

1/5/2016

**HISTORY PROJECT INTERVIEW**

**Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2016**

**TERRY ACKLAND SNOW**

**BREAKDOWN**

- 00.00 – History Project intro – names, date, location
- 00.34 – Born 1943, Middlesex Hospital, brothers
- 01.43 - Education – slightly confused – leaps ahead to work in film industry
- 02.27 - Father & brother Brian working in film industry, led to TAS first job at Danzigers
- 02.52 - Father had own set-construction business, contractor for BBC
- 03.31 - TAS went into film/TV because he loved it, not just family connection
- 03.50 - “I wanted to be in Art Dept, father was more on carpentry side”
- 04.12 - First job as print boy, then a bit of drawing – follow-up explanation of job of print boy
- 05.03 - “The tell tale heart” – pig’s heart with tomato ketchup
- 05.53 - Everything was new, exciting to be on film set
- 06:40 - First drawing ever was chopping block on “Richard the Lionheart” - chopping block story
- 08:06 - Walked into shot on Danzigers WW2 film
- 08:38 - Danzigers, small studio, cheap productions, revamped sets, but opportunity for TAS to progress quickly
- 09:22 - Danzigers owned Mayfair hotel, studio just another business

- 10:00 - Desperate to work in big studio, invited by Elliot Scott to help out on major MGM film with Ken Adams, “In the cool of the day”. Learned drawing skills from draughtsman Frank Wilson.
- 12:06 - Remembers getting very involved in drawings for house interiors, working from books. Film location in Athens but TAS didn’t go.
- 13:18. - Ken Adams panatellas / lunch money story.
- 15:00 - Working on “Danger man” with Jack Shampan. Recycled sets from MGM scene dock.
- 15:55 - Jack Shampan design story – biro on back of fag packet
- 16:58 - “Danger Man”, low budget, fast turnaround
- 17:30 - Patrick McGoohan story: TAS told off for giving him a lift, not insured. PG a lovely man, very religious.
- 19:20 - PG claimed to have photographic memory
- 19:53 - “The Yellow Rolls Royce” – Ascot race course story – worked with all three Art Directors: Elliott Scott, Billy Kellner, Vincent Korda.
- 20:57 - Rex Harrison – specially built Rolls Royce – TAS designed mock-up of car
- 22:04 - Two other films at MGM – “Operation Crossbow” with Elliot Scott, full size V2 rocket and miniature, rocket blown up on set; “The Liquidator”, Ron Blezzard, Ron Taylor & Eric Sykes both nice blokes, Trevor Howard story, heavy drinker, unable to deliver line.
- 25:58 - First “freelance” (NB. really loan-out) job “The Blue Max”, taken on for experience in fore-shortening shots. Crane/flying shot story. Art Director Arthur Lawson.
- 27:30 - After “The Blue Max” MGM regularly loaned TAS out to other studios, incl to Pinewood for “On Her Majesty’s Secret Service” with Sid Caine. TAS went freelance when he discovered how much MGM was charging for him.

- 29:40 - "On Her Majesty's Secret Service" TAS made models for restaurant & cable car.
- 30:00 - Drawings/designs – "works of art" – belong to production companies not draughtsmen / Art Directors.
- 31:00 - "I'm writing a book ... " which will show how little has changed since silent film days.
- 31:50 - "On Her Majesty's Secret Service" – large cave set, 2 feet out, big fuss.
- 32:44 - Relations between Art Dept and Construction Dept
- 34:00 - Different colleagues/team on each film – "That's what makes it work ... it's the same language"
- 34:54 - Most respected Designer/Art Directors: Peter Murton, knowledgeable, technical; Ken Adams, "a thinker", philosophical. TAS prefers to work with someone like Peter Murton. "Death on the Nile", Peter Murton's best film.
- 36:30 - Bette Davis story from "Death on the Nile".
- 38:30 - Most respected directors: Tim Burton, Peter Yates.  
More difficult directors : Stanley Kubrick, James Cameron, Ken Russell: "geniuses" but difficult to work for, want to do everything themselves.  
Ken Russell 'difficult Director' stories.
- 42:55 - Art Dept approaches to different genres: sci-fi/thriller/period costume etc. "Always start from what the camera is going to see".  
Sometimes Director arrives with an initial vision – e.g. Ridley Scott / Giger / "Alien" – sometimes not.
- 44:30 - "Rocky Horror Picture Show" – cult movie. "I'm very lucky to say that at the age of 29 I was Production Designer on it". Fortuitous: first Brian Thompson then John Clarke dropped out.
- 47:29 - "Rocky Horror Picture Show" – hand to mouth production – actors standing on scaffolding, early rain scene using dodgy water pumped out of Thames, etc.

- 48:25 - “Rocky Horror Picture Show” – wall of death / ramp / motorcycle / Meatloaf scene.
- 49:40 - “Rocky Horror Picture Show” – tiles and geodesic dome
- 50:35 - “Rocky Horror Picture Show” – lift got stuck but actors didn’t panic, very professional
- 51:35 - “Rocky Horror Picture Show” – shot at Bray Studios
- 51:50 - “Tommy” – story re Ken Russell getting John Clarke to sing “It’s a boy Mrs Robinson ...
- 53:11 - “Tommy” – Ken R. “felt safe” with TAS and other key crew close by during shooting
- 53:35 - “Tommy” – story re errant nail – argument between Ken R. & TAS – relationship fine after that.
- 54:52 - Directors: Tim Burton “a thespian Director”. James Cameron “wants to do it all”. Peter Yates “just a gentleman”, direct but pleasant. Stanley Kubrick “wants to do it all, looks at you like that”.
- 56:05 - “Barry Lyndon” – Ken Adams film, TAS joined to take charge of wagons etc. Story re setting up marks for soldiers in battle scene.
- 57:35 - “Barry Lyndon” – story re shooting candle-lit scene in tent, too hot, had to cut hole in tent. Kubrick wanted to shoot by candlelight, big job for Props.
- 58:52 - “Barry Lyndon” – story re Kubrick getting TAS to spend 3 weeks making model of existing set “because he didn’t know what to do, he was buying time”.
- 01:01:05 - “Barry Lyndon” – story re arriving in Ireland & being told to follow Ken Adams & Kubrick in car.
- 01:02:50 - “Barry Lyndon” – Huntingdon Castle, “horror castle”, Kubrick arrived with string of garlic

- 01:03:32 - Stanley Kubrick – “very intense”, wanted to control everything around camera, story re SK doing camera calculations from toy soldiers.
- 01:05:30 - “Death on the Nile “ – working in Egypt, Aswan, Cataract Hotel.
- 01:06:34 - “Death on the Nile “ – Story about David Niven & John Guillermin.
- 01:09:10 - “Death on the Nile “ – Director: John Guillermin, “awful”, good Director but difficult to work with. Story re painting the boat. Story re drinking Scotch while driving in desert.
- 01:12:52 - “Superman II” - Director: Richard Lester. “Totally different – a one-take Director”. Fast worker. Nice bloke.
- 01:13:35 - “Superman II” – names of Art Dept colleagues
- 01:14:00 - “Superman II” – story re Wardrobe Dept. Lester wanted wall painted same colour as actress’s frock.
- 01:15:42 - “Superman II” – story re special set, laid on side on 007 stage at Pinewood for ‘punched out of skyscraper’ stunt effect.
- 01:17:29 - “Superman II” – working with Derek Meddings on SFX. An artist, very nice man, designed “Thunderbirds” vehicles. TAS also worked with him on “Spies Like Us”.
- 01:18:33 - “Superman II” – working relationship between Art Dept and SFX. “It’s team-work, we all work together, we are filmmakers”.
- 01:19:45 - “Spies Like Us” – TAS joint Production Designer with Peter Murton. TAS did locations and rocket/launcher. Story re problems driving crane/launcher up mountain road to location in Norway. Situation saved with bulldozer and plastic bags.
- 01:22:18 - “Spies Like Us” – story re protecting virgin snow despite vehicles/crew.
- 01:23:15 - “Aliens” – amazing trick film. Android’s blood = milk from canteen + yoghurt. Pig’s entrails also.
- 01:24:44 - “Aliens” – corridor = bin-holders turned inside out.

- 01:25:02 - Sourcing/building props & sets: cannibalise vehicles, DIY shops, etc.
- 01:26:00 - Sourcing/building props & sets: not just down to Production Designer, “We are film-makers, we all think of ideas all the time ... It’s the art of illusion ... “
- 01:27:05 - Role of concept artist as compared to storyboard artist.
- 01:28:57 - “Aliens” – Production Designer Peter Lamont. Corridor in film was tunnel on E Stage at Pinewood. PL, TAS and another in Art Dept all read script independently then compared notes re how to realise it: all 3 virtually identical. Used a blowtorch to create ‘alien blood’ effect.
- 01:30:33 - Storyboard artists. First extensive use on “Superman II”.
- 01:30:47 - Storyboard artists. “In my opinion, being a bit of an old fogey ... “ – storyboards most appropriate for particular sequences, not whole film.
- 01:33:20 - “The Deep” – “I was a Class 3 Diver ... “ Background story re getting qualified by booking Slough swimming pool, then straight to Caribbean and diving 90 feet.
- 01:37:15 - Top films: Most enjoyable to work on – “The Deep”. Most successful – “Bond” or “Superman”. Cult hit – “Rocky Horror”.
- 01:38:02 - “The Deep” – story re making underwater protective cover for Jacqueline Bisset scene, locked in place by water pressure, still there today.
- 01:39:30 - “The Deep” – “most exciting” to see whole underwater film unit – Lee Boys – underwater lights -
- 01:40:31 - “Labyrinth” – Escher set, re-created Escher optical illusion with mirror.
- 01:41:20 - “Labyrinth” and “Dark Crystal” – Jim Henson & Frank Oz “lovely people”. Both spoke with muppet hands, couldn’t help themselves. Story re doing i/v on “This Is Your Life” for Frank Oz.
- 01:43:21 - “Batman” – Story re design of Batmobile. “I was in charge of this vehicle”. Tim Burton: “This is great but how do they get in it?”. TAS

designed sliding entry, & Costume Designer designed special Batman hood with shorter ears.

- 01:47:10 - “Batman” – Batmobile - Drove it once to 70 mph ... SFX got it to about 90 ... not aerodynamic, just a prop ... built two for insurance, but both got used on different units ... about six units in all ... SFX unit different again ...
- 01:49:53 - “Batman” – Art Dept is like teacher, the person who says ‘That’s it’.
- 01:50:30 - “Batman” – Only 17 in Art Dept on “Batman” compared to 52 on “Casino Royale”.
- 01:51:57 - Accountability. “The only person I ever listen to is the Director”, because Director is creative, while Producer is administrative. “The Director is the master”.
- 01:53:05 - If Director is losing control, Producer/money people usually see it first. Don’t like it if Director is indecisive, needs to be nice but strong.
- 01:55:21 - Role of the Designers Guild and BECTU. In USA the guild is the union. In Britain it’s a ‘guild of excellence’ with affiliate membership for young people. BECTU also has many TV Designers. TV drama work now rivals film work.
- 01:57:03 - Story re ACTT getting payment for crew on dodgy job in Ireland.
- 01:58:33 - TV work in 1990s. “Soldier soldier”, “Inspector Morse”, “Monsieur Renard”, “Kavanagh QC”, mostly Central/Carlton TV.
- 02:00:25 - TV work – “Alternative 3” space spoof – Anglia Television – story re Jehovah’s Witness accusing TAS of frightening people. Story re mocking up Hollywood summer in English winter.
- 02:03:18 - Film Design International – set up by TAS 15 years ago – met a global need, other media courses don’t teach reality of filmmaking, give students unreal expectations.
- 02:05:25 - FDI combines traditional and new methods: “CAD and Vectorworks has its place but it’s not instead of”.
- 02:06:35 - Discussion re revival of 35 mm as shooting option for major features

02:07:34 - FDI graduates regularly find work in the industry – “I would say 99%  
... not all at Pinewood ... worldwide ... TV ... six on “Star Wars” ... “

02:08:40 - “We’ve got to teach young people the industry ... it’s our future ...  
that’s what I hope I’m doing”