

**Interview Respondent: 0807****Date: 30/7/2015****Location: University College London****Interviewer: Emma Pett**

Interviewer: Great!

Respondent: I lived in North Wembley and I was in the Sixties, well in 1968 I was sixteen.

Interviewer: So your teenage years basically?

Respondent: Well, a little bit teenage years.

Interviewer: And you mentioned some of the cinemas you went to in North London. Can you say a little bit about them and how you remember them? Just actually the physicality of them as well, what the buildings were like and ...

Respondent: I think I remember seeing Antonioni's Blow Up in the Grenada in Harrow which had a restaurant above it, I never went in but it seemed quite posh ...

Interviewer: Modern.

Respondent: Yeah. But mainly, I mean my sister was a big influence, she was five years older and she took me quite a lot of cinema, more in central London. We probably went to the Academy cinema and then we went to the Paris Pullman.

Interviewer: Cause that showed European art films, didn't it?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: I've seen some of the programmes for the Paris Pullman and I find them really intriguing and I'll come back to that in a minute. But did you ... were there local cinemas you went to when you were a little bit younger that were like, sort of, slightly run down? Quite often people talk about how there was a kind of nicer cinema or chain cinema that was a bit more upmarket, but very often local areas still had the kind of local fleapit cinema at the beginning of the Sixties and obviously a lot of those closed in the following sort of ten to fifteen years.

Respondent: Yeah, there were a few actually in Wembley. I think there was one called The Regal in Ealing Road and then ... there was possibly an Odeon that was more modern on Wembley High Street ... there was one called The Majestic, actually that might have been the one on Ealing Road.

Interviewer: Yeah, I think you mention The Majestic.

Respondent: Oh, did I?

Interviewer: Oh no, you mention The Grenada, that was it and the Everyman.

Respondent: The Everyman in Hampstead.

Interviewer: Everyone remember cause it hasn't, well didn't change that much from quite a long period of time so it stays with you. Were they, when you were younger at the beginning of the decade, did the cinemas seem quite opulent, luxurious sort of places or not?

Respondent: No, not really. No, just nice places to go, you could just go and obviously they didn't have set times, you could just go in and watch whatever.

Interviewer: Yeah, you bought a ticket for a seat.

Respondent: I remember, well I guess this is the beginning of the Sixties, with some school friends we saw a film called She with Ursula Andress, we walked in in the middle and then stayed around until it started again, seeing the newsreels and all the other stuff they showed.

Interviewer: Can you remember the national anthem being played at the end?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Did you stand up for it or did you sneak out or did you ...?

Respondent: Well, I remember one occasion, this was in a cinema in the West End ... A Man For All Season, I think, I went with a boyfriend, I was about sixteen, and he was quite, sort of political, and we walked out, we kind of made a big thing of walking out. And I remember a man sort of grabbed me and said, "where do you think you're going, young lady?"

Interviewer: Really? Oh, that's funny! I think towards the end of the decade did more and more, didn't they, kind of ... it's interesting how there's a generational shift, I think, that happened. The beginning of the decade was still sort of post-war era in a lot of ways, quite traditional values. And then, as the decade progressed it started to shift and that kind of patriotism, maybe people started questioning a bit. So you can remember an older person sort of giving a bit of a ticking-off. That's very funny! Can you remember how you felt about that patriotic feeling that there still was in Britain in the Sixties? The people who'd fought in the war and the sort of values that went along with that. Was that something you were aware of and felt that you were slightly rebelling against or was it something that you just kind of didn't really pay attention to?

Respondent: No, I felt... well, I suppose certainly in the younger teenage years I couldn't stand hearing about anything to do with the war. I just found it incredibly boring.... I suppose I kind of rebelled against it, I certainly felt I was rebelling against my parent's generation... yeah, just sort of found it tedious.

Interviewer: There's ... I'm surprised at how often people have expressed this sentiment. I think particularly if you were a young teen in the Sixties. Obviously we interviewed some people who were children, some people were teenagers, some people were a bit older. I think there is something generally about being that age when you kind of tend to react against your parental generation and what they stand for. But I was interested in some of the things that you said in the questionnaire about a sense of freedom and atmosphere in London. You were obviously quite young at the time but you were picking up on that sense of things changing and enjoying that, even if it was just sort of vicariously

through the cinema. Can you say a little bit more about how that felt? What sort of freedom did you feel was opening up to you? Was it anything specifically related to being female or was it just a very general ...?

Respondent: No, at that point, I don't think it was really about being female. I mean, apart from wearing miniskirts but that ...

Interviewer: Yeah, I know, now we look back and think what was going on?

Respondent: Yeah, it felt rebellious, I liked anything that was rebellious basically. So, the shorter the skirt the better.

Interviewer: And did older people tut a bit when you were miniskirts?

Respondent: Yeah, I mean, I remember in the sixth form at school, in the last term we were allowed to wear our own clothes.

Interviewer: For the whole term?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: That's funny.

Respondent: We were told to dress like we were going to work in an office.

Interviewer: Oh, I see, OK.

Respondent: But, you know.

Interviewer: How old were you? Sixteen or eighteen?

Respondent: Then I would've been eighteen. I mean, clothes got a lot of disapproval. It was a very strict school.

Interviewer: I find that quite interesting, the way that fashion was one of the ways in which people could rebel. So perhaps some of the other ways in which people were countercultural in the Seventies hadn't really taken off but fashion in the Sixties did seem to be quite important and quite key to that generational identity.

Respondent: No, no, it was, I remember going to Biba, everybody ... a lot of Saturday mornings buying a new dress or something like that. Which were very cheap so we could afford it with a little bit of pocket money.

Interviewer: That's amazing, isn't it? It seems amazing to me now. Were you aware of women's fashion in film? Did you ever sort of see Julie Christie or someone and think, "oh, I want to look a little bit like that".

Respondent: Oh, a lot, yes. I mean ... I was trying to remember if I saw anything with Julie Christie. I was certainly aware of her but I'm not sure I remember any ...

Interviewer: Any particular film, Doctor Zhivago, Darling?

Respondent: I did see Doctor Zhivago ...

- Interviewer: It didn't kind of ...
- Respondent: But I remember again in Blow Up ... I think it's Jane Birkin or someone, I can't remember, they were wearing coloured tights and I really liked those, I remember.
- Interviewer: Was that seen as quite daring, coloured tights?
- Respondent: Yeah, very daring.
- Interviewer: Was that because tights were supposed to be kind of tan, skin coloured?
- Respondent: Yeah, and I think they were also new, we were stockings. Up to a certain point. Well, I mean, tights came in with miniskirts cause you couldn't really wear stockings.
- Interviewer: Did you go out and get coloured tights after you saw Blow Up?
- Respondent: Yeah. Well, don't know if it was after but ...
- Interviewer: Around that time?
- Respondent: There was actually, this was earlier, there was The Avengers had brought out a range of clothes that I know my sister and I bought. But that was probably early Sixties.
- Interviewer: Oh, really, I didn't know that.
- Respondent: Cause I remember having stockings but they were kind of maroon. But my sister had an Avenger raincoat.
- Interviewer: What was ...
- Respondent: Plastic, I think.
- Interviewer: OK.
- Respondent: Shiny.
- Interviewer: Did it feel really daring?
- Respondent: Yeah.
- Interviewer: That's really interesting. So there was an element in which film and television and popular culture was shaping new ways of behaving, even if it was just what you wore.
- Respondent: Definitely. I found it actually made school more and more impossible because I went to a kind of very strict girls' school and I just found it harder and harder ...
- Interviewer: What, in the sense of conformity?
- Respondent: Yeah. And also because I did art ...

Interviewer: You're creative inclination.

Respondent: And of course I wanted to ... and I mean, it was a shame really, I wanted to leave after my O-levels and my parents wouldn't let me. I wanted to go to a college and I remember going for an interview, saw this, I think it was Kingsway College, and they had all these people doing modern dancing and I thought this is fantastic but they said, if you want her to get her A-levels you shouldn't, don't come here.

Interviewer: What, they said that, at the college? They wouldn't do that now.

Respondent: So, anyway, I stuck it at school and did quite badly and ...

Interviewer: You felt disengaged?

Respondent: Yeah, yes.

Interviewer: I suppose as well, schools and institutions were more of the previous generation?

Respondent: Very much so.

Interviewer: So that gap between the two generations probably felt very wide at that point.

Respondent: It felt enormous. The teachers were almost two generations away from you. My grandparents' sort of age.

Interviewer: That's really interesting ... you remember the fashion and that kind of thing influencing you. The actual films, before we talk about Blow Up, you said that you liked ... in the early part of the Sixties you liked Hayley Mills.

Respondent: Oh, yes.

Interviewer: Was that cause she was ... what was it about her, do you think, that appealed to you? Was she ...?

Respondent: ....

Interviewer: Slightly more adventurous than other kind of female ...?

Respondent: Maybe ... I liked the way she looked. There was a film called ... I don't know if it was The Parent Trap ... I can't really remember. But I mean, she was someone I grew out of. She was certainly an early teen ...

Interviewer: Interesting. Yeah. But then when you were a bit older you started going to the ICA and Paris Pullman and the cinemas in central London.

Respondent: Yeah, and also actually, I remember, I think I put it there, I went to Better Books where they started the London Film-Makers' Co-op there. My sister took me and I remember seeing a film by a French film-maker called Franju called Blood of the Beasts, it was called. About a slaughterhouse.

Interviewer: Where was that, at Better Books?

Respondent: It was a very famous sort of radical book shop in Charing Cross Road.

- Interviewer: And they showed films?
- Respondent: Yeah, and they did, I think performance art and the London Film-Makers' Co-op started there.
- Interviewer: So your sister was five years older than you. Was she working or was she a student?
- Respondent: She might even have been at school when she took me, I was probably about fourteen when she took me to this film. But she went to university.
- Interviewer: So you probably were introduced to a culture that was perhaps a little bit older than you would have been because you were younger. What was it ... you mentioned Blow Up a couple of times that you saw when you were about fourteen?
- Respondent: Yeah, fourteen or fifteen. I actually got a diary at home I would have written it in.
- Interviewer: So it must have made an impact on you then. Can you remember ...
- Respondent: Well, it did. I mean ... in this diary it said I liked it because it didn't have a lot of script. Which I find really interesting because it's kind of exactly how I am now.
- Interviewer: Because it was visual?
- Respondent: Yeah, I think so.
- Interviewer: Did that seem quite alternative at the time?
- Respondent: Mm, yes, it did.
- Interviewer: Blow Up, was it was screened at regular cinemas? It wasn't just at arthouse cinemas?
- Respondent: This place where I saw it in Harrow was just a regular ...
- Interviewer: It's quite interesting cause you know it's sort of European art cinema but it kind of crossed over into the mainstream and so it's perhaps a film that introduced a few people to Antonioni or European cinema or something like that. Did you become aware after you'd seen it ... did you know who the director was? Did that register?
- Respondent: I don't think so. No.
- Interviewer: Cause in the Sixties, I've noticed when I looked through the programmes, that directors weren't, even though there were some incredible directors working at the time, the directors weren't promoted in the same way that they are now.
- Respondent: No, it's very different.
- Interviewer: And there was still that culture of who was in the film, being the kind of key thing to attract the audience. And I was wondering if you can remember

developing as you took an interest in European art cinema, can you remember developing any awareness of any directors?

Respondent: Yes, probably Godard was the main one.

Interviewer: Did you then think you wanted to see other films by him? Did it become ...?

Respondent: Yeah, totally.

Interviewer: How did you find out more information. Were you looking at newspapers or did you look at... I know that there were kind of film magazines and things at the time.

Respondent: Yeah ... I know I used to go occasionally to the, well what was the NFT, I think and my sister had friends who worked there and I remember they sort of sometimes drove us home. They had a book of Godard on the dashboard.

Interviewer: Oh, did they?

Respondent: Which, again, I was really young, I was about fourteen but I was sort of fascinated by this book which I never opened.

Interviewer: But you just used to see it there on the dashboard?

Respondent: Yeah, and I'd hear them talking about it. I think I probably pursued it a bit. Well ... I mean, I'm not sure but I think the first Godard film I saw was at the ICA. It's the kind of film that's very shown, a very obscure one called *Le gai savoir* which I didn't have a clue what it was about but I just loved the way it looked. That held me. Even though I was ...

Interviewer: And was it to do with the way that he sort of played with cinematic conventions? Cause he was very sort of ... Experimental and maybe going too far but he certainly didn't conform to kind of narrative story telling as it had been used up to that point in mainstream cinema. Was that what you were picking up on, do you think that's sort of ...

Respondent: Yeah, I think possibly. I just remember the lighting and the ... I mean it's basically really two characters in a studio, that's all it is. And there's a few things in ... I mean I'm telling you this from having seen it subsequently ... And they have a big transparent umbrella in the studio. But the colours, the lighting, they wore very bright coloured Shetland jumpers. These Shetland jumpers again were very fashionable at that time. Sort of short Shetland jumpers. So, I was probably attracted to that ...

Interviewer: So it's a fashion element again.

Respondent: Probably.

Interviewer: And the visual, the aesthetics of it.

Respondent: Yeah, the darkness and this beautiful lighting and bright colours.

Interviewer: That's really interesting. What was the ICA and the Paris Pullman, can you remember what they were like, the interiors? Was there an atmosphere of it being a place where hip people went?

- Respondent: Definitely, the ICA. And because I was young I always felt a bit awkward cause, you know, I wasn't ... I just felt a little bit too young to be there and a bit stupid and I wanted to be hip and cool like the slightly older people but I wasn't.
- Interviewer: You didn't know enough about it.
- Respondent: I was dragged by my sister really.
- Interviewer: Was your sister ... did your sister meet up with people there?
- Respondent: Sometimes. But I think, she really wanted to go to these things and wanted someone to go with so I got dragged along.
- Interviewer: What about the Paris Pullman? I'm quite intrigued by. Obviously the thing about the NFT and the ICA is that they're still here and obviously they've changed beyond recognition. But the Paris Pullman is this sort of mythical place to me that people talk about in interviews. What can you remember about it?
- Respondent: I can't actually remember what it looked like at all, no.
- Interviewer: I don't think it, on the outside it didn't look anything special.
- Respondent: No.
- Interviewer: So you mainly remember it for the programmes, the films that were on?
- Respondent: It was only really one film I can actually remember I saw there. I remember the actor, Pierre Clémenti, I don't remember the name of the film.
- Interviewer: One of the things that intrigues me slightly about it is that art and arthouse cinema has become very respectable and middle-brow now but in the Sixties when I look at the ... there's a magazine called Continental. It's almost like soft porn, it's just lots and lots of nudity and photos taken at nudist camps and that kind of thing that because European art cinema had more sex and nudity in it it kind of when more in that bracket.
- Respondent: That's right, yes.
- Interviewer: Than it does now and I find that really quite intriguing because it's sort of been gentrified in a way. In the Sixties it obviously was still a little bit more edgy and not so acceptable and that was on a national level as well, you know, there were cinemas around the country that had these double bills where they would have something by Resnais or Godard or someone, and then something slightly dodgy with it.
- Respondent: That's right, yes.
- Interviewer: Were you aware of that at the time or did it just not really ...?
- Respondent: Yeah, I think when I was younger I had a bit of confusion about what continental cinema meant. It did seem to have these two meanings, like you say, one of being a bit dubious and the other really interesting stuff.

Interviewer: So you ...

Respondent: They somehow got merged.

Interviewer: You kind of picked up on that?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did you ever see a continental film magazine or anything like that? You knew these people that worked at the National Film Theatre.

Respondent: I certainly didn't see it in the Sixties, I don't think.

Interviewer: No. Do you remember any of the programmes at the National Film Theatre that showed more abstract art films? I know, I've seen a few programmes where they showed Warhol films and that sort of thing.

Respondent: No, I don't think I saw anything like that really until I went to Leeds. Actually, I did a foundation course at Chelsea School of Art, that was about 1970, I saw stuff there, abstract.

Interviewer: Was that screened as part of your foundation course?

Respondent: Yes. There might have been something when I went to ... the Film-Makers' Co-op. There was this Blood of the Beasts, it's about 40 minutes, I'm sure there would have been other things, I don't remember.

Interviewer: What about your memory of kind of more mainstream cinema? Did you ever go and watch, once you kind of got interested in European cinema, did you just stop watching American and Hollywood mainstream films?

Respondent: No. I don't think so.

Interviewer: You still went to see ... Can you remember any of the other ... did you go and see any of the kind of big films, like Lawrence of Arabia?

Respondent: I didn't see Lawrence of Arabia then, no. I do remember seeing the Marx Brothers in a cinema at Notting Hill, I think it was the Classic.

Interviewer: Yeah, they were a little chain that showed older films. There's one at Waterloo as well, people have told me they used to watch them while they were waiting for the train. That's quite a good idea.

Respondent: There was one at Victoria too, I think, there was something there.

Interviewer: It was more common to have cinemas at stations than I had realised. It's quite interesting. So there was a Classic cinema that you went to in North London?

Respondent: Well, this one in Notting Hill I remember. I don't know how regularly but I remember seeing the Marx Brothers.

Interviewer: And you liked that?

Respondent: Yeah, but ever since I was a kid I loved the Marx Brothers.

- Interviewer: What about things like James Bond and British cinema, were you aware of that?
- Respondent: I was aware of James Bond, I don't think I actually saw one at that age and they were ... well, they were X-films. I did go to see ... I think the first X-film I saw was Tom Jones ... no ... it might have been, I don't know. I can't remember the year.
- Interviewer: Tom Jones is late Sixties.
- Respondent: I know I was too young and I wasn't sixteen, I was about fourteen, I went with school friends and we put tons of makeup on to look older.
- Interviewer: Did they ask you what year you were born?
- Respondent: No. We all got in.
- Interviewer: That's how they used to test people, wasn't it, cause there was no ID then.
- Respondent: No, I don't remember ...
- Interviewer: Somebody told me this story that she went, it wasn't Tom Jones, it was something else, and she had planned her answer so she'd worked out what year she would have had to be born in but her friend hadn't and got it wrong so she went in on her own and left her friend outside, it was quite funny. What about, you said they didn't really make an impact on you but the kitchen sink films in the Sixties, obviously when they came out you would've been quite young then. But they were different ... they changed British cinema in a certain way. They kind of introduced Realism and representation of the working classes in a serious way rather than using them as comedy characters and they changed to a certain extent British cinema. Did you go and see any of them, anything like that when you were a teenager or was that something you only kind of saw later?
- Respondent: I don't really remember them. I sort of have a memory of Cathy Come Home, I think ... I don't know why I didn't see them.
- Interviewer: I was just wondering if they seemed ... cause a lot of them were filmed in Nottingham and Manchester and they represented northern ... not all of them but Up the Junction was in London, but a lot of them represented northern working-class life and if that just seemed so remote that it didn't really ... register that much?
- Respondent: Yeah, I kind of ... I don't know ... they weren't really on my radar, I don't think. I kind of feel like I must have known about them but I don't really know why I didn't see them ... I saw the Beatles films, I remember that.
- Interviewer: Oh, did you, you were quite young then? What did you think of the Beatles films?
- Respondent: I probably thought they were great, I loved the Beatles.
- Interviewer: Yeah, the Beatles films are quite interesting when you re-watch them cause they capture quite a lot of that generational difference that I was talking about

cause they've got that cheeky ... It's not a kind of aggressive rebellion, it's a very sort of just poking fun at establishment figures but they do it quite a lot. It's quite consistent. So I can see why they would've appealed in a ... more than just being a boy band.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: There was something that you said about cinema opening up other worlds and I was wondering if you could just ... if you can remember how it felt going to the cinema when there was so little in terms of other culture that was available compared to now obviously. At the time you wouldn't have been able to see it like that. But you mentioned that it showed you things that you perhaps weren't aware of. Can you remember how you felt about going to the cinema? Did it feel quite important to you?

Respondent: No, it felt very important. I mean, I suppose on one level it was a kind of escape from my suburban life and parents and all of that. But also ... yeah, I mean some sort of political ideas I was quite interested in and ... so that kind of opened up...

Interviewer: What sort of left wing ...?

Respondent: Left wing political ideas. I remember ... I don't know if this counts cause it was in Paris but I remember when I was ...

Interviewer: Well, if you can remember it when you lived in Britain then it counts. The riots and the students demonstrations?

Respondent: Yeah ... but I went with my then boyfriend we persuaded my parents to let us go, we went to Paris in August '68 and we saw a film called The Hour of the Furnaces which is an Argentinian sort of revolutionary film. About four hours long and we ... I think we left after about two hours because we couldn't understand because it had French subtitles. My boyfriend couldn't understand at all, I'd done my O-level but ... so we left and I remember the audience seeming really hostile that we left like we weren't ...

Interviewer: Taking it seriously enough.

Respondent: Yeah ...

Interviewer: When you went to Paris was there a sense of ... did you feel like politics was more important? Was that quite tangible then?

Respondent: Yes, and this boyfriend who was two years older was very political and he was convinced that it was all kind of going to happen again while we were there, they were going to play it all out for us again.

Interviewer: Was that why he wanted to go to Paris that summer?

Respondent: Yeah, definitely.

Interviewer: Because of the politics. That's interesting. Did it ... can you remember being at all politically active in any other way or was it just a kind of interest? Did it go further than that?

Respondent: Yeah, I went on anti-Vietnam demonstrations.

Interviewer: In London?

Respondent: Yeah, in London. And, you know, this is going into the early Seventies but certainly in Leeds. The Art School there was very radical place. A lot of street theatre and performance art and ... a lot of quite political stuff.

Interviewer: You went to political marches in London before you went to Leeds? Anti-Vietnam. That kind of countercultural atmosphere that there was in London at the end of the Seventies. Can you remember in your mind that being linked at all to cinema particularly? I don't know, something like Easy Rider ... can you remember films ...

Respondent: Oh, I did see Easy Rider, yes.

Interviewer: That felt like they were part of that?

Respondent: It all felt that it was all part of the same thing. I mean, there was another film that I've never come across since. Again, this might be the early Seventies, called The Strawberry Statement which was about ... I don't know, it was an American film about ... I think it was some shootings on a US campus or something. I can't actually remember but it was ...

Interviewer: That sort of thing. People going barefoot and ...

Respondent: Oh yes, I remember that. I was just telling a friend how I went to The National Gallery barefoot.

Interviewer: Did you?

Respondent: And was told to put my shoes on. Yeah ...

Interviewer: What I find really interesting when people remember things like that, going barefoot. Someone told me the other day that they were barefoot on the tube and a very concerned woman asked if she could buy them a new pair of shoes. Didn't seem to realise that this person was sort of very middle-class and had plenty of shoes. That ... clash of generations is really interesting. And I suppose, because things manifested through clothing and clothing choices, even if it was to not wear shoes, that maybe became a focal point for that. So that people would actually comment about the length of your skirt or being barefoot. It was a sort of public thing is what I'm trying to say whereas now people would wear things and you wouldn't necessarily ... that wouldn't necessarily get a comment from a stranger. It might be that your parents would say something but you wouldn't go up to someone in the street and say something. Whereas it seems that it was OK then for the older generation to sort of say something if they disapproved. That's a way in which the public sphere has changed.

Respondent: That's true.

Interviewer: For women particularly, a short skirt seems to have been a big part of that. That's really interesting. Is there anything else that we haven't touched on that you ... particularly remember. You said that you smoked before you should've been allowed to in a cinema.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Was that just to do with kind of breaking the rules or was it just because everyone smoked?

Respondent: Everyone smoked. I do remember going to the cinema. I can't remember what film it was. It was in Ealing with a boy and he bought me a whole packet of cigarettes. I think it was the first whole packet I'd ever had and I didn't really know how to ... well, I remember opening it and there was some foil inside and I was sort of trying to put the foil back in once I'd taken the cigarette and he was sort of stopping me and I felt really embarrassed cause I didn't know ...

Interviewer: You didn't know just to pull it off? Did you have ... were there any films that you went to see more than once, any sort of favourite films that stood out for you?

Respondent: I don't remember seeing, not at that point, seeing anything more than once.

Interviewer: OK, thank you very much, I'll stop the tape there.