

Maurice Askew (sound recordist/dubbing mixer) 12/05/1916 - 11/12/1986

by [admin](#) — last modified Apr 18, 2008 10:21 AM

Born in India in 1916, Maurice Askew entered the film industry in 1938, working for The Religious Film Society. During the war Askew joined the RAF, but he came back to (what was then) Religious Films Limited as a dubbing mixer at the Gate Studios, and remained there until his retirement. In this interview with Jim Shields made at the Gate in 1972, Askew talks extensively about his post war career in film. He recalls early work for Herbert Wilcox on *Spring in Park Lane* (1948), the management of Religious Films Ltd (which later became GHW). He recalls various films he has been involved in dubbing sound and producing sound effects for, particularly *The Chalk Garden* (1964), *The Ipcress File* (1965), *The Mechanic* (1972), *Scorpio* (1973), *Romeo and Juliet* (1968), as well as various Gerry Anderson television programmes. He, Jim Shields and Lionel Strutt discuss the advantages of the dubbing theatre in the Gate Studios, and various technical aspects of Askew's work. Unfortunately the sound quality on this interview is not perfect, and some passages are indecipherable. (Lawrence Napper, BCHRP)

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Interview Date: 1972

Interviewer: Jim Shields

Interviewee: Maurice Askew

Tape 1, Side 1

Jim Shields: This is a recording made in 1972 at the Gate recording theatre at Elstree, of Maurice Askew, who was the dubbing mixer there - and a very find dubbing mixer too. [break in recording]... You know, just when you started in the industry, roughly, and where?

Maurice Askew: Is it rolling?

Jim Shields: Yes we're rolling.

Maurice Askew: Oh you've been rolling all along, I didn't know that!

Jim Shields: Yes - no, no, I just this second started it, Maurice.

Maurice Askew: Well I started in the industry in 1938, with The Religious Film Society.

Jim Shields: Ah hmm... and they're tied up with J.W. then were they?

Maurice Askew: No.

Jim Shields: They were a separate entity...

Maurice Askew: The Religious Film Society was formed to make Christian pictures, and that's when Rank got interested in the film business.

Jim Shields: Yes.

Maurice Askew: And they had a studio in Crystal Palace, just opposite the burnt down remains, at the top end. And I went over there. And it was religious films of course that got Rank interested in the business - he came into it because of that. I think - this is only, sort of hearsay, really - but I think he got, you know, he got run around by some of the sharp boys at the time and um, he sort of bought his way in. He was a Methodist.

Jim Shields: He was a Methodist, hmm.

Maurice Askew: ...and he became interested. Anyway the Religious Film Society became Religious Films Limited, and then I joined the Air Force in January 1940 and I was there until February '46. And by the time I came out they were here, having been to Dunstable during the war. So I joined up again with Religious Films and carried on after coming out of the RAF. And er, I've been here ever since...

Jim Shields: You were a dubbing mixer then were you?

Maurice Askew: We were over at G-BI [Gaumont British Instructional] at the time...

Jim Shields: Yes, that was what decided, was it?

Maurice Askew: Hmm. I hadn't had - you know I'd been a sort of general dogsbody for a chappie in Religious Films called Lawrence Couselle. He built his own recorders and, in those days. And when I came back the first thing we did was to re-record their whole library of things with new tracks and...

Jim Shields: Hmm, yes.

Maurice Askew: And then when this place was installed, the console was going in about 1946, the first film was done on it in '47, I came over here and carried on. The first film done here was Spring in Park Lane, for Wilcox...

Jim Shields: Oh yes, well that was a very popular picture.

Maurice Askew: I didn't do that, Red Law, er, it was Peter Handford assisting did that. And then after that I did everything else that was done here.

Jim Shields: Oh that's very interesting. I remember seeing that picture as a youngster and [indecipherable, interviewee talks over].

Maurice Askew: Yeah well, I sort of sat behind Red Law and watched him and Peter Handford dubbing it, you know.

Jim Shields: He wasn't a bad bloke was Red Law was he?

Maurice Askew: No, no...

Jim Shields: Burns Red! [Chuckles]

Maurice Askew: [Chuckles] Brilliant dubbing editor.

Jim Shields: Ex Naval man, of course.

Maurice Askew: Of course [Hulton?] was absolutely new you know, it had just been installed - it all worked! It was one of the first, well if not the first post war Westrex Channel - well it was Western Electric then, it wasn't Westrex for some years. And the first music session here I recollect was George Melachrino and he was very kind about the quality he got, so that put us on the right road, and we sort of...

Jim Shields: Can you remember what that picture was?

Maurice Askew: The picture I don't remember. Melachrino and His Strings - I don't know what other description he got, but you know that style of orchestra. And we were the recording theatre for The Gate, which is the other station.

Jim Shields: Yes.

Maurice Askew: And that had one big and one small stage, and was operating to make religious films and in between whiles, taking on commercial films. And that carried on for some years and then it was sold up when they decided not to run the studio any more, but we stayed on, on our own feet as it were. Religious Films handed over the technical stuff to GHW in 1947 I think. GHW stood for Gregory, Hake and Walker, the three director founders. It was a Methodist organised thing - I think the Methodists were often behind it - to do the technical side of the making of religious films and Religious Films Limited did the church content side. That's how GHW came to be.

Jim Shields: And the present board of directors, whoever they might be, when did they take over?

Maurice Askew: Well - when? I never remember the dates but um, sort of middle fifties I think.

Jim Shields: Oh that long ago?

Maurice Askew: Rank lost um - stopped having any connection with us. We were still under Rank for some time, independent, not part of the Organisation.

Jim Shields: Yes.

Maurice Askew: And then the Sydney Box Organisation bought us out some time in the fifties.

Jim Shields: Oh yes I remember that because he set up a company I worked for - I did a Brian Rix picture at the Gate National as they they set up. He set up a very big organisation, which was going to be a nucleus of directors or producers, the best in the country. And um - actually it was one of my shortest jobs, I started on a Monday morning and was fired at lunchtime! On a thing called 'D-Day the Sixth of June', when he was unfortunately taken ill on the Sunday and they decided to curtail production and that was the end of it. So there must have been a tie-up with this - it was about the end of, about the middle fifties or...

Maurice Askew: Something like that.

Jim Shields: I remember. I know I was scratching at the time, [indecipherable?]

Maurice Askew: Hmm. So I don't know. It's called - it's now Peter Rogers Productions, I think.

Jim Shields: What Peter Rogers, the 'Carry On' people?

Maurice Askew: That's right, yeah.

Jim Shields: Has he done any pictures here at all?

Maurice Askew: He hasn't done anything here as far as I am aware.

Jim Shields: He hasn't done anything at all?

Maurice Askew: I think one music session once.

Jim Shields: One music session?

Maurice Askew: I think so. But um, he is the sort of um - well he's a chairman of the directors you know.

Jim Shields: Hmm, hmm.

Maurice Askew: And when they took over, Jeapes and Sloan who had been the directors before left, and Sydney Box and the others - and it's sort of changed over the years. It's still called GHW, as far as I know the same GHW as makes the Carry On's - I don't know of any subdivision in the firm. But we've had nothing to do with the Carry On's in this recording theatre, we're quite independent, working for whoever comes along, you know. And up to the last couple of years we've been working all the time practically. [break in recording] Well of course the first

time I came here, we didn't actually go in the dubbing theatre but Russ Lloyd was doing Decameron Nights...

Maurice Askew: Ah yes.

Jim Shields: They were dubbing it, and I came here and watched you.

Maurice Askew: That's right. That was the first hundred per cent post synch picture I think.

Jim Shields: Yes.

Maurice Askew: It was absolutely every inch post synched because they had those great tri-pack cameras and no blimp!

Jim Shields: Oh yes!

Maurice Askew: It was like a combine harvester going all the time.

Jim Shields: Yes just like... But after Maytime in Mayfair, what other...

Maurice Askew: [correcting him] 'Springtime in Park Lane'.

Jim Shields: Er 'Springtime in Park Lane'.

Maurice Askew: Spring in Park Lane...

Jim Shields: Spring in Park Lane, that's the one yes. Maytime in Mayfair followed it didn't it?

Maurice Askew: That's right, but we didn't do that one.

Jim Shields: But um what sort of - from that date do any pictures come to mind that are of particular interest?

Maurice Askew: Well one or two that were made in - one that comes to mind that was made in The Gate there, Odette. Do you remember we made Odette in The Gate. I don't think we dubbed it, I don't know where it was dubbed.

Jim Shields: It was dubbed at Pinewood.

Maurice Askew: Yeah that's right, we didn't dub it.

Jim Shields: That's right, they dubbed it.

Maurice Askew: An early Attenborough film was made as 'The Cockpit' - er, I saw it in a theatre and it was on the telly a couple or three years back. That was made and dubbed here - that

was late forties, early fifties. But, Decameron, as you say, Frankovich's. I think it would have got a U certificate nowadays but [laughs]

Jim Shields: Yes I think so. Possibly. This is the downfall of the industry I think - all the muck they're making now. It killed the theatre and it kills the cinema. Get the family in and that's the most...

Maurice Askew: Well the family gets out of the habit of going now...

Jim Shields: Well exactly. I mean it's like...you have big crowds in for the 'Bond' and what do they do? The week after it's on they put X certificates on, instead of putting a run of U's and get people in the habit of going again.

Maurice Askew: That's right.

Jim Shields: If they can find a U certificate of course.No one thing that um...

Maurice Askew: Who are the names, you know

Jim Shields: They go. We never came here on - I didn't come here again, I think the next one was The Young Ones we did the post-dubs here.

Maurice Askew: The Young Ones, yeah.

Jim Shields: Then, the one that you re-dubbed at the - we dubbed at MGM and they did it in America and I remember your remark that when you saw the American dub. You said "Oh, I think we can do a little bit better than that!" And did... was The Chalk Garden.

Maurice Askew: Oh yes!

Lionel Strutt: That's when I started, yes. That's almost ten years ago to the day.

Jim Shields: Yes it is...

Lionel Strutt: Because it's almost ten years to the day since I started here.

Jim Shields: In actual fact it is about ten years ago to the day that I finished on that picture.

Lionel Strutt: Really?

Jim Shields: Hmm, in October, that's quite right. Then we did - we came up with Ronnie Neame. Because he was very impressed because when we were at Shepperton he said, "I don't what to post-synch in that small box of a place, I want somewhere large to post synch in." So I suggested to him that we came here, and he was very impressed with the way that - hearing stuff in stereo, and quick change-arounds from this to that all went so smoothly - and loved the quality. The only thing that happened really was that you were too fast and I kept getting told off

for having a gap with artists arriving, but...[MA chuckles] I mean it's amazing how much you learn, because then I learnt this business about - you wanted... Do you remember Kenneth Moore had to really holler out and you said, "Well it's no good making him shout, leave that for amplification." That I remember.

Maurice Askew: Yes some voices you pitch 'em up and they loose the...

Jim Shields: They loose the...

Maurice Askew: ...the body, and sometimes it's better to push it afterwards. Some voices will take it.

Jim Shields: Yes. Then of course Man in the Wilderness[?] with William Pecks[?] which was interesting. But something you always - I don't know why it is, Maurice, it must be obviously, you know the theatre, but here is one of the few times when - perhaps you could answer it because I haven't found the answer anywhere else - one of the few places where you can come in with post synch, you have a reasonably good guide track, and it's the only time I think a director can be excused for saying, "Is that the post-synched or the original?" Because if you want an acoustic match you get it...

Maurice Askew: Hmm. Well it's just a matter of taking care.

Jim Shields: Yes, but it doesn't happen elsewhere. Straightaway you're saying, "God, that's post-synched."

Maurice Askew: Hmm.

Jim Shields: You know, straightaway. Then it's the artist, "They can't perform..."

Maurice Askew: Yeah well this is in fact a two-way thing, Li [Lionel Strut?] and I are working together. Mike distance is - the amount of hard, you know, we always had these go-go's round, and the proportion of hard to soft to try and simulate the acoustic that you started off with.

Jim Shields: It's not a battle.

Maurice Askew: Well there's no substitute. If you haven't made it acoustically right you won't equalise it right.

Jim Shields: No. But then you get this sort of horrible, flat sound...

Maurice Askew: That's right...

Jim Shields: ...which is only part of the battle of post-synch to make it fit. It is so often when you have a picture where you have another wild track, and they look so much better because they're shot in the set with the same acoustics. You drop a line of post-synch in and it never

equalises, straightaway you say, that's post-synch - it doesn't matter how much background fill that you put behind it or anything else.

Maurice Askew: The difficulty often is to get the artist to project to the same degree. They're under more tension when they're facing a camera.

Jim Shields: Well this I think this, too, is an advantage because they feel they're projecting to the screen because you have a good-sized theatre.

Maurice Askew: Yes they're looking into a big theatre, therefore they tend to project more than they would in a box. And acoustics doesn't hide the theatre, you know the - don't hide the theatre.

Jim Shields: Well normally we do enter into large places, it's rather like live, like a scoring stage and therefore you're at a disadvantage.

Maurice Askew: It's too live and too big.

Jim Shields: Yes - too big, I mean yours is large but acoustically it's right for...

Maurice Askew: Yes, well it's dry round about and you get the liveness close.

Jim Shields: Of course the other terrific advantage I think in a way was er post-synching - shooting your effects - in the theatre you were going to dub in. Because theatres are so different, we all know, I mean acoustically. But um, what you think is good in a footsteps theatre or a post-synch theatre, you get in a dubbing theatre and it sounds [clicks fingers] nowhere near.

Maurice Askew: Nothing similar, no.

Jim Shields: No well what you can expect to hear on the screen. Anyway enough of that! We got to - we've got to the early fifties - do you remember any nice moments from then on?

Maurice Askew: Well, we did two or three films originating in Italy in that period, The Tempest.

Jim Shields: Oh yes.

Maurice Askew: ... I remember. That was when we first installed our reverb chamber, to cope with the big sets that they had.

Jim Shields: Yes.

Lionel Strutt: What about the mysterious island one that was around at that time?

Maurice Askew: That was a little later, yes that's Charlie Steer's Island[?], that was quite fun, yes.

Jim Shields: Hmm. Then you did a 'Bond'?

Maurice Askew: Yes we did Thunderball. We did a lot of sort of ancillary services for the following one - what was the er...?

Lionel Strutt: What about that um, Station Six-Sahara one? You did that before my time, that was a fairly big picture of its time.

Maurice Askew: Yes.

Lionel Strutt: That must have been about the middle fifties [Actually 1962].

Maurice Askew: I'd have to get the book out, you know you completely forget.

Jim Shields: Well I'd love to, I'd love to have a list because...

Maurice Askew: But the books are that thick! You've got to work your way through them! [Chuckling]

Jim Shields: Yes but I think we're missing some you know. I seem to remember pictures coming in that were - also then you did the um, a few Russell pictures here didn't you?

Maurice Askew: We did all the earlier Ken Russell pictures - which ones did we do? Um...

Lionel Strutt: Oh, we did a lot.

Maurice Askew: Women in Love, the Tchaikovsky one [NB The Music Lovers]...

Jim Shields: Yes.

Maurice Askew: The Boy Friend.

Jim Shields: Yes.

Maurice Askew: Were there more?

Jim Shields: There was one, the name of a girl, an artist, umm...

Lionel Strutt: Berlin? No that wasn't...

Jim Shields: Isadora?

Maurice Askew: Oh Isadora, that was Karel Reisz's picture...

Jim Shields: That was Karel Reisz?

Maurice Askew: Isadora, yes. Oh that was a beautiful picture.

Jim Shields: Yes, Maurice there's a lot of pictures with names that people remember?

Maurice Askew: Yeah.

Lionel Strutt: One of the particularly good ones and I thought one of the best we ever did was Ipress File.

Maurice Askew: Oh yes that was...

Lionel Strutt: ...from a dubbing point of view, because it depended so much on the sound, because of all this brainwashing and everything, which me more-or-less created in the dubbing suite.

Maurice Askew: I certainly enjoyed doing that, because you were given a freehand to work out this brainwashing sequence for ourselves you see.

Lionel Strutt: I would say that out of all the pictures that we've done here, I certainly enjoyed that one more than any. Because I think we probably were able to contribute more to it than most pictures we've done anyway, simply because of all that. And we were given a pretty free hand by Peter Hunt, who's very much like that, very much open to anybody's ideas.

Maurice Askew: That's what you see in the 'Bonds' actually.

Jim Shields: Yes. Well of course you did his 'Joanna' here didn't you?

Maurice Askew: 'Joanna' yes. That was an odd one, but er...

Jim Shields: Yeah I think that there's always pictures from a technical point of view, perhaps the picture isn't good but technically it's good.

Maurice Askew: Satisfying if you can er...

Jim Shields: Yes...

Maurice Askew: ...get some technical...

Jim Shields: ...I mean quite often you work on a picture that isn't very - that just dies a death, but from your own personal point of view it's very, very satisfying.

Maurice Askew: It seems that so many pictures we did - we didn't the whole thing, you know, we did the effects for scores of pictures of course...

Jim Shields: Yes, we did A Twist of Sand here right the way through.

Maurice Askew: A Twist of Sand, that's right, hmm.

Jim Shields: Of course very unfortunately you were ill at that time weren't you...

Maurice Askew: That's right.

Jim Shields: And I'm on the console with Vincent.

Lionel Strutt: Was it? Yes, with Vincent, that's right.

Maurice Askew: And I was ill too when Drop Dead Darling, what did that...?

Lionel Strutt: Oh yes that was a good picture.

Jim Shields: That was very good.

Maurice Askew: Lionel in fact dubbed that one because I went in to hospital? At the time.

Jim Shields: That was John Shirley and Chris Lancaster.

Lionel Strutt: That's right but I didn't have Vincent with me that time, it was um - oh I can't think of his name, the assistant mixer from over the road - from MGM. John...

Jim Shields: Was it Ray Palmer?

Maurice Askew: No not Ray.

Jim Shields: Oh John Street.

Maurice Askew: John Street!

Jim Shields: Yes, yes that's right.

Maurice Askew: That was a good picture, I liked that one - you know, from the subject matter anyway, it was one of the more interesting ones that we've done.

Jim Shields: I remember, it's interesting actually the different approaches, we came over here on Where The Spies Are to do a rough dub.

Maurice Askew: Hmm.

Jim Shields: It was a nightclub sequence and we had about a quarter of an hour. You ran it, looked at it - fine, we did it. We knew we were going to have to post-synch it anyway. And you got the music up and down and so on and all the dialogue. And when we came to dub, we'd post synched it - we never did hear the dialogue quite as clearly! [Laughs]

Maurice Askew: [Chuckling] Oh dear, oh dear!

Jim Shields: But yeah, it was quite amazing. It would have been interesting, and I'd love to - an interesting operation, to have two sets of rushes, two sets of editors, and dubbing editors, go to two different theatres, and not let the other one know the other one is happening, and then sit down and compare the two products. Because you never have this chance, in this industry. If someone paints a house it stays on for two years, the bloke next door paints it and it comes off in six months - you've got a comparison. But in this business you haven't any comparison...

Lionel Strutt: No you never know what you can get, do you?

Jim Shields: You never know - like when you go somewhere you don't want to go. You think, "God I wanted to go so-and-so, but they want to come here." And you think, "No I don't damn well." I want somewhere else that would be different.

Maurice Askew: That's right.

Lionel Strutt: That's so right.

Maurice Askew: You can't always say it can you? Cause if you do you're unnecessarily opening a can of beans with your people anyway, to say it could have been done better elsewhere, so...

Jim Shields: Well you can't, it's a personal thing anyway and you can't prove it. Plus the fact that so often if you recommend somewhere, you're behind the A-ball. Because it's, "Oh gee whiz, I did so-and-so in five days." Well next time you go there, you'll take a picture in there and it takes you twenty-one days you know. They've always got this lever on you. Now we've sort of got down to interesting. I would like a list of pictures, if that's at all possible from you know - the ones that come to mind. I'll go and see June later, perhaps she'll give me a list of.

Maurice Askew: She may have them listed up. I'd have to just go through the tops of the pages of the diaries and there's a stack that thick! [Chuckles]

Jim Shields: There's too many. But there are some good pictures. There must be, because you've done so many.

Maurice Askew: There's all the puppet stuff, the Gerry Anderson. We had a long run with that - we've done all of those. From Four Feather Falls which nobody's seen, because that was done for - Granada, I think it was. And stuff he's done - from Supercar[?], Fireball XL5, Stingray, Thunderbirds - over a period of years.]

Jim Shields: And I saw, I remember I saw - we had some friends round on Sunday and I saw a Thunderbirds - nothing like it!

Maurice Askew: Yes.

Lionel Strutt: I dubbed it.

Jim Shields: Did you?

Lionel Strutt: Well I was the dubbing editor on it, put it that way. [Indecipherable]

Maurice Askew: Two reels usually.

Lionel Strutt: Six reels - four out of six reels a day.

Maurice Askew: Oh yeah two episodes at three reels an episode.

Lionel Strutt: No, but they were hour episodes Maurice, some of them.

Jim Shields: Only half-hour weren't they?

Lionel Strutt: No they were hour episodes. They started off at half-hours and we did three and then they stopped it and we did [break in recording].

Jim Shields: Can you remember roughly when you started?

Maurice Askew: Oh - dates again, I can't remember dates...

Jim Shields: Well sort of roughly.

Maurice Askew: He was here for seven or eight years I suppose, till he died of cancer a few years back. He'd been in the - he'd been sort of associated with films before. In fact he was a clapper boy in the studios over the road there, what were they called? BIP before that...

Jim Shields: Yes that's right.

Maurice Askew: I remember him telling me a joke that was played on him, on a big set on one of the pictures before the war, he went on as clapper-boy in front of this huge set and everything turning and [laughs] somebody had nailed the clapperboard down for him!

Lionel Strutt: Oh that was on a Hitchcock picture, wasn't it?

Maurice Askew: And er...so he was there before the war, sort of getting introduced to pictures as far as I know. He joined us after the war - oh, in the fifties sometime, for seven or eight years. Quite a character.

Jim Shields: Oh yes. Because he was from White Russia, wasn't he?

Maurice Askew: He was a Russian...sort of escaped at the revolution time, as a child - about eight or nine years old I think when he was got out.

Jim Shields: He lived in Paris I believe...

Maurice Askew: They were in Paris for some time.

Jim Shields: And then came over here.

Maurice Askew: Yeah.

Jim Shields: Hmm. Because it was a strange thing, with his rather thick accent and this usual scrambled talk-back he was very distinct. I don't know whether it was that he found a de-scramble method of making himself heard. I could always hear him quite clearly on talk-back.

Maurice Askew: Yes he took care to make it clear because of his accent. He was very fluent in French and German, of course he could speak Russian.

Jim Shields: Yes.

Maurice Askew: ...which got us one or two Russian posting jobs which were very, very enjoyable. I was on one with Matt McCarthy called Two into Three Won't Go or something. It was a beautiful, light-hearted holiday thing, and that was very carefully post-synched and in fact you got lip-synch for much of it. It was a very attractive picture, I don't think it ever did the circuits but it was a very attractive picture.

Jim Shields: Yes, I think it did. The name certainly rings a bell. I never knew you did [indecipherable?] which I believe was Russian, which Jack Slade did here.

Maurice Askew: Oh yes that was a more historical type thing I think that...

Jim Shields: The revolution, wasn't it?

Maurice Askew: Yes that was one of these make ups concerning the revolution.

Jim Shields: And Michael Redgrave did the comm?

Maurice Askew: He did a commentary yes, that's right a sort of commentary to um...

Lionel Strutt: To a Russian film and he just did the English voice.

Maurice Askew: That's right. That's right, hmm. And Ted reminds me - simply about physical dimensions - of the time Gregory Ratoff was in here.

Jim Shields: Oh yes.

Maurice Askew: Doing the one about King Faruk.

Jim Shields: Oh yes, the one that - yes that went to many places, that was a lot of trouble on that, it er... Yes I remember I was at Shepperton on that and - Kay Kendall was in that if I remember...

Maurice Askew: That's right, that's right.

Jim Shields: It was one of her last - one of her almost last pictures.

Maurice Askew: It brings back memories - the first reel we dubbed, he'd been around in at least two or three places I believe...

Jim Shields: Yes but he'd been thrown out because he hadn't paid his bills...

Maurice Askew: Something like that. Anyway he came up and - I forget who was with him at the time, I think it was before Lionel's time so it would probably have been Bernie. And after we'd dubbed the first reel there was a moment's silence and then he got off his chair, went storming up to the desk, and you'd wondered what was going to happen. He almost embraced and kissed us, he said, "I've tried time and again to get it like that and that's the first time I've ever seen it work!" It was so embarrassing, to suddenly be - this continental effusiveness sort of thrown at you.

Jim Shields: And he did slobber a bit, didn't he?

Maurice Askew: Yes, quite a character!

Jim Shields: It will be nice to have Ted mentioned anyway, I think.

Maurice Askew: Yes, yes. He's quite a character in his own right.

Jim Shields: I always remember thinking - was it a large steam engine, a model of a steam engine he brought in to show me once. He's had that downstairs for a long time. I don't know where he'd got that from, it was obviously - it reminded him of somebody and he'd hung onto it. Of course his wife is working over here now isn't she?

Maurice Askew: Yes she's with um, Cine Sound. She's married again, she's Mrs Field now.

Jim Shields: Oh. Easier to handle anyway!

Maurice Askew: [Chuckles] Yes!

Lionel Strutt: I wonder if you wouldn't mind, also Maurice, a little something about Eric?

Maurice Askew: Oh Eric, yes he was with us for ages. Again I can't remember how long ago but it must be way back in fifty - he must have been with us for about twenty years before his death. At least he was spared seeing the er...

Jim Shields: Seeing the closure.

Maurice Askew: ...seeing the close of the Gate. Always the same, was Eric. Looked as though he was due to retire I think from the time he came here, [chuckles] he looked just the same by the

time... [break in recording] ...it's a BP picture. It had no direct hard sell. It was set around this petrol station in Italy, and you'd got this thing with this distant cart coming up, squeaking like mad. Plodding along, the old boy fast asleep, the horse knows its own way. And the squeaking is louder and louder and louder. Presently the garage proprietor gets fed-up, so he asks for an oil can, walks alongside the car and puts the oil in the wheels and the squeak dies away, and the old boy still stays asleep and carries on! [Chuckling] Turned out beautifully.

Jim Shields: Yes I remember when we were on ['Man and Waters?'], the opening sequence on that, the cow, and the boat being pulled on a cart. And Wilson kept saying, he said, "Got a track for that?" So I said, "Yes we've got a track for that." "We can do it better!" So I, it took about three days - a squeaker, an old suitcase and a garden roller and you'd got a better track than the real thing!

Maurice Askew: Yes. Oh we got quite a routine, Bill and Lionel with the squeaker, suitcase and things, we could really make carts - not carts - coaches and horses and things. And you'd do them on two tracks and blend them onto a third, and you could get them up and by, and as you say, it sounded more convincing than the real thing sometimes! [Chuckling]

Jim Shields: And also you had control, you had control of the rattle and squeak and the roller.

Lionel Strutt: That's right. There was one picture we did, I think it was called The Viking Queen or something, do you remember that one?

Jim Shields: Yes that's er.

Maurice Askew: Stan Smith.

Jim Shields: Stan Smith, dubbing editor...

Lionel Strutt: He was dubbing editor. Well, we did the effects on it. Bill and I did all the chariots on that, using that technique, with the suitcases, you know, that cable drum which we've always found to be very useful for this sort of thing. Well it was chariots all the way through from start to finish, do you remember?

Maurice Askew: Yes, yes.

Lionel Strutt: They were racing over the fields and all kinds of surfaces. And the girls had done the main footage then we started a couple of days afterwards doing all these tracks. And they weren't - you know, it wasn't an over-fussy picture so you didn't have to be too pedantic about it, and that was the kind of thing really where you can let yourself go with the thing, I've always thought anyway. It's when people start getting fussy and they keep on saying over and over and over again, you must keep doing it again and again, it takes - well you know yourself...

Jim Shields: yeah

Lionel Strutt: Yet with a thing like this, with Bill and I doing it, in particular, I mean it begins to show your confidence anyway, after a time. If they keep on saying, "Well try it this way, try it that way" and you lose it. But on this particular film, it wasn't like that, it was, the loop was after the chariot went by, you did it, they liked it, the next loop went up and it was good.

Jim Shields: Yes, yes.

Lionel Strutt: And you know, it came out quite well and I think they used all that stuff, I think he was quite keen about the whole thing.

Maurice Askew: Yes, on old Terry's pictures [NB Possibly Terry Rawlings], a lot of 'em had sort of a Wild West story about them. [Chuckles] It was quite a thing when the horses came up and the cart - the stagecoach went by, you know.

Lionel Strutt: Yes! [Makes imitation of the required noise]

Maurice Askew: [Laughs] Yes, yes. We had a marvellous car crashes, from, didn't we for um...

Lionel Strutt: Yes we did on that fairly recently - Fear is the Key - no, no...

Jim Shields: Fear is the Key is a brilliant picture.

Maurice Askew: We did the effects on that. The juddering wheels over that space run, and beyond the crash down the cliff in the - The Mechanic wasn't it?

Lionel Strutt: That's right, yes.

Maurice Askew: The Mechanic. It was a marvellous crash down that cliff.

Lionel Strutt: Of course the latest decent picture that we did the effects for was Scorpio which is just out on release at the moment.

Jim Shields: I've seen it. [All talk at once - indecipherable] The picture was bad, but technically it was a good picture I think that er...

Maurice Askew: Yes.

Jim Shields: You didn't dub that, though, did you?

Maurice Askew: No.

Jim Shields: No. It was put on a bit with a trowel.

Maurice Askew: Yeah.

Lionel Strutt: Was it?

Jim Shields: Hmm. It's loud let's hear it.

Maurice Askew: We only did the effects for that.

Jim Shields: Hmm. No it was very good. We have had an opportunity...

Maurice Askew: And we did the effects for Chato's Land that was another interesting one to make effects for.

Jim Shields: Another Winner picture?

Maurice Askew: Yes that's another Winner picture...hmm.

Lionel Strutt: Well we've done effects for most of the Winner pictures haven't we, more-or-less, in conjunction with Terry because er...

Maurice Askew: That's right, he likes it here.

Lionel Strutt: He'd always like to come to us and - what was the one about the um, oh famous novel, the one with Marlon Brando in it?

Jim Shields: Oh The Nightcomers?

Lionel Strutt: Nightcomers, we did the effects for that one.

Maurice Askew: We did The Tailor of Venice[?]...

Lionel Strutt: Oh yes, that was a recent one which um - well it seemed good to us, I mean you can never tell until they've been...

Maurice Askew: Well they liked it when they dubbed it - Night Watch. The boys over there said they liked it the picture when they dubbed it.

Jim Shields: Very nice yeah.

Lionel Strutt: They're pretty good at dubbing next door now, you know they've got some real talent there on the desk anyway, so therefore if you can do a reasonably good job on it, the fact is, you've got some backup. Whereas - you know, in the past... not saying any names, you know, if it didn't go to the right place, you could sweat your heart out doing the effects and nobody would ever hear them anyway!]

Jim Shields: Half the things we used to deal with in some places - again no names - if it's not shot in their place, there's something wrong with it.

Maurice Askew: Yeah. But this is not solely the attitude with EMI..

Jim Shields: Oh no, no.[Indecipherable]

Maurice Askew: You know, anything we've done for them in these last two years, we've done quite a lot of pictures for effects and so on. You know, he's always been very complimentary about our stuff, and in fact he does a very good job himself when it comes to dubbing. In fact the full story is really they're that good next door now that, you know, there's a lot of work that we might have had which we haven't had for obvious reasons.

Jim Shields: And also I think a lot of it, a lot of it is this town. There's a lot of producers and directors don't want to come out of...

Maurice Askew: Won't come out of town. No we had a...

Jim Shields: I believe there are lots of shortcomings, but you know, some can do cutting and some...

Maurice Askew: We had a marvellous example of that because we did The Grass is Greener...

Jim Shields: Yes.

Maurice Askew: Cary Grant - for Stanley Donen

Jim Shields: I remember it very well, done at Shepperton.

Maurice Askew: At Shepperton, that's right. Well we dubbed it here. I think it was a repeat dub after a preview or something. First dub went over to the States and they had their preview, and then it was reorganised and we did the second dub. And Cary Grant wanted to re post-synch any line which suited him, you know if he didn't like the reading of it. So we'd dub a reel and he sat down like that in line with the two shot, and we had the looping thing standing by.

Jim Shields: You couldn't have done that anywhere else!

Maurice Askew: And we would stop, they'd lift out the loop, we'd match it in and put it back. And he was thrilled with the - being able to do that and have it fit, have it match. But the next picture - wasn't a Cary Grant one but was Stanley Donen - and he did it in town.

Jim Shields: Yes but he's doing that now. I mean the what he's done next door is taken all the cutting rooms to town.

Maurice Askew: Hmm. The ironic thing was, when they dubbed it, it was unprintable.

Jim Shields: It was the one they did at CTS[?], I was up there.

Maurice Askew: Oh you were there at the time? Oh well then some of the astonishing things we heard [chuckling], you remember well!

Lionel Strutt: Two for the Road, wasn't it?

Jim Shields: I happened to be next door at Zenith and I had a - well this probably doesn't matter, this won't go on record - but I was on the picture next door and they said, "We're going to dub there." I said, "You dub there and I'll leave the picture right now." And that was only this. And it was - well I was proven right because we did something post-synching. But the next picture that would have - that went in after we did our post-synch, the same thing happened again. And I think it was...

Maurice Askew: Nice picture too, that Two for the Road...

Jim Shields: Yeah.

Maurice Askew: Yeah, nice music and everything.

Jim Shields: Yes.

Maurice Askew: It should have been a delightful thing. It really - you know, it really had to be flogged to get it so that it would go on optical film and print. And Lionel was saying, "Oh dear, fancy having to transfer this over like this and it should have been.." you know...

Jim Shields: Yeah...

Maurice Askew: It's so wrong you know, to really...

Lionel Strutt: You really, if you believe what you could have had if you'd have had the first chance, you know.

Maurice Askew: You'd had the effects to play with.

Lionel Strutt: Another one we did which was a bit like that was Repulsion a Polanski one.

Jim Shields: Yes I remember that, yes.

Maurice Askew: When we did do an absolute re-dub of that, it wasn't a question of...

Lionel Strutt: It was the [indecipherable]

Maurice Askew: It really was sort of horrific, you know - psychologically.

Jim Shields: It was set in one of these sort of sex houses in town...

Maurice Askew: Oh yes there was a play - entirely on sound, there was a sex scene in that one.

Lionel Strutt: There was yes, hmm. But narratively speaking it wasn't that so much - well, it was the repulsion of the act, the murder and everything, were all rather startling and shown in the film. But it was a very interesting dub because Polanski is very keen about his soundtrack.

Maurice Askew: He has a very acute ear too.

Lionel Strutt: He's got a fantastic ear for, you know...probably more so than any director in the whole world before him, I think. And quite a few of 'em have been, I mean Ken Russell was a bit like that...

Jim Shields: It's a great shame that when we did The Chalk Garden, that Ross Hunter wasn't here. He has the keenest ear I've ever come across - ever.

Maurice Askew: Yeah. Oh this reminds me of another film I enjoyed doing and that was um... Romeo and Juliet...

Lionel Strutt: Oh yes.

Jim Shields: Was this the one they did in Italy, recently?

Maurice Askew: Yes the Zeffirelli picture, we did that. We dubbed that one.

Jim Shields: Sash Fisher was the sound controller on the floor, wasn't he?

Lionel Strutt: completely re-dubbed that over a period of some five or six weeks didn't we? That was right back to square one, with the original track.

Jim Shields: Had to because the Americans wouldn't accept it there.

Maurice Askew: That's right, they re-post synched quite a bit because they couldn't understand the dialogue.

Lionel Strutt: But it was a very nice picture.

Maurice Askew: It was a delightful picture, that one. Rather like the other Shakespeare one we did for, um - Charlton Heston.

Jim Shields: Oh yes the um - Antony and Cleopatra.

Maurice Askew: Antony and Cleopatra.

Lionel Strutt: I didn't like that one quite as much.

Jim Shields: [indecipherable]

Maurice Askew: That's right, yeah. Well I liked it - I don't mind it if it...

Lionel Strutt: But I didn't think it was as well done you know.]

Jim Shields: No.

Lionel Strutt: I like the Shakespearean side, but it's got to be well done really I think.

Maurice Askew: It didn't have quite the same feeling of - I don't know, some sort of feel of perfection about the Romeo and Juliet, it had that something extra. The other one was a good workmanlike representation of Antony and Cleopatra really I thought that I quite enjoyed doing.

Lionel Strutt: One thing about these Shakespearean films that you probably noted as a dubbing editor, is that they've got enough interest in them because of the lines in them that you can't um - you know, your interest doesn't turn off. You don't sort of get over-used to the dialogue because it's that complicated. In other words you can keep on getting something out of it at every running, I don't know if you found that on some pictures?

Jim Shields: Yes, yes...

Lionel Strutt: I mean some films you get totally bored with, but these Shakespearean ones, even though you might or might not be a Shakespeare enthusiast, every time the reel is run you seem to find some new angle on the story. I mean this seems to be the very reason why theatrical types, like acting them.

Jim Shields: Yes...

Lionel Strutt: It's much more complex for them...

Jim Shields: Depth in the script...

Lionel Strutt: Hmm. That certainly applies I think with dubbing those type of pictures. Romeo and Juliet in particular I found that - the other one, Antony and Cleopatra I didn't really go quite so much on. But even with that there was a lot of play on words...

Jim Shields: Which I think is - an American actor instead of a British actor playing the lead - this is [indecipherable]

Maurice Askew: Hmm.

Jim Shields: You mentioned Scorpio...

Maurice Askew: Hmm.

Jim Shields: We saw that um - I think... Yes it was Scorpio - Paul Scofield.

Maurice Askew: Hmm.

Jim Shields: I thought that was the best thing in it, his performance. He's a trained actor and it wasn't his sort of part - well, obviously it was his sort of part because he did it, but it's not the sort of part you expect him in. But he had tremendous depth and you were held the moment it was on the screen. And I think this is one of the things that's to the detriment of the picture, because it showed else up - you couldn't care less whether they lived or died! He was the character that you remembered.

Lionel Strutt: We saw a run through of that - a cutting copy... quite good.

[NB the following passage is difficult to make out due to crockery being moved around in the background]

Jim Shields: Bernard wasn't with you very long was he?

Maurice Askew: Oh some years...

Jim Shields: Was he?

Maurice Askew: Yes. Up to when he went to Samuelsons. How long was Bernie here? Several years. Because he did his service, you know his National Service in the middle of it.

Jim Shields: Oh did he?

Maurice Askew: So he was here and he went and did his National Service and then he came back and did a few years.

Jim Shields: It was a [indecipherable] everybody that was here, I think...

Lionel Strutt: He was certainly here in 1955 when I joined.

Jim Shields: Oh he was here when I came, he was here [indecipherable]...

Maurice Askew: Yeah. It would be interesting to see the dates somewhere because I loose track of dates entirely.

Jim Shields: Yes. And with Vincent, he hasn't been here terribly long, has he?

Maurice Askew: No...

Jim Shields: He's [indecipherable] ...about four years.

Lionel Strutt: Eight years actually, he was telling me yesterday.

Maurice Askew: Eight years, is it as long as that?

Lionel Strutt: Yeah.

Jim Shields: And Sid, well we know when Sid came here, he came here when [indecipherable] closed.

Maurice Askew: When National closed.

Jim Shields: Oh British National, yes that's right.

Maurice Askew: That was the Rex Studios when we started.

Jim Shields: Yes, yes.

Maurice Askew: Then it was British National, Lady Yule's outfit. Wasn't it?

Jim Shields: [Indecipherable] Yes, I don't think we've left anyone out?

Lionel Strutt: Have you spoken to Wynn[?] yet?

Maurice Askew: [Indecipherable] Cause he's been here for a long, long time.

Jim Shields: We'll go and have a chat with Wynn[?] and have a chat with Bill. And if there is a chance of getting a - if I could leave a cassette here for Pat, if he'd like to do some, I'll put it in an addressed envelope to me and so when he comes back...

Maurice Askew: He's coming in on Friday, I believe.

Jim Shields: Oh, I won't be up here tomorrow.

Maurice Askew: Its Friday tomorrow?

Jim Shields: Yes - what a shame. I could have done it the other way around and gone to town tomorrow, never mind - er town today rather.

Maurice Askew: Well he has got that cassette recorder, anyway.

Jim Shields: Well I'll leave a cassette here and perhaps he'll be good enough to, you know.

Maurice Askew: Yeah. He did a lot more in the way of documentaries, commercials, all that sort of thing. In recent years, of course, we've been on features only, but we did the whole range before - and a lot of music. We haven't done any music recently, but we did a wide range of music.

Jim Shields: Um [indecipherable]...I remember too, Maurice. You used to do a lot of 16mm transfer here of Paramount Pictures...

Maurice Askew: Oh we did, yes that's right. We saw all the Paramount Pictures, we made the 16mm release negatives, that's right.

Jim Shields: And I remember I was up here.

Maurice Askew: That's right.

Jim Shields: [Are you sort of still connected with religious films?]

Maurice Askew: The company isn't, no.

Jim Shields: Well the company isn't but they still...?

Maurice Askew: Um well, we did their work until they went over to 16mm and we're not set up for 16mm tracks.

Jim Shields: Oh I see.

Maurice Askew: Recently we've been working 16 mm, otherwise we'd would because Duncan sort of lives with us anyway.

Jim Shields: Yeah sure, hmm.

Maurice Askew: But because they're shooting on 16mm we've lost track I think, except for a few odds and ends.

Jim Shields: Hmm, yeah. Yes I remember when I was here we used to pop down when we were slack and see a Paramount Picture!

Maurice Askew: Hmm, it was rather fun, on some of those, Prince of Foxes, Slattery's Hurricane - one or two names come to mind!

Jim Shields: I seem to remember a 'Road' picture we saw.

Maurice Askew: Yes.

Jim Shields: Most of the pictures were Paramount releases. Strange when you think about the number of films that used to be made and the big combines and where they've gone now.

Maurice Askew: Yes.

Jim Shields: Of course MGM have finally wrapped over here, they've all got their noses out of town.

Maurice Askew: Yes well that's - it's their hundred and twenty-five thousand a year that's missing from next door that's made next door a query now.

Jim Shields: Yeah old Jack King and all the [indecipherable] have finished now.

Maurice Askew: Of course we forget that Hollywood was completely closed, or virtually closed for seven, eight years wasn't it? It ran right down, and now it's beginning to come up again, so I suppose the work's going back there now.

Jim Shields: Well, no. The scenario? according to Ken Healy-Ray[?]. Because he came over from Canada a couple of weeks ago and I saw him here. He said, "Gee it's busy next door"... meaning EMI. And I'd just been over there, it looked like a ghost town to me, but he said that compared with Hollywood it was really busy. [MA laughs] Oh yes, very, very quiet. I did hear that um...Gordon - the dubbing editor...

Maurice Askew: Daniels?

Jim Shields: Daniels - he was going to come back.

Maurice Askew: Really? Because he's been out there some time now hasn't he?

Jim Shields: Yes.

Lionel Strutt: I thought they'd picked up again out there with all these special TV films, you know all the multi-media type films, they call them...

Jim Shields: Yes, but it depends you see, he was sort of does this business where they pay you a fee to dub it, you provide the magnetic and the spacing, and you book the theatre time and everything else and that comes out of your fee. And of course if it's done by the big combines then you're outside that. It's rather like it was in the old Bond days, I mean...

[End of Interview]

Document Actions

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