

Interview with respondent 0705

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Location: UCL

Interviewer: Emma Pett

Interviewer: In the questionnaire you put down that you were mainly in Preston in the 60s is that right? Were you there for the whole decade or...?

Respondent: No I was born in Preston in 1951 and I went to school there right up until 1966 and then I was in Canada for two years then I came back from Canada early 1968 and then I went to...I did A levels there and then I think I must have left Preston at the end of the 60s and I know in '71 I went to college.

Interviewer: Lovely. Interesting that you were in Canada...

Respondent: Well my parents went and it didn't work out. Well, ironically they went back again and...

Interviewer: Did they stay there then?

Respondent: My mum still lives there now. She's 84 now and I've got a younger brother who is pretty much a Canadian. He lives there and he's got a good job and they live near Vancouver which is a... the nicest city in the world to live in.

Interviewer: Yeah it is, it's an amazing city

Respondent: But, yeah we came back.

Interviewer: So kind of what we're talking about then is really kind of late childhood  
and teen years with a kind of two year gap towards the end of the 60s?

Respondent: Yeah that's right.

Interviewer: So one of the things that I was really interested in...one of the areas that  
we've been exploring is cinema as a social space and what it meant within  
the community, because obviously all those things have changed.

Respondent: Yeah

Interviewer: And one of the things that I was really interested in were the comments  
you made about the ABC miners (minors?). You kind of talked a little bit  
about them being rowdy.

Respondent: They were rowdy. Pea shooters and they had sort of usherettes coming up  
and down the aisles and making kids be quiet...

Interviewer: So you had...did you have a pea shooter?

Respondent: Do you know I think I might have done, yeah, because I used to fire them  
into the light beam and then it'd look like bullets, with hindsight it looked

like bullets. Kids used to do that, but nothing like you know incredibly violent.

Interviewer: Nothing violent no, just kind of fun.

Respondent: The only violent thing was a kid being thrown out and he managed to kick in a plate glass door or something. That was a bit scary for us as kids but no, the kids trying to let their friends in through the fire doors you know.

Interviewer: Yeah I've heard this from other people, yeah. Were they quite busy? Did a lot of people go?

Respondent: Oh yeah, yeah. There were two actually, I think I put down the ABC minors and after I thought about it there was another one as well, the Gaumont. I don't know if the Gaumont was a chain, was the Gaumont a...

Interviewer: It was yeah, not a big chain like ABC though

Respondent: They had their own one as well.

Interviewer: What like a children's club.

Respondent: Exactly, a children's Saturday morning and they'd show...I was thinking about this the other day...they'd have a cartoon, a sort of Tom and Jerry cartoons with the black maid and that, and then like a serial, like a Batman serial, I remember those from...probably from the 30s or 40s and a lot of

that content, and I was thinking about this, was from...wasn't from the 50s  
or 60s it was from the 40s

Interviewer: What...how old were you, kind of what age range did you...?

Respondent: That was probably sort of from about 7 or 8 so 1957 probably up till about  
'61, '62.

Interviewer: So kind of really early 60s

Respondent: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Did your mum drop you off and you were left there or...

Respondent: Do you know I was telling my friend this this morning as I came she said  
"were you alone" and I said "it was like child-care". My mum would be  
mortified now but my brother is slightly younger than me and we'd get  
through the school holidays, it was a shilling maybe of old money and go  
out for the day, you know. We'd like check what the cinema was, even at 7  
or 8 we'd get the bus into town you know, and there five, six, seven  
cinemas in Preston town centre so through a week in the summer holidays  
we'd do like five movies you know, one every day and then swimming,  
we'd go swimming by ourselves and rock up at home sort of 4 or 5 o'clock  
in time for dinner you know.

Interviewer: Yeah

Respondent: It sounds terrible now.

Interviewer: No it doesn't sound terrible it's just a different world

Respondent: It was a different world.

Interviewer: I mean I grew up in the 70s and it was not that different actually, my mum used to shoo us out of the house in the morning and we'd go off and have adventures and come back at teatime or lunchtime so yeah that sort of thing has all changed. So it wasn't just the Saturday morning club then, it sounds like in the school holidays you kind of...

Respondent: In the school holidays we did and then later on maybe when I was at secondary school in the early 60s two or three of us would go out in the evening to see movies. Even, do you know I was trying to think about this the other day, before I was sixteen, sixteen was the X film, I think at fourteen and fifteen we were sort of sneaking in to X films.

Interviewer: Yeah, they didn't really check so...

Respondent: Oh they didn't care. We used to put suits on and everything. Everybody did, you know, everybody did the same it was a kind of youth culture. I think my friend, this guy John, used to smoke and he looked a bit older and he sort of gave us confidence to do it and once you did it once it was....And we saw some rubbish films. "Night of the Vampire" I think if you know that one, the most horrible rubbish, but and it wasn't...we weren't interested in sex, we were interested in horror movies actually. Hammer Horror movies

was what springs to mind, it was. And they would, you know, now they're quite tame

Interviewer: They are quite tame but they were X certificate then. It's interesting it's also that kind of daring thing when you're a teenager of just going to see the film that gets the highest rated certificate.

Respondent: It was, yeah, and you wouldn't see anything else like that anywhere else. It was...I suppose it was horror really we were interested in.

Interviewer: Yeah so, I'm quite interested in the behaviour that you're describing in some of the cinemas that you went to...

Respondent: Yeah I never smoked, but it was a place to smoke. I didn't smoke until much later but I had friends who'd go there and everybody smoked in the whole cinema I think.

Interviewer: You said that people sang along during the Cliff Richard film?

Respondent: I'd forgotten about that, yeah. "The Young Ones" and "We're All Going on a Summer Holiday" the whole...it was just..thinking back it was just incredible, like a revivalist church, everybody clapping and singing along yeah.

Interviewer: That's interesting because I don't think that happened everywhere across the UK, we've had quite mixed responses to people discussing that and some people said "oh no you never sang along" but other people, like you,

have said that you did and I'm wondering if it was perhaps more common in some of the northern towns and cities, I don't know. It's really fascinating, so Cliff Richard you sang along...can you....

Respondent: They're the two I remember. "Summer Holiday" and "We're the Young Ones" I can still probably sing them now.

Interviewer: Did the records come out before the film, is that how people knew all the words? They presumably didn't keep going back to see it...

Respondent: Do you know I think the major part of that audience were probably slightly older than me and they would be really into it, I was quite young when that came out...'6?..I was probably ten or eleven so you just go along with it, you know. I can remember the Beatles movies coming out, I was a big Beatles fan, but I don't remember singing along with the Beatles films. They were so wholesome those Cliff Richard movies weren't they?

Interviewer: That's great. You also said that during "The Day of the Triffids" when the blinded victims were shuffling along in a line...

Respondent: Oh yes, I forgot about this...

Interviewer: That people started singing the Conga.

Respondent: "Oh the Hokey-Kokey, put your left leg in...." I remember that, yeah. That would have been later at night actually, do you know, I think that would have been some sort of midnight matinee thing you know, this is later on I

think this would have been '68, '69 something like that and people had come from the pub. Pubs would close at 10, 10:30 and they would start up, yeah sort of laughing at the movie really, laughing at the film.

Interviewer: Yeah. Do you think the social dimension of cinema-going was different then? It was more about people coming together and kind of doing something as a community? Did it feel more like that then?

Respondent: It's just a different world now. It really is a different world. You can't describe, I know we talk about "Oh it was a black and white world" it was in so many ways you know, just nothing going on. You know, Preston, there was a movie wasn't there... "A Month of Sundays" or something and Preston was like a month of rainy Sundays, like a Morrissey song you know. It was just so dead when I look back now, nothing happened, you know so going to the cinema, yeah, was...and there was no home entertainment you know...

Interviewer: Did you have a TV?

Respondent: We did, we had TV from about 1959 but it was like in the main living room you know, I think the rest of the house was too cold to...we had a coal fire and it was just two channels I think it was, wasn't it, yeah...

Interviewer: Did you ever watch films on TV?



Respondent: Yeah, yeah but once again there was that time lag. Now it can be like 6 months and it comes on TV, then it was probably 10-15 years. There was some embargo wasn't there I don't know how long it was.

Interviewer It was a lot longer yeah.

Respondent: Yeah. So they'd be like Randolph Scott cowboy movies and Hopalong Cassidy movies you'd see. And nothing during the day, it sort of started with kid's programmes about 5ish or something and then it would be in the evenings. You know, I was made to go to bed sort of 9, 9:30 something like that.

Interviewer: So in the school holidays the TV wouldn't have offered you very much anyway so...

Respondent: The things we did, we played cards, I remember playing cards a lot, we went swimming a lot, we went to the cinema nearly every day to see something.

Interviewer: Did you always go to the same cinema or did you kind of...?

Respondent: Well in Preston there was, I was talking about this earlier in the week, Preston's a very small town. In the town centre I think there were five or six...Ritz, Palladium, Gaumont, ABC maybe one or two others, and even...I lived in a suburb outside Preston, there were two. But other suburbs there were, you know, three or four cinemas so...I remember "King Kong" coming on once and somebody...you know the 1930s one...and getting my

Nan to drive...she couldn't even drive...catch two buses across town so we could see "King Kong".

Interviewer: Did you have a favourite? I mean some people have talked about the difference between the chain cinemas and the REP cinemas in terms of the quality, were you...did you ever notice that or were you just interested in the film?

Respondent: Obviously the ABC and the Gaumont were the big ones and they were...there was much more...I remember going to see "Dr. No" whenever that came out, 19...and it's like a little bit, a touch of luxury.

Interviewer: Oh yeah you've mentioned Bond yeah.

Respondent: But the others, some of the others, were real like flea-pits. You did actually get flea bites in them, pretty horrendous and...

Interviewer: So those...like the Gaumont and ABC were the nice cinemas?

Respondent: Yeah, and you really felt like a bit of luxury in your life, you know, in a life where there wasn't any luxury...

Interviewer: Yeah, it's really interesting, a lot of people have talked about that...it being this kind of other world and the escapism being not just about the film but about the actual environment.

Respondent: Toilets, I remember, you know, coming out of the James Bond movie, mirrors everywhere and you know, clean surfaces and marble surfaces and it's like well I'm James Bond, you know. 007, and it sort of reflected that, that sort of aspirational movie.

Interviewer: The look in the cinema kind of continued into the actual theatre.(??)

Respondent: Of course, you know, they had a steward...I don't know what you call them...people at the door?

Interviewer: Commissar?

Respondent: Like real sort of military style uniforms. I even looked, nothing related to this, Pathe news opened up their news reels to online and I looked for Preston, and one of them was a movie premiere at the ABC in like 1959. I can't remember who the actor was but couple of famous 50s actors from that era, turned up for the premiere at Preston, I don't know why it was probably some publicity stunt for the new cinema and they had all the guys outside in the gold braid and they had the manager shaking hands with this actor. I remember that manager, it was bizarre.

Interviewer: Did you, he looked familiar?

Respondent: Yeah..at Christmas they did a fancy dress competition as part of the Saturday morning and mum sewed me something and I actually won a prize and shook hands with this guy so I remembered him.

Interviewer: What sort of...in some cinemas, I know particularly the bigger cinemas like the ABCs and the Odeons, they were so big that they were used for other things like competitions, dance competitions....

Respondent: The Gaumont in Preston was split and, I don't...do you know I'm not sure if it was always split like this but in the 1950s one half you went in was the cinema and the other half was like a Cafe Royal type cafe, a quiet posh cafe and my granny used to work there and she used to have starched linen apron, I remember that. That changed in the early 60s and that second side became a dance hall and later on, sort of mid-60s, we used to go to a Saturday morning dance after, you know, as we got older we went to a Saturday morning dance club there, with twist competitions and.."Let's Twist Again" and...

Interviewer: The cinemas were used for other things?

Respondent: Well this...the Gaumont was split

Interviewer: That particular one...

Respondent: I can't think of... you know you're thinking about variety and stuff like that, not in my era, they were all pretty much...

Interviewer: Yeah, some of the big London ones were. I mean, the Beatles played at some of the cinemas.

Respondent: I lived out near East Ham, they played East Ham town hall didn't they? The cinema in East Ham which was a bingo hall I don't know what it is now.

Interviewer: I don't know either; I can't keep track of them all but yeah. So, you got some quite good memories of the buildings then? They obviously made quite a big impression on you. Did you observe...was there any, kind of, pattern of them closing throughout the 60s, I know in a lot of places there was less by the end of the decade?

Respondent: Yeah, in general...I wasn't in Preston throughout '71, but I never really went back, you know, I came to London in 1975. But it's that general trend really, they closed down and a lot of them were pulled down because they were quite old. In redevelopments of city centres the Palladium and the Empire they were all pulled down, I think the Ritz turned into a nightclub. Do you know I don't think there are any cinemas in Preston town centre now.

Interviewer: A lot of the multiplexes are on the edge of towns aren't they?

Respondent: Yeah, I think they either turned into bingo or some cinema some bingo or nightclubs. Those ones specifically from my memory, I moved out of Preston really after I was 18, 19 never really went back.

Interviewer: You talked a bit about Bond. You obviously enjoyed the escapism of Bond and it is a kind of glamorous lifestyle as well isn't it, but you also mentioned a bit about the sort of New Wave kitchen sink films and how it

was interesting to see films that reflected your own environment on the screen.

Respondent: Yeah, with hindsight I didn't obviously see those movies when they first came out.

Interviewer: Were you a bit young

Respondent: I was a bit young for that. But in the 70s I watched them on TV and even late 60s...

Interviewer: You mentioned "Kes" and that..

Respondent: "Kes" yeah. "Kes" was my school days.

Interviewer: Did it feel like that when you watched it?

Respondent: Oh yeah, definitely.

Interviewer: That's...I find this quite interesting because in the 70s and 80s British cinema is associated with realism but of course it hadn't been before then, before the kitchen sink stuff so I'm quite fascinated by how people felt when they first started seeing kind of working class, ordinary lives being represented in the cinema.

Respondent: Yeah, see I never...

Interviewer: Thought about it like that?

Respondent: I know what you're saying but yeah it was my life and, you know, probably when I first saw "Kes" I was... and "The Sporting Life" and all those ones in the 70s and really got to understand them that was my life you know; and you could recognise those characters and particularly Kes, you know, I went to a sort of little secondary school like that.

Interviewer: Just all really familiar?

Respondent: Yeah, there was...going along with that a lot of them were London based, you know "Up the Junction" all those Ken Loach ones like "Up the Junction" and "Kathy Come Home" bit London based, but certainly "Kes" and the northern ones were...

Interviewer: Resonated. Did you...you mentioned Movie Monster magazines, did you look at film reviews much? How interested in kind of....

Respondent: I think we loved horror and we loved that sort of Frankenstein, Dracula, and I remember trading them, you know, we'd have Spiderman, Superman, Fantastic 4 comics, this is sort of early 60s and we'd swap those, but parallel with that we had those ?? movie, all American stuff.

Interviewer: Yeah, did you read film reviews? When you chose what to go and see did you look at it....

Respondent: No, no.

Interviewer: No, you just kind of went along to what...

Respondent: In...this is the story of my life isn't it... in 1969 I was a big Beatles fan and the Sunday Times, and I never ever looked at a broadsheet, and Andy Davis ?? for the Beatles was serialised in the Sunday Times you know, and you can imagine can't you, little working class boy living with my nan and I'm buying the Sunday Times and read...and of course I read the Beatles and I went on to read...then I got the Observer and I started reading film reviews and really getting into it you know. It was like a new world for me. Made me want to come to London and experience all that culture.

Interviewer: So it's kind of like the tail-end of the 60s

Respondent: That was the tail-end. I was a bit young to read reviews earlier and the sort of papers... I don't think we even got papers in our house.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's really fascinating, I mean if you look back now and think about the role that cinema played for you throughout the decade, do you think it was an important part of that..?

Respondent: Oh without doubt yeah. You know, it gave you, it's a cliché, like a window into another world. Even that sort of James Bond stuff it made you...do you know I can't tell...I'd never even been out of the little suburban Preston, Preston's a small place and I went to town centre...

Interviewer: You just didn't travel



Respondent: No, you know we never had any money, we never...to see bungalows and houses that weren't terraced like ??? terraced houses was, you know, I just wouldn't have seen it you know. It was quite a limited childhood, of course movies opened that up for you.

Interviewer: Did you....I mean, we've talked about film but you did mention the Pathe news reels can you remember some of the other elements to the film programmes? Particularly on the ones that rolled around where you...

Respondent: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: Did you pay much attention to the reels or were you just kind of waiting...

Respondent: There was the Pathe and there used to be like a B movie or something, I remember a couple of those. You know, short British, like the Eric Sykes type thing, "The Plank" and couple of others. They still used to show, and this was at sort of second rate cinemas, they'd have like a worn out clip of the Queen at the Trooping of the Colours I remember, and this would flicker through, and even when I was relatively young, everyone would stand to attention.

Interviewer: Really? Did people stand up for the national anthem?

Respondent: That's what I'm talking about yeah, the Queen came on at the end, but that as I got older I remember my mum making me stand up when we were together. Everyone did it you know, it was deferential times...

Interviewer: By the end of the 60s had people stopped doing it then?

Respondent: No, by the end people started sneaking out and in the end they just discontinued it I think. I don't know at what point it was discontinued.

Interviewer: It's difficult to pinpoint because people remember it at different times, but certainly at some point throughout the decade it just stopped being the thing that you did.

Respondent: Looking back now, this wonderful faded image of a very young Queen sat on a horse you know, and the flag flickering, I would love to see that now because it had obviously come through like thousands of times and it was completely faded and blotchy. It would conjure up an era for me.

Interviewer: Well yeah, and it's a very particular culture that didn't really exist beyond the 60s. Some of these things that you're remembering obviously some of these things continued but a lot of it is very particular to that decade and I think it's...what fascinates me is it's like the tail-end of a very particular way of cinema going and then the 70s and the 80s kind of ushered in a different...you know with video and multiplexes....

Respondent: I would...my kids, you know I've got two girls, and what they remember is like, it would be a big "Star Wars" or something like that and we had big buckets of popcorn and drinks and you know go together and...but it was never like that for us.

Interviewer: No. It sounds like from quite an early age it was something you did with your peer group.

Respondent: With my brother and with my friends yeah. Occasionally I'd go with my mum, occasionally I'd go with my nan if my nan wanted to see something...I remember Harry Belafonte movie something in the...

Interviewer: An X certificate movie where you needed to go with an adult?

Respondent: Mainly I'd go to keep her company. Something like that. With an A certificate, you're right, yeah she would come with me.

Interviewer: That's great, is there anything else you want to add, I mean this is all really fascinating so thanks very much for sharing all of this...

Respondent: You're making me emotional, going back to the ...

Interviewer: I mean, somebody I was talking to the other day said that when their local cinema was knocked down he couldn't go back to the site for a few years because it meant so much to him, because he'd spent so much of his childhood in this one particular cinema that actually it was incredibly sad to see it disappear.

Respondent: I feel that way about the movies actually.

Interviewer: Not the actual building

Respondent: Not the buildings, no, it's...some of those movies, "Kes" still moves me to tears and some of those other ones yeah.

Interviewer: Is there a stand out kind of film for you from the decade or not really...?

Respondent: That I saw at the time? It's going to be probably "Dr. No". That was just so different it's what you said isn't it, it opened up that world. Other ones that with hindsight... "Performance" I loved "Performance" that was great movie, but a different sort of realism there.

Interviewer: Yeah I suppose it is the difference between what you look back on and actually what made an impact at the time. Like you're saying, the Bond films, for all their kind of fantasy they've...they were aspirational to a lot of people because it just said yeah there's this other world out there.

Respondent: I don't think I went to a restaurant until I was about 17, you know I'd never been to a casino. In "Dr. No" the casino and all these gorgeous women, I was probably about 12, 13 when that first came out and that all filters in doesn't it...

Interviewer: It does I think when you see films at that age it has quite a big impact. Ok, well thanks very much that was great.