

GUIDO COEN

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Guido Coen, producer and director of Twickenham Film Studios -
interviewer Sid Cole.

SIDE 1, TAPE 1

SC: We always ask about origins, where were you born.

GC: I was born in Milan, in 1915 which makes me 73, I don't feel
it but its there.

SC: And you went to school

GC: I went to school in Italy until about 12, and then we came
to this country, my father, myself and my mother for what was
intended to be 6 months, a maximum of a year, and we stayed here
ever since.

SC: WHy was that

GC: My father was connected in business to a cousin of his who
had an office in London, a rather large office representing
italian manufacturers and my father was the link in Milan. And
this cousin of his died of a heart attack suddenly and he came
over here to see what was going on, what could be done with the
company and there it is. Since then, my father started on his
own, I went to Pitman College, first of all I had to learn
English, I didn't speak a word, and having passed an exam I went
to Pitman's in Southampton Row where I took various courses in
English Literature, shorthand typing and bookkeeping, and one day
my father whom I 'm afraid suffered from heart trouble said the
time had come for me to go into his office and I became a
commercial traveller. We represented italian and French manu-
facturers and I started to travel the City of London with my
heart in my mouth. And then came the war and the whole thing
collapsed. And being Italian nationals we were immediately
interned.

RF: Where were you interned.

GC: Isle of Man. I was, we're talking 1940, I was born in 1915,
there it is. That's how we met by pure chance Filippo del
Giudice, he was also interned, we met him and my father thinking
of this young man interned with with nothing to do informed Del I
knew shorthand and typing and i became his right hand man in the
Isle of Wight Douglas camp, and we started, we opened a bank, we
opened schools with Del as the head of the camp. He said when you
get out get in touch with me. And when I got out I phoned him up
and I said I'm out. He said you better come and talk to me. I
went to Bedford Sq just behind Tottenham Court Rd and they had
beautiful offices. He said you see these beautiful offices, the
lights are switched on, the gas fires are going, I have £35 in
the bank, would you like to join me. At the time I had 17sh/6d
in the post office so I had very little to loose, I knew nothing
about films and I said certainly and I will join you. And I
started making tea. But suddenly Del being Del he informed me
that Columbia were going to finance his first picture which was

Unpublished Story with Valerie Hobson and Richard Greene and that's how I met Havelock Allen, Tony, a charming man. But then two things happened, Del had a flaming row with the financial director of the company at the time, he almost came to blows with him, but having got rid of him he turned to me and said you take over the company. At the same time one morning he had telephoned Noel Coward and said to him he wanted to make a picture about the British navy, an you imagine the situation, an Italian in this country during the war telephoning Noel Coward, and Noel Coward intrigued by this man who spoke very poor English and to make a long story short we began preparation for In Which We Serve with me in charge of the company and that's how I started in the film business, by assisting Del and by becoming in the fullness of time his right hand man and learning everything I know today of how to handle people in this business.

Then we made two other pictures of Noel Coward, Blythe Spirit and Happy Breed. David Lean directed all three. And we went from strength to strength, Major Sassoon who was our chairman at the time, and the story of Two Cities is linked with Rank. he was distributing, we had a long term agreement with Rank at that time which was negotiated by Dell but many things happened in the interim, there were certain jealousies, it was a very complicated relationship there. I've never gathered why men are so jealous of men.

SC: Can I ask you something there, did you have any connection whatever before all this with films.

GC: None at all, none whatsoever. It was all new. Giudice himself introduced me to films and left me to my own devices, he expected things to be done and you had to find out how they were to be done. I had to learn by mistakes and trial and error, because financial situations were such that I had to find by trial and error, we had nothing else, we had lost everything in the war, because of the war money was tied up abroad. You know what it is when the war breaks up completely your business and the shutters come down. I started that way. I found it fascinating, I found it exciting, I found it to the day it is a business which is never the same, it changes every day.

SC: What happened

GC: What happened was that Two Cities unfortunately came to an end for the reasons hinted at before, the Rank organisation found itself exposed to a degree and John Davis came in and had to clear up the situation, a lot of people lost their jobs, Two Cities was taken over by the Rank Organisation and we were all dismissed. But I am the proud owner of a very beautiful letter from John Davis, which in not something a lot of people got in which he wished me a lot of luck. I found myself on my own. That was probably the toughest period in my life in the film business, because after having everything I ever wanted in an office with secretaries, sergeants at the doors, cars and so on, I found myself with nothing. I drove out of Denham Studios with a little Morris and I said to myself what am I going to do with myself now, I felt very alone. I looked around and what I said to myself was that I had to continue on the same pattern of life as I had at Two Cities, in other words I should not change my style of working life, I had no office to go to but I would take my car

and go to Wardour St, and start looking, start talking, start ringing bells, I knew people and I got to know people, and I finally got a phone call from London Films, Sir Cunyngham, that's it, who asked me whether I had ever subtitled pictures. I immediately said I had when in point of fact I did not know what he meant, and there was a young man in the office with Sir David Cunynghame called Lew Watt, and he said Lew Watt will do the technical side and we want you to subtitle an Italian picture in to English. I said certainly. I came out of his office and Lew Watt said to me you don't know what they're talking about do you, I said you're quite right, he said well I'll show you. And I started subtitling pictures with Lew Watt, I used to do the literary side, and he used to do the technical side, the spotting, and lengths, and we together did subtitles for 40 or 50 pictures. The funny thing was we subtitled pictures in Chinese, in Indian and for the Chinese picture I had to have a Chinese waiter with me to tell me where the subtitles,

SC: Did you have a book saying what the dialogue was.

GC: I had the Italian dialogue and I had the picture, they gave me a film and we did the spotting together with Lew Watt and the measurements and I used to type the script. We had the film, we had the print which used to run on the two sided thing. And Lew Watt was working all the day so we had to do this at night, so we either used to work at night till 2 o'clock in the morning or we used to work at the weekends. There was always the problem that the Movieola might break down and so we had spare keys of other cutting rooms in in elm St in case we were caught. And that was how we started.

With Derick de Marney I joined forces with him.

SC: What year was that

GC: 54, 55. And my first picture which I co produced with Derick who was a very good producer was She Shall have Murder which was not a very good picture. But we made it and then I began to get the feel that I wanted to produce and and i began to want to write, it's always been a thing with me to write. And when I was by myself I made 10 or 15 films, I had no office, I worked from home, I always said and I say it today as long as you've got some paper, a pencil and a telephone, you can start work. Big organisation are not absolutely essential so long as you've got a telephone and something to write with . And I made quite a number of pictures and I was 10 years as an independent, not easy, i wouldn't recommend it to anyone, it was difficult until 1959, having made one or two pictures for Alf Shipman, at Riverside, Southall and here Twickenham, Alf Shipman suddenly died and Kenneth Shipman asked me if I wanted to come and join them here permanently at Twickenham and that was April 1959.

SC: Can I ask you before that the financing of pictures when you were totally on your own

GC: The first thing which happened was the National Film Finance Corporation came into being, and I think that Derick and I were the first one to get a loan from the NFFC for SHE Shall Have Murder, which was eventually distributed by John Woolf's Independent Distributors,

SC: What sort of terms did you have.

GC: The terms were the ones you remember no doubt, it was first charge, 2nd charge 3rd charge. I remember saying to Lawrie at the time, Jimmy Lawrie who you remember, head of the National Film Finance Corporation, I could not understand why when 3 people put in money into a picture, or an form of product, the recoupmnt should be spread out into 3 installments and why the producer who has deferred part of his money should be the last one to get any money out of it, he was shocked because first there was the bank, then came the distributor, and then if there was any left, the deferment to the producer would be recouped.

SC: I agree, that's always been the great problem.

GC: That was the nonsensical problem, because I said recoupmnt in keeping with the amounts each party put in, he thought it was most unacceptable to anyone concerned. After that the situation changed slightly because Eros was one of the companies I made pictures for and they would finance 100%, you were paid say as an employee so much for your producers fee, there was no question of participation, at the time that made a lot of sense to me, which affects itself what had been happening in the years after. The negative belonged to them forever and a day. There was a certain advantage as far as I was concerned because you were not waiting week after week desperately for statements that never came showing that you had nothing coming anyway. Then I even made a picture for Columbia, Kill Her Gently, Frankovitch was the big noise there. He was very nice. Kill her Gently reminds me of a very funny story, because Kill her Gently was made for about £29-30,000 and when we showed the picture to Columbia they could not believe their eyes, we had 50% of the profits under the agreement and we were going to make a fortune out of this, but when the statements began to arrive the black one was always inferior to the red one which was underneath the black one, which showed the expenses incurred, and whenever we started asking questions, we were going to make a fortune out of this and where was the fortune, and we got on their nerves, and I got a telephone call saying they wanted to buy the company and shares, so by that time, 1959 I was here, so let's put it as bluntly as possible, I had a job I was paid for so I said yes, let's sell the shares, and they bought the company with the picture inside.

SC: Do you think that satisfied what you should have got as a participant.

GC: You know, you're asking a very interesting question, distribution is a mystery which will remain a mystery until the dying day,

SC: In what sense

GC: Probably because of my early training in the City, I do feel what is fundamentally wrong after all these years, either you make a picture, and I am talking about distribution generally, you make a film, you sell it as you would sell a suite, a dining room table with 6 chairs and you forget it, but to think in terms of giving that picture to someone to sell where you have no

control whatsoever, you have no knowledge because you are talking about a world organisation, let me give you an example, I hear there is some picture making an enormous amount of money in Japan, I've yet to find a producer who tells me he has had a big amount of money from Japan. I would like to know the answer to that question, what has happened to the whole of the money from Japan. I had an idea at one time here at Twickenham that I wanted to create a cooperative in which the producers and directors who made the film were the sales people of their film so the producers and directors who formed a company to make this film are connected to that negative till the last day of that negative, and when we are talking to the last day of the negative today we are talking about a long long life, because they are the manufacturers of the product, there is not the slightest question - producers are manufacturing a product on which finally they have no control, but it is an asset, no matter how it has been financed it is an asset which has been produced by them, they may well have links with financial people who are entitled to part of the revenue which comes in, that is part of the agreements, but the moral principal of having a producer control his own product and not to have to go through wholesalers, because the distributor is fundamentally a wholesaler who sells to shops, now I don't see the necessity for that, if the wholesaler, be it one of the big Americans or whatever, has put up 100% of the cost of the picture, the picture is there, now they will say to the producer that you are entitled to a percentage and that is where we begin to ask a lot of questions which have been asked over the years by countless producers and the answers have not been always extremely satisfactory, therefore it is not a healthy state of an industry which says to itself we have a future. Now the television as I understand it is a very different thing because it is based on licenses and at the end of the period the material comes back to the producer who can sell it either again to the same source or to somebody else. And that I find healthy because the creative people, and they are creative people, must be assured, guaranteed, I find that the whole approach of television is healthier than the chronic state of affairs of our film side which has not changed over the year.

SC: What you are saying is, and I agree with you, creative people make a product and it wouldn't exist if they didn't do it, so they're entitled, which is different from the practice, the people who've made the product are entitled to the major part, the initial part of the revenue of what they've done.

GC: We're talking about a lot of money. There is the question of the risk financiers run when they put up a tremendous amount of cash for a picture, that is one of the risks, the major risk that a financier runs in wanting to be part and parcel of a very dangerous industry, no one puts a gun to their head and say you must put up the money for this picture. If they put up the money for a film it's because they have thought about the possibilities of making a lot of money, consequently if they do unfortunately lose it, it isn't a question of saying that we want to weep for them, they have gone in with their eyes open, and I am thinking particularly of The Last Emperor, but the fundamental principal of a producer risk, let's leave his reputation aside for a minute, but to have to risk part of his fees in a picture and have to feel that he is going to recoup it if and when the other parties have recouped their including the guarantor of comple-

tion, who in any case are getting a fee, we are talking about people who come into a film on a business basis and come out of it almost as wounded victims. Now I find that amoral.

SC: You were mentioning The Last Emperor, can you tell us any more about that.

GC: The Last Emperor was a marvellous achievement, one banker saw the possibility of making, because they did not come into the Last Emperor because they liked the script, or they like the cast or they liked the location, they came in because they thought the picture could make a lot of money, that was the only reason why they came in, there was only one banker who thought it was possible, now that banker is entitled to get his reward, hopefully in the very near future, or the long run, what I am trying to say is when an banker or financial institution puts in money in a film, 1) the producer doesn't really have to take his hat off and say thank you very very much, they're coming in because they think you're going to make money, if you don't it's just one of those things, that suite did not sell, that dining room table did not sell, people did not like it, it was made with the intention of selling, no one sets out with the intention of making a bad picture or making a failure and I wish one could approach the film business in the same way as we approach any other manufacturing enterprise.

SC: It's slightly different, because take The Last Emperor, the main person involved in that was the director who had the original idea of doing this rather extraordinary thing. And therefore should be the first person to recoup.

GC: I don't know what the set up was, the financial arrangements, but I should certainly imagine that the makers the creators, as Del Giudice used to call them, the talents, they should be the first ones to be rewarded unless they've already had a considerable sum out of the budget, I do not know anything about the picture, but they surely must have a percentage of the profits and that's where we get into the row of establishing what the profits are, and that is one of the most difficult item to establish over the years and that's where the accountancy comes into play.

SC: Can you tell me something more about the Isle of Man.

GC: It was a tragic moment as far as I was concerned, and my father because he was interned with me. We never thought Italy would come into the war on the side of Germany, I come from Milan and we're not particularly keen on anything North of the Alps. The Isle of Man was a tragic, it wasn't tragic, all of a sudden you were a prisoner and you had to put up with it.

SC: How did you feel about it, did you feel betrayed

GC: No, no. I was betrayed by the Italian government, not by the British government, I understood the situation here, I understood it very well indeed. I couldn't believe and then facts proved it Italians didn't want to fight the war, they didn't want to know about it, Italians are lovable people, easily lead in a sense, I don't know if they're easily lead today but they certainly were at the time and of course he made a mistake

in calculations, he thought the war would be over in three weeks, and that was the reason he came in, he made a terrible mistake of never having been abroad and in particular never having been to England.

SC: There was an Italian director who got sunk on the

GC: No he wasn't sunk, it was Mario Zampi, Mario came to the Isle of Man eventually when he was picked up, minus 3 teeth. He was rescued by a Canadian, I think it was a Canadian destroyer, and the man who went up on the deck in front of him was a man called Lundini who slipped on the last step and kicked Mario Zampi in the teeth, pushed him back into the water minus 3 teeth. He arrived in the Isle of Man. But Del got out of the camp because he had diabetes and the authorities were bored with people with diabetes because of the special diet, what with one thing and another it was a passport to freedom.

SC: They didn't know much about diabetes then

GC: They couldn't be bothered with diets and special food in those days, it was mutton and if you don't like it too bad. So there it is that in short is the life of your's truly in the film business.

SC: Here we are sitting in you office in Twickenham Studios which is a very different Twickenham Studios from the one I knew 20 years ago, which today is a very sensibly organised studio, not on the scale of Pinewood or Denham, but which can accommodate the kind of pictures people are making, tell me how you came to be involved in Twickenham.

GC: Let's go back, Alf Shipman, who controlled a chain of cinemas, Shipman and King but also owned 3 studios. There was Riverside, Southall and Twickenham, hence Alliance Film Studios that was, I made pictures for Alf at Riverside, Southall and here. It was very simple in those days because Alf had a contract with GFD for small pictures which would cover the quota. He would phone me up and say I want you to make a picture for me, I haven't got a story yet, I've got one myself Alf would say, I've got to make it for £13,000 for the very simple reason his contract with GFD stipulated £15,000 on delivery. The £13,000 would also absorb a certain amount of studio space, a certain amount of labour, because in those days he had carpenters and electricians, and therefore it paid him to absorb for a 3 week picture, 15 shooting days his staff and so on, and this happened very often towards November when nobody wanted to make a picture before Christmas, and he would say there you are, that's the script, and I used to go home and phone him up and say Alf I can't make this picture for £13,000, he'd say I can't understand what you're complaining about, I give you the script, I give you the money and you're complaining. I used to say look if I don't make it in 3 weeks you'll have to put more money into it, he'd say I don't want to hear about that, change the script, so I got once a script in which there was a lot of night shooting with police launches on the Thames and I said you're just wasting your time, he said well change the story, I said there is not even the beginning of a story for £13,000, well change the whole thing, did you ever meet a writer called Brock Williams, so I used to phone Brock out of sheer desperation, I've got to make a picture

which has got to cost £13,000, well I'll come and see you, I've got one or two ideas, so we would make a script which had nothing to do with the script he'd given me and I had to say to Alf I think we've got it, he'd say you've changed it have you, what is it called Hornet's Nest, that's not the title of the picture, I said it's nothing to do with the picture you gave me, he'd say get on with it. That's now we made a number of pictures which was a tremendous training.

SC: A lot of things must have happened between those days and now when you're in charge of the place.

GC: It all changed when first of all Alf passed away, Riverside had already been sold to the BBC, Southall was decrepit anyway, and he only had a lease on it, we discarded it and concentrated here, when Alf died the whole situation changed, I came here in 1959 and I found myself in a situation first of all that the studio was very run down and to his credit Kenneth Shipman said you cannot have a studio without a dubbing theatre. And we built the first dubbing theatre, to his credit he built a dubbing theatre, my father used to say you cannot have a studio without a dubbing theatre so we built a dubbing theatre and gradually we built other things, we built this, we built another stage, and it was tough because of the time, there was a lot of thing which were wrong. 1960 was a bad time, a bad period, the competition was murderous, somebody invented the blanket deals, that was what destroyed Walton, and I had to fight that period of time when Shepperton in particular were giving anything away, and we had to do a lot of blanket deals. While we were taking completely the responsibility of the sets, the building of the sets, the lay by and everything else, but we had no control over the problems of the shooting.

SC: Can you explain a bit more about the problems of blanket deal.

GC: The blanket deals were this, the producer came along and said I want one figure which will cover a number of items and these items are accommodation in the studio as far as office is concerned, stage availability, the construction of sets without the dressing, the lighting of sets, the labour allocated to sets, in other words, carpenters, electricians, stage hands, you're responsible for all that, the studio, that figure must cover the whole thing, now that implied immediately what we, the studio, had to have on our side was the art director, we had to control and we had to look at the paper that was hanging on the walls, the kind of construction he wanted, the kind of doors he wanted, windows that he wanted because everything was money, if he wanted special windows that had to be built, while we had a stock of windows, one has to say use the windows which are there so not to use material, because materials came into play, the question of every other aspect of the set had to be considered very carefully because it was money and it came within that one figure he would give us, plaster work was another thing which was the bane of my life because plaster work was expensive, so that was the mistake which was made in certain quarters, to establish that sort of unit that was offered to producers who had no problems once they had made the deal with you, once they had made the deal with you the responsibility was yours, we had to strike the sets and possibly revamp them or replace them so we had to follow the

shooting schedules in detail, we were practically producing the picture without having the authority of the director or the producer.

SC: It must have led from time to time to various controversies about what was being charged over and above the blanket figure.

GC: Well there was hardly anything charged over and above because they also turned round, the producer would turn round to us and say tomorrow morning, I don't see, will you be ready, and he'd call for overtime which came within the blanket, if there was a question of keeping people back a couple of hours it was to our charge not the producer because he expected to have

SC: It was not a very good deal.

GC: No it was not a very good deal, it was a recipe for bankruptcy, it was established a long time ago, it shall remain nameless, he was a disaster in another studio,

SC: Why should it remain nameless.

GC: It was Andy Worker. It was Andy's idea at Shepperton. I remember very distinctly once, that will remain nameless because he's very big, he was making a picture and he had me on one phone and Andy on the other comparing the blankets and he would say you would give me another cutting room included, he's giving me a cutting room, and I used a very well know English expression asking him what to do with his picture, and I needed that picture very badly but I wasn't going to go down that road, and I didn't speak to that man for many years, and finally he came up to me at BAFTA and said isn't it time we shook hands, I said if you must you must, but I didn't like that because it was a bazaar then, it wasn't filmmaking. I will tell you another story, a picture with Willy Wilder, The Man without the Body, Willy was Billy Wilder's brother, he used to call himself the cheap end of the family, he died a millionaire, made here, at British National, I was producing and he was directing and putting up the £15,000 that the picture cost. We had an office at Eros, I wasn't here, I was independent, and Eros was going to buy the picture if they like it, and I made a deal with National, I can't remember the details, but Walton got to hear about and phoned me up, J. K. Morris said to me on the telephone, Willy was standing by me, he said whatever you're paying National take off £2,000 and come here, Willy liked this, we were going to make a picture for nothing. I said Willy no, we'll do our worst at National, we've got to go to National

SIDE 2, TAPE 1

SC: How did the picture do.

GC: Willy said whatever the picture makes take off £2,000, he owes us £2,000. He made it at National, we made it at £15,000, he sold it to Eros for £15,000, I had made a deal with Willy and I think I had 5% of the profits. I learnt a great deal from Willy because he came back to us for other pictures, he said to me listen kid, you've got 5% of this picture haven't you, I said yes and you've had the cost of the picture back now and the worlds yours, that's right, he said how much do you want of your

5% profit, he paid me because he said I have a stock of pictures which I accumulate, then I sell them for anything they want for television, then I go to the American distributor and say I have 45 hours of television, they don't know what crap is in those tins, they buy 45 hours.

SC: What did you get out of it.

GC: A few hundred pounds. It's a long time ago, I needed the money, I took the money.

SC: IN terms of the people you've worked with which is the director which has impressed you most in terms of the pictures you've done.

GC: David Lean. David Lean was a revelation, I was young, I was on the floor, This Happy Breed, behind his chair, listening to Stanley Holloway, who was, you remember the two of them, enthralled, suddenly I hear David say cut, I couldn't help it, I said why, I don't need him, I'm picking it up off the other fellow. I learnt a lot from that simple sentence, this was an editor who knew exactly what he was going to use. David Lean impressed me tremendously, to this day he is one of the top half dozen, Carol Reed,

SC: What did you do with Carol

GC: Odd Man Out and The Way Ahead. Carol Reed was something else, he was a very interesting man.

AL: But a different approach

GC: A very different approach, Carol I remember one story, I was very proud of myself because my boss Del had had a heart attack and was in bed and I was practically in charge of the office, of the company, Sasha was in America and Carol appeared in my office, and he said listens he said, we were going to make Odd Man Out, James Mason, I was young in those days, they want a lot of money for him, he mentioned a figure, I don't remember it, he said what do you think we should do, I felt very proud, I said Carol, I learned this from Del, because any good in Odd man Out, one afternoon I knew that Del was having a meeting with Carol and about 4.30 I get a call would I go into Del's office, Carol's left and Del is in a state, we've got the knew picture with Carol, and he tells me it's the greatest this and that, and I said there's a book F. L. Green, and F. L. Green was the writer of Odd Man Out, and I said have you read it, and he said no. Carol has. He wanted to make it, so his money was on Carol, that's what I learned, he said trust the talented people, your job is to find out if that man is talented, if he's talented trust him, don't interfere, when he said to me that he had not read the book that proved to me his money was on Carol and when Carol came into my office and asked me if we should pay this money to James Mason I took on the mantle of Del and said Carol if you think so you must go ahead and he paid the money, he said thank you, I've never forgotten that day I made the decisions, I can see Carol in my office.

SC: You made Odd Man Out possible, because it's a lovely lovely picture.

GC: It's a beautiful picture, the best thing James Mason has done in my opinion. And then of course came Lawrence Olivier and don't forget Leslie Howard, we had Leslie Howard as a director of the company for a while until he died.

SC: Tell me more about Leslie Howard because I worked for him for a while.

GC: Leslie was a dreamer with his feet very much on the ground funnily enough. I had one experience with him which was quite stunning when Violette died, Violette she died, I was taken aback when I went to see him at Grosvenor House, he was shattered, and I was terrible upset when he said why did it have to happen to me, she was a young woman, Leslie was a dreamer, yet he had his feet on the ground, and Leslie came in, we made a picture called The Gentle Sex, we shot part of it at Highbury Studio which was a disaster

AL: Why do you say that

GC: It was the wrong director. P. C. Samuel, Phil,

SC: What happened to him.

GC: He's dead, Phil died after marrying a very wealthy lady, I phoned Phil up and said it's a piece of rubbish here

SC: Tell us about the aeroplane, shooting down,

GC: Terrifying, I said to him as he was going off, Leslie must you go, he said yes I must, he never came back, and then Leslie came into the Gentle Sex and reshaped the whole thing.

GC: It was not him who did it originally,

GC: No, he changed it completely and he made it a very good picture, but he would come in at 11 o'clock, he was a bit erratic.

SC: I was the supervising editor on Pimpernel Smith and First of the Few, a great loss

GC: Del appeared in your picture as the Italian general,

SC: That's right, but it was a great loss with Leslie because he was a director and actor who had a great sense of style.

GC: Delightful man. I was very fond, but he was very far away, but you never got near to him, I think one could get much nearer to Laurence Olivier in the making of Henry V and Hamlet.

Henry V I was behind the scenes, and for Hamlet I had to buy the chimes or notes of a particular organ which could only be got in France, then I got a letter from him thanking me, I kept that letter for years. This is what I miss today, they're not there anymore, these people who inflame the imagination, and others that worked around them, they were personalities, they were giants, Gabby Pascal, Alex Korda, Del in his own field was a giant. That made you work 7 days a week because they knew how to

inject enthusiasm in you, they're not there,

SC: Like Leslie Howard as far as I'm concerned, a great creative thing there, I was the editor, he wanted me on the floor all the time, and you felt in contact with a tremendous creative energy,

GC: I think that's what we miss today, we have a machine which makes pictures and in future will make a lot of television stuff but the inspiration is gone, maybe you find it if David Lean is going to make another film, but the years are going by and I do not see from the young elements this kind of charisma which was very much in evidence today - but probably that's due to my getting older and therefore I do not see in the younger generation that same quality and I am probably wrong, but I see the results, there is really no great moments of imagination, I do not see them, I think Dickie Attenborough got very near to it with Gandhi

SC: What did you think about Cry Freedom.

GC: In terms of entertainment a compelling thing, I preferred it to Gandhi, it was repetitive, I'll tell you why and may Dickie forgive me I got fed up with Gandhi saying he was going to starve himself to death, I wanted him to starve himself to death finally, do me a favour and do it. I mean enough with threats, it's beautiful to look at but I found it a bit too long. Cry Freedom I thought was very compelling, I like it very much, I liked very much Jewel in the Crown, now that I adored, that to me is art, so you have moments, but because of the demand it's like Macdonald, it's mass production.

AL: You've had Dick Lester here quite a lot. He did a lot of his early stuff here.

GC: First of all he started with the Beatles, and that was pure genius because the four boys were a unique experience, he's done a lot of pictures, he's been here 15, 16, 17 years,

SC: Looking at the future do you think it's basically with television, however you widely interpret it,

GC: I'm afraid there's no way out, that's it. You see I foresee blocks of flats being built with screens in there, libraries downstairs, saucers up the top and this thing will pour out and nothing will will require a tremendous amount, I was talking to somebody the other day who's now gone to Los Angeles and they're now talking about 400 hours of television,

AL: One of the other directors you've had here on a couple of films is Polanski.

GC: Roman, unique experience. Roman arrived here with Michael Klinger, Repulsion, and Michael introduced me to Roman and said this is a very nice boy, he hardly speaks any English, and whatever Michael was saying he would say yes Michael, certainly Michael, and Michael would turn round to me and say see, he eats out of my hand. And I would say but Michael I'm not so sure. He's a lamb. We started shooting. The producer was not allowed on the floor. And Michael coming to me what a , I said I told you, a genius, Roman is a genius that can give you the

biggest picture you've ever had and the biggest disaster you've ever had, he's a lovable man in need of affection, warmth, who's had all the tragedies of the world piled on his shoulders, I can remember coming out of the A with her in front of him very pregnant and him saying I'm going to be a daddy for the first time in my life,

SC: It was awful.

GC: What more can a can take. I'm very fond of Roman, tremendously fond of Roman.

SC: Where is he

GC: Paris. I'm very fond of the man, but he can make you a sensational picture or give you a real headache.

SC: How do you see the future, people have been talking in terms that the future really belongs to a European market making pictures in the English language.

GC: Man many years ago, about 15 years ago, came to London a man, a new Italian ambassador who happened to be a friend of mine because when the embassy opened up again in London he was a second secretary, his name was Raimondo Manzini, and when he came back and went to a cocktail party, all of a sudden I said this is the new Italian ambassador, and I said I don't believe it, and he looked at me and said you've kept your hair, Raimondo Manzini talked at length at the time and I said I can only see one thing, a European Film Production, in those days we were not talking television so much, in which the various countries pool together, eventually everything will have to be shot in English, it will become the lingua franca of our industry and it will be dubbed in all those languages as and when necessary. He said look, we'll get in touch with the TUC and ACTT and I will give you the embassy, if you need the embassy I will give you the reception room and we will have the reception here with the heads of the unions and so forth and possibly the BFPTA, get together and start talking. I got in touch with that, I got in touch with the other, and nobody wanted to hear, could not be bothered, and this is what I find a terrible obstacle, people do not want to grasp that the common market is here, the common market to my way of thinking with all it's mistakes, it's not perfect, far from it, it will take a hundred years to make it perfect, but we have 13 nations of different character, different habits, languages, different outlooks together, it will take a long time, it will take generations because the British will have to learn their languages, they will have to learn English, it belongs to the young people, it doesn't belong to people like myself, but it is inevitable, I revel at the thought that in Brussels there is a school where kids from this country, from other countries are being educated together in each other's languages, that is the key and eventually it will come, when I hear the mountains of butter and beef, of course there are mistakes, but can you imagine for 40 years we have had peace, the major wars have always started in Europe, they've been killing themselves by the thousands in Persia and Iraq and we've lived our life, but the moment somebody starts letting off a gun in Europe you've got problems.

SC: Can I come to a final question, can you tell me what you feel as a producer about your relationship with the union over all those years.

GC: Over all those years I applied to the ACTT to become a member and I was rejected and rightly so, because I hadn't make a picture. I was told you haven't proved yourself as a producer, goodbye. I was very hurt at the time until such time I was invited to join when I accepted.

SC: Who was that.

GC: George Elvin. I have a letter from George Elvin still in my files saying you can lay your ticket on the table because being here it didn't make any sense now, belonging to ACTT now, I don't make pictures any more, you can pick it up any time, I've still got that letter. Unions, I've nothing against them at all, I think they're good providing they're modern, providing, and I say in all sincerity, provided that they're not politically motivated, they are there to safeguard the welfare of the workers, fine, we've never had an unpleasantness, we've had a meeting today with BETA and NATKE, a very successful meeting, I've asked Alan to come down here many times, he came down here once with a representative of socialist opposition, a lot of MPs came down, Alan came down, I think he's a very intelligent man, but let's not mix politics with work, people want to live, want to make good money, improve their standard of living, fine.

SC: The thing about ACTT is not that it's just interested in wages, it's also interested in the industry, haven't you found that. What's good for the industry is good for the people who work in it and might actually be good for the people who control it.

GC: We now come into the realm of this word industry which upsets me, it is not an industry, it is a cottage thing, where people come and people go, where people have successes and people disappear, industries of ICI and Rolls Royce and Rover, those are the industries of the country, this is a business in a sense, it succeeds or fails by the very fact a script may be successful or unsuccessful, now can you imagine

SC: Don't you feel that films are supposed to be very extravagant and inefficient but on the whole making films has been a more efficient business than many things, you hear about the steel industry all those millions in debt.

GC: I entirely agree with you. And I'll tell you something else which I find in our business which gives me tremendous confidence, and it is a) the technicians - what ever field you go, cameramen, art directors, I come into contact with all of them, they are all professional, they're all experienced and they're all true to their word. The other people I find and I have the greatest respect are the production accountants in our business, there are first class production accountants, they know their business, they know films, and when they show you figures you know that they are correct. I have the greatest respect for everybody who works in the business, there are one or two things, it's inevitable in like, the people who would like to work as little as possible for as much as possible, but that's human

nature, but when it comes to the upper grades, professional to the finger tips, that's why they have a reputation throughout the world.