

JOHN HOGARTH
(The Distributor's Story)

Born February 1931.

Entered industry September 1946. Commercial course at local polytechnic. Joined British Lion as office junior. Very mundane work. 5000 cinemas to service. Thousands of contracts. Gave him detailed geographic knowledge of the country. Strict office discipline and formal relationships. Separate entrances. Promoted to salesman on east coast. Given a car. Learned to drive in a week. (Married in 1952. Earned £9 per week.) New job £25 per week. Territory stretched from the Thames to Lincoln in the north, and Wantage in the west. Selling British Lion films to cinemas. Predominance of independent owners. Largest was the Bostock circuit based in Ipswich. Had to compete with the American giants. MGM dominated the territory. Competition intense. Camaraderie among the travellers in different lines of business. Hotel life. Commercial room where travellers ate together. Average Trust House hotel: dinner, bed and breakfast for 17/6d. Details of cinema programming, and film-going. KRS inspectors who checked box office returns. Remembers the birth of Cinemascope.

End of Side 1.

In 1956 returned to head office. Increase in salary, but lost his car. Became Independent Circuits Manager. Biggest was Essoldo. Also remembers The Star Circuit. Covered 200-300 cinemas. Regular hours. Discipline now more relaxed. Made redundant when British Lion merged with Columbia. Great shock. Joined Mondial selling Italian cinemascope ratio films. First experience of independent distribution. No organisation. Financially slender. Moved on after 3 months to become producers' agent for Bryanston. A very rewarding period. Production group eventually folded. Looked for another job. Set up his own company: Crispin Film Distributors. Very successful. Approached Dimitri de Grunwald offering distribution service. Bought up instead. Became London Independent Film Distributors. Then offered services then to Hemdale. Became managing director. Then had an offer from EMI. Moved there with secretary Anne Boyle. Ran EMI UK Distribution for 3 years. Then British Lion took them over, and he was made redundant again. Started another independent company: Enterprise Pictures. Backed by Morgan Grenfell and the Samuelson Brothers. In 1980 John Hardy approached him. Bought up again. But relationship did not endure. Started HoBo. Roger Wingate (owner of Curzon chain) became a partner. Transformed into Mayfair Entertainment. Retiring at end of June 1994. Reflects on the life of an independent.

End of Side 2.