 May 1970, p.4.

will not work with the wheeler-dealers and the packagers who have done so much harm to the whole film industry””: and *Today's Cinema* reported that ‘American film-makers have decided to take the X out of Sex. They are cutting back—in some cases actually banning—further productions of X-type movies’, also noting that Jonas Rosenfield, vice-president of Twentieth Century-Fox had ‘quietly instituted a policy of no more X films’.³⁶

Nonetheless, the rhetoric of Hollywood’s managers did not reflect the type of films produced by the studios. In 1970, a new Warner Bros. production schedule was announced by Danton Rissner, director of foreign production, the films included *The All-American Boy* (Charles Eastman, US., 1973), *Summer of '42* (Robert Mulligan, US., 1971), *Klute* (Alan J. Pakula, US., 1971), *The Day of the Locust* (John Schlesinger, US., 1975), and at their British studios, *A Clockwork Orange* (Stanley Kubrick, 1971) and *The Devils* (Ken Russell, 1971): all these productions received an X rating from the BBFC, and in the case of Kubrick and Russell’s films, created a great deal of controversy for Warner Bros. as well as the British censors.³⁷ Moreover, these films also included depictions of sex and nudity, for example, *Klute*, the story of a prostitute played by Jane Fonda, features simulated sex and nudity; *A Clockwork Orange* features nudity, simulated sex and a graphic gang rape; and *The Devils* also contains graphic sex, explicit violence, masturbating nuns, torture and nudity. MGM’s films scheduled for release in 1970 and 1971 included the following X-rated movies, *The Magic Garden of Stanley Sweetheart* (Leonard Horn, US., 1970), *My Lover, My Son* (John Newland, 1970), and *Shaft* (Gordon Parks, US., 1971).

This is somewhat of an important point that I would like to emphasise. From the late 1960s onwards, it was increasingly clear that a significant shift was taking place in Hollywood. The differentiation between Hollywood and the exploitation industry (as explored by Schaefer) had all but disappeared and it was becoming evident that the subject matter and filmmaking aesthetics (as well as the distribution and exhibition practices) of exploitation, was being embraced by the mainstream American film industry. For example, Warner Bros. would have been fully aware of John Schlesinger’s Oscar success with *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), which is the only X-rated film to win a Best Picture Oscar, when the decision was made to ask the filmmaker to direct *The Day of the Locust*. Furthermore, the film, adapted by the 1939 novel by Nathanael West, itself a brutal, sleazy critique of Hollywood and modern America’s obsession with fame and

³⁶ Lewin, David, ‘James Aubrey: A Revealing Interview’, *Today's Cinema*, 19 February 1971, p.12; ‘America Is Taking X Out Of Sex’, *Today's Cinema*, 27 April 1971, p.1.

³⁷ ‘London? Short of Good Ideas’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 30 May 1970, p.9.

celebrity, would have been intended to replicate the earlier, X-rated success of Schlesinger's earlier film. Indeed, Schlesinger's career up to this point had included other X-rated pictures such as *A Kind of Loving* (1962), *Billy Liar* (1963) and *Darling* (1965).

Stanley Kubrick had not received any acclaim at the Academy Awards nevertheless his previous films included the critically regarded *Paths of Glory* (1957), *Spartacus* (1960) *Lolita* (1962), *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). Moreover, Kubrick had shown with *Lolita*, (a story about a man who falls in love with a 14 year old girl) that he could deal with potentially controversial and exploitative subject matter without offensive or encountering problems with the censors. Therefore, Kubrick's selection as the director of *A Clockwork Orange*, based on Anthony Burgess' novel of violence, revenge and freedom of expression, was intended to avoid any censorship problems. The original screenplay had been previously rejected by the BBFC, 'the general intention (crude violence and obscenity) is always plain; and the visuals, however restrained, could not possibly get into even the 'X' category', and was subsequently abandoned by Paramount, who had commissioned the original script.³⁸ It was only after the screenplay was presented to Kubrick that Warner Bros. became interested and the production shifted from a violent exploitative film into a prestige studio picture.

Ken Russell's early television career had included several highly critically regarded documentaries for the art programmes *Monitor* (UK: BBC, 1958-65) and *Omnibus* (UK: BBC, 1967-2003). Russell's second feature film was the spy thriller, *Billion Dollar Brain*, starring Michael Caine as the working class secret agent, Harry Palmer. The film, which was distributed by United Artists, was a mainstream release and the second in a series of films featuring the spy. Russell's next film, *Women in Love* (1969), based on the book by D.H. Lawrence, attracted some controversy because of a nude full frontal wrestling scene between the stars of the film, Alan Bates and Oliver Reed. However, the film was passed uncut by the BBFC, as John Trevelyan argued, 'this film included a remarkably brilliant scene in which two young men wrestled naked. We had to consider this carefully, but decided to pass it; [...] We had little criticism, possibly because of the film's undoubted brilliance'.³⁹ Russell's choice by Warner Bros. to direct *The Devils*, like Kubrick, was based on a record of earlier prestigious productions. Furthermore, the film was inspired (like *A*

³⁸ Robertson, James C., *The Hidden Cinema: British Film Censorship in Action 1913-1975*, London: Routledge, 1993, p.143.

³⁹ Trevelyan, 1973, p.117.

Clockwork Orange) on a book by a critically regarded author, in this case, Aldous Huxley and his historical novel, *The Devils of Loudon* (1952).

Finally, these films attracted many mainstream actors. For example, *The Day of the Locust* starred Donald Sutherland, Karen Black, and in supporting roles, mainstream actors like Burgess Meredith, Geraldine Page and Richard Dysart. Donald Sutherland had also appeared in *Klute* which featured Jane Fonda. Fonda's early Hollywood career had included films like the comedy-western *Cat Ballou* (Elliot Silverstein, 1965), the big budget melodrama *The Chase* (Arthur Penn, 1966) and the romantic-comedy *Barefoot in the Park* (Gene Saks, 1967) before making two films in France with Roger Vadim. Fonda was of course the daughter of the Hollywood actor Henry Fonda. Therefore, Fonda's role in *Klute* as a prostitute stalked by a sexual psychopath offers a further indication of how Hollywood was embracing previously exploitable material with the additional prestige carried by mainstream actors. *The Devils* featured another actor from a respected acting dynasty – Vanessa Redgrave. The actor was the daughter of Michael Redgrave who had appeared in many highly regarded British films from the 1930s onwards (too numerous to mention here). Vanessa Redgrave's earlier films included several British prestige productions such as *A Man for All Seasons* (Fred Zinnemann, 1966), *Camelot* (Joshua Logan, 1967) and *Isadora* (Karel Reisz, 1968). Redgrave's co-star, Oliver Reed, may have begun his career in Hammer films, nevertheless, the incredible box-office success of *Oliver!* (1968), and his role as the murderous Bill Sykes, as well as starring roles in *The Assassination Bureau* (Basil Dearden, 1969), *Hannibal Brooks* (Michael Winner, 1969) and *Women in Love* (Russell, 1969) had helped to propel the actor into the mainstream.

Hollywood's exploitation of X-rated entertainment echoed Hartford-Davis' filmmaking career at Compton in the early 1960s. Hartford-Davis' X films were part of a low budget wave of British independent films (that also included many of the "kitchen-sink dramas") made for the mainstream market that exploited controversial themes, as well as sex, nudity and violence. The convergence of mainstream, art and exploitation film had started at studios like Compton and filmmakers like Hartford-Davis, as far as English speaking audiences were concerned, and Hollywood had only just started, albeit reluctantly as far as their public announcements were concerned, to understand the exploitable, commercial aspects of X-rated entertainment.

The type of films Robert Hartford-Davis had made throughout his career, intended as mainstream productions, had gradually shifted into Hollywood's mainstream. The themes of nudity, sex, and violence prevalent in many of Hartford-Davis' films (and

subtly featured in *Gonks Go Beat* and *The Sandwich Man*), was now becoming a critically acceptable form of entertainment. The demarcation between exploitation, art, prestige and quality cinema, frequently defined by the critical establishment and by some members of the industry, had gradually blurred. The type of films Hartford-Davis began making for Compton's independent London cinema in Soho had crossed over the Atlantic, into the mainstream, and back to Britain. Furthermore, this shift combined with further increases in the liberalisation of the arts throughout the late 1960s and 1970s which gradually led to an increasingly hostile response from some members of society.

The complicated relationship these films had with changes towards attitudes in sexual freedom is highlighted by the popularity of the British sex film which ran parallel to an increasing backlash against the rise in the permissive society from organisations such as the Nationwide Festival of Light, the Clean-Up TV campaigner Mary Whitehouse, as well as Lord Longford. Longford's supporters included well known mainstream personalities such as the singer Cliff Richard, the author Kingsley Amis, as well as the (now disgraced) Radio and Television personality Jimmy Savile.⁴⁰ The anti-pornography crusade also had the support of members of the British film industry as demonstrated by Bernard Delfont's agreement to become Chairman of the Longford committee's Theatre and Cinema Group in June 1971 – Delfont was, at the time, the Chief Executive of the media and electrical conglomerate, EMI.⁴¹ Moreover, despite predictions (and protests) from both sides of the Atlantic that sexploitation was a short-lived trend and hopefully leading to a reduction in X-rated films, explicit sex and nudity on the screen in fact increased throughout the 1970s. In Britain, as David McGillivray and Simon Sheridan have noted, the sex film became an important mainstay of the British film industry throughout the 1970s, and remained popular with cinemagoers until the home video boom of the 1980s.

The financial problems experienced by the rest of the British film industry were largely avoided by the funding deal Titan International had secured with the Triumph Investment Trust Ltd. Moreover, the distribution deal the company had with Columbia Pictures meant that the company had easier access to the North American market, as well as Rank's cinema circuit in Britain. Hartford-Davis' experience of making commercial pictures with low budgets was also an approach that the rest of the British

⁴⁰ Sandbrook, Dominic, *State of Emergency the Way We Were: Britain, 1970-1974*, London: Allen Lane, 2010, p.453.

⁴¹ 'Delfont To Form Longford's Porno Group', *Today's Cinema*, 18 June 1971, p.2.

film industry were gradually being asked to consider. This shift in attitude was made clear by Gwyneth Dunwoody, previously the Secretary of State at the Board of Trade up until the Labour Government's defeat at in June 1970. Reviewing the last twelve months, Dunwoody believed:

we may be over the worst in the sense that we have certainly had a very bad period. But possibly this has indirectly produced its own stimulating effect in the form of the constant need for examination of expenses and costs and the necessity to think in terms of lower rather than higher budget productions. [...] Certainly in 1971 it may be necessary for all sections of the industry to make sure that we keep costs at all levels in a much more realistic basis than on occasions in the past. For obvious reasons, we are always going to have difficulty in raising finance. I think the future may well lie in more pictures, but at lower budgets, and I think that could be a very good thing.⁴²

The approach Hartford-Davis took with his next film eschewed the timidity of others within the film industry towards sex and violence. This resulted in the transition of the highbrow novel, *Doctors Wear Scarlet*, into a film that featured exotic locations, a ten minute psychedelic orgy, drug taking, bloody violence and the deaths of several major characters. In addition to exploiting the controversial aspects of vampirism and sex, *Doctors Wear Scarlet* was also intended to be a lavish, commercial and highly marketable film.

Doctors Wear Scarlet: From Highbrow Literature...

After the filming of *The Smashing Bird I Used To Know* was complete, the product selection department at Titan International located two novels with the potential to be converted into films: *The Dead Men of Sestos* (1968) by Philip Loraine and *Doctors Wear Scarlet* (1960) by Simon Raven.⁴³ The two books are very different in style; *The Dead Men of Sestos* is a formulaic action\adventure story, whereas *Doctors Wear Scarlet* is a literate, dense and complex exploration of vampirism as a sexual perversion which also contains an attack on conservatism within academic environments. The choice of Loraine's *The Dead Men of Sestos* is understandable – his books were popular pulp thrillers and lent themselves easily to film adaptations – an earlier work had already been filmed as *Eye of the Devil* (J. Lee Thompson, 1966) starring David Niven and Deborah Kerr.

⁴² 'More pictures at lower budgets...and that could be a very good thing', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 19 December 1970, p.5.

⁴³ Robin Estridge is one of the literary pseudonyms of Philip Loraine. He also wrote novels under the name of Robin York.

The Dead Men of Sestos is a mystery story about an American ex-soldier, David Hillyard, who is stranded on the fictitious Greek island of Sestos with his young girlfriend, Christiane, whom he has only recently met. On arrival, Hillyard is threatened by several of Sestos' young men, and Christiane is the frequent target of sexual assault and threats of rape. Unable to leave because his boat has been damaged, Hillyard eventually uncovers a terrible war-time atrocity, after which the couple are allowed to leave the island. The novel's ingredients, which include the thinly veiled threats of sexual assault to Christiane, 'aged twenty-three [...] the mistress of an expatriate American [...] old enough to be her father', the exotic location, as well as the frequent violent situations Hillyard is faced with, would have easily translated into a low budget, exploitable thriller.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the subject matter may have suited Hartford-Davis' style of filmmaking, already established from his previous films which featured sex and violence.

Lorraine (whose real name was Robin Estridge) was a prolific writer of pulp novels throughout the 1950s and 1960s.⁴⁵ By way of contrast, Simon Raven had written scripts for radio and television, including an adaptation of the novels of Anthony Trollope for a twenty-six part television series called *The Pallisers* (UK: BBC, 1974). Between 1959 and 1976, Raven also worked on *Alms for Oblivion*, a ten volume saga of English upper-class life.⁴⁶

If the choice of Lorraine's thriller was predictable, then Raven's novel was unexpected. Opinions of Raven's novel range from the positive a, 'literate, sexually-provocative work in which vampirism is depicted as a psychological disorder akin to drug-addiction [and] one of the great vampire novels of the 20th century' to the negative, a novel 'ponderous and fraught with psychological symbolism'.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, Raven's book attempted to shift the traditional vampire narrative away from Bram Stoker's original gothic interpretation of supernatural creatures. As the vampire expert Dr Holmstrom points out in the novel, 'the vampire is in fact a living human being with a

⁴⁴ Loraine, Philip, *The Dead Men of Sestos*, London: Fontana, 1968, pp.16-7.

⁴⁵ Estridge's novels include, *White Lie the Dead* (1950), *Evil with Intent* (1950), *The Dublin Nightmare* (1951) and *The Angel of Death* (1961), he also wrote several screenplays including the World War Two drama *Above us the Waves* (Ralph Thomas, 1955), the thriller *Cambell's Kingdom* (Thomas, 1957) as well as the adventure film *North West Frontier* (J. Lee Thompson, 1959).

⁴⁶ Simon Raven had studied at Charterhouse public school, and went on to read English at King's College, Cambridge University.

⁴⁷ Topping Keith, *A Vault of Horror: A Book of 80 Great British Horror Movies from 1956-1974*, Tolworth, Surrey: Telos Publishing Ltd., 2004, p.198; Del Vecchio & Johnston, Tom, *Peter Cushing: The Gentle Man of Horror and His 91 Films*, Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 1992, p.237.

peculiar type of sado-sexual perversion. [...] Allegations of immortality can be dismissed outright: they are merely the product of the Slav imagination'.⁴⁸

I would suggest there are two reasons why *Doctors Wear Scarlet* was considered a suitable subject for a Titan film. The first reason was financial, both novels were set in Greece, and the original intention was to shoot the films 'back to back'.⁴⁹ Secondly, it is the way that the psycho-sexual vampires of *Doctors Wear Scarlet* represented a shift from the traditional interpretations of vampires found in Hammer productions, or in other similar films. One of the few films to offer a variation on the vampire story was *The Last Man on Earth* (Ublado Ragona, It., 1964), based on Richard Matheson's novel, *I Am Legend* (1956), which gave a scientific explanation for vampirism.⁵⁰ It was only from the 1970s that Hammer began to depart from their traditional vampire format. For example, *Captain Kronos – Vampire Hunter* (Brian Clemens, 1971), introduced daylight walking, sword-fighting vampires, and in *The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires* (Roy Ward Baker, 1973), a Hammer co-production with the Hong Kong based Shaw Studios, Dracula is helped by a horde of Kung-Fu kicking vampires. Therefore, the intention to make the 'first psycho-sexual vampire film ever made' would have introduced a significant variation on the vampire myth in British cinema, as well as making it easier to emphasise sex, nudity, violence and horror.⁵¹

Incense for the Damned (1970)...to Sex and Horror

During the editing of Titan's previous film, *The Smashing Bird I Used To Know*, Hartford-Davis and Newbrook announced the production of *Doctors Wear Scarlet*, which was due to start shooting in 1969, for release as part of the distribution deal with Columbia.⁵² Newbrook, as head of production, approached the camera operator Dennis Lewiston to direct *Doctors Wear Scarlet*. Lewiston had worked with Hartford-Davis and Newbrook at Compton on *That Kind of Girl* (1963), *The Yellow Teddy Bears* (1963), *Saturday Night Out* (1964), *The Black Torment* (1964), and later, after they had left the company, *Gonks Go Beat* (1965). Although Lewiston had never directed a feature film before, it was Newbrook's decision to select him to direct the film because he felt that the 'psycho-

⁴⁸ Raven, Simon, *Doctors Wear Scarlet*, Kelly Bray, Cornwall: House of Stratus, 1960, p.204.

⁴⁹ See Appendix A.

⁵⁰ Other film adaptations of Matheson's novel include *The Omega Man* (Boris Sagal, US., 1971), where vampires were replaced by albino mutants following an attack of biological warfare, and the Will Smith star-vehicle, *I am Legend* (Francis Lawrence, US., 2007), which also dropped the vampire theme in favour of superhuman, computer generated, mutants.

⁵¹ See Appendix A.

⁵² 'Titan topics', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 5 October 1968, p.17.

sexual business' was not suitable for Hartford-Davis.⁵³ However, Hartford-Davis was unhappy with the situation, as Newbrook later pointed out:

I gave it to Dennis Lewiston and assigned Bob to do *The Dead Men of Sestos*. And the way the scripts were coming up it looked as though *Doctors Wear Scarlet* would be ready for production before *Sestos* which would leave Bob with actually physically not doing anything in the production sense for quite some time. I think he didn't like the idea of that so he said, "What is this *Doctors Wear Scarlet*? I want to do it." Well there was a row in the end. Dennis Lewiston was already contracted to do the picture, he actually sued the company, although he was a friend of mine, he did sue the company and of course he won. So Dennis had to be paid off and Bob took over the direction of *Doctors Wear Scarlet*.⁵⁴

Following the replacement of Lewiston, Robert Hartford-Davis, with Robert Sterne (head of production) and the cameraman Peter Jessop, flew to Nicosia, Cyprus in March 1969 to finalise details of the location shooting.⁵⁵ The original Greek location was switched to Cyprus because, as Newbrook has pointed out, 'we couldn't make the picture in Greece because it was the year of the generals and it was too politically difficult to organise locations and permits for people to work in Greece at that time. So we decided to do it in Cyprus, same kind of background, same country, same language, speaking Greek'.⁵⁶ After details of the location shooting was finalised, several sequences were shot in Britain; they included filming at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, Holloway Sanatorium, Virginia Water, and Denham Village.⁵⁷

Finally, in May 1969, Hartford-Davis and the rest of the cast and crew flew to Cyprus while Newbrook remained in England to continue work on *The Dead Men of Sestos* (now with Dennis Lewiston as director). The cast included Madeline Hinde, Patrick Mower and Peter Cushing, who had appeared in the director's last two films, Johnny Sekka and Imogen Hassell, as well as the television actors, Edward Woodward (in a

⁵³ See Appendix A.

⁵⁴ See Appendix A.

⁵⁵ 'Production Review – Studio Round Up', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 15 March 1969, p.16.

⁵⁶ See Appendix A. From 1967-74, Greece was ruled by a military junta which had come to power following a *coup d'état*.

⁵⁷ 'Titan's progress', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 26 April 1969, p.12.

cameo role as a vampire expert, Dr Holstrom), Patrick Macnee, and Alexander Davion.⁵⁸ While the crew were in Cyprus, Newbrook announced in June an addition to Titan's production schedule – *The Rector of Stiffkey*, 'based on the exploits of the famous Rector of Stiffkey whose escapades in the 1930s resulted in his unfrocking as a priest' and a mauling in a 'lion's cage in a fairground'.⁵⁹

Doctors Wear Scarlet is a reasonably a faithful adaptation of Raven's original novel. The film (and book) begins with the search for Richard Fountain (Patrick Mower), the son of the Foreign Secretary and an academic at the fictitious Lancaster College, Oxford, who has disappeared in Greece while carrying out research on Greek mythology. The British Government has requested the help of Tony Seymour (Alexander Davion), Fountain's friend from University, to find him. Helping Seymour with the search for Fountain is a former pupil of the missing academic, Bob Kirby (Johnny Sekka), and accompanying Seymour and Kirby is Fountain's fiancée Penelope Goodrich (Madeline Hinde), the daughter of Dr Walter Goodrich (Peter Cushing), the Chancellor of Lancaster College.

Fountain, who has fallen in love with the mysterious Chriseis (Imogen Hassell), spends the early part of the film in a drugged state, until he is rescued by Seymour, Kirby and Major Derek Longbow (Patrick Macnee), a British military attaché stationed in Greece. Before Fountain is rescued, Penelope is nearly gang-raped (this does not happen in the original book but is a sequence that appears in *The Dead Men of Sestos*), Major Longbow is murdered by Chriseis, who pushes him over a cliff, and Chriseis is accidentally killed by Kirby. On Fountain's return to Oxford, he gives a speech at the college's quinqucentenary dinner where he accuses the gathered scholars and academics of dehumanising everyone. After being forced to leave the dinner, Fountain returns to his rooms and murders Penelope by biting her neck. He is chased by Kirby across the university roofs but falls to his death. The film ends with Dr Goodrich announcing that

⁵⁸ Johnny Sekka's career included the role of the black fiancé in *Flame in the Streets* (Roy Baker, 1961), one of a number of British films made during that period to examine contemporary racial tensions, and he appeared in many television shows throughout the 1960s before moving to America. Imogen Hassell appeared in several British films, mainly in small roles that unfortunately only emphasised her physique. Edward Woodward had played the tough working class spy in *Callan* (UK: ITV, 1967-72) and his film appearances up to this point had been infrequent. However, Woodward's portrayal of the doomed policeman in *The Wicker Man* (Robin Hardy, 1973) firmly cemented his reputation with fans of cult cinema. Patrick Macnee had recently completed the role of John Steed, the bowler-hatted secret agent in the long-running and popular *The Avengers* (UK: ABC, 1961-9); and Alexander Davion was mainly known for playing the athletic and handsome Chief Insp. David Keen in the gritty police series *Gideon's Way* (UK: ATV, 1965-6).

⁵⁹ 'Production – Titan and Stiffkey', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 14 June 1969, p.12.

Fountain and Penelope had committed suicide. However, the film when it was eventually released is not as coherent as my synopsis suggests, and the finished product led to the breakup of Titan International as well as the business partnership of Hartford-Davis and Newbrook.

Previous accounts of the problems during the production of *Doctors Wear Scarlet* have placed the blame on a lack of finance which led to the film's incomplete state. For example, in David Miller's biography of Peter Cushing, he wrote, 'there was never much money behind this production and it ran out altogether while Hartford-Davis was on location in Cyprus'.⁶⁰ Jonathan Rigby repeated the same story, 'the money ran out while director Robert Hartford-Davis and his team were in Cyprus and the picture was left unfinished [...] when his business associates tried to make sense of the fragmented *Incense* footage by adding a crude voice-over narration, he had his name removed from the credits'.⁶¹ David McGillivray also refers to similar problems, 'while they were on location, the money ran out. The film was left unfinished and Bob [Hartford-Davis] went on to his next project, **The Fiend** [emphasis in the original]'.⁶²

However, problems with money have been misreported and Newbrook has pointed out that there were no financial difficulties during the production. The film was left incomplete because of complications with Hartford-Davis: 'There was a lot of distractions going on. His eye wasn't on the ball to tell you the truth. [...] he was lording it up in Nicosia, and meeting with Archbishop Markarios, and all the celebrities, and acting the big film mogul. It had gone to his head. He was corrupted. He was truly corrupted'.⁶³

David Lodge, who had a small part in the film as a Greek Colonel, gives an indication of some of the distractions and what filming was like in Cyprus, 'from the moment we arrived there, we were treated like royalty [...] It was the first time – indeed, the only time – that I have seen the letters VIP next to my name in a hotel register – and found out those letters unlock doors'.⁶⁴ Patrick Mower, who had 'sworn never to work with Robert Hartford-Davis again after the awful *Smashing Bird* [emphasis in the original]', also liked the attraction of two months filming in Cyprus and 'lots of money'.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Miller, David, *The Peter Cushing Companion* (Richmond, Surrey: Reynolds & Hearn, 2000, p.124.

⁶¹ Rigby, Jonathan, *English Gothic: A Century of Horror Cinema* Second Edition, Richmond, Surrey: Reynolds & Hearn, 2002, p.161.

⁶² McGillivray, David, 'High Blood Pressure', in *Shivers*, no.10, 1 January 1994, p.14.

⁶³ See Appendix A.

⁶⁴ Lodge, David, *Up the Ladder to Obscurity*, Bognor Regis: Anchor Publications, 1986, p.176, p.182.

⁶⁵ Mower, Patrick, *My Story*, London: John Blake Publishing Ltd., 2007, p.147.

The heightened sense of privilege was supported by Archbishop Makarios who also helped the production team by allowing Hartford-Davis to film in the Presidential Palace, as well as to use members of the Presidential Guard as extras. This prompted Hartford-Davis, while still on location, to tell *Kinematograph Weekly* that “all films with an Eastern Mediterranean setting should be made here”.⁶⁶

However, the production team in London were unaware of any problems in Nicosia, and Hartford-Davis continued to send footage back to the UK. Newbrook remembered seeing ‘the rushes every day and they looked pretty good and then I got a telex or cable from the production managers saying that they were within a week of completing location’.⁶⁷ Newbrook only recognised the severity of the situation following a meeting with the editor Peter Thornton, when he asked:

where are we?” and he said, “well we’ve only got 70 minutes of finished production.” And I said, “What the hell are you talking about, they’ve come back here with only half the picture done.” Half the screen time you see. So I went out there and of course they were living the life of Riley. [...] I gave the production manager a rollicking. I gave Bob a rollicking. I said, “You can’t come home. You’ve only got half a picture, what are you talking about.” It was most unpleasant, most unpleasant. Anyway, they shoot some more stuff, and they came back to England and they wrapped it up, and I looked at the rough cut and I thought, “Jesus Christ. This is terrible. We haven’t got a picture here. This is hopeless.” So I said to the backers, “I can’t be responsible for this production because it’s no go. We haven’t got a picture. So, in the end they agreed he should be removed from the board and summarily dismissed. Which was very difficult because of all of the contractual arrangements, and it all got around to lawyer letters who had to sort it all out and he was removed from the picture. And I had to engage another cutter called Bert Bates who is an old friend of mine who had been a big American editor on American pictures to recut the picture. I shot some other bits and pieces and stuff, did some voiceovers and commentary, and by which time, he had issued a lawsuit against us and wanted his name taken off the picture.”⁶⁸

Before the film could be released, Hartford-Davis issued a lawsuit against all of Titan’s separate companies, which prevented ‘them passing off the film as having been directed by him; disposing of a version of the film not approved by him, or without a credit to him and Ruth Warwick for additional sequences; or parting with possession of any print, negative or tape of the film’.⁶⁹ In April 1972, the film, now called *Incense for the*

⁶⁶ ‘Location’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 17 May 1969, p.14.

⁶⁷ See Appendix A.

⁶⁸ See Appendix A.

⁶⁹ ‘Director Dissociated from Titan Film’, *Kinematograph Weekly*, 16 May 1970, p.16.

Damned, was eventually released, and a pseudonym, Michael Burrowes, was credited as the director. In America, the film was released with a more overt horror title, *Blood Suckers* and was distributed by Chevron Pictures, an independent distribution company.

The problems with the film are most noticeable at the beginning when the character of Seymour explains the events leading up to Fountain's disappearance through the use of a voiceover and a succession of still photographs and stock shots of exotic overseas locations. Furthermore, when Seymour meets Penelope, Kirby and Dr Goodrich and agrees to search for Fountain, there are no classic shot-reverse-shots, or reaction shots of the characters – adding an amateurish and oddly dislocated feel to the sequence. Finally, Seymour's voiceover is used towards the end of the film, following Fountain's rescue and is used to explain how the characters return to Oxford from Greece – filling an obvious gap in the film.

Despite these problems, *Doctors Wear Scarlet* is an interesting attempt by the filmmakers to shift away from the supernatural horror films of Hammer, as well as produce a contemporary update to the myth, and move towards a more realistic interpretation of vampirism. Sexual themes are emphasised, not only to make the film different, but also to exploit opportunities to show nudity and sexually explicit scenes. Fountain's impotence is referred to frequently, and there is a deliberate ambiguity about his relationship with his student Bob Kirby, despite Kirby's insistence that he is not a homosexual – Kirby, in anger, later states that Fountain was unable to "make it" with either Penelope or himself. Further emphasising the differences, Fountain's impotence is blamed on Dr Goodrich, the result of a symbolic, psychological castration, and he can only achieve a sexual climax when Chriseis sucks his blood.

David Pirie's original review in the *Monthly Film Bulletin* comes closest to describing the original intention of the film:

Arriving after a long delay and widely reported production problems [...] this version of Simon Raven's modern vampire novel *Doctors Wear Scarlet* turns out—against all odds—to be an effective and comparatively faithful adaptation. [...] for the most part, it sticks closely to Raven's central idea in which vampirism is not a supernatural cult but a sexual perversion based on repression and impotence. [...] The moment in which Fountain's friends enter his Oxford rooms to find that, in a mixture of lust and revenge, he has finally sunk his teeth into Penelope's throat, must rank as one of the more extraordinary images of personal rebellion in the British cinema, precisely because the vampirism it depicts is allowed to benefit from a full symbolic resonance.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Pirie, David, 'Incense for the Damned', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, May 1972, p.96.

Majorie Bilbow's review was equally enthusiastic, in *CinemaTV Today* she noted, 'this develops into an adequately exciting, occasionally erotic, out-of-the-ordinary mixture of adventure and horror that may prove too intellectual for the bottom rung of addicts but should compensate for this by keeping the brighter ones more alert and interested than usual'.⁷¹ Bilbow's review emphasises how the finished film is more complex (for its time) than other, similar horror films, in spite of the production problems.

The reputation of *Doctors Wear Scarlet*, unlike Hartford-Davis' earlier horror films, has not experienced any critical or fan-based re-evaluation. Harvey Fenton referred to the film as, 'an essentially rather dull effort enlivened by a few exciting fight scenes, an occasionally (and quite unintentionally) hilarious script and a really naff voice-over'.⁷² David Flint argued, 'there's a germ of a good movie here, and left to his own devices, director Robert Hartford-Davis might have made it. But the finished product [...] is a near unwatchable hodge-podge of missed opportunities, *longeurs* [emphasis in the original] and irrelevant asides'.⁷³ Jonathan Rigby referred to the film as, 'a terrible mess, apparently cut together with a lawnmower and featuring some very stiff acting plus even stiffer dialogue'.⁷⁴ David McGillivray writing in the horror fanzine *Shivers*, referred to the film as, 'mysteriously flawed'.⁷⁵ McGillivray later downgraded his opinion of the film, arguing that 'this is not very good at all, although the original novel, which presented vampirism as a sexual deviation, may have been more worthwhile [...] a notable curiosity'.⁷⁶ In contrast, Kim Newman's review not only refers to the chaotic result but also some of the film's unique aspects:

Incense for the Damned [*sic*] has a lot of good ideas (mostly from the novel) and deserves credit for being different from any other British horror movie. It may well be a shame that someone as ploddingly literal as Hartford-Davis wound up shooting the film, which has sections you'd swear were edited in from either a psychedelic porno flick or an ITC two-fisted action show [...] How many other British horror films of the period have relatively unsteretyped [*sic*] black (Johnny Sekka) or gay

⁷¹ Bilbow, Majorie, 'Incense For The Damned', *CinemaTV Today*, 15 April 1972, p.20.

⁷² Fenton, Harvey, 'User's Guide to the Flesh & Blood British Horror Filmography Part One (1970 to 1972)', *Flesh & Blood One & Two*, February 1993, p.21.

⁷³ Fenton, Harvey & Flint, David, 'Incense for the Damned', in Fenton, Harvey & Flint, David (eds.), *Ten Years of Terror: British Horror Films of the 1970s*, London: FAB Press, 2001, p.35.

⁷⁴ Rigby, 2002, p.161.

⁷⁵ McGillivray, David, 'High Blood Pressure', *Shivers*, 1 January 1994, no.10, p.12.

⁷⁶ McGillivray, David, *Notes on Robert Hartford-Davis*, [Letter] Personal communication, 11 February 2009.

(William Mervyn as a don) characters? Or contain fairly erudite debate about classical mythology?⁷⁷

Following Hartford-Davis' removal from the film and from the board of Titan International, the company ceased operating. As referred to in Chapter One, after the split, Newbrook set up a new production company, Glendale, and made two films, *Crucible of Terror* (Ted Hooker, 1971), which Newbrook produced, followed by his directorial debut, a period horror film, *The Asphyx* (1972). Newbrook left the film business shortly after and continued his career in British television. Hartford-Davis set up the production company, World Arts Media, producing and directing two British films, a sexually violent horror film, *Beware the Brethren* (aka. *The Fiend*, 1971), and a sex drama, *Nobody Ordered Love* (1971). He then moved to America and made two Blaxploitation films in Hollywood, *Black Gunn* (US, 1972) and *The Take* (US, 1974) for Columbia. After completing work on *The Take*, Hartford-Davis stayed in America and worked on the television drama series *Family* (US: ABC, 1976-80), and the police series *Cat and Dog* (US: ABC, 1977). On 12 June 1977, after three days of filming on *Murder in Peyton Place*, a TV film adaptation of the popular American television soap opera, *Peyton Place* (US: ABC, 1964-9), Robert Hartford-Davis suffered a massive heart attack at his home in Beverley Hills (not, as Matthew Sweet has stated 'in an elevator').⁷⁸ Despite the attention of paramedics, Hartford-Davis 'was pronounced dead upon arrival at Cedars of Lebanon Hospital'.⁷⁹

Although Hartford-Davis' career went beyond the 1960s, the story of British filmmaking in the 1970s differs significantly. The narrative of the British film industry during this period is one of financial collapse, and by the end of the decade both the Rank Organisation and ABPC had largely withdrawn from domestic film production. Warner Bros. shares in ABPC had been bought by EMI in 1968, but after making several films which performed poorly at the box-office the company was taken over by Thorn Electrical Industries and renamed Thorn-EMI in December 1979. Rank's interest in the British film industry gradually reduced throughout the 1970s in favour of Bingo Halls, bowling alleys, and other entertainment outlets. British Lion announced losses of £1.22 million in 1972 following a takeover by the financial company Barclay Securities.

⁷⁷ Newman, Kim, 'Incense for the Damned', in Fenton, Harvey & Flint, David (eds.), *Ten Years of Terror: British Horror Films of the 1970s*, London: FAB Press, 2001, pp.35-6

⁷⁸ 'Obituaries', *Variety*, 22 June 1977, p.110; Sweet, Matthew: *Shepperton Babylon: The Lost Worlds of British Cinema* (London: Faber & Faber, 2005), p.294.

⁷⁹ 'Obituaries', *Variety*, 22 June 1977, p.110.

Hammer Studios failed to capitalise on the British low budget horror boom during the 1970s and despite the very successful box-office performance of *On the Buses* (Harry Booth, 1971), an adaptation of the popular British situation comedy, the company was unable to obtain a long-lasting distribution deal with any of the American majors. The company's final horror film of that decade was *To the Devil a Daughter* (Peter Sykes, 1976) and Hammer would not produce another horror film until the release of *Let Me In* (Matt Reeves, 2010).

Finally, the 1970s also saw a significant change to the classification of British films, a constant theme throughout this thesis. On 1 July 1970, new censorship categories were introduced by the BBFC in order to alleviate some of the concerns the industry had persistently held about the X certificate. The age limit for an X film was raised from 16 to 18 and a new AA category was created (over 14s only). As Neville Hunnings in *Sight and Sound* pointed out, the change would 'make it easier to for the Board to grant an X certificate to films which are at present banned, or cut [...] Both of these consequences are obviously desirable to the film trade'.⁸⁰ As a result, many of films that had previously received an X rating were transferred to the new AA category, furthermore, as far as local councils and the film industry were concerned, the AA category did not have the salacious or disreputable image of the X certificate. The introduction of the AA category was also one of the last actions of John Trevelyan before his retirement as Secretary of the BBFC in June 1971, a post he had held for thirteen years. Trevelyan's influence on British film throughout the 1960s should not be underestimated and his departure, to be replaced by the more self-effacing Stephen Murphy, coincides with the many crises faced by the industry for the rest of the decade and into the 1980s. Hartford-Davis' struggle to make films during the 1970s opens an additional narrative on to low budget independent filmmaking in Britain, in contrast to the challenges faced by the filmmaker during the 1960s, however this is outside the scope of this thesis.

Conclusion

Despite some signs of a financial crisis, many organisations within the British film industry failed to acknowledge (or ignored) the serious impact that a withdrawal of American funding would have on British film production. Without a significant restructuring of the domestic industry, as well as refocusing on the type of films made by

⁸⁰ Hunnings, Neville, 'AA and X, *Sight and Sound*, Spring 1970, p.71.

the industry, large British film production companies like Rank were ill-prepared to cope with the loss of American support and finance. Hollywood, struggling with economic problems in the US, began preparations for a rationalisation strategy in order to improve their competitiveness. As a result of this restructuring the American majors found that continuing British-based production facilities gradually became financially unsustainable.

Hartford-Davis and Newbrook at Titan International challenged the consensus of the mainstream British industry, as well as Hollywood, that the public did not want sex films, violence or increased levels of nudity. Titan's intended production schedule for the end of the 1960s and the start of the 1970s, included two films, *The Dead Men of Sestos* and *The Rector of Stiffkey*, and contained features that could be converted into low budget, exploitable films. Furthermore, *Doctors Wear Scarlet*, was adapted from a highbrow novel but had been transformed it into a sexually explicit horror film. The finished product combined not only nudity and sex but also drug taking, psychedelics and other examples of late 1960s counterculture. Although the release of *Doctors Wear Scarlet* was delayed, the film remains an early example of the commercial possibilities of combining sex and vampires, a feature that earlier films had only hinted at, but which other filmmakers in Britain, Continental Europe and America would later imitate. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Hammer featured nude lesbian vampires in *The Vampire Lovers* (1970), and in Continental Europe the trend for sexually explicit vampire films began with the co-production *Daughters of Darkness* (*Les Lèvres Rouges*, Harry Kümel, Bel.\Fr.\WGer.\It., 1970), followed by *Vampyros Lesbos* (Jess Franco, WGer.\Sp., 1971), and *Female Vampire* (Jess Franco, Fr.\Bel., 1973). In America, companies like Roger Corman's American International Pictures quickly exploited the trend with *The Velvet Vampire* (Stephanie Rothman, US., 1971). Furthermore, in America X films had penetrated the mainstream industry and themes that had previously been the remit of the American exploitation industry, as well as the type of films Hartford-Davis had made during his career, had crossed over into Hollywood.

Throughout the 1960s, and working within the low budget independent sector with companies like Compton, Hartford-Davis' films frequently offered the British cinemagoer movies they could rarely find in mainstream city centre cinemas. His films (when the formula was right) were box-offices successes, and allowed the director to continue a filmmaking career throughout the 1960s at a time when other British directors were finding work in America or Continental Europe. Although these films may not have been critical successes or replicated the financial achievements of Hollywood

blockbusters, they avoided many of the problems experienced by larger British film companies like Rank. It is likely, given Hartford-Davis' earlier filmmaking experience, as well as his subsequent career in America, that had the problems during the production of *Doctors Wear Scarlet* not led to the director's departure from the company, Titan International may have avoided many of the problems experienced by the rest of the British industry throughout the 1970s and possibly into the 1980s.

Whereas, Rank, ABPC, and others had either lost their enthusiasm for the industry or had misunderstood the domestic market, smaller, low budget producers were making a succession of sex comedies and/or violent, sexually-themed horror films, a tendency that continued throughout the rest of the decade. Furthermore, the withdrawal of American studios from the UK had the effect of freeing up the market and allowed British film producers easier access to domestic cinema circuits. The British industries' failure to prepare for home video, as well as the reluctance by successive Conservative Governments throughout the 1980s to offer any substantial subsidies to the film industry led to the collapse of many of the organisations which made up the mainstream film business.

Conclusion: Reframing British Exploitation

‘I think if you tell a story well, people in India, China, whatever, they’re interested’

Robert Hartford-Davis, 1968.¹

This thesis began as a challenge to understand how and why the term exploitation has been used to describe some British films. As this thesis has shown, exploitation as a generic category to describe a British film was not used by the industry during the 1960s. Exploitation was used sparingly by the industry and usually applied to low budget (usually horror) films from America. Critics would, more often than not, describe a film as sensational, sleazy or salacious rather than as exploitation. Furthermore, an exploitation film in 1960s British Cinema included any film that could be exploited in terms of marketing and publicity. Therefore, the currency of exploitation, when applied to a British film, has shifted significantly from a marketing term to its current use as a generic term.

In comparison to the American industry, there is no tradition of exploitation filmmaking in Britain. In America, the separation between the mainstream industry, as represented by Hollywood, and the exploitation filmmakers did not exist in Britain. The structure of the British industry from the post-war period onwards was largely dominated by two main film producers, the Rank Organisation which was the largest, vertically integrated film company in the UK and, to a smaller extent, Associated British Picture Corporation. In competition (but still part of the British industry) were a myriad of small independent production companies and cinemas. Unlike the American model, whereby exploitation film was defined in opposition to Hollywood studio pictures, British low budget filmmakers competed in the same domestic market as the films produced by Rank and ABPC.

The title of this thesis refers to a reframing of British Exploitation Cinema, but why is this important? Why does this thesis re-examine a term that is rarely contested and is unlikely to change commonly held perceptions of exploitation cinema? The following reasons make clear why reviewing and reframing the debates on British exploitation cinema is a useful exercise. The first reason is one of interpretation which Robert Murphy makes clear in his analysis of British films in the 1960s. Murphy begins the

¹ See Appendix A.

introduction to his book with a quote from the British director Alan Parker in which the filmmaker declares that ‘whatever the Swinging Sixties are going to be remembered for it won’t be films’.² Furthermore, Murphy concedes that many of the films made during this period are surrounded by ‘simplistic myths’ and he brings to attention the critical orthodoxy of the image of ‘the ‘Kitchen Sink’ films as glum, drab, and visually boring’.³ Murphy’s intention therefore is to challenge existing critical orthodoxies, and he concludes with the claim that the ‘1960s saw a greater number of significant and exciting films made in Britain than at any time before or since’.⁴ Murphy’s reframing of the often negative approach to British films made during the 1960s introduces the importance of some films that would otherwise have been forgotten. A similar approach is taken by Sheldon Hall who, in his article on the British heritage film wished to purge the definition ‘of its pejorative connotations and its attachment to the Thatcherite phase of cultural history’.⁵ Moreover, as Hall further argues, ‘a generic label can hardly expect any longevity if its connotations are entirely negative’.⁶

In terms of exploitation, the critical and cultural orthodoxy has created a generic description that has failed to examine the differences in the structure of low budget, independent filmmaking between America and Britain. Furthermore, labelling some films as exploitation, and therefore disreputable and non-prestigious, has led to the marginalisation of many films, as well as filmmakers associated with low budget production. Reframing exploitation cinema, and in this case, the films of Robert Hartford-Davis, becomes important because it gives an insight into many films which were popular with British cinemagoers, as well as offering insights into changes and shifts within popular culture, and the concerns, debates and anxieties of the British film industry. Re-evaluating films now referred to as exploitation, and removing them from a generic category, allows the films to be placed within a broader context about British film cultures, as well as the development of the British film industry throughout the 1960s, and the films steadily growing impact and influence on the American film industry.

The films of Robert Hartford-Davis also comprise a significant component of this thesis, but why this director, and what does his career and his films offer to our understanding of British cinema? Why not analyse a filmmaker whose contribution to

² Murphy, Robert, *Sixties British Cinema*, London: British Film Institute, 1992, p.1.

³ Murphy, 1992, p.1.

⁴ Murphy, 1992, p.278.

⁵ Hall, Sheldon, ‘The Wrong Sort of Cinema: Refashioning the Heritage Film Debate’, in Robert Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book* 3rd Edition, London: British Film Institute, 2009, p.54.

⁶ Hall, 2009, p.54.

British cinema is perhaps better remembered, or whose oeuvre might possibly be re-evaluated and become, perhaps, the subject of future retrospectives? Hartford-Davis' career is interesting because his total body of work does not easily fit within generic categories. Similarly marginalised directors like Terence Fisher, Pete Walker, and even Norman J. Warren (British directors who have recently been the subjects of critical and academic reappraisals), are celebrated because, with a few exceptions, the bulk of their films fit within a specific generic category. Therefore, their careers, through the development of their films, offer an easier, more self-contained narrative which can appeal to critical and academic orthodoxies.

Hartford-Davis did not limit his filmmaking to one type of genre, and as a result his career encompassed many different aspects of post-war British cinema. Hartford-Davis made crime thrillers, dramas, short documentaries, social realist films, horror films, musicals and comedies. He also worked for low budget independent production companies and made films within the larger mainstream industry. Hartford-Davis' attempt to forge a career within the British film industry gives an insight into how some filmmakers reacted to changes in the domestic market, as well as dealing with significant shifts in post-war cultural and social attitudes.

As the Rank Organisation and other organisations in the British film industry struggled to understand and cope with the decline in cinema audiences, frequently placing the blame on X films and commercial television, Hartford-Davis at Compton (and later for Titan) made a career from the production of low budget X-rated films. The least successful period of Hartford-Davis' career was during the mid-1960s after leaving Compton. This period coincided with a greater interest by Hollywood companies in British film production. Hollywood's interest in making big budget, family friendly films had an impact on large British companies like Rank and ABPC. Avoiding X films, larger British film companies followed America's lead, determined to make films that would bring back the family audience, despite evidence produced by the industry that such audiences were not frequent cinemagoers.

The films Hartford-Davis made fall into three discrete periods. The first period covers his work for Tony Tenser and Michael Klinger at Compton where he produced and directed four films. The first three films, *That Kind of Girl*, *The Yellow Teddybears*, and *Saturday Night Out*, embraced and exploited sensational and controversial narratives. Encouraged by the freedom the X category allowed, these films included riskier and more explicit depictions of nudity, sex, violence and language – often excluded in

discussions of the British new wave – these films were made to take advantage of the popularity of “kitchen-sink dramas”. The decision by Hartford-Davis, Tenser and Klinger to make a period horror film, *The Black Torment*, was taken partly because of the disappointing box-office performance of *Saturday Night Out*, as well as a shift occurring within the rest of industry away from social realism and towards fantasy, horror and less serious subjects.

The second period covers the establishment of Hartford-Davis’ production company Titan International and a move away from X-rated films, towards musicals and comedies. The musical, *Gonks Go Beat*, was made to capitalise on the success of other similar films. However, the market for such films was saturated by the time the film was ready for release and subsequently failed to secure an adequate distribution deal. Hartford-Davis’ next two films, *The Sandwich Man* and *Press for Time*, were made for the Rank Organisation. Although these films obtained a distribution deal with Rank, any control over marketing, publicity and exploitation possibilities had to be relinquished to the company. Furthermore, Rank’s belief in the family audience resulting in box-office success was misplaced. Films rated as U or A, were less likely to perform well at the British box-office when compared to the audiences for X films, nonetheless, the rewards for such films could be enormous as shown by the performance of *Mary Poppins*, *The Sound of Music*, films starring The Beatles, and the James Bond series. Only *Press for Time*, which took advantage of Norman Wisdom’s star power, attained any significant financial success during this stage of Hartford-Davis’ career.

The third and final period covers Hartford-Davis’ switch back to X-rated films and lower budgets. This period also highlights how a low budget, independent film company benefited from producing smaller films once a secure means of funding was made available. Titan’s deal with the Triumph Investment Trust ensured a reliable and secure way of funding the company’s films. At a time when the rest of the British industry was coming to terms with the economic realities of relying too much on American finance, Hartford-Davis was in a position to put into production three films towards the end of the 1960s. *Corruption*’s success at the American box-office was helped enormously by the distribution power of Columbia. *The Smashing Bird I Used To Know*, Hartford-Davis’ next film, failed to perform well for similar reasons to *Saturday Night Out*. Both films possess exploitable titles and interesting subject matter, nonetheless, the features that had made Hartford-Davis’ films exploitable, in terms of marketing and publicity, were unclear and vague in the latter film.

The successful films Hartford-Davis made during the 1960s ignored the majority critical consensus of what constituted a “quality” British film, as well as the perception by many in the British film industry that X-rated, adult oriented entertainment dissuaded the public from going to the cinema. These films, if the components of narrative, subject matter, and exploitable features were arranged properly, could avoid the restrictions placed on the British marketplace by the duopoly of Rank and ABPC. This duopoly, viewed by many in the industry as detrimental, was never seriously challenged by the industry or the British Government. The position the Rank Organisation held before the war helped the British film industry to survive, nevertheless, by the 1960s, I would argue that the company had a place within the decline of the domestic industry. As the experience of Hartford-Davis (and the numerous surveys produced by the industry) demonstrates, British audiences had not wholly deserted the cinema. However, Rank and ABPC were reluctant to make the type of films cinemagoers wanted to see. By the 1970s, both companies had virtually withdrawn from film production, and it was the efforts of low budget filmmakers, including Hartford-Davis, that continued film production in Britain.

The final films of Hartford-Davis during the 1960s coincided with a significant shift by the American film industry towards making the type of product the director had made throughout his career – including much of the subject matter of his early work in the 1950s. Hartford-Davis’ films are part of a tradition of filmmaking in Britain that has previously been dismissed as mere exploitation (or sexploitation). Nonetheless, they form part of an important strand of feature film production in Britain that often had to fight against the critical establishment, local censorship bodies, the BBFC, the steady decline in regular cinema attendance, as well as many in the film industry. These films attempted to take advantage of the shifts in British society towards a greater acceptance of subjects previously thought of as taboo in the cinema, as well as more liberal attitudes towards explicit language, depictions of sexual situations, nudity and violence. Eventually, these films would have an impact on the rest of the industry. Faced with a greater decline in cinema attendances as well as economic crises within the film industry, the exploitation aesthetic found in Hartford-Davis’ films began to gain acceptance within the mainstream industry. Hollywood’s embrace of the type of films previously marginalised within the American exploitation film industry utilised themes, narratives and the visual aesthetics that had already been exploited by Hartford-Davis.

To refer to Hartford-Davis' films as merely exploitation or sexploitation films is to misunderstand their place within British popular film culture. Removing generic labels allows us to view more clearly these films as products of 1960s British filmmaking, as well as understanding how they were influenced by changes in British society and culture. Moreover, their role in bringing audiences into cinemas should not be forgotten. These films may never be critically appreciated nonetheless by analysing how these films were produced, distributed, and exhibited they contribute an additional narrative to our understanding of post-war British cinema.

Appendices

Appendix A

Peter Newbrook. *Robert Hartford-Davis*. Interviewed by Michael Ahmed [Tape] Norwich, UK. 6 February 2009.

Michael Ahmed (MA): When did you first meet Robert Hartford-Davis?

Peter Newbrook (PN): I don't recall meeting Bob Hartford-Davis until before sometime in 1961. The only notes I've got was [*reading from diary*] "on Monday 6 February 1961, we started to shoot *Crosstrap* at Cobham." *Crosstrap* was a short feature we finished at the end of February. That was my first meeting with Bob Hartford-Davis.

The Yellow Teddybears (1963)

PN: That came from a newspaper article about a school in North London where the girls who had sex wore these yellow golliwogs, you know from the Robertsons jam [*pause*] marmalade bottles. The provisional script that came out were originally entitled *The Yellow Golliwog*. Unfortunately, but I don't know how it came about, I think the lawyers checked with Robertsons and they objected most strongly. I don't think they liked the idea of their product being associated with an exploitation film. I think that was how it came about and the title was changed.

MA: This was the first full-length feature Bob had actually directed.

PN: Yes, because as you say, *Crosstrap* was only 40-45 minutes. He seemed very keen. I know very little about his background. The only thing I do know that he had been an electrician at Teddington Studios under the name of Bob Davis. When he became Robert Hartford-Davis I don't know. I think he went to work for the television people. He did a lot of TV work. He might have been with ATV. I don't know how he became involved in that sort of business at all. I know that before we met he'd been married, and obviously divorced, and he had a daughter who was still alive, and she married an executive from the Honeywell control company in Bradford. When I met Bob, I know in the end he married a very nice girl called Denise, who came from an excellent family and they lived in block of flats in Kingston. We became very friendly. I don't think he had any particular influences. He was very fond of Westerns. He liked Westerns. He always wanted to make a picture about smoking barrels. But he was very keen on Westerns.

MA: It seemed to go quite well, because the things I've read [*pause*]

PN: Of course by that time Michael Klinger had teamed up with Tony Tenser.

Pause as Peter looks through a collection of various photographs from the films he made with Hartford-Davis. These include location photographs, press-books, premieres, and stills.

Saturday Night Out (1964)

PN: *Saturday Night Out* came next.

MA: It's lot of different stories? About four or five different stories?

PN: It's a group of merchant seamen coming off the ship for their weekend break and we follow their activities when they get to shore. And some go drinking, some go with women and some go back to their family and so forth. That featured a group called *The Searchers*.

MA: That is something I notice about the pictures you and Bob made. There does seem to be some musical elements in them. You have *The Searchers* in *Saturday Night Out*, there's a group in *Yellow Teddybears* that play at the beginning. Then there is *Gonks Go Beat*. Is this something you and Bob deliberately did?

PN: Don't forget that was at the height of the pop era, the '60s onwards when all the pop groups came to the fore. I've been in music all my life. I formed England's first independent music company.

MA: As far as the music was concerned, being an element of the pictures, was because of the type of market you were trying to target?

PN: Bob wasn't musically literate at all. He couldn't read a note. He couldn't sing. He couldn't play an instrument. He couldn't read a score. On the other hand, I can do all of those things. I was classically trained. I can read a score, compose, arrange. I guess when it came to musical selection I tended to engage background music writers who thought like me, and that is why we had people like Bobby Richards, who was a drummer by profession, and Bill McGuffie later on, and people of that ilk. Bob concurred with these ideas for background music without any difficulty at all. I think later on when the pop boom really burst, I think about time of *Gonks Go Beat*, he became really obsessed with the idea of begin involved with the idea of pop music scene and in fact he formed a group called The Long and the Short which he signed a Decca record contract. Bob at that time had become exposed to a lot of mercurial band managers, agents, people like Don Hartman. Some of these agents, bookers were gangsters; really, they would chew the balls of people who would cross them.

MA: How did Bob get on with Klinger and Tenser?

PN: Bob tried to put on a different persona altogether when he became Hartford-Davis. He wore nice clothes. He had his haircut in Jermyn Street. Went to the Caprice restaurant and did all the right things. How he came into that Tenser\Klinger orbit I don't know. I never really got involved in that kind of politics.

The Black Torment (1964)

PN: Then they decided to make their first colour picture, which was *The Black Torment*, which put them in a much bigger league, because they rented the stages at Shepperton Studios, and built bigger sets, and employed better artists. We had Heather Sears, John Turner from the National Theatre. The picture must have cost a lot more money. One of the problems that arose on *Black Torment*, we had some locations at a stately home, I think somewhere in Hampshire, we had do some exteriors and stuff in the country. We were cursed with fog, absolutely awful, thick, murky fog and it put the picture back two or three days at least. And then Michael Klinger came down and he was so beside himself. I don't know whether they took out insurance or not I don't know. He didn't know what to do because they were so far behind. There is a story, which I think is apocryphal, having said to Bob, "Oh! You're behind schedule; tear up a few pages of the script?" It's a good story.

MA: I think it is fair to set the record right because, from what I have read, it appears it was Bob's fault that the film fell behind, and that Klinger blamed him, and that is where the story comes from.

PN: I don't remember it like that. The technical crew on the picture were first class. There was no problems during the shooting. We had no problem with it at all. The fog business was a nuisance and put the picture behind three days, and then Michael Klinger left to go away on business, and Tony took over and that's where the hurry up and rows started. He was a different cut to Michael Klinger and there was a good deal of unpleasantness. [*Reading from diary*] "Three days behind schedule, certain financial problems seemed to have cropped up. A row about the quality of the print used for the premiere. A lot of hot air meeting lasted for half an hour."

MA: That must have been for *Saturday Night Out*.

PN: Yes it was, yes.

PN: It was a difficult film to do. Oh, here it is. [*Reading from diary*] "2 March, Michael Klinger leaves for America. Tony Tenser in charge, more hurry up than ever, snow, much confusion, rows breaking out now and again. Everyone very low." I suspect there

must have been some row about the money. I was only told that Bob came into the office one morning at Compton and found his desk was locked and all his papers had been taken out and he was fired, or they parted company. I don't know. Obviously it wasn't a very friendly parting.

Gonks Go Beat (1965) and Titan

MA: How did Titan come about?

PN: I think Bob approached me. We had got on quite well together and I found him [pause], although he wasn't a good director, he was always a ready listener. He was as good as a director working in small pictures at the time. We rented offices in Shepherds Bush. We had a very nice production suite there. We got quite a good team together. The real trouble, which one doesn't realise until you get into that line of business, is to find a good script. And that was the trouble. We didn't really know what to do first. And I suppose that is how *Gonks Go Beat* got into the act. Of course in retrospect we should have realised that everybody and their brother was making musicals, I mean they were coming out of people's ears. So many of them were being made, and in the end, at that time, was just another small project musical.

MA: It had some good names in it though.

PN: Oh yes, we got some good names. The trouble was we were let down by finance. We were originally promised financing by Butcher's Films. John Phillips was running the company and he promised to finance the picture, and it got very far advanced in the production of course to the point where we couldn't stop it. I mean we could have done, but I mean we got a script. We got a lot of the cast assembled. The only people we didn't get were The Rolling Stones. I went to see them, we had a long meeting with them at Wimbledon Palais where they were playing, and we couldn't come to terms with them. They had just broken through and they wouldn't do it for what we could pay them, and at the eleventh hour they pulled out. It was a shame and Bob was forever cursing. So I suddenly thought, I knew somebody at Anglo Amalgamated, someone I had been in the army with, and I went to see him and he would introduce me to Nat Cohen, who was head of Anglo Amalgamated. He said, "I would put up a third of the production costs". And we always used Humphreys Laboratories at the time, and they started a company called Humphreys Film Financing. It was quite a smart move because they would put money into pictures as long as it was produced and printed at their office. And they put up a third, and we got some private finance, and we put up some money ourselves for

the other third, and that is how *Gonks Go Beat* was made. It wasn't a very smart move really because the way it was rigged was, Humphreys and Anglo Amalgamated came out first, and anybody else who was in the line, stood in line and still are [*laughing*]. The picture was fun to make. It was a lot of fun to make. It was made at Shepperton. Our offices were based there and we got a good deal for the studio and cameras. I got a good technical crew. Wonderful music, which we all recorded at Decca and they made an LP of it.

MA: There is some wonderful colour in that film, and the drum sequence is [*pause*]

PN: In fact that drum sequence is my sequence. There are two sequences I particularly put together. The drum sequence, the drum prison, and the other sequence, this never came off. It shows you how disaster can strike. We did a deal with every major car manufacturer in the country to provide us with ten convertibles. It was originally conceived to be shot at Camber Sands. We had a terrible sand storm. We went to Camber Sands on the very first day of shooting and we got everything set up. We had the camera car running along with the playback, a pre-recorded playback for them to mime to. It was all rehearsed and done, and just as we were about to shoot, a sand storm blew up. We had the first Mustang in the country and the cars all got filled up with sand and the drivers had to report back to base. And they were told to take their cars away and they would never darken our door again. That was a real put back. It took us a long time to recover from it. The interiors went on very well. I signed Lulu. She was just sixteen.

MA: Where did you eventually shoot the car scene?

PN: We shot it in the end at Blackbush Aerodrome.

MA: You said that the drum sequence was yours, what did you mean by that?

PN: I conceived the whole idea. The idea for that originally came from [*pause*] in that period there were two famous drummers one was called Gene Krupa and the other one was Buddy Rich, two American drummers, and they were signed to the Norman Grand Organisation, which was called *Jazz At The Philharmonic* and the climax of the show was the drum battle between Gene Krupa and Buddy Rich. And they had two identical drum kits, and it struck me as a very funny idea to get, not two, but half a dozen or more, and that is how it ended up.

MA: What were these drummers like to work with? Did they really enjoy doing something like that?

PN: They were all proper drummers, all famous drummers.

The Sandwich Man (1966)

MA: So that was *Gonks Go Beat*, and then *Sandwich Man* with Michael Bentine.

PN: Now *The Sandwich Man*, yes it is interesting, my recollection is that we knew David Lodge, quite well because he was a good actor, but David happened to be a good friend of Peter Sellers, and he was very much in that circle. And that was a very curious, close circle. Peter Sellers, *The Goons*, you get the connection now? Seacombe, Bentine, and so forth. Now Bentine had quite a successful TV series, I think it was called *It's a Square World*. I don't know quite how but I think the idea came from Michael. I know Bob and Michael wrote the story between them completely. They didn't get on particularly well. I mean Michael Bentine was a very strange man. He came from some Peruvian ancestry. Very nice man, very personable, very fun to be with, nice wife and he had a son that got killed in an air crash later on. But he was odd, very odd, Michael and when he got into a mood he could be very cantankerous. The original company set up to make it had Michael Bentine on the board as the director of the company. It was Bob, me, and Michael: equal directors of the company. Then we set about thinking how can we make this? It would obviously be an expensive picture with that kind of a cast. So, who do I know in the bigger league, who would be interested in a British picture because there was no question it would be American, no point in going to Paramount or Warners. So, my wife knew the secretary at Rank, who was the secretary to Freddie Thomas, who was the director of production at Rank, and we spoke to her and she said she would fix up an appointment to see Mr Thomas; and at that time Rank had just come to an agreement with the National Film Finance Corporation to co-finance British pictures. They had done one, the girl with the little green dress or something.¹ They had done one picture and they were looking for more product. So we went along to see Freddie Thomas, and he said it sounded like a good idea and he would put it to the board of the National Film Finance Corporation and see what they think of it. And the head of the National Film Finance Corporation was a man called John Terry. This is a very curious thing. I lived in Cobham in Surrey and John Terry was a senior churchwarden at my local church. So I knew two people involved in the film business who I had nothing to do with at all at that time in the business; Freddie Thomas, through

¹ Newbrook is confused with *The Girl with Green Eyes* (Desmond Davis, 1964) which was based on an Edna O'Brien novel and produced by Woodfall Films. The first NFFC-Rank film was *I Was Happy Here* (Davis, 1966) also from an Edna O'Brien short story, *A Woman by the Seaside*.

his secretary and I knew NFFC through John Terry through my local church. Anyway, they put the idea together, and they did agree to it, and we had a meeting and a drink; and that is how *The Sandwich Man* got made.

MA: How were these films distributed? Because that is a different part of the film business.

PN: That was done through Rank, and *Gonks Go Beat* through Anglo Amalgamated. Distribution in the end has been a curse of British production since the day one. People can put pictures together, sometimes they are good, sometimes they are bad but if you don't have a distribution deal you might as well go down the pub and spend your money there, because it is not going to go anywhere. That is always the key to it. Anybody can make a motion picture; as long as you have enough money anyone can make a movie. Getting it on the screen to get people to go and see it, that is another thing altogether. Rank owned Gaumont\Odeon, what was left was Essoldo and Star. In the end you needed to get into Rank cinemas to get a good distribution release and unless you could get that. There were a lot of independent cinemas but they didn't take much money, they were small houses playing to small audiences. But that was the key always to making motion pictures, money and distribution. Making a picture is almost secondary.

MA: Who did most of the business deals at Titan?

PN: I did most of the business side of it because I had more contacts and more connections. That's not to say that Bob didn't do anything with it at all but I don't think he fully every grasped until later on the importance of the other side of the business. But he was very progressive in the sense that he was a good listener and when he was shooting on the floor he would always take advice on cutting and setups. And he always said to me when we were at meetings "if I start to say something out of line, give me a kick under the table."

MA: You said there were some difficulties on the commentary on the DVD of *The Sandwich Man*?

PN: Each picture has its own production company for tax reasons. One picture might make a profit, the other picture might make a loss, so you don't want to cuddle them up together. Michael Bentine was a co-director of Titan International Pictures but he became very cantankerous at times.

MA: Was Bob like that, what was he like to work with?

PN: Bob was very good, he would get on with job, he was no genius director but he was as good as many in the field at that time. With *The Sandwich Man* he did fall out with

Michael more than I did. Michael was very awkward at times. I don't know why, as I said he was a very curious man, he had a curious birth. He had a huge cabinet of guns in his lounge. Rack of guns, he was a gun collector. I think in the end we kind of fell out with Michael. I don't really know why. I think Michael told me he wanted more control over the picture probably, but then there comes a time when you need to take off one hat and put the other hat on. I think Michael wanted to do more hands on stuff. A lot of the sequences were shot when he wasn't even there. I know there was a sort of falling out and in the end Michael resigned from the company. The picture was made entirely from a mobile telephone installed in Bob's Rolls Royce. It was one of the first mobile telephones that worked.

MA: In *The Sandwich Man* you met Norman Wisdom because then you made *Press for Time*.

PN: I think Norman had the idea. We bought a book called *Yea, Yea, Yea*. Rank said they would co-finance it. Leslie Grade said he would do a good deal with Norman if Rank would distribute and that's how *Press for Time* was made. The night before we started to shoot, Rank got cold feet about Bob doing the direction of the picture. I don't know if it was Rank entirely or whether it was Norman, seemed to lose confidence in Bob directing. I don't know if it was because of his work on *The Sandwich Man* but there was a lot of horse-trading going on. In the end, all of them decided for the good of the picture that Bob would step down. It wasn't done with grace, I can tell you. It was very acrimonious, a lot of disputes and very unpleasant at times. There were endless meetings and rewrites. I thought the picture would collapse. There were some problems during the picture. It wasn't an easy picture to make. Norman – not the easiest of persons to get on with. I think Bob always resented the fact that Bob Asher directed it. I don't think he really accepted it because he was always telling Bob to do this and do that and so forth. It did very well. It still plays very well. It was the last picture Norman made of any consequence. Norman really didn't do much after that. I think he did one tit and bum picture for somebody afterwards.

MA: That was *What's Good for the Goose*?

PN: Was it? *So Press for Time* was Norman's swansong in the major league and it did very well. I mean we all had percentages of it and it has been a good earner that picture, very good indeed.

Corruption (1967)

MA: The next film after that is the one that really interests horror fans, and that is *Corruption*.

PN: I don't know how he came into our office, but we met a very nice American gentleman called Jules Brickan, who made a marvellous film called *The Train* with Burt Lancaster, a very big picture. I don't know how we got introduced to Jules, and we decided to make a picture with him and we cast around and came up with this idea for a picture called *Corruption*. That was entirely self-financed. We were still based at Shepperton then. And we made this picture called *Corruption* with Peter Cushing and Sue Lloyd, good cast. I photographed it as usual. I put up about £40,000 towards my end of it and Bob did something similar. We picked up the rest from people all over the place. And it was the only time we made a picture without securing a distribution deal. We hadn't got a distribution deal. We must have been crazy...must have been crazy, because it was the last major money I had at the time. The picture was made, and then came the question of what shall we do with the distribution. It was no good going back to Rank because the pictures they made, apart from *Press for Time*, because the other pictures they made through this co-financing thing had gone down the drain, they hadn't made any money. The first picture that Rank made was *The Girl With Green Eyes* with Rita Tushingham [See Endnote 1], *The Sandwich Man* was the second and *Press for Time* was the third. I knew it would be no good going back to Rank because it wasn't their cup of tea at all. So I thought who would be interested in this picture, and I thought this is the sort of picture that might do well in America. So I rang up my old friend Sam Spiegel, who was in with Columbia. He had done *Bridge on the River Kwai* and *Lawrence of Arabia*. I knew him pretty well. I said we've got a picture I would like you to see. He said is it a good picture. I said I think it's a good picture, it's a horror film, which might have a niche market in America. So he set up a screening at the Columbia theatre, with two Columbia executives who were running Columbia, and we ran the picture, and Spiegel was absolutely knocked out by it, he got so excited. He said, "C'mon get this picture sorted. I will ring my chap in New York." Anyway, they bought it for a handsome sum plus a handsome sum of percentage profits off the gross, which I negotiated, not the net. Funnily enough at that time we sort of...I don't know again...I think it's really due to Bob. We had sort of fallen out with Jules Bricken. He didn't get any credit on the picture, although he retained a percentage of the profits in perpetuity. Anyway, Columbia took it, and we went to New York with the print and we met a man called Bob Ferguson who was head of promotions and publicity. And he put together a marvellous campaign. It

opened in New York. I forget how many cinemas they opened it in. "No single woman allowed in this theatre alone." I know it took so much money. It recovered the budget in about two or three weeks. And the picture to date has grossed I don't know how many millions of dollars. It has done fantastically well.

MA: Critically, the critics hated it.

PN: They kicked it to death. I put the idea also at the end when Cushing wakes up and you get the impression that it could be a dream, and that was my idea. I always like to have a little tag at the end of all my pictures. Give the audience something to think about. Did it happen, or didn't it happen? Things like that, and they all came from me. And certainly the big deal for the distributors was the target market. It was my doing with Sam. He had been very kind to me on *Lawrence*. Halfway through *Lawrence*, my father died, and he put the little private plane that *Lawrence* had. He flew me back to Beirut, from Beirut to Rome, Rome back to England, and gave me three days off to go to my father's funeral and flew me back to the desert again. He was a tough old nut but it was very kindly thought. Seven or eight million dollars it's taken worldwide. It is still earning money. Anyway, that was the end of *Corruption* saga. At that time, we wanted to carry on making pictures, but I could see that the source of finance in England was going to dry up. Everybody was in trouble and I knew we couldn't go back to Rank again. And you couldn't get most of the majors like Columbia to advance money. They would only pay for completed pictures. There was a man who took production insurance, he said, "Are you looking for film finance?" and I said, "Always." It was my waking nightmare. He said, "If I could find it would you give me a finders fee?" and I said, "Certainly, why not." He found various people. Some were bloodsuckers. Before I get on to the next phase, there was a man who came from America to England once a year, and he would punt around the West End going to all these independent people who made pictures but couldn't sell them, and he would give these poor people a pittance for their pictures and would demand world rights, plus a bit extra from the profits which, of course, would be non-existent. He was a real rascal. He did come to see us, but I realised he was a rascal and sent him packing. But, this other man in the end did find us a company called the Triumph Investment Trust, who were, had an investment bank, in addition to there regular business of finding finance. We met up and we showed him all our books, all our accounts, and the results for *Press for Time*, and the receipts for *Corruption* and they decided to go into business with us. We did a fantastic deal with them. Two of their directors came on to a board, Tom Whyte and Leonard Richtenberg, they came on to the

Titan board. And we moved into a very palatial office in Wardour Street and carried on making pictures. The deal was very good because it was so structured that, when we wanted to make a picture we were not allowed to go anywhere else for finance but the Triumph Investment Trust and, by the same token, if they wanted to get involved in motion pictures they could only do so through us. It was like golden handcuffs, we were both handcuffed to each other; which was very good because if we wanted a hundred thousand to make a picture that was it, finished. There was no argument, nor discussion. That was the deal. Anyway we made *The Smashing Bird I Used To Know*.

The Smashing Bird I Used To Know (1969)

PN: *The Smashing Bird I Used to Know*, which was my title.

MA: Madeleine Hinde was in that.

PN: We ran a promotion to find a new star. Which our casting director set up and we went into a small studio in Soho, the West End, with a video camera and we must have tested thirty, forty girls all reading scenes from the picture. We got a young actor to play the boy part and we shot all these scenes. Two or three of them became very famous in later years. I think I was the one who picked Madeleine. I think in retrospect I made a mistake. She was too English. She was too country rose. I think we should have picked someone more, maybe when I say middle class, or maybe lower class. I don't know what it was, but I think I made a mistake in that sense — maybe not quite so feminine as Madeleine. We groomed her. We gave her new hairstyle, new teeth, gowns, wardrobe, signed her to a long-term contract. It was one of Dennis Waterman's first pictures. I think it was one of his first. Maureen Lipman, that was her first picture. She played one of the lesbian girls in the dormitory. We discovered Maureen Lipman and Patrick Mower. He became one of our regulars.

MA: How well did that film do?

PN: Not good. I guess it about broke even in the end. The trouble was it probably wasn't rough enough. The girls' dormitory was more like jolly hockey sticks. I know for the exporters they had different titles — *Girls of Shame*.

MA: The DVD version calls the film *The School for Unclaimed Girls*.

PN: That's a new one on me. It didn't do very well. It didn't bring the house down.

MA: Did the finance company arrange distribution deals?

PN: No, no. That was entirely different. We had a company called Euro London Films, run by John Henderson who did all the foreign distribution. The English distribution was done by Grand National, run by Maurice Wilson.

Doctors Wear Scarlet (1971)

MA: You had problems then with *Doctors Wear Scarlet*.

PN: We had got a department for product selection, and my readers came up with two good books, one was called *Doctors Wear Scarlet* (1960) written by Simon Raven and another book called *The Dead Men of Sestos* (1968) written by Robin Estridge [*Philip Loraine*]. By coincidence, this wasn't intentional; both were based in Greece, both Greek backgrounds to them. Good idea to maybe make them back to back. Dennis Lewiston had been working for me as a camera operator. I recognised in him the potential to become a good director, and because I was the production head and cameraman as well, at the time, I realised you can't do everything. So I thought I would give Dennis *Doctors Wear Scarlet* because, in *Doctors Wear Scarlet*, it was a very peculiar story. It would have been the first psycho-sexual vampire film ever made, which was most interesting. It was a very intellectual film because it was based in the halls of academe, made in the University, with foreign locations. An interesting element of vampirism and this psycho-sexual business in the picture, and I thought this would not be Bob's metier, so I gave it to Dennis Lewiston and assigned Bob to do *The Dead Men of Sestos*. And, the way the scripts were coming up, it looked as though *Doctors Wear Scarlet* would be ready for production before *Sestos*, which would leave Bob with actually physically not doing anything in the production sense for quite some time. I think he didn't like the idea of that so he said, "What is this *Doctors Wear Scarlet*? I want to do it." Well there was a row in the end. Dennis Lewiston was already contracted to do the picture, he actually sued the company, although he was a friend of mine, he did sue the company, and of course he won. So Dennis had to be paid off and Bob took over the direction of *Doctors Wear Scarlet*. One of the troubles at that time arose because the people at Triumph were very well to do. I mean they had yachts and penthouses in Mayfair, money coming out of their ears. I mean they were doing very well indeed. In fact, I became a major shareholder in the company, in Triumph Investment Trust, and I don't think Bob had ever been exposed to such wealth before. I think it went to his head. He became obsessed with being like them, if you want to put it that way. It altered his whole approach to life. He wanted to have a chauffeur driven car, this that, and the other, and

so forth. And, I think he had been divorced from his wife, or they parted at least, and he was living the high life around the place and so forth. And he decided to take over the direction of *Doctors Wear Scarlet* as it was still called. I hired another good cameraman. We couldn't make the picture in Greece because it was the year of the generals, and it was too politically difficult to organise locations and permits for people to work in Greece at that time. So we decided to do it in Cyprus, same kind of background, same country, same language, speaking Greek. We sent the production manager and Bob to do the recce for the picture. They came back with it all set up. By which time another picture had fallen through. We wanted to do a film in Africa about people like Idi Amin, about one of these dictators that arisen. It was a very good script, we went to South Africa, we went to Johannesburg and we did a lot of recce all around, because we could get money in South Africa. They were in financial trouble, they were making by the ton but they couldn't remit it back to the UK. The way you could do it was to make a movie and send it back. So we went to South Africa. The picture was called *The Freebooters*. It was about a bunch of renegades, Michael Caine types, who would go out there and liaise with these villains. Bob picked up another local girl there and brought her back to England. There was some trouble over that, getting permits, getting her into the country. There was a lot of distractions going on. His eye wasn't on the ball to tell you the truth. He had become obsessed with all this money business. He left his wife and was living with this girl from South Africa.

MA: Was this his first wife?

PN: Second wife, I never knew the first, I don't even know who she was. I believe he was married because he had a child. Anyway, he brought another girl back from Johannesburg and there was a lot of trouble getting her a work permit, getting her into the country. Anyway, off they went with Pat Mower, Madeline, Imogen Hassell and the rest of the crew. I didn't go because I was busy preparing *Sestos*, and I used to see the rushes every day and they looked pretty good and then I got a telex or cable from the production managers saying that they were within a week of completing location. So I got together with the editor of the picture and I said, "blah, blah, blah, where are we?" and he said, "well we've only got 70 minutes of finished production." And I said, "What the hell are you talking about, they've come back here with only half the picture done." Half the screen time you see. So I went out there and of course they were living the life of Riley. And there was another girl there. An American girl called Maureen something of other. I don't know how she came into the act. He must have picked her up on one of

our trips to America, which were quite frequent. She was out there and he was carrying on. I gave a terrible rollicking. I gave the production manager a rollicking. I gave Bob a rollicking. I said, "You can't come home. You've only got half a picture, what are you talking about." It was most unpleasant, most unpleasant. Anyway, they shot some more stuff, and they came back to England and they wrapped it up, and I looked at the rough cut and I thought, "Jesus Christ. This is terrible. We haven't got a picture here. This is hopeless." So I said to the backers, "I can't be responsible for this production because it's no go. We haven't got a picture. So, in the end they agreed he should be removed from the board and summarily dismissed. Which was very difficult because of all of the contractual arrangements, and it all got around to lawyer letters, who had to sort it all out and he was removed from the picture. And I had to engage another cutter called Bert Bates, who is an old friend of mine, who had been a big American editor on American pictures, to re-cut the picture. I shot some other bits and pieces and stuff, did some voiceovers and commentary, and by which time, he had issued a lawsuit against us and wanted his name taken off the picture. Ok, fine, we took his name off the picture and it went out initially as *Doctors Wear Scarlet*, as it should have done. Of course, he had completely missed the whole concept of the picture. He didn't understand the very things that I saw in the story, about the psycho-sexual connotations of the vampirism and that kind of life. He couldn't comprehend the life of a major college like Oxford or Cambridge. He completely cocked it up I'm afraid, and that was the end, the parting of the ways as far as Bob was concerned. The parting wasn't really amicable but it wasn't acrimonious in the end. We met in the solicitor's office and he said, "I'm sorry it's come to this." And I said, "Well, what you can you do Bob you know. Business is business. You've either got to toe the line or get on with it, we can't put up with this caper any longer. A picture's a picture. When you start a picture, you've got to forget about Rolls Royce's and girlfriends and this that and the other and so forth. And get on with the work." And of course he was lording it up in Nicosia, and meeting with Archbishop Markarios, and all the celebrities, and acting the big film mogul. It had gone to his head. He was corrupted. He was truly corrupted. I'm not blaming him in the end because I think he came from a fairly humble beginning. I remember his father ringing and saying, "Allo is Davis there?" He didn't call him Bob or Hartford-Davis, he would say, "Allo is Davis there?" I knew who it was, it was his father – his mother had died some years before. I don't want to be unkind about him. In some ways he was a smashing fella, he was so kind in some ways. And when you think about the things he bought for my son

and he took him to meet The Beatles and Peter Sellers and all those people. He bought lovely presents for everybody. In one way he was very kindly, but he had this other side to him, which was completely manic. It's not often you meet people like that. It's very strange. It was my choice, I must have thought it would turn out all right in the end but of course it didn't. He then left and took some offices in Knightsbridge and started World Arts Media. The only sad coda to it is that this girl, Maureen, I read in *Variety* (he wasn't linked to her) but there was a case come up in *Variety* that she had been arrested for brothel keeping in Las Vegas and sentenced to so long in prison. Bob did a couple of pictures in America. He did that one, that black picture.

MA: *Black Gunn*.

PN: *Black Gunn*, that's right. Anything else?

MA: *The Take*, which was his last feature film and then *Murder in Peyton Place*.

PN: He started on *Murder in Peyton Place* and then he died. I think it was the second or third day of production. He collapsed and died of coronary arrest. DOA.

MA: *Black Gunn* is interesting because when you mentioned the western connection it is almost like a Blaxploitation western.

PN: He was always very keen on that. Bob was always very keen on westerns. Anyway, he had a very sad ending, and he died in California and that was the end of it. I never heard any more about him. A solicitor acting for the family did contact me sometime later asking for any residual funds due to Bob. I said there are some but unfortunately, there was also an outstanding debt because he borrowed several thousand pounds from the company to purchase his last Rolls Royce, which he never repaid.

MA: I think he must have got married again in America because it mentioned a wife in one of the obituaries that I saw.

PN: Did it? I don't know. I've no idea at all. There was this daughter. As far as I know it was the only child he ever had.

[Interview interrupted]

End of Interview

Appendix B

David McGillivray. *Robert Hartford-Davis*. Interviewed by Michael Ahmed [Tape] Kings Cross, London, UK. 11 February 2009.

Michael Ahmed (MA): You didn't know Robert Hartford-Davis did you?

David McGillivray (DM): No. He disappeared off to America round about the time I was starting, so I never had opportunity to meet him.

MA: Had you heard of him at that time? Was he a well-known figure at that time?

DM: Well you can't talk about Robert Hartford-Davis being well known because as you know from what I wrote in *Shivers*, when he died he didn't even get any obits. He got one obit in a trade paper and that was it. So I don't think anyone would have been aware of Robert Hartford-Davis unless they were really into that kind of film, which I was and so there were early films I hadn't seen which intrigued me. And then when I saw *Corruption* I thought well this is obviously somebody very, very special. But I don't remember ever discussing him, even with friends. So I would have thought that he was pretty much unknown. Pete Walker knew him.

MA: Was there a difference between the type of films you were making and the more prestige products, or was there just a British film industry and everyone got on with it and everybody found work where they could find work. I don't like this difference between prestige and exploitation pictures, and I'm not sure it was a term you guys used anyway.

DM: No, that came later. I can't be sure about the word exploitation but I'm pretty sure we didn't use it. I don't know how we would have termed the films we made. But they were very different as far as I was concerned. Often they wouldn't play the major circuit so they were deemed by the circuits to be low class. So most of this stuff would have had an X certificate and they would have played in Essoldo's they would not have played in Odeons or ABCs. *Corruption* was different because I remember seeing that at the Odeon, Islington, but generally these films wouldn't have had press shows they would have just slipped out and gone largely unnoticed.

MA: So why did people make these films at that time?

DM: Well they made money. That was the main object of the exercise, to make money. Some of the films, most of the films were terrible. One or two managed to have a certain amount of integrity because of the people involved. And I think Robert did have talent. Not an enormous amount of talent I have to say. I'm pretty sure I start off

by saying, in that article, there are hacks and hacks. He was a hack, he churned it out but every so often he came up with the goods. I would have loved to have met him and to have found out how his mind works but maybe Peter Newbrook told you more about that. It was very, very difficult finding out anything about his private life because there was nothing written about him. The only thing I found at the BFI was something he'd written himself, and I don't know whether that can be entirely trusted. He is a bit of a man of mystery.

MA: Some of the information you got for the article was from Derek Ford.

DM: Yes, I interviewed him and I probably used practically everything of interest from what he told me.

MA: Let's get back to the type of films that were being made at that time. They were films that you knew would not be played on the mainstream circuits. So what type of audiences were you going for?

DM: Well as far as the films I was making were concerned I did in fact know that they would play them, the major circuits because Walker was working for Miracle and they had a deal. So by that time, I think we are talking '73, '74 the situation had changed and the independent circuits had almost gone. At the time of *The Yellow Teddybears* and stuff like that, *Saturday Night Out*, I remember seeing those films in these strange flea-pits which were all beginning to disappear by that time. So there is a shift around, from the '60s to the '70s.

MA: Rank owned cinemas, didn't they?

DM: Rank had the Odeons and a few Gaumonts. EMI had the ABCs.

MA: So these other cinemas they were private cinemas?

DM: Well it was a very grey area. They were small chains, some of which had just a handful of cinemas. And these films which were not suitable for Rank or ABC or maybe had been turned by these circuits would play these smaller chains. And the one I remember, because I used to obviously go a lot to see these kind of films, the chain I remember was the Essoldo and there was quite a few of those in London. There was an Essoldo in Holloway Road and the one I went to is near where you are living now and that was in New Barnet. No there was two, there was one in East Barnet. I think it's a supermarket now. And they were, they had to be hunted out, they wouldn't get an enormous amount of publicity as I say, they may not have even been shown to the press. So you just went by posters and that was the sort of world that Pete Walker came from

because you know he loved designing posters before any other work was done. It was a different kind of mindset in those days.

MA: How did these films make money if they were not widely shown?

DM: Well they didn't cost much. Heaven knows what they were costing in the '60s, I don't know but in the '70s I was always under the impression that the films I wrote were made for about £60,000, so you didn't have to play many cinemas to get that sort of money back. Walker made considerably more than that. They couldn't have gone on being made unless they made money. I'm of the impression that they made their money back from the British market alone. But some of them would have gone abroad as well and so that was all profit. There were a lot more cinemas in those days and so you would have been pretty unlikely to have lost money by making this kind of film because there was an audience for exciting, sensational, there wasn't much violence in those days but sleaziness.

MA: I guess that's how Hammer got away with it.

DM: Stuff you couldn't see on TV, definitely, yes.

MA: I like the sleazy aspect of it.

DM: They would have played on that. The posters were lurid and promised things they obviously you couldn't see but the punters were very resilient and they would come back again and again. I mean people like me were going to see these films because they were so unusual and quirky and that's why I liked them. I had a feeling if that if didn't go to see them I would never see them again. They were never going to become classics and indeed play on television and most of them never did.

MA: *Corruption* played in America and did very well.

DM: That would have done exceptionally well. And I can imagine that it would have had terrific word of mouth because it's a great film. A lot of the other films didn't really deliver the goods.

MA: Critically it was not highly regarded.

DM: I think I said at the time that if critics couldn't distinguish between, I can't think of the right words. Unless they could distinguish a good film amongst the rest of the rubbish then why were they doing the job, because it seemed to me that *Corruption* was head and shoulders above the rest of the dross. It wasn't just the *Bulletin* [*The Monthly Film Bulletin*] but the critics as a whole absolutely hated that film. They thought it was a disgrace. I have a feeling that this is the sort of thing that would have made me go to see it. The critics didn't like any of these films, including Hammer. If you look back on the

reviews of Hammer films they are now quite astonishing. They thought it was terrible that these films were going abroad and giving British cinema a bad name.

MA: Working in the business, did you read the critics? Did it bother you? How did you view the critical establishment view of the type of films that were being made by you and Pete Walker.

DM: I suppose deep down I wanted the critics to say, yes this is a cut above average and my fantasy was probably that I would then go on to do much better films. But it was pretty obvious from the beginning that was not going to happen. We were all tarred with the same brush and because it was distributed by Miracle and had a lurid poster and film like this was never going to be taken seriously by the critics. When *Frightmare* came out and got the most dreadful press I suggested to Walker, who was terribly shocked because they were so personal in their hatred of the film and therefore him, I persuaded him to actually put these terrible reviews in an ad for the film. Because I thought if I'm attracted by this kind of thing then other people will be as well and so ads in the evening paper said, "disgusting", "obscene", "a moral obscenity". I thought that might have worked but the film came out at Christmas, so I don't think anything was going to save it and it didn't do enormously well. It was disappointment.

MA: In the *Shivers* article you speak about *A Christmas Carol*, that Hartford-Davis made with a black Cratchit family. I tried to find some information on this film. How did you find that out?

DM: BFI. I never saw it.

MA: How did the distribution circuit work in this country? In America everything is owned by the studios and the vertical integration setup.

DM: It was here as well course because Rank owned Pinewood and Rank distributors and ABC owned Elstree Studios and at various times they had a distributor which was called Associated British Pathé and they owned cinemas. It was a very similar setup which I assumed that they'd copied from Hollywood. So it was the same system essentially but on a much smaller scale.

MA: When you and Pete Walker were making films it was outside of that system wasn't it?

DM: Yes, in that I never worked for a major studio. I've only ever worked for independent companies who then had to sell their films to the circuits.

MA: Would you get money up front to fund these films?

DM: The money was all privately raised and Walker always used to say I use my own money, and he was very proud of that, and he was using money that he made on the strength of these 8 millimetre loops, which were big earners at the time. I don't know where everybody else got their money from but there was no funding as such in those days. It had to be raised privately and you wouldn't get it back again until the film had finished its circuit. There were no guarantees, but then again there wasn't much likelihood of a film being a flop because it had the ingredients that had been proven to be box-office. You had to be very unlucky. I mean nowadays it's completely different in that films aren't released, they stay on the shelf, or if they go out they play a couple of cinemas and then are never seen again. These films lose an enormous amount of money, but it wasn't like that. As we started off by saying it was a business, you had to get the right formula together, the right amount of exploitation whatever that was. Whether it was a sensational subject, or naked women or a degree of violence or horror if you could get that formula right there was very little chance that a. You wouldn't sell the film or, b. You wouldn't make money.

MA: Perhaps the withdrawal of American money from England during the late '60s should have helped to make British filmmakers aware of what films would appeal to audiences.

DM: Very much so. The big budget flops and there were some at that time were all those that were funded by America. Most of the studios were putting money into British cinema and it was very, very hit and miss. I know Paramount and MGM, Columbia. They all had British outlets but not all the films made money. They misjudged the market regularly. I supposed it evened up because they did have some big hits but you couldn't take that risk in the independent sector. There was no element of risk at all. The slightest suggestion of something that wasn't going to appeal to the public and it was written out. We can't have this. The public won't like it. The guys in charge, the producers and directors generally knew what their market wanted. It was very safe.

MA: This is an area of cinema that is not written about.

DM: No it is generally forgotten. I think that the general opinion now is that the British cinema is dead and has almost always been dead. So few productions that are big hits, there is only one or two a year.

Interview interrupted by telephone

DM: I think what I was trying to say is that the general impression is that the British aren't awfully good at making films and really ought not to bother. We're terribly good at

theatre and that's known throughout the world and nobody can touch us. We're terribly good at television and everybody loves British series in which ladies wear crinolines, and there is no question about that, but our films have so often aped Hollywood unsuccessfully. And I think myself, the general feeling is, that we're not awfully good at it and that we really shouldn't bother, also that they didn't make money. I think it's a misconception in that it was possible for a long time, even before I started working, to make a lot of money, just from the British market. Just because they weren't popular abroad didn't mean they weren't financially successful. And you know, even before my time, people like George Formby and Gracie Fields, their films made huge amounts of money, just from British cinemas. And there was certainly an element of that when I was working. All these British sex films that I wrote about in *Doing Rude Things* made a lot of money just from the British market alone.

MA: Could we make films like that now and still make money?

DM: How many British films can make their money back just from the UK? It's really, really difficult now because so it's much more expensive to make films. I suppose, theoretically you could eventually make money from DVD sales but nowadays it's a real risk. You've got to have a lot of money and be prepared to lose it and it wasn't like that in the '70s.

MA: Did you have any problems with censorship? Was it Ferman or Trevelyan?

DM: Trevelyan was just on the point of retirement and we were dealing with his successor Stephen Murphy. He was the first censor I became aware of. The story that is often told is that Murphy felt that in *House of Whipcord*, Mrs Wakehurst was Mary Whitehouse and her blind husband was Lord Longford. Walker came back from the BBFC office and told me this and because we didn't know. As a result of that he put the title card at the front of the film. That was added after it had been to the censor. That is definitely what happened.

MA: That then implies it was about Whitehouse.

DM: I suppose it was. Maybe it was just as well that that conversation never came up during script meetings otherwise it would have turned out to be a different film. It would have been pretentious.

MA: How did you first hear about Robert Hartford-Davis? Where did you first come across his name?

DM: That's difficult to say. I would have been aware of his films when I was too young to see them for a start because I would have seen the ads in the papers and they

would have excited me. As to what his first film was that I saw [pause] I don't know.

Could you remind me of the chronology?

MA: *The Yellow Teddybears, Saturday Night Out, Black Torment...*

DM: It would have been *Saturday Night Out*. I remember seeing that at the Rialto, Enfield. I remember having to go a considerable distance to see that film because it was on at very, very few cinemas, so I knew that I knew if I didn't go to Enfield I would miss it. And I remember thinking, well this is interesting because it was like a TV play with a bit more, not that you ever saw anything, but sex. So that was quite exciting. That was X certificated stuff, with *The Searchers* in, I remember because they couldn't afford *The Beatles*. That was the story anyway, so I'm pretty sure that that would have made an impression because it was a very competent film, and because of that I wanted to see *The Black Torment*. I think that was at the Essoldo, East Barnet, actually, and at the time I quite liked that. So I was aware from about that period, about 1964. So I knew about Hartford-Davis long before I saw *Corruption*.

MA: When *The Black Torment* premiered they had a big game hunter and the Tiller Girls turn up at the cinema.

DM: That was called Showmanship I remember and that died in the '70s. There was no more of that after the '60s. It was very, very common. It was like a carnival mentality, you had to stand outside the cinema and get people in.

MA: There were problems during the making of *The Black Torment*, with Tony Tensor insisting that the film be made under budget and on time. Did you have any pressures when making films?

DM: To a certain extent. The minute I suggested something that was going to make the film go over budget then it had to be re-written. I remember seeing a documentary about the Hammersmith Palais, and I went to see Walker the next day and said we must shoot there, because we had a sequence at the front of *Frightmare*, I think. And I said the Hammersmith Palais will be perfect and I knew so little in those days, that it would cost a fortune, a. to hire, b. to light, you couldn't possibly have lit a space that big. So we ended up in a pub. That's the way it worked.

MA: How did you come up with some of your ideas? For example, the poisoned wafer in *House of Mortal Sin*.

DM: I can no longer remember who thought of what [laughing]. I know that the knitting needle through the ear was mine in *Schizo*.

MA: In British horror cinema at that time there are no happy endings, unlike American horror cinema. Have you any ideas why this might have happened?

DM: It was never discussed at the time. That's the interesting thing. We never said let's be downbeat, let's go against the grain. Let's have an unhappy ending. But there must have been a mood at the time. I mean obviously they were difficult times. We were working, sometimes not working because of the three day week. The lights would go out and we would have to go home. So there was a feeling of great depression at that time. Not exactly despair but irritation and it must have rubbed off on us without us knowing. There is no other reason. We weren't making any kind of statement, conscious statement by having these downbeat endings. And you're right there was a lot of them.

MA: I remember the lights going out as a child.

DM: It was period of complete madness. It must have rubbed off on the popular entertainment. Not just the stuff that we were doing but if you were to have a look at everything that was made during that time you would probably be able to find a theme.

End of Interview

Appendix C

Norman J. Warren. *Robert Hartford-Davis*. Interviewed by Michael Ahmed [Tape] Soho, London. 28 July 2009.

Michael Ahmed (MA): How did you get started in the film business?

Norman J. Warren (NJW): I started looking for a job in the film business in about 1959. I had no experience but I just wanted to get a foot in the door. I approached all the big American companies who were based in Britain at the time, MGM, Warner Bros., but because I didn't have any experience and didn't belong to the union, I couldn't get a job. Approaching the union was no good because they wouldn't put you on their books unless you had experience. The unions operated a closed shop in those days, which meant that everyone had to belong to the union. I eventually found a job with Screen Space, a company that produced commercials for the cinema. I began work as a runner and then moved into the editing and cutting room, and then, in 1960, I got a job on the Peter Sellers film, *The Millionairess*, as a production runner for the assistant director. I then went freelance and worked as an editor.

MA: How did you begin making your own films?

NJW: The problem was finding a decent script. I wanted to make a short film and I knew that Wardour Street and Soho was the place to work in films, because all the major American studios had their post-production facilities there. Wardour Street was the centre of the British film business in the 1960s. There was a lot going on then. The Americans were putting a lot of money into the British film industry. Money was pouring in. It was very easy to get work. Things started to go wrong in about 1969 when the money started to disappear. We all used to go to a pub called "The Intrepid Fox", just around the corner from here. A whole mixture of people from the film business used to go there, editors, cameramen. I picked up a lot of work there. Someone would come up to me and say, "Norman, I've heard about an editing job and I think you would be suitable" and I would take the job. I also used to do the censor cuts for the BBFC. If the BBFC wanted cuts I would do that. And we never worried about payments or signing contracts. It all used to be done with the shake of a hand, not like now. The difficult thing about making a film was to find a good script, a good commercial script and one that would be within the right budget range.

MA: Rank and ABC owned the most profitable cinemas in the UK, what impact, if any, did this have on independent filmmakers?

NJW: With Rank it was difficult. They owned the big studio at Pinewood and the owned the Rank laboratories that would develop film. There was also Rank distributors. They had a monopoly.

MA: What did you think of this monopoly?

NJW: It wasn't good. It was very bad for the industry. If you wanted your film to be seen by large audiences you had to go through Rank. Anyway my first film was called *Fragment*, made on 35mm and it was eleven minutes long. But I couldn't get it shown. There was no market for short films. Fortunately, someone I knew was showing a film in a Rank cinema and they needed a short film for the programme. I told him about my film and they put it on. It was one of the proudest moments of my life, seeing my film on the big screen. Then someone saw one of my short films and they were looking for a director to make a film, so they asked me. My first feature film was called *Her Private Hell* (1967) and it was the first sex film with a story. It was the first British sex movie with a story. It just took off. The cinemas were full of the raincoat brigade. And in some cinemas it would play ten times a day. It ran for twenty-four months in the Cameo, Charing Cross. It cost £18,000 to make and was making £5,000 a week. The film was sold around the world.

MA: What censorship problems did you face with these types of films?

NJW: John Trevelyan was the head of the BBFC and he genuinely loved films. He liked talking to the filmmakers and he would look over the scripts and tell you where you might have problems. He would also come down to the cutting room and you could explain to him where something would be difficult to cut, and we would work out where to cut. Compton of course never had that problem because they operated as a private club, so they could show uncut films. I then made *Loving Feeling* (1968) which was another sexploitation film, made in colour and Cinemascope. I then decided that I didn't want to make any more. They were incredibly boring to do. It became very boring.

MA: What was the critical reaction to these films?

NJW: Majorie Bilbow was very good. She did not judge these films. The others I didn't care about, none of us did. These films became difficult to make after Columbia began making the *Confessions of...* movies. You know the ones with Robin Askwith. They were very successful and they pushed a lot of the small people out. That's when Stanley Long began making his *Adventures of...* sex comedies.

MA: What problems were there in arranging distribution and exhibition in the UK for this type of film?

NJW: It was easy if you had a good exploitable title and subject. Bigger movies had bigger names and they could sell themselves. You could get your films shown at the smaller cinema chains, like the Essoldo\Classic and the Star Group, but they were always small cinemas and you would not make a lot of money. You would make money if your film was shown in the big Rank or ABC cinemas. Sometimes distributors would test a film in one of the small cinemas, and if it went well they would play it at the larger cinemas. ABC were better, they were more open to the independents. Another problem at that time was the Eady Levy which was abused by the distributors, and others. If you made a British film, it was good because a certain percentage of films shown in cinemas had to be British. For the first year of a film's release, you would get a pound for every pound taken at the box-office and this would go to the producer, which meant that you would get your money quicker. The distributors would not distribute your film unless the producer would agree to pay them a percentage of the box-office. They were getting your money for doing nothing. I then went back to editing until I made *Satan's Slaves*, which was completely independent for Brent Walker distributors. *Satan's Slaves* was made for £15,000 and sold to other territories. It made enough money for me to make *Terror*. I still half own all of my films with Les Young, but it is difficult to make films these days. It is different from the Sixties. You can make some money but not on the major circuit, only in repertory theatres with one screening for the specialised market. But there is more interest in my stuff now. And more stuff is coming out on DVD.

MA: Thank you Norman.

End of Interview.

Appendix D

Robert Hartford-Davis. *Now and Then*. Interviewed by Bernard Braden [*That Kind of Girl*, DVD] 1968.

Bernard Braden (BB): I want to ask you at first a two-part question. What was there in your background, in the film business, that was missing in other people's background that caused you to be able to convince someone like Mr Whyte, that you had a cost sense in terms of film and secondly, what led you to him, specifically?

Robert Hartford-Davis (RHD): Well, in the first place I began as a director by investing my own money in my own production, when I first wanted to become a director. In that rather unfortunate episode I lost every penny, which was the background of becoming cost-conscious. Since then, I've endeavoured to combine artistic talent with commercial business, so that my partner, Peter Newbrook and I, have an unparalleled track record of successes. We've made such motion pictures as *The Yellow Teddybears*, which is one of the highest grossing motion pictures for a British low budget picture ever made in this country. We've made *That Kind of Girl* which was also an incredibly high box office return all over the world, and our last picture which is on release now has grossed to date £400,000 in this country, the Norman Wisdom *Press for Time*. Both Peter and myself have travelled up through the ranks from clapper boy, focus puller, cameraman. I've been an editor, assistant editor, assistant director, and we both are producers with several hats. We can walk in any part of the studio, from the carpenters, plasterers, paint-shop and know every detail of the costing, from the art department down. We know where the money goes and how it should be spent. Does that answer your question?

BB: That certainly answers question one. Now what led you to Mr Whyte?

RHD: Well, we were prepared to investigate the potential of owning negative for television release in America. One [pause] filmmaking in this country relies on a major distributor, either English or American majors, we felt that if we could own the negative in perpetuity we would have something, after we had made thirteen or ten pictures, a package which we could offer. Now as you know most motion pictures are financed completely by a major distributor and the producer just shares in the net profit or a small percentage of gross according to his track record.

BB: And gets it last.

RHD: And he comes out on the end, even if he puts part of his own money into the picture. We went to America and investigated the possibilities of selling negative or films to television after theatrical release, and we found that if we could make it down to a price, that is without sacrificing quality, we could recoup the negative cost in America; and the rest of the world you could make a profit on. And that's how we came to go to Mr Whyte to back us in this venture.

BB: Did you have any qualms? He spoke about a period of reluctance to get involved and a three month investigation. Was this a worrying three months for you?

RHD: No, not worrying, because he virtually tore our books apart. He went over all the receipts, over all the films we'd made. He went back in our history for quite a while. And eventually his accountant came up with an answer that satisfied him.

BB: And you?

RHD: Ah yes, we had nothing to worry about.

BB: You mentioned a little while earlier, "without sacrificing quality". What is your concept of quality at this point?

RHD: I don't think that you should spend [*pause*] I don't think that you should use money for the sake of improving a picture for, as Mr Whyte said, to spend 500 per cent to get 5 per cent improvement. I think that every penny you should spend should be up there on the screen. It shouldn't be dissipated in nervous energies of spending enormous sums on producer's perks as it were. If you have a budget, you cost that budget up with your production team as near as you can within say 5 per cent, you should be able to make the picture. If you don't there is something wrong with your costing.

BB: And this is a matter of pre-planning?

RHD: Absolutely, right down to the last detail.

BB: Now then, continuing this concept of quality. Would you be satisfied for example as a production team to get the reputation of Hammer films?

RHD: Well, Hammer have an excellent reputation. There's shame in being classed as Hammer, but Hammer have a reputation for a certain type of motion picture at least up 'till now. We're not in any category as the type of picture we made. Our range is various. Our next picture is an adventure story. We've made comedies, we've made dramas, we've problems with a social background, the kitchen-sink kind of drama. So we don't really have a reputation of being specifically in a horror field, our last picture was a psychological thriller. Which isn't released yet but we didn't go into this venture to make

a horror film, or a psychological thriller, or a comedy but an overall concept of all types of story, whatever is we feel right for the market as it is now.

BB: Suppose that you do get into a field where one or both of you want to do something a bit wild in terms of the sort of financial advice you get. How would you go about selling that?

RHD: By wild? I don't quite understand? What do you mean by wild?

BB: There is a sense in which the British film industry in the past seven or eight years has made its breakthrough as a result of which a lot of British films have capitalised on it, through films which were unusual in the sense that they showed first in art houses and films that eight years ago showed in art houses can be made in this country now and get major distribution. There is the pioneering thing of making the film you really want to make artistically, that excites you, but may not bring the immediate return.

RHD: It's a difficult question because I think all films, if you tell a story and you tell it well, you tell it artistically, with good artists. And I think that Peter Newbrook is one of the finest producer and cameraman in the world. If you tell it with that kind of approach, where your producers sits down with you as director and work out the details, I'm sure that any story no matter how wild can be commercially successful. One possibly looks at paintings that were done by Leonardo Da Vinci, in those days were considered wild, today they are accepted as great forms of art and worth hundreds of thousands of pounds. I think the motion picture today can be artistic, to the point where it can be completely enjoyable by all masses of people. Whether you have a quasi-pseudo-intellectual approach or whether you have a purely down-to-earth approach of the man who needs to be entertained after he finishes driving his bus or getting out of the coalmine. I think you've got to apply to all intellects.

BB: You talk about a down-to-earth approach or a quasi-intellectual but there is a true intellectual approach and let's forget Da Vinci. I would think Da Vinci was largely representational, would always have been acceptable but the artists of the Impressionist period, for example were not considered in their time, saleable at all. The Van Goths, the Renoirs, the others. They're the ones who in far less time than Da Vinci have become worth more money than Da Vinci is now. That's the kind of film I am thinking about, the film that's ahead of its time.

RHD: Well, we made a film ahead of its time. We made a musical ahead of its time. Which at the time we made it was not a particularly financial success, which we backed with our own money, but today some eight years later, or six years later, the picture is

beginning to reap its benefits; from American television, strangely enough. So this might answer your question. I still think no matter what the subject matter, if you make it entertaining, if you tell the story well, that's all we are, we're story tellers...in celluloid.

And, I think if you tell a story well, people in India, China, whatever, they're interested.

BB: Do you believe yourself, that it is possible to develop a British film industry in this country, which is British backed, which can cost itself properly to the point where we will not have to have most of our films financed by America. Is there a way, to what extent do you think, using the kind of system you've employed; convincing people about your costs in this country. Is there a way that we can get a bigger slice of the dollars coming back in here rather than having the Americans initially finance the film, so that in fact the benefits don't accrue to the country? And if so, how should we do it and how much bigger a cut should we get?

RHD: What are you saying? Is there a way for the British film producer or the British film company to be able to own a larger percentage of his negative? Is it possible for him to get dollars back into this country, into his account rather than paying into an American production company account or distributor's account, and how is it going to arrive at that solution?

BB: Briefly, what have we to learn from you?

RHD: From me I don't know. Personally, from this situation, I think that Tom Whyte has arranged a situation whereby he participates with an American major as a complete 50\50 partner. So that at least 50 per cent comes back to this country whereby in the past only the producer's profit, which is always at the end of the film, used to come back here. Now at least 50 per cent of the profits of the picture will come back because he is participating in 50 per cent in perpetuity of the negative ownership. I think the British banks will eventually realise the potential of the market as colour television comes in, and colour films after their theatrical release become valuable. Many of the stock issues of the American majors have occurred because pirates want to get their hands on the vaults and get their hands on these negatives. It becomes a very valuable commodity. I think that if we can get hold of negative ownership in this country of good British films, they are without doubt one of the biggest dollar earners that this country could ever have.

End of Interview.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	Associated British Cinemas
ABP	Associated British Productions
ABPC	Associated British Picture Corporation
ACT	Association of Cine Technicians
AIC	Association of Independent Cinemas
ASFP	Association of Specialised Film Producers
BBFC	British Board of Film Censors
BFPA	British Film Producers Association
CEA	Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association
CCC	Cinema Consultative Committee
CFC	Cinematograph Films Council
EMI	Electrical and Musical Industries
FBFM	Federation of British Film Makers
FFU	Federation of Film Unions
FIDO	Film Industry Defence Organisation
FPA	Film Producers' Association of Great Britain
FSFA	Federation of Specialised Film Associations
GNP	Grand National Pictures
KRS	Kinematograph Renters' Society
NFFC	National Film Finance Corporation
SAA	Screen Advertising Association

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