

BEHP 0739 T Phil Windeatt Transcript.

Transcribed by Kelly Robinson.

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INTERVIEWEE: Phil Windeatt

NAME OF INTERVIEWER: Kelly Robinson [whose dialogue is in italics]

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Kelly Robinson [KR]: *Lovely. So could you tell me a bit about your background: where you were born, and so on?*

Phil Windeatt [PW]: Yeah sure. I was born on the 13th October 1955, erm, I was premature. My Mum was at Kingston hospital, erm, and there was an incubator in a small hospital at Hampton Court so I was rushed over there and I was born a couple of weeks early, erm, I, we, were brought up on a council estate in Norbiton, which is between New Malden and Kingston-Upon-Thames. My Dad was a toolmaker, who's now retired, and my Mum did all sort of jobs to fit in and around myself and my brother, who's Martin, who's seven years older than me, so she worked as a playground minder at a school. But by and large she was a part-time copy typist for a milk, a Milk Marketing Board in Thames Ditton, which no doubt, doesn't exist anymore. Erm, and yeah, so we lived in Norbiton, erm, but my Mum and Dad bought the council house, er, which they eventually sold, and we moved when I was fifteen, to Long Ditton [phon], which is sort of the other side of Thames Ditton [phon], only a couple of miles away. And I went to School, erm, in Norbiton and New Malden, my Junior School was the Mount, and I went to a secondary modern school which was Hollyfield School in Surbiton, er, where my brother had gone and where my Mum had also attended that school as well, when she was young. Erm, and I left Hollyfield, I stayed on and did the sixth form – the first person in my family to stay on in sixth form: six O'Levels; two A Levels, in those days that was good enough two A Levels at C grade that was good enough: English Language and erm, history.

KR: *And were those the subjects that really interested you?*

PW: English Literature.

That you did well in?

Yes. I didn't find it a problem doing English Lit. it wasn't like a hard – history was a lot harder actually in fact I don't think I've ever had such hard exams as my history A Level, I found it incredibly difficult, erm, but I really enjoyed it, it was the two years, that I really enjoyed at school. You know, I was quite an alienated kid, I was gonna leave school at sixteen with two O'Levels, and I thought, oh well there must be more to life than working in an office when you're sixteen, so, and my brother had left school early, and worked for the Inland Revenue, which was fine if you want to do that, but I didn't really want to go down that road. I felt I was being corralled. I think Hollyfield was a good school, but it was a school for people who wanted to work, who didn't, there was not much encouragement for people who were on the edge, or thinking of other things, you know, you, they helped those who wanted to help themselves. I suppose that is a problem with secondary modern schools in that period. Erm, in Surrey, you know, they probably still have the grammar schools situation which was dominated in our area by Kingston Grammar [inaud]. Erm, so you were in a sort of B stream education really, there's no doubt about it. But, fortunately for me, in the early seventies the doors of academia opened slightly and kids from ordinary backgrounds many working class backgrounds could go to university, the growth of humanities degrees, combined arts degrees, you know, and so the combined arts degree, it was quite low, and two c's was quite good enough to get me into the University of Leicester, I doubt if it would have been good enough to get me in to do a pure subject, or English Literature but I could do a combined arts. So I went to Leicester when I was eighteen, you know, and of course this was, this had never happened anyone in our, my family before. It was a complete step into the unknown. I'd been at school until I was eighteen, so I was quite...you know not experience in the world and it was one hell of a shock. You know, so I just got up one morning, my Mum said: 'Oh, I'll get you a taxi to Surbiton station.' Which she did. And then I was off.

[03:58]

And that night I was in a completely strange city, which I'd only visited for an hour for my interview, the year before, with someone I was sharing a room with from Thetford [phon] in Norfolk – nice guy – Stephen Plowright – and there we were, you know, we'd been matched by the halls of residence at the University of Leicester and I entered this amazing world of, first of all, predominantly middle class, erm, where Hollyfield was quite a respectable secondary modern school you know and I mixed with people from Surbiton, I was mixing, but it was a mixture, of working class and middle class people – backgrounds, but Leicester was this complete open, you know, this complete unknown territory to me. Erm, and I being a very inexperienced eighteen year old, really sort of didn't sort of appreciate it at all it was completely lost on me. And to me, because I'd been at school for seven years, I just went, just went out every night to all the music gigs and you know, I thought well I'll just go for a pass, or a third, I don't want to stay in academia, so I'll just go erm for a pass, and really enjoy myself. And I was meeting people from different walks...

So the education wasn't so much about the classes then as the stuff outside that; the social life?

It was the social side, yeah, and I was going to every gig going, and joining this and joining that, and was having a grand old time, the problem was I wasn't doing any work. I had no self discipline whatsoever and no one was advising me, and quite rightly, you're left to your own devices at college, I have no problem with that.

And also if you haven't got the family that are use to that sort of procedure then. Yeah, you did that on your own.

I was homesick actually. I really was homesick. But I got into it. I really enjoyed it and met some great, nice people.

[05:45]

Erm, politically it was '74, so I went on the knocker in Leicester, for the Labour Party, and we kicked the Tory out. A guy called Jim Marshall – who was elected, I remember that was one of the first things I did. That was an eye opener for me

because it was the first time I had met Asian people, Asian communities, because obviously Leicester was one of the areas where Ugandan Asians went. So I that had a profound effect on me. I heard Paul Foot speak – that had a profound effect on me. And I stated to realise there was this thing called Marxism and The Far Left, and I was attracted to that but I was very solidly Labour. I think at the time my dream job would have been a [inaud-trip by night?] a Labour Left MP, I think that was what I wanted but I was, I was pretty solidly Labour Party, but I was attracted to what I was hearing from people like Paul Foot and International Socialists at the time. Er, and I was reading newspapers but not with great depth, just enjoying myself being an eighteen year old.

[06:43]

And then I got ill with glandular fever. Because I wasn't looking after myself. Er, and it came to the end of the second term, and I thought well there's no way I'm gonna pass my exams. And actually, the course was hard. I think that's what I was denying. There was a little bit of denial going on. Actually, I'm not so sure I could do it. You know, it was such a discipline. And the depth of say the English literature part of the course: I did history of art, English Literature, and Archaeology, the English Literature was beyond me I think. And at the end of the second term I thought, I need to start again, I need to really approach this completely. I'd been ill so I could get, erm, a grant again, [laughing] 'cause you could do things like that in those days if you got a certificate, believe it or not. So I started again. Erm, and I went through that Summer, worked at the Albert Hall in the box office, saw Frank Sinatra, so that was good, that was a good discipline, five and a half days, old fashioned work place five and a half days a week, hard work, er, I worked in my Dad's factory, he got me a job there, and that was all good, build up a bit of cash, I thought, right, I'll start again. That Summer I was applying through [inaud] to see what I could pick up and I was trying to do sociology, but I didn't have a maths O'Level, so I didn't go to Bristol, I didn't go to Bangor, and I thought, well look, why don't I go back to one of the Polytechnics that I went to 'cause they look pretty good and there was this incredibly good humanities degree. Erm, and so that's what I did so... I contacted Thames Polytechnic which was in Woolwich then and ... was accepted, and started in

Woolwich erm, a year after I had started university and started the Humanities degree then a year after the university.

So you started from scratch?

Started from scratch, started all over again. With a, what they called, provisional grant, that would be looked at after a year, and they would determine if you got pass the exams at the end of the year.

That was motivation to work hard then, I presume in the first year?

Well it was, but I [intake of breath] I wasn't any different at nineteen than I was when I was eighteen, erm, and I was cocky with it, because I'd been to university so I thought I knew it all I certainly should, should apologise to my lecturers. Erm, but, I scrapped through. You know I scraped through, I got a third. It took me four years to do it, because I failed my dissertation at the end of the third year – ridiculous, I should never have failed at that stage, but I knew, I wasn't listening to anybody, I thought I knew it all.

And how was your social life during this period?

It was fantastic. It was pub rock, and punk was starting, and that's what interested me, and there was this enormous fight in South East London against the National Front, and we were part of that, er, and it was a hell of a political period and there was Lewisham and you know...

Did you say you were studying Sociology as well?

No, it was Humanities. It was a general, a year and a half on a general course which was a sort of a mixture of Science, arts, simple science for us because we were all arts people. And then exams after four terms and then you got to select certain subjects and I did politics, erm, and did a dissertation and exams at the end of the third year. Because I failed my dissertation I had to go back again, and by then it was 1979 before I actually graduated and left.

[0:10:15]

People have stayed in education for much longer than you so [laughs].

[Laughs] But of course I was actually potless, I had no money, you know and I'd been on the dole when I did my retakes, you could do all those sort of things in the seventies – you could sign on - and apply for grants, and get a new bed. There was a functioning welfare state. Yeah. Yeah

Even in the eighties as well, when there was lots of artists that came out of signing on during that time...

I certainly did that. I graduated in June 1979 with a Humanities degree, third class, honours, and erm, worked for Our Price Records, in the Charing Cross Road. Which is, was my big love, was music.

So it wasn't a bad job then, really, for you?

No, no that was okay. I used to check for scratched records. I didn't work out front. I was nicely tucked in at the back and, er, I didn't have to work Saturdays, which pleased me, so, erm, I was living in Plumstead. Scored a council flat, hard to let, so it wasn't too bad, I just had no money, absolutely nothing. And we, I was trying to get into some sort of journalism, that's what I was aiming for. And I'd met a journalist who'd worked for the NME [New Musical Express] primarily but also the Sunday Times, called John May and he'd worked on the alternative press in the sixties: Oz; Black Dwarf, erm, and I got on very well with John and he said: 'look I've got this idea of setting up a magazine called The Beast', which was quite ahead of its time. It was to look at ecology, Green issues, animal liberation, he said 'would you be interested in working on it?' And I said 'well, yeah' - I'd have worked on anything rather than Our Price scratched records, you know. But it meant leaving the job and working for nothing and signing on again, which of course you could do. And I worked for The Beast for quite a time, it was based in Blenheim Crescent, which was

Notting Hill, almost exactly where the film was, the Rhys Ivans, is it Rhys Ivans?, Welsh actor, who comes out in his underpants...

Notting Hill?

Yeah, Notting Hill, and I think it was almost that flat where I was, number two, Blenheim Crescent. And of course Notting Hill in the late seventies, was still very much bohemian, hippies from the sixties, Hawkwind were in and out, Lemmy held court in a pub across the road, you know, it was nothing like it is now. Predominantly working class area, erm, so I used to pop up there everyday on the tube, and, I learnt a lot from John, John Chesterton, er the Science Photo Library had started, so I was starting to learn a bit about stills and doing picture research.

So this cross arts must have been perfect for you?

Perfect. And I learnt you know how to lay out a magazine in the old days.

And politically committed so...

And then selling it as well. Erm...So that was good, it was an alternative look at an alternative life in London. John went on to do anything he, he'd bring out puzzle magazines for WH Smith. He had this little publishing company called Clanose Publishing [ph] and it was a little you know, about four of them, erm, and Mike Marten who ran the Science Photo Library he was basically pulling in 35mm transparencies from the States of anything scientific, of space travel, so he set up quite a nice little library and I used to work part time every now and again for that. So I was going to the Press Association to pick things up and pulling in stills

All of this volunteer?

[0:13:45]

Er, yeah, yeah, they paid my expenses and I just signed on and that was a really good experience. And from that an American film director came in one day, erm ... called

Victor Schonfeld, and he said that he'd come over from New York he was making a film about animal exploitation, a major film, and he needed some guidance on working in Britain, people to interview, so it was an absolutely fortunate meeting. Victor then took me on part time and we made *The Animals* film, erm, I then worked full time on it. That went from, I think I did my first shoot probably 1979 and then we filmed it in the UK laboratories, factory farms and also in America, right across the States. And that film had its world premiere at the London Film Festival in 1981. Sold out. Massive publicity. Great reviews. We were exhausted because we had, I had, I was signing on, or was, you know, very little money involved.

And why did the process take so long? A period of two or three years, wasn't it?

As I had said previously, it was a very, very difficult film to make. We looked at everything else that had been made on animal cruelty and animal exploitation and it was either jokey like *Mondo Carne* [ph], sort of jokey films about what happens to animals or, erm, they were cuddly bunny type films, you know, aren't they lovely, and all that. This was an attempt to make a serious, polemic about what happens to animals behind closed doors. And that in fact what they do to animals is usually the things they do to animals before they do it to us.

And was this something previously you'd thought about?

Yes. I'd been a member of the hunt saboteurs when I was at University; no when I was at Thames Polytechnic. I was attracted to that. I'd gone out and tried to sabotage fox hunts and so yes, I was keen on that. Erm, and I knew people, in that field, so it was perfect for getting money from animal charities. To make the film, so we'd stop and start, I suppose it was what you'd call guerilla filmmaking. Where you just basically sit down say, let's do a film.

So what was your experience then like as a researcher, 'cause you were still relatively new?

Completely naïve. None at all. I owe everything to Victor, who'd just tell me what to do really. I'd go to his flat first thing in the morning and say 'What are we going to do

today?’ and he’d say ‘Well you know take my dry cleaning over first, get a loaf of bread, get some coffee, right today we are going to the National archives in Washington next week and we’re going to do three weeks research there because if you, he’s an American so he has a right to obtain films, government films, and use them for free and so we used a lot of material.

We used the Freedom of Information Act as well in the States and pulled in a lot of government nuclear tests on animals, so we were using all sorts of sources, erm and we had only a tiny budget, erm, probably about a hundred and fifty thousand dollars, which for a two hour film is zilch. Erm, because we paid, everyone got paid. It wasn’t one of those, erm, films that: ‘Oh we’ll pay you once the films out’. We were all absolutely correct. All the technicians were paid.

How was it funded?

Erm, well there was American and British Animal Welfare Charities; RSPCA; British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection; Millennium Guild in New York. There’s a much more developed animal welfare movement in this country than in the States, so a lot of the money came from British, erm charities and then...

Why did they entrust Victor to direct such a film?

Well...we would apply to say the RSPCA, then we would present them with documents on what we intended to do, we would do showings to them, previews of what we already had filmed, what we’d found from archives. And they would make a decision on how much they would give us. Sometimes they would give you a little amount and then a little bit more and a little bit more, and, put it altogether, erm, and what Victor’s plan was, was that we would make the film, show it at film festivals, to get television interest because television people go to film festivals and then from that we would make all the money back by selling it to television stations for transmission.

At the time there was probably, now this is pre-internet and DVDs and whatever, but we felt that there was probably a half a dozen international television stations that would warrant, if we could make those sales we would get enough back to pay off all the debts, because there were enormous debts. You know, transferring laboratory,

invoices for laboratory work, sound work, erm, there was overtime to pay, I mean there was a lot of bills. In fact I can remember one point when I think we owed twenty five thousand pounds and I remember the morning when a postal order came in for two pounds, which I went and put in. But it felt like a mountain and Victor was only, he was a very young man and he was, you know, loaning money from the bank really just to keep going because it was a big film and the editing was probably over a year – eighteen months; it was a long haul to make such a film.

It's wonderful it got made at all.

It's – no one else could have done it. I don't know anybody who could have done it apart from Victor Schonfeld. I've never met anyone who could have had the vision, to, you know, to drag, dragging the idea through, it would have been abandoned by anyone else, but Victor had this will to make it. He was absolutely destined to make that film, and it was his first major film as well, and it was agony. Both of us couldn't even think of any ideas when we'd finished *The Animals Film*, we were just completely gutted, intellectually and again in a situation perhaps with no money and you know. But, our other ambition for the film was that it be shown in cinemas, er, fortunately Blue Dolphin, a film distributor, Joe D'Morais, from Blue Dolphin, he took the film, he loved it, he said 'I won't make any money out of it, erm, but it will just be a personal commitment because I just love the film.' So he promoted it, I think it played at The Gate in Bloomsbury for a short cinema run and then the ICA for six weeks.

Did it help having Julie Christie as a narrator?

Ah yes, that's when, when we were getting home and dry, with Julie's commitment, financial commitment as well. And she just gave a weekend up.

And then it's going to be written about 'cause it features her.

Absolutely, and, 'cause of Julie Robert Wyatt came in to er, because he's, he's a good friend of Julie's and he gave in and did a completely original score. We didn't have any money to pay him, if course.

And was it David Byrne who...

Yes, that's another great story. We wanted to use the music of Talking Heads, who were massive at the time. Their music was so, there's so many Talking Head songs from 'Fear of Music' album that fit The Animals Film, you know. And we contacted him and he said, yep you can have it, you can just have it, as long as you pay a little towards the publishing rights and the writers. So for hardly, very, very good of him to just give us, basically give us the song, just for expenses. So there we were, and we had other people who gave us their music which is very rare but they knew that we, this was really...

A cause...A worthwhile cause...

A cause film. You know that we were giving up everything, that we weren't going to make any money out of it, that it was just a film that had to be made and, er, I spoke to some guy, I remember at Warner Brothers and it was actually he, he was a vice President, and he would say well the publishing rights are with me and not David, so I will [inaud] and he just said to me 'Will the film be pro-vivisection or anti-vivisection' and I had to say well it'll be anti-vivisection. He went: 'You got it then'. So that was his personal position. So lucky – we were fortunate there. And having that on board was fantastic, you know. And Julie gave up loads of her time; put the work around to other people. Having her name, journalists would take you seriously. We got a whole page in the Daily Mail, just because, erm, Julie Christie was on board.

And how did The Daily Mail write about it? [Laughing]

Well the Daily Mail, it's a funny subject, animal welfare, because they would, they would probably find it too extreme, but they were quite okay about it, you know, and they were just pleased. I knew a journalist on the Mail so, I said: 'Julie Christie will be at the preview today in Soho, that's a nice tip off' and she got an interview with Julie Christie, so everyone's happy, you know, and we got a page in. So absolutely amazing amount of publicity and we even ended up on, not Newsnight, the tea time BBC show with Sue Lawley, (actually it was Nationwide. PW) and er, so the film was

getting around. This is incredible really from nothing, from thin air, to eventually having a standing ovation at the London Film Festival and then we went to Los Angeles Filmex . Tough for us then, at Filmex, it's a massive film festival in LA and we went out there for a couple of weeks to try and promote the film but, you know, you're up against the Hollywood majors. They've got PR people and whatever. But, you know, we were there we had a viewing and, er, we got some press interest and desperately trying to get a distributor. But you know, we were up against Victor Victoria, the Julie Andrews film. So you know, try and carve out any, it's virtually impossible. And even Atomic Café, 'cause we, erm, The Raffertys, with Jane Loader who made a brilliant documentary called The Atomic Café which was, er, a look at propaganda, pro-bomb propaganda, films made about nuclear war, er wonderful film, er, that really was getting all the interest as an alternative film, but, we used to swap footage with them and they use to call us from Washington and say 'hey' 'cause their film was all archive, so they were, Piers Rafferty, would call us and say: 'I've got some amazing animal footage today you'll want it. I'll send it over.' And if we found anything we'd call them. So we were working as well hand in glove. And Atomic Café was a massive hit.

[0:24:33]

I wonder if now there wouldn't be more of an exhibition space for that type of film? Because you know now you have things like the London Documentary Film Festival? And film festivals in general have increased massively. So, I wonder, if it was released now, although whether it would even be made now is another matter. But there would at least be the venues to show it possibly.

Well the film festivals were great, by and large; they took the film to heart. And you know, in Australia: Melbourne and Sydney were sold out

And were you touring with?

Victor went to Australia, I went to Filmex in Los Angeles and Knokke Heist film festival in Belgium we both, they were very generous, we could go out there with our partners, so that was a lovely weekend, er, Gothenburg, erm, oh yeah, it went down

very well. We just didn't have the resources to try and get it in to the documentary section at the Oscars. I mean, that would have been something but we just couldn't, we just didn't have the resources. People wanted the film. And obviously with Julie's name on it and Robert's name didn't do us any harm.

[0:25:45]

It was a very collaborative enterprise wasn't it?

Yes, yeah.

So the film isn't credited to one person, is it?

Yes. Victor was very generous. He said everyone who worked on the film would be credited as co-filmmakers. Which was very generous.

And obviously as a researcher then in this kind of documentary your role is more important than perhaps directing actors or...?

[police sirens]

Well it was twenty-four-seven really, cause you know, we mixed socially as well Victor and I we were very close during that, and also, you know, we had massive rows about what we were saying or doing. So er, it was a tough time. And also we had to be quite secretive. We had some interest 'cause obviously when we're trying to sell the film to television stations, erm, you got the sense sometimes that people from television were coming to see what we got you know. Or, someone in French television wanted to take the film and re-edit it, and that sort of thing, we're not here to sell footage, we're not an archive, this is a film.

[26.47.9]

What was the political climate like at the time? About this sort of activism? Because, you know, activists tend to get quite bad press now, don't they?

Well, we'd, we'd managed to interview, the illegal side of people like the Animal Liberation Front, the Animal Liberation Leagues, and we were taken in by, they accepted, they knew we were making this film so they, they spoke to us quite openly. Created all sorts of legal problems actually. Obviously having people expressing their opinions. They were knowingly breaking the law. Erm, so we had to be very kind of, the legal costs of clearing The Animals Film you would not believe. But, we were taken in by them and we went and interviewed them and they gave us footage of their raids they did. So it was controversial. Erm, I think erm, the actual period, I mean the film came out in '81, so you've got the Falklands War, you've got Royal weddings, I remember working through the Royal weddings and whatever, but we were basically in a little room with telephones, I mean there was no internet. Just trying to make this film as quickly as possible with enormous problems of, er, finance and organisation and at the same time we didn't want to make a film about animal exploitation and exploit human beings to make it and so, and so we certainly didn't. But it was a great learning experience for me. You know, I just learnt everything. I had a pretty good idea on the film world, but of course, the film world in a sense was disappearing.

[0:28:51.5]

Because, from The Animals Film, I desperately needed to find work when we finished the film and I saw an advert in the Guardian for a, this was the birth of, thank god for me, this was a breakthrough, that Channel 4 was starting in 1982 and I saw an, and companies were just starting up and employing thirty people in one go and one of them was Diverse Production in Olympia although then they were based just off Oxford Street. And David Graham was a producer/director from Panorama and Jeremy Isaacs who was the original controller at Channel 4 he'd encouraged Graham to leave the BBC and, er, because he'd seen some of his Panorama's which he liked he was bringing in alternative voices into Panorama, you know, shop stewards, rather than union leaders, people from rank and file and he liked that, Isaacs, and he said 'I'll give you a couple of million' or whatever it was – 'start up your own company'. So he started Diverse Production. Graham took on, I suppose, about thirty five to forty people in one go. Erm, I applied, along with three or four thousand other people, and fortunately for me, David Graham had seen The Animals Film, 'cause my whole CV was...The Animals Film [laughter], there wasn't much else, you know? Erm, and he said would you be prepared to everything you did on The Animals Film for me?

And I said ‘of course – yeah, yeah, yeah’. Now this was a staff job, this was a real, this would mean I could join the union as well. I could join ACT [Association of Cinema Technicians] or the NUJ [National Union of Journalists], in fact, I joined both. So I went in September 1982 to work at Diverse. We all started on the same day it was very much like going back to college and David Graham said: ‘You can do what ever job you want to do. Downstairs there are two video cameras; sound’ obviously the editors had to be editors but he said: ‘basically if you think you can produce straight away then I’m interested.’ And I looked at all of this and some of them were journalists who had come in, you know, some of them didn’t have great television or film background. This was new people to do a new type of current affairs he didn’t want any old ideas; he didn’t want any old practices; he didn’t want noddies [ph] and pieces to camera. This was gonna be a new form of current affairs using viewer groups to give us ideas, rather than the traditional sources like the wires, you know, Press Association, Associated Press or the media. This was going to do new ideas and it was called The Friday Alternative and it went out for half an hour on Channel 4 on a Friday evening. The news would stop at six thirty, I think it was, or seven thirty, and then we would go from seven thirty to eight. And these viewers groups were kept going all over the country. We, as researchers, would go to those viewers, we’d stay over night talk to them and they would tell us the things that were troubling them in their community.

So like roving reports?

Yeah, we would go into them, sometimes film them, we had some say at Bexhill, who would say: ‘Well, crimes not a problem, there’s no crime here, you know, but what bothers me is...’ and then they’d give us a subject or we might go to Wolverhampton, which would be a group of workers and they’d say: ‘You know what troubles us is, you know, at work we can’t do this, we have problems with...’ or whatever and we would get all these ideas that would be one source and the other one was to do ideas that the mainstream media didn’t do. So, you know, the classic one I think probably is, is erm, in a strike we would go and interview the strikers rather than the union leader. You know, or someone from the TUC [Trade Union Congress], er, and also we didn’t put ourselves as journalists and researchers into the show, you know we kept out of, we just interviewed people we didn’t do all the conventions, the ideas was

to, it was influenced very much by the Glasgow University Media Group – Greg Philo, actually worked at Diverse. So it wasn't about, we didn't want people presenting news their not, they shouldn't be there really, it's about what the subject is. We didn't want to make people into personalities. Journalists and researchers shouldn't be personalities in current affairs. So it tried all these new ideas. I mean it was moderately successful, most weeks it was zero-rated, so it didn't even get 150 thousand viewers, but, it was new days, it was very radical, it was Channel 4, very different to now. But, erm, when it started, erm, and that ran for about a year. Sort of, and the channel then axed it, but instead of us all losing our jobs, came back and said: 'Well actually, we want something different to that now. Half hour on a Wednesday evening: Diverse Reports.' Now we had special permission from the IBA, where we would; there would be documentaries but they would come from a point of view documentary. So one week you'd have, and the bias would be across the series rather in just one documentary. So, one week you'd have, erm, say a Daily Mail journalist saying why British Telecom should be privatised and then in the same series you'd have, er, someone from the unions from British Telecom saying it shouldn't be privatised. And they would do like a reply but

So you get a sort of dialect?

Yeah, yeah, you would but rather trying to do the fore and against in one documentary and it'll probably be the truth that the lies somewhere in the middle which is the Panorama approach this, it would be better if people just expressed their opinion on a subject. So Ted Heath came and we had politicians come in but they would give us a biased report on something that they thought was right. Er, Powell came in, we had a whole, Ken Loach came in and he did, when Ken Loach he couldn't get work anywhere he was doing ads in fact. Erm, he came in and did a programme at the end of the miner's strike from the perspective of a rank and file miner, which was a very, very good show in fact. So it was great fun for us to work with him.

And did you work on the South Bank Show of Ken Loach?

Yeah, I worked on that yeah. Yes, so that was quite nice, you know years later. But even [inaud] starting out [inaud] worked on the show. Erm, and so, yeah you know and that got a better viewership, I suppose.

What was your day to day job like? Was it very varied then?

Yeah, it was, erm. On The Friday Alternative the budget was pretty low, erm, so I, I thought I'd try and do things rather than grab a and say I want to be a producer, cause I would fail to do it, and I didn't have the confidence to just grab the camera and say I want to be a camera operator I didn't want to do that work anyway, the technical side of television doesn't really interest me. Or lighting and all that. Erm, I thought research interests me. It always has done. The actual act of finding something I find really interesting. So erm I thought I'd go for a job that no one would want to do. And clearly what was often the case no one wants to do picture research. So I started out doing a lot of picture research and a little bit of film research. We were shooting on ENG, three quarter inch high band, great cumbersome cameras and sound equipment, incredibly heavy, but this was preferable to 16mm because you didn't need a laboratory, when you shot on 16mm you'd have to take the rushes back. Overnight they would go in the bath for the lab and then you'd get them sometime the following day. Shooting on three quarter inch video tapes meant you'd go on a shoot, film it, come back, and edit. Perfect, you know. It was already there and then. So I also went on shoots erm and really it was anything that was going. I was also doing programme research, there was one, one, we use to do jokey items like what happens to, one, one I got was what academics in the summer? So we got a whole series of universities who we called up and said can I speak to so and so, every, no one was there [laughter]. Erm, I did also do a piece on, erm, how many, as a journalist, how many free holidays can you score? And it was just incredible. I mean I was going all round the world for free. All I said was: 'We're thinking of doing, erm, a new travel programme' 'cause you remember, travel programmes were incredibly popular? Welcome Here, or something, there was all sorts of Thames Television had, incredibly successful shows that BBC I suppose it's property now, but in those days it was holidays more I think. And that was just a funny little item. You know, oh, erm, a good new item er most letters do get to the destination the following day, most aeroplanes do arrive, you know, and we just went through everything statistically,

going for, you know, we would do a piece on that. Or we might even look at, do an item on a Friday Alternative, what's happening in the world of dogs and Dog World [inaud] That was a sort of mix of it, to shape up current affairs a little, you know.

[37:33.7]

Now, working on that show was Steve Hewlett, who went on to head Panorama and now is the Guardian Media columnist, and he's been head of Carlton and Channel 4. Erm, Karen Travis, who went on to write loads of Star Wars books, I think. Barry Flynn, who's a media consultant. Erm, yeah, no it was, oh Christopher Hird who sort of makes documentaries, left wing journalist, he was on the Inside team. And we worked with Paul Foot, Eamon McCann the Irish Socialist, Christopher Hitchens, Bea Campbell, a lot of people came through the Olympia newsroom.

It brought you into contact with really interesting figures then?

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[0:38:15]

You talked about belonging to the Unions?

Yeah, erm...

What was your role there?

The first thing we did. The first day I sat next to a guy called Dave Clarke [ph] who'd been on the Leveller. Poor Dave died I think, about ten years ago. But Dave had been on the Leveller and he'd been in quite a well known; I'd known him, he'd been in the International Socialists in the seventies and I knew of him, I didn't know him. But we got on really well – became quite close friends. And our, one of the first things, he was in the NUJ so he, 'cause I was working in the newsroom I decided to join the National Union of Journalists. Erm, so upstairs in the newsroom we were all in the NUJ. And then downstairs, erm, everyone joined ACTT, the people who editing, a

couple of technicians. So we had a functioning, we were a hundred per cent unionised in fact which, er, we did extremely well. Erm, but I also joined ACTT, because I know that er in other work places, if I moved on from Diverse, that, erm, they would expect you to have an ACTT ticket. So I decided to join both. Er, which was fine. And it was the period of the Miner's Strike. So I was going to the London NUJ meetings and we were raising cash for the miners, having miners speaking, there was also some, er, ser con [ph] we struck over ser con [ph] which was, I think, Leon Brittan, trying to stop, erm, an anti-nuclear documentary going out which we struck over. The Home Secretary actually stopped the BBC from putting that show, that show out and there was a picket of ITN and BBC. So, yes, it was a lively period.

So for you it wasn't just about membership it was also about being active?

Yeah, of yeah. And of course we represented the people. Erm...

Any interesting cases that you can remember?

Well we were just on that circuit of you know the London NUJ.

It's an interesting period, isn't it really, in politics?

But you know, about from the sort of representing people within the building. But it was a tiny workplace, there was only about thirty-five of us there, you know, but we were solidly unionised. But it's not now. We certainly were then. Erm, and then when Diverse came along we did lose a few people, it was quite difficult. Erm, but Diverse was a much bigger project, more freelance people came in and, er, bigger budgets, that's when people like Ken Loach and Beeban Kidron were working there. Er, and that, er, I was there five years. In '87 they'd lost the Diverse Reports commission, erm, and management said: 'If you can move on we'd appreciate it because we, we feel we might go under.' We had no other work we were having six weeks breaks in the summer and that sort of thing and nothing to do and it was getting...and I'd seen a job on the ACTT job list which was the weekly job list looking for a staff film researcher at London Weekend Television. And to be honest I had always wanted to work in the mainstream. And I always felt that Diverse was a little bit, even location,

location in Olympia [ph]. It was a, you felt a bit on the fringes. Much as I got a lot from it, learnt programme research and film research, picture research, it was an excellent five years. But hard graft, you didn't have any backing really, not like mainstream television, and I felt...

And did it pay enough for you to live in London?

Yeah. Yeah. And buy a house. It was about 7.5 was the wage, I think.

But not terribly secure really?

You always felt like it wasn't secure at all. There didn't seem to be any long term to it. You just made hay while the sun shines really, where Diverse, it always seemed to be rocky. We weren't getting any other work apart from a couple of, er, erm, things from businesses. You know one day jobs here and there. You know, making little videos. There was a growth of little videos. People wanting little films about their companies and promotional videos, so we got on, we did a few of them. But by and large it was the Channel 4 commissions that were sustaining everyone in the building including the secretaries and the accounts department, management, everyone erm, that's what...

And if they stop then...

Then we were, Diverse was in deep trouble. But Diverse is still carrying on. So, they got past that problem.

[0:42:42.4]

Erm so I went in June '87 before that I'd gone for an interview at London Weekend Television, those days they were like company-wide interviews. You know, they had a board of ten people interviewing you from every single show and departments – taken very seriously. Erm, and it was a staff job, in fact I was the last staff film researcher to get taken on at LWT in June '87, which says a lot about casualisation in television. And, I was, er, successful. And started there not long after. I certainly

missed the radicalism of working at Diverse. You know, anything could go. And there was quite a nice freedom to work there, to work on different aspects, but it was time to move on.

So LWT for a full-time, secure position?

Yes, it was, yeah as long as you passed your trial after a year it was lifetime really. The feeling was you, you'd, it was a bit like working at the BBC, it was a mainstream, proper...

I think as you get older that appeals much more, doesn't it?

Yeah. And for me it was, it was one train to work rather than: train, tube and long walk to Olympia. So, er, I was, it fitted. Erm, I felt that I had made a mistake at first. I worked on some very light – LE [Light Entertainment] shows – to get me use to the building. And I wasn't sure, I thought perhaps I had made the wrong decision. It was a very friendly work place. Er but I though I might had made a wrong decision and should have stayed at Diverse. Erm, and then, after doing, I worked on "Concrete and Clay", which was an ecology, they did these units, John Birt had a series of units. There was a college unit, a current affairs unit, Peter Mandelson had just left and er Weekend World was a big current affairs Sunday show that LWT did. So you either worked on a shift pattern for Weekend World, which was extremely well paid, good overtime rates, you worked all night that was one aspect of film research there. I was working on small shows Monday to Friday, er, and then after about a year, I had done a little bit of work on, on the South Bank Show, in fact on my first day, on The Smiths show. Erm, they said er: 'There's a job going permanently on the South Bank Show' and I said : 'Well – yeah, yes please.' And it's Monday to Friday, I didn't want to work, the shift pattern on Weekend World meant that you worked one weekend – you got overtime, you worked three days the following week, had a break and then worked the following week. It was a sort of rather nice shift pattern which suited a lot of people. But I don't like to work weekends 'cause, I like to watch football on a Saturday afternoon, so, South Bank Show was a show I'd been hoping to get and although I wasn't the most experienced film researcher there, but er, I got the job, erm, and very glad, and in fact, interestingly, I went back working on film again.

‘Cause in those days in ’87 – ’88, erm, by and large, the South Bank Show was shot on 16mm, so it was back to film and I had to remember all the things I’d learnt on The Animals Film. Erm, and it was fantastic, yeah, very happy to work on the show. And then after about, erm, working on, what was lovely about it was doing Peter Brook and I was, these subjects I was learning, I was learning myself who these people were. We did Peter Brook and, one of his films was, erm, I always use this example, but one of his films was, erm, a made up language by the actors [chuckles] to try and explore communication. And the film was owned by an Iranian Prince incognito. So I had to clear that. So I thought this was so, this is totally different to what I’m, I mean, I, I, was totally amazed that there were people who only did arts documentaries. I assumed everybody was general or current affairs. That was my background – current affairs, so I was amazed that these people only wanted to work in arts and [inaud] and they didn’t want to do anything else. So we would, and, and this was in the middle of London Weekend Television, which was doing Surprise, Surprise, Blind Date, in this LE environment, there was this one department, which was basically a BBC department in the middle of ITV. In the middle of LWT. Which was a very successful station.

It must have been the perfect home for you? With your backgrounds, your interests in arts and music and so it’s bringing together all your interests?

Yeah, yeah, yeah. We I’d seen a very early one on Talking Heads and I’d written to Melvyn Bragg when I was at Thames Poly saying: ‘When can I start to produce [inaud] as a researcher?’, you know... [laughter]

Isn’t that funny?

And Melvyn, he wrote back, and said: ‘Well it might be worth you getting your degree first and then writing to me’, sort of a, very polite, very encouraging.

And did you remind him of this?

‘No I’ve never, I, I never remember, er, erm. So it had, obviously something had been on the back of my mind about the South Bank Show. When they started doing rock

and roll I, I warmed to it. And then I would probably watch something else on another subject that I normally wouldn't. So I got quite attracted to the show. So to work on it was, was fine, you know. You know, Peter Brook, I didn't know him from Adam, but I certainly did after working, I...

It was like a learning curve.

Fantastic. Yeah

Like every programme must have been like an education.

Raymond Chandler. I mean I knew a little about Raymond Chandler. I didn't know he went to Dulwich College. I didn't know he is English but he was regarded as a Los Angeles writer. So it was, working on that, I worked with Mary Harron who went on to be a film director. And Mary loved archive, you could tell that she was going on to greater things and, er, we got on famously well. Erm, and Mary and then after about, it must have been about '91, a lot of people left the South Bank Show, er, production staff to work for The Late Show, you know when the BBC started up a big commitment to arts broadcasting? Er, and Mary went, she went to work on The Late Show as a producer and we lost a number of people actually, who left...

I didn't know her background was in, as a producer?

Yeah. She lives in Brixton. Any Mary, very kindly, put my name forward to Michael Jackson and Roland Keating, who were the editors of The Late Show. And I'd, I'd never been headhunted before, this was a lovely experience, I mean really, it was great feeling to be phone up by them. So I had breakfast with Michael Jackson at LWT, I think it was the earliest, in twenty-two and a half years I ever went into LWT. And I had breakfast with Michael Jackson and he said, he offered me the job. Er, and then I, Soho, this was typical of the period, Soho Brassiere meal with Roland Keating and he said, you know: 'We want you to do this'. Obviously it was gonna be a hell of a commitment. Lime Grove, which is defunct now, Hammersmith way, daily show, going out every night, I mean, I've worked on daily shows; they're a complete nightmare. So I knew there was gonna be a lot of work. Erm, and then I had this

decision: do I carry on the South Bank Show and see how that develops, or do I start on The Late Show?

Difficult decision!

It was a difficult decision. But what, at the back of my mind, my Dad had always said to me: 'Never start a new job if the money's less'. And the BBC can be like that. You know the money can, wasn't that great and it meant double the travelling. So I was looking at it from a personal angle and I thought [inhales]. I, I'm quite angry about the fact...

Sometimes...It's nice to be, you now, you're so flattered but that's not a reason, just because you're flattered to take it.

There was something holding me back, yeah, it was something holding me back, definitely, you're absolutely right. Erm, so I decided to stay with the good ship Melvin. And I'm glad I did, because it proved, twenty-two and a half years, it proved to be absolutely the right decision. And you know, erm, it was absolutely correct. So that was really only the time when I might have moved on, you know. And I'm glad I didn't now. And also The Late Show, much as I loved The Late Show, I use to watch it every night, it didn't survive that long. Whether I could have carried on, doing contract work for the BBC, that may have been advantageous now, to have been in the Beeb, but then, I think it was probably the right decision.

You mentioned working on the Raymond Chandler and Peter Brook programmes.

Yeah , that was the very early ones I worked on I remember.

Was there any particular programme that really stands out as being your favourite?

Well, certainly the Raymond Chandler had a profound effect. Erm, cause there was some beautiful footage of 1930s Hollywood in that, a collection that was shot on 35mm. It was a, Elmer Dyer, I think he was a 35mm cameraman in Hollywood and in his spare time, would go and film Hollywood and we, we, it was absolutely beautiful

material. I mean, that was a really good show that one. Erm, there's a number of shows that I was always very pleased with. Dusty Springfield in 2005, er, there's so much good footage of Dusty Springfield. Helped by the fact that she had her own show on BBC in the mid-sixties.

[0:51:59]

And where did you, did you tend to research, what archives did you use most regularly?

Well, when it comes to the South Bank Show, you know, you're totally reliant on the BBC. Er, because of their fantastic arts footage archive and all the documentaries that exist that they've filmed and all of the musicians and artists they've profiled so, and all their shows. Their incredible commitment to culture and arts, so obviously the BBC was always was one of the first calls.

You must be so familiar with their collections?

Yeah. Yes, and the Monitors, I mean obviously they started arts documentaries with The Monitor. Which Melvyn worked, obviously as a researcher to Ken Russell. So you had, they start, they kicked off the whole movement really of television arts. So we're reliant on them, so we felt like we were part of the BBC in many ways, you know. Erm, then really, it was, depending on the subject. You know, erm, obviously ITV's got a massive archive, erm you know, they've done, you know, Yorkshire, Tyne-Tees, the regions have done, especially on artists from that area, they've done major profiles, major art series, rock music series. So ITV we used our own, erm, archives as well.

I suppose access wasn't really a problem for you because of your status?

Yeah, BBC material was by and large expensive. LWT allowed the South Bank show a pretty good budget, you know. So they could go to New Zealand and film Kiri te Kanawa talking about where she was born and could fly back there for a second shoot, there was money in the show then in the 90s, 80s and 90s. Erm, I think LWT

saw it as a prestigious show that sold round the world. That did well at film festivals, won, would win the Prix Italia and you know did Bafta; it would win Bafta awards and so it was that side of LWT that they could say: 'Look we don't just do LE we've got The South Bank Show.' It was a

Prestige?

Yeah, they used it I think for PR. And why not? You know, 'cause it did win awards.

So what were the reasons for stopping The South Bank Show then?

Well, many years later, erm, I think ITV started to think: 'Well, we've got thirty-five people working in there/forty people, plus freelancers, plus technicians, freelance, er, do we really need The South Bank Show?' You know, and it does well, on one hand it does have a viewership that's interesting: professionals, people who buy cars, so we can have some car ads, you know, it appealed to a certain level of advertising. I think if you're hard-nosed they were looking at it like that. But they increasingly put us out quite late, you know 11.15. Which drastically affects your viewers.

That's not a great time.

We were down to a million sometimes. Erm, the audiences were getting smaller 'cause of the crazy [inaud] but when they put us out on teatime on a Sunday afternoon, very, very rarely, we would get, we would attract, millions of big audiences, but [inhales] I think in the end they thought: 'Do we really need The South Bank Show anymore? You know, advertising's down, erm, it only gets a million, it's expensive for us'. And I think we got axed probably along the sort of lines. Now look at Piers Morgan's show, erm, it's cheap to make, it's done in the studio, show a few stills, a little bit of archive, Bob's your uncle, four million people watch it. Er, obviously, er, you know, and it's more mainstream. It's doing popular, it's much more popular, although we did many popular profiles – Dolly Parton.

It's such a tragedy isn't it, don't you think?

Well, it's short-sighted I think. Course they could keep it going and...

'Cause these programmes are gonna be watched in fifty years time.

Yep, yeah, of course, yeah, yeah...

The programmes themselves are such a resource, aren't they?

Fantastic resource.

For future researchers but also just for the general public, who are interested in say, Ken Loach, or David Hockney.

Yeah, I think yeah. As long as you kept that mix, it was, you know, so rock people would always watch the rock ones, people into art would watch us, we had a good relationship with the whole young British artists movement and filmed extensively with those, got fantastic access, 'cause the shows wouldn't be made if we didn't get the access we the people involved. You know, so, erm, they had to be living artists as well, by and large, we did do a few who are people that died but there was mainly, 'cause of biographies had been released, you know, like we did George Orwell 'cause DJ Taylor's biography came out at the same time. So it was more about DJ Taylor doing a profile, a biography of Orwell, erm, so we kept to that; mainly doing living artists. So that you know, and yeah we were criticised for being too soft on people, but by and large they were, the show was always a celebration of these people really, it wasn't a hard-nosed criticism of them, you know. Erm.

[0:57:25.0]

You talked about, erm, did you say the increase in freelancers?

Yeah.

Is that, would you say how TV has changed a lot?

Oh yeah. Greatly.

So is, are there positions like what you had in existence any more? Or is it freelance; temporary contracts, things like that?

Well, I really was the last staff and I probably will always be the last staff film researcher there, er, now. Erm, everyone was staff, there were a couple of people, there was some freelancers, when I first started at LWT, erm, but when I left. What happened was that two years before it looked as if The South Bank Show was going to be axed, two years before it actually was, but they did we lost twelve members of staff in our department which in a department of thirty is half the department basically were laid off and made redundant and of course, that vacuum was filled by freelance producer/directors and freelance researchers, who came back, or new people were bought in. So the last two years at The South Bank Show it was a very different working environment to the twenty years I worked on the show, you know. Erm, and the budget was, you know, cut drastically and I think Melvyn felt that: 'Well okay we don't like this but at least we'll survive, the show will survive; it will live on.' Although he didn't like it and we lost a lot of people, very well known producers who had worked on it for decades. Who have, find it very difficult because, obviously we don't have, if you're not in at the BBC, then you're the only people really making art shows. So it was very difficult, you are left high and dry and it was; it's had a profound effect on many producers who are now in the freelance market. Erm, so the last two years were very different, yeah, it was shifting, people coming in, just before, even if they stayed there for a year, a year and a half, you knew that the company would get them out before two years because they knew they would have staff rights. So there was a whole everybody knew that, yeah but, some people were kept on for quite lengthy periods contractually who did well on the show. But it was shifting, yeah there was much more movement. Much more casualisation now and reflected probably more in other departments as well.

[0:59:46]

So what happened to you then when the...?

Well it was pretty swift actually. I'd survived the cull with two years to go just, erm, my other, Tim Morrison, who I'd worked with for many years, er, he was erm, freelance but he'd been kept on for a long period – fifteen odd years – erm, he left, he was made redundant, erm, so I carried on, and the part-time researcher also carried on. So there was a little, we managed to keep, we managed to, fortunately to BECTU [The Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union] and the brilliant Sharon Elliott, who represented me, we tied them up in so many knots and, because some of the redundancy procedure was incorrect - they had to admit it in the end - I won't go into all the details because it involves people, but nothing, it was just, we kept basically putting it into dispute and in the end I think ITV said [sighs]: 'If he wants to stay, let him stay.' [laughter] You know, so I kept my job, which was very fortunate, if Sharon Elliott hadn't fought so well, and been so eloquent, I'd have lost two years wage, so she did a brilliant job. But the second time, the threat, as far as I know the story is Melvyn went in to discuss next years budget for The South Bank Show with Peter Fincham and, er, he thought it was just a routine meeting we, we'd survived all the shows being axed even though it had been rumoured The South Bank Show was next, no one was safe, when Peter Fincham came in he said: 'No long-standing programme's safe.' So we assumed this isn't looking good. But, we'd survived it all. Melvyn seemed quite confident that we were going to carry on even in this sort of casualised state with a couple of staff as a shifting freelance department. Erm, Peter Fincham turned around and, er, said: 'Well this is the budget that I want The South Bank Show to be.' This is Melvyn's story; I don't know what Peter Fincham's story is. And it was a small percentage, you know, twenty per cent budget, so, about eighty per cent budget cut. So Melvyn said: 'Well you know we can't make The South Bank Show for that sort of budget. It would have to be in the studio. There would be no archive, no editing, it would just be live interview with an artist.' And there is a place for that. Obviously in satellite telly and whatever, erm...

But that's not what made The South Bank so special?

That's not The South Bank Show. So rather than compromise the show Melvyn said: 'Well that's it then, we, I'll leave, I won't renew my contract, I'll go.' And the show is finished. Erm, and they said: 'Okay'. And, so were all made redundant. The whole department. In one swift go. We were all taken into a room and told: 'With the show

going, I'm afraid you'll all have to go as well.' Didn't seem to be any attempt, serious attempt, by ITV to try and keep us on, I mean they do have a commitment actually as an employer to try and keep people, erm, working. But there didn't seem to be, they just wanted, obviously the whole department was arts, well, we're not gonna do that sort of thing anymore, er, it's X Factor now, you know, erm, seventeen million watching that, I'm afraid you'll have to go. Even though some of us had been there a hell of a long time. So we were all, I was made redundant on 31st December 2009. And that was that you know. Pretty swift, you know, there was no room to negotiate they wouldn't accept it. You know, I can't believe ITV, I mean I worked on, to some extent I mean I did work on one show for twenty-two and a half years basically. I'd have liked some sort of commitment back by ITV to say: 'Well, you know, you did that job for such a long time, erm, we've now got something else you can do.'

Because surely with you knowledge and skills? And also you see archive footage in so much now; you'd think they'd have been a position where you could combine all what they need in a role for you? There's no loyalty is there really?

No. That was it. It was just, you know. I mean, you know, I got a very good redundancy rate. I got a very good pension out of it, so the compensation was good. But, erm, yeah, you know you felt like...

Well you want to work.

Yeah. I'm fifty-four. If I'd been sixty it wouldn't have mattered.

No.

So er, I would have liked to have some sort of, I mean I, I can't believe that in terms of ITV DVD distribution or some department like that wouldn't have needed someone, you know that has an archive background.

I mean, I presume over the years the contacts that you must have made in the industry?

During that period I didn't feel as though ITV management now are that bothered about people with an archive background. Not needed anymore. If we want archive we can go and get a DVD.

Yeah, so the nature of archive material has changed hasn't it? It's not like where you used to go to an archive and have to search for material and you know people are trying to get material online, there's lot of material on youtube, so they almost think anyone can do it.

Yes, that's right. Someone can just take it off the internet. How many, so many people have said that to me: 'Oh we'll just take it off the internet.'

But then you get same footage as well if you do...

Yeah you get the same footage, in fact you've got to be sued once you know for breach of copyright, you've only got to be sued once, and then you're, it won't happen again. So, there is this concept which is downloading use it. Now with the freedom of information, with the right to criticise now, you know, you can, if you criticise footage you can legally, er, use archive footage, er, in a critical context, where you make a reference to it, comment on it. You can use in that sense archive footage for free. Just as you have a right to quote if your reviewing a book. You can quote a documentary if you're making a film. Perfectly reasonable, but first of all you've gotta find the footage in an acceptable state so it's gotta be of a transmittable quality. Otherwise it's useless.

Which is a problem, isn't it, with lots of material? 'Cause it could be older material?

Yeah, and there's lots of factors to using footage in a critical way to legally use it. You need a lawyer also to look it over. Erm, and there's lots of things you can't do, you can't montage, you know, you must make a reference to it, either good or bad, or some, you know, it's not that easy to use, you've gotta know what you're doing. If you're using Warner Brothers footage or BBC footage, you know, you've got to be a bit careful.

Can you think of an example of an appalling misuse of archive footage? You know, where you've just gone: 'Noooooooooooo!' [laughs] Kind of misrepresentation or...?

Yeah. You saw war footage and it's the wrong war [laughs]. Errr, Washington Square's in New York, it's not in Washington.

[laughs]. Okay.

There are little, there's these little traps out there that you've gotta be careful of.

Cause people, the viewer, watches it as evidence. And that's quite problematic, isn't it, how archive footage can be used in that way as a support to something, as fact?

Yeah, yeah. You see overuse. Someone's gone: 'Oh right – hippies!' or 'Swinging London' and they always use the same colour, British Pathé shot of, you know, Carnaby Street. And to the point where, you know, you know it's a story called 'in gear' 5013, you know the reference number [laughs]. 'Cause it's, it's, it's such a well known piece of archive.

That's why the roll of the film researcher and archivist is so critical because it's the way we formulate our history, and our identity.

Oh yeah, absolutely. And also...

So finding the correct sources and a variety of sources is integral.

Variety is crucial. If you're gonna give say a rock band in you should get the best footage of that rock band, you know. First of all they shouldn't be miming. You get a lot of mimed footage. Or people just lazy get the Top of the Pops performance, rather than thinking: 'Well they may have done something else, they may have done that song a lot, it was a big hit, they may have sung it live, it'll be much more interesting.' Or they might have sung it to backing tracks but at least they might have sung it live. It's nice to use a bit of depth.

And you really appreciate it as a viewer when you see someone showing you footage that you haven't seen before.

Yeah.

I remember, quite recently watching a Michael Jackson documentary and thinking: 'Oh I'm just gonna see the same old bog standard footage, and it didn't, it showed new stuff that I hadn't seen.

That's right. Yeah, yeah.

Really appreciated it.

And you know, perhaps, if it's 16mm tele-recording, you know, it's gonna be black and white, something from the sixties say, quality's not much, but it's the same old Top of the Pops stuff that's used time and time again. Actually for a bit more work you might find it in colour, you might find it shot on 35mm, beautiful quality. And, why not use that?

But then if you're a freelance researcher, you haven't got the time, you just go for what's easiest, don't you, where I think if you're more in house and dedicated to creating a...

Well, it's interesting you say, 'cause I, the major problem is a producer in a television station saying: 'Oh we don't need film researchers; they're expensive – two hundred quid a day, erm, get the runner to do it.' Then you have copyright problems you might lose a master tape that you've got in on loan, erm, have you cleared all the actors say, in a drama, have you cleared the music. And then it becomes, it could end up, you might get away with it and I think nine times out of ten you probably will.

And I think they'll take that risk because of the financial...

And you end up; you'll end up using the bog standard, erm, clip of the band on a tele recording from the sixties rather than a colour, 35mm clip. You know, it's that variety

which is crucial, and people I think, the audience has a right to see new footage and you can still find new footage of events that occurred forty or fifty years ago, if you look. You know, for instance, most people got to the BBC or ITV if they wanted a British rock band but, from the sixties or seventies or eighties, but you have to realise that these bands toured - and, in America - you might find much more interesting footage when they toured America. Colour, show on film, rather than a tele recording. Or they may have gone to, I mean, Belgium television. Unless you're a film researcher RTBF [Radio Télévision Belge Francophone] has the most incredible archive of musical, including a great deal of jazz. He's got John Coltrane, some of the best John Coltrane footage, er, performance footage, live, absolutely stunning footage in a tent in a jazz festival somewhere in Belgium, for god's sake, you know. Erm, now they've never thrown any of their footage away. So, you know, say you wanted Atomic Rooster, you know a pretty obscure band from the mid, late sixties, they've got it [laughs]. Atomic Rooster spent, these band use to spend their whole time touring. There was no internet, there weren't pop videos.

But if you're the runner doing this job how are you gonna know...

You wouldn't know that, you wouldn't know that in a million years. You end up using the, a clip so familiar because you've seen it on youtube. That's not to say there aren't really good stuff on youtube. Erm, but just 'cause it's on youtube, you can't just use it. By and large, it's owned by someone and that's breach of copyright. Nine times out of ten, ninety nine out of a hundred, er, times, you will get away with it but one day someone from The Beatles will see it, and Yoko Ono will contact you and say: 'Well you didn't clear this footage and I own it.' Apple, the Beatles own their own footage now, The Rolling Stones own their own footage, people don't realise this. You use a Stones footage from you know, a clip from "Gimme Shelter", you want to be careful what you're doing. 'Cause you'll get you fingers...Or Warner Brothers or MGM, if you want a Hollywood major on your back, then rather you than me. They don't mess around these people.

So there isn't really anything really that's going to replace The South Bank Show is there, or that can compare to it? So we're just probably gonna get one off programmes?

Yes, yeah, I think there could be one offs if they get big enough people...

Or documentaries?

Michael Jackson sort of documentaries or, erm, big stars: Madonna, I mean obviously television, basically television is desperate to get Madonna, ITV, erm, Kylie, you know I think that sort of mainstream star, oh Kate Moss [laughs]. They'd, I think ITV would pay anything to get a programme, to get her to do an interview, you know. So, that's the sort of way that television seems to be at the moment. I mean I think...

What about BBC4? What's your opinion on that?

It's fantastic. I love all that, yeah, yeah, when I was at ITV I put to Melvyn, I mean I actually worked it all out. Seven to midnight each day ITV could do an arts channel, using all the back catalogue that ITV now has. I mean before The South Bank Show we did Aquarius, Humphrey Burton and Russell Harty presented, a fantastic arts show that went on for ten – fifteen years. A lot of them are missing but a lot of the film inserts still exist. There's an interview with Salvador Dali there, you know, erm, which I know ITN who own all the rights to all these shows they're still seeing them all round the world. So someone's watching these shows, even in little, truncated form.

You have things like The Culture Show but they're not very penetrating are they?

No, no, no.

You just get five minutes of say an interview with Loach and then move on to the next topic. And I think that says something about how, er, they kind of patronise viewers in that they don't think that our attention span will hold long enough for an in depth programme.

That's right, I think that's the problem with BBC4, much as I love it, and watch it all the time, you one of the channels I always go to, erm, it in the sense puts arts into a,

you know, a separate area, rather than being in the mainstream of television. So you don't get a, you still get Arena and Imagine but you know there's always that feeling that they're just sort of putting it in a separate compartment away from mainstream TV, and I think we all like to see that sort of commitment to serious art shows in the mainstream. I think that's what Melvyn was all about. He loved the fact that it was on ITV and everyone who worked at ITV on The South Bank Show loved that fact. That it was going out to millions of people, you know 'cause all of us have worked on shows and busted a gut, it's so small an audience that no one's watching, you know, or a hundred thousand or fifty thousand, very small in British television terms but not in other terms.

But that's again about, it's instantaneous those figures but what about future, you know, viewers?

Yeah, I mean, that's also the DVD market which is quite exciting that people these days are choosing to just go. And I have been talking to a few people who, who, production companies only make DVDs and who have no intention of working on television, it's too, because that market's fallen. The one of arts documentary is not really happening at the moment but erm, streaming video of arts stuff on the internet or DVDs, you know, where you know, you can sell fifty thousand DVDs is you've got the right artist and the right moment. And a good, that's a lot of money. You know, so I, it seems to be where, erm, it's much more, erm, dispersed now that when I joined in '87. Erm, and it's a shame, yeah, that ITV have done this but obviously the massive success of the X-Factor and shows like it, erm, I mean when I, you know, when I was being made redundant this time last year, I did say: 'Well, why can't we still do an arts show, I mean Melvyn, I'm not even saying that Melvyn has to present it, it would be different, you know, it doesn't have to be The South Bank Show, we could do another arts show in a different way? Or, perhaps, even more mainstream artists? I don't mind Madonna, or Kylie, fine, that's no problem to me.' Erm, and the response seemed to be from management was: 'Well we do arts anyway.' Which was some sort of, actually made me shut up for a while. And I think they mean, well X-Factor is music, you know, so, I don't know, I'm not trying to second guess them. But, that was the feeling I, and we will do arts I think every now and again, you know we'll do as, but I think that's going to be Kylie and [inaud] people like that, rather

than, you know, David Hockney, you know, whatever. But you know, The South Bank Show revisited, they've been repeating an updating The South Bank Show. It's got a million and a half viewers, I mean it's been doing very well.

And the events at, they're holding at the BFI Southbank I know have been phenomenally successful.

I understand the whole series is going to the University of Leeds to be archived there and would be available for everybody.

That's good to hear.

Which is great to hear. Students are here.

Because access is what's so important.

Yep.

As well, isn't it?

It's been very difficult so far because, erm, you know if you send out DVDs, an artist can say: 'Well that's another form of distribution and we didn't agree on when I agreed to make a television show.'

Of course. Yeah, yeah.

So you've got to be a little bit careful with that and I think this is a great idea and people, or students, or whoever will just be able to contact the University, so it's great to here and I mean, over the years show have gone out on video and DVD anyway and every now and again, The South Bank Show would be so big, you know, for instance, the, erm, arh, it's the, erh, it wasn't The South Bank actually, we did a Without Walls, erm, which we won a BAFTA [British Association of Film and Television Awards] for and Melvyn in it was the great television, Dennis Potter and

we did a Without Walls for Channel 4. And that interview just went so well 'cause he really wanted to do it. Erm, Potter in fact, interestingly...

Is that the one where he was very unwell?

Yes, and he was dying. And he was drinking champagne and morphine.

Yeah, that was, what a classic for television.

And he'd phoned Melvyn and said: 'I want to do you.' Rather than the BBC, because, you see this is when you look back and I'm not going to go into the whole Golden Age of ITV but in the sixties and seventies you know, you would have a Dennis, LWT made a series of Dennis Potter plays and films. It may a series of Alan Bennetts. A real commitment there to popular drama which you know, erm, you know, you had Corrie [Coronation Street] a fantastic sit, err, a fantastic, err, series. And there was this mix of serious work with popular work, you know, I'm very drawn to that I think it's a great idea and I think there is, you could still do that you know, you could still do that mixture. Thames Television, who, lets, we now go to Covent Garden, I mean Thames TV have got loads of ballet from Covent Garden, you know, there must have been an audience, I'm not so sure there isn't an audience now, but it's just presumed seemingly or broadcasters have been convinced, I quite like that fact of, of, you know, Reg Varney [ph] show one night, Please Sir, there was this big think of getting popular comedy, popular sitcoms, massively popular, somewhat crap and racist now but some were, you know, there was a real, there were mass audiences, you know any er, but now erm that commitment to have something serious occasionally seems to have gone, you know, it's a shame. It is a shame.

[1:19:12]

And have there been programmes that you've worked on since leaving The South Bank Show, or?

No, oh no, I've taken, it's thirty years – I've just been at home. First time I've done an extended break; it's been absolutely fantastic.

Yeah.

Erm, my cholesterol levels are down, er, the blood sugar has gone down [laughter], erm, my doctor said: 'Have you had some sort of major', he said: 'I've never seen such a change', he said 'into', because there was a blood test – he was checking everything, he said: 'Have you had some sort of life changing moment recently?' I said: 'Yeah – I've been made redundant.' I'm not working...

If someone asked you though, if a project was exciting enough, would you be tempted?

Yeah. I'm ready to go back now. Winning the Focal Award last week, erm, I thought it would, also you know I thought it would be good to use that as a way in again, you know, erm, and I thought, you know – summer's here, it's time to get back in, you know, get back into it, erm, but I'd still like to do some sort of arts film research if I can find it. And there are new forms of broadcasting which I'm not even aware of, I mean I haven't been in the freelance market ever. Not since '82. Since *The Animals Film*. So, when I was a freelancer, so there's a whole new ways that people are making documentaries. The one offs on television, not so much now, it seems. Erm, because a filmmaker would say: 'Let's make a DVD instead', you know. There's more, because, you know, you can do it, as long as you've made an agreement with the artist, so perhaps, you know, there might be something in these new forms of programme making that, er, I could work. And I don't have to work full time now which is fortunately. So er, this might, you know, fingers crossed I might get a little break through you know.

Looking back are you proud of the contribution you've made to shows?

Yeah, yeah, it's been a fantastic thirty years. Er, I'm, *The South Bank Show*, we made some, I can think of a dozen of them, really important shows which I could easily watch again and again, you know. Erm, I think when we did a good one, we did a good one. Marianne Faithfull comes to mind quite recently, we found some great archive in that, erm, of her when she was a child. Erm, she'd completely forgotten

about it, she was filmed after a, when she was still at school. Er, and there was footage of her mother, and she saw it, in the edit, and cried. She said: 'Where did you get that footage?' She'd completely forgotten about it. So that's a great moment. You know. Erm, yes, The Animals Film funny enough I can remember talking to Russell Crockett who was working with us we, it was his first job in the telly, like myself, and Russell's now a very, very good videotape editor which came from The Animals Film. Another good story there. Russell's great videotape editor. And I remember we had a standing ovation and I went on the stage with Victor and Russell and we both joked and said that this is our fifteen minutes [laughs] you know, enjoy it. But I did get a feeling we 'd made a joke at the time that perhaps our careers were the wrong way round. That really, would we ever be able to trump the impact of The Animals Film. Erm, and it was probably true. We didn't actually, you know, The Animals Film was probably, erm, incredibly successful, you know, and then when it came out, the BFI brought it out on, in 2008, on DVD and we got these reviews again. You know, which was wonderful. Ken Russell gave it a fantastic review in The Times and er, all of a sudden it brought back a lot of good memories actually.

Obviously the impact of that was instantaneous but I think your contribution to The South Bank Show over a long period of time and the legacy that that will have for future generations...

Yeah, I've worked with some great producers and fantastic, I mean, 90s was a fantastic social life as well on the show it really did peak then for most of us. You know there was a good group of people that we sort of worked together, and played together. So that was a great period as well. Erm, and they've gone on as well, they've made some great shows. Yeah, yeah, and you know, you, you, there was certain producers who came in, who just had a magic touch, and you always enjoyed working with them, or it was perhaps a quite, could be quite erm argumentative, erm, they would push you, and you'd push them and so yeah it was a good working environment, especially during that period. We did some cracking shows. Yeah.

Oh, well thank you so much Phil!

[Laughter]

What a fascinating career!

[Laughter]

It's been a pleasure.