

What Makes Sandy Run?

Sandy
Lieberson

Interviewed by Paul Cronin

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1936. Los Angeles, California. Cedars of Lebanon Hospital. My parents are Elsie and Philip Lieberman. Ukrainian-Russian immigrants who came to the country, it must have been around 1910 or 1912. Sent out by their parents. They sent the oldest son, and once he established himself then all the other children were sent out. The parents never made it. I never met my grandparents.

They met in Chicago. They got married, and then they went west, and they had three children. I was the last of three. We grew up in East Los Angeles. City Terrace, Boyle Heights. There was a Jewish neighborhood there, around Wabash Avenue, and my father had a laundry store on the corner of Brooklyn and Soto. There was a Curries ice cream store there and there was a good delicatessen down the road. Mainly Mexican, with a small Jewish enclave.

We had a really good cinema. Pretty big – I would say maybe eight or nine hundred seats, something like that. And Saturday was it. One person paid for the ticket to get in, and then what they did was run round and open the fire exit door so that three or four of us could sneak in without paying.

Wolfman, The Bride of Frankenstein, Duel in the Sun, Red River, Treasure of the Sierra Madre, Lost Weekend, Snakepit, Road to Morocco – I loved the Bing Crosby/Bob Hope films. *High Noon, The Third Man, Citizen Kane, Yankee Doodle Dandy, East of Eden* – I saw that at least three times. *Rio Bravo, All the King's Men, From Here to Eternity, Marty* – I saw that several times. *The Quiet Man* – I thought that was brilliant. *A Streetcar Named Desire* was my first Brando movie, and that just blew me away. I must have seen that a half a dozen times. *Vertigo* had a really powerful impact on me. *Night of the Hunter*. If I had to pick an actor, a Hollywood actor, Robert Mitchum was it. He was anti-establishment. *Shane* – I must have seen that a dozen times. It just kind of affected me as a young kid. It's a classic good versus evil story, but I think it was the young boy, the situation, that maybe reminded me of my own childhood. *Guys and Dolls* – absolutely great. I finally saw a musical that meant something to me. And of course *Rebel Without a Cause, Paths of Glory, 12 Angry Men*. The Ealing Comedies really got to me. I loved the sensibility.

Good cinema was a source of entertainment for me. Not only entertainment, but it opened my eyes to the world, the world beyond this little L.A. that I was living in. It was quite narrow, and so all of a sudden there was an introduction to the rest of the world. And that became really important to me, and in some ways made me more sensible and more thoughtful.

I was a pretty fucked up kid. A juvenile delinquent. I was so rebellious and unruly and aggressive. It was a disturbed childhood. I was constantly in trouble. Broke into stores... arrested. I was going in the wrong direction. Cinema was an escape for me. It represented other worlds. Cinema showed me there are alternatives. What it made me do was identify with the most troubled characters that I saw in films. That somehow had a real impact on me, and in some ways deflected me away from this troubled childhood.



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I heard about Hollywood but I never felt that I would ever get into Hollywood. It just didn't seem conceivable that there was something I could do to be in the movie business. It seemed very far away.

I got out of high school at eighteen. I would have gone in the army, drafted in the army, and I didn't like that, so I joined the Navy Air Reserve. Just outside of L.A., downtown, is Los Alamitos Naval Air Station, and that's where I would train for one weekend a month. It meant that I would be in the cockpits of these fighter planes and get them ready to be started and flown and make sure everything is right. That was my reserve, and then I had to go on two years active duty, and so I decided that as soon as I got out of high school that I would activate myself and go on active duty. I did that in 1954. I went to San Diego and got assigned to the USS Princeton, an aircraft carrier. I had my bootcamp and got on board. Our first port of call was Hawaii. I got my tattoo there. It was a really interesting experience for me because it made me look at who I was – an outsider within the navy.

I was assigned to the deck crew, which meant you push the planes to get them ready to go on the elevator to be catapulted off. I was a plane pusher and I didn't like that, so I thought, "How the fuck am I going to get out of this division into a better division?" I did a little recce and discovered that operations intelligence was cool because you didn't have to push any planes, so I got sent to a training course. My assignment in operations intelligence was radar.

It was a wake-up call. What the hell am I going to with my life? And there was a moment when I thought, "Hey, maybe this is a career for me. Professional sailor."

When I did get out of the navy in 1956, I went to L.A. City College. I only lasted a year. I'm not a student by nature, in the formal sense. I knew I wasn't college material. I was too impatient and never had the discipline. So I got a job in valet parking, which was a big deal in Southern California in those days.

I worked for a guy who had all of the top bars, night clubs and restaurants on La Cienega Boulevard, which was the heart of L.A. eating. I worked for him as a valet parker – and I was a brilliant parker.

I met a guy who was parking cars at Lawry's restaurant on La Cienega Boulevard. He said, "I'm going to an acting class." I said, "Really? What's that like?" He said, "Well come along." It was at a place called the Beverly Hills Playhouse on Robertson Boulevard. A man called Elliott Kastner, a legendary character, was running it together with somebody who had been through the Actors' Studio, Brian Hutton. "This looks interesting." So I tried it for a couple of sessions with Brian. He demolished me as an actor, and I realised that wasn't in the future for me.



One of the restaurants that I worked at was on the corner of Sunset and La Brea. Columbia Pictures and Desilu Studios and NBC were all in that area, so this particular restaurant was a mecca for Hollywood people. Not the top echelon, but the sort of middle and lower echelon, who would come there for their very boozy lunches.

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I was parking cars there one afternoon. A car pulled in, I think it was a Cadillac, and I opened the door for the passenger, a very beautiful young woman. She gets out and I go to give the guy the ticket, and I look at him and said, “Mike!” He said, “Sandy!” It was Mike Rhodes, somebody that I’d gone to Fairfax High School with. I said, “What are you doing? I’m parking your car and you’re in a Cadillac with a blonde!” He said, “Well, I’m an agent.” I said, “What’s that?” He said, “I’ll introduce you to somebody” – and he did. He introduced me to a publicist, a Hollywood press agent, a very original and strange character called Sheldon Davis. He said, “OK fine, I’ll take you on as an apprentice.” I didn’t know anything about it at all. He said, “What you have to do is find the clients. I’ll give you a list of restaurants. You go to the restaurants and ask them if they want to get their name in the trade papers, in the *Hollywood Reporter*, in *Variety*, in the *Los Angeles Times*, in the gossip columns. If you can get them as a client, I will pay you.”

I had to get stories planted. I had to write stories. I had never written anything in my life before. All of a sudden I realise I had some skill, actually being able to write and get stuff that I wrote in these trade papers, in the *Los Angeles Times*. For example, one of the nightclubs that Shelley Davis represented was the Crescendo on Sunset Boulevard. I remember getting a big story about Lenny Bruce, who appeared at the Crescendo.

Shelley Davis was an innovative guy. We had Diners Club as a client. We had Little Richard. We had the incinerator campaign for the city of Los Angeles. We did a bit of everything. We did stunts. We had an actress – I remember we took her to the Foreign Press Association party in a casket. The casket opens and there she is, the beautiful blonde. It was pretty crude in a way, but nonetheless it worked, and you got publicity.



If you were lucky enough to have a friend or relative who was in the union and was working on films, then you got a job that way. It was through contacts, social contacts, family contacts. It was a very closed shop. Unless you had a contact, it was hard or impossible to get into the union. So there was a barrier, in a way, and that wasn’t open to me because I didn’t know anybody at that point in the film industry.



Through Sheldon Davis I met an agent at William Morris called Sy Marsh, who worked in the television department. “Why don’t you apply for a job at the William Morris Agency? I think you’d be a good agent.” And that’s exactly what I did. I filled out an application, went for an interview, and really through his introduction I got a job working in the mail room. That, I believe, was 1957.

That was the William Morris training programme. Mail room, secretary, junior agent, and then, if you’re lucky, you become an agent. That was the route that I took at the William Morris Agency. It was great training, a great way to enter into the mainstream of the entertainment business.

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In the mail room you sorted the mail. All the memoranda had to be delivered every day to all the agents, plus you picked up and delivered scripts to actors and directors and writers and producers. You got to know which script was going to which studio.

I made a policy of always reading the memoranda that came into the mail room. I would open the envelopes. They weren't in sealed envelopes, and I would read all the memoranda and knew exactly what was going on throughout the whole agency. It was always interesting because when you were delivering the scripts, you gave it to the actor or the director or the writer, whatever. Jean Peters, Spencer Tracy, Katharine Hepburn – you had some kind of personal contact. It was always sent to their homes. Working in the mail room, I would be delivering those scripts and various other things.

Very fortunately, the president, the guy who really ran the company, a fascinating man called Abe Lastfogel – he had started in the mail room. His secretary had been his secretary for twenty-five years. She was an alcoholic, a wonderful woman called Eleanor Flaherty. She was a fascinating character herself. She had to go home by two o'clock in the afternoon, and so they needed somebody to fill in for her. She liked me, and she said, "You can take my seat in the afternoon. You will be Mr. Lastfogel's secretary assistant." That was the next step from the mail room. You became somebody's secretary.

I got a lot of help. She would say, "Always put Mr. Lastfogel's glass in the fridge," because he liked to have a nice whiskey when he got back to the office from doing the rounds at the studios. Little things like that. He noticed that I did those things, and so he overlooked the fact that I wasn't a terribly good secretary in terms of taking dictation and things like that.

I got promoted. I became a secretary from his office, working for a younger agent there called Lenny Hirshan, who represented Clint Eastwood, Piper Laurie and various people like that.

I wasn't a terribly good secretary. It worked in my favor because Lenny wanted to get rid of me. My secretarial skills weren't measuring up, so I got promoted quite quickly into being a junior agent.

I was assigned to work for two fantastic guys. One was called Phil Kellogg. He represented the sort of *crème de la crème* of the acting and directing talent, particularly anybody coming from Europe. He had an associate called Peter Shaw. I worked as their junior agent. They were really wonderful to work with. They were generous and took me everywhere and introduced me as the new young agent from the William Morris agency. So it was a great start.

As an agent you get a good overview of how the industry is structured in terms of how the scripts get developed, how they get made, who controls them, who has the authority, how they are financed, the distribution of them. You see it right through in terms of reaching the public, the marketing side of it too. You're representing people who are working in television. So you got a really good snapshot of what was happening.



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I saw one foreign film. Maybe there were others as well, but the first one I can remember was *And God Created Woman*.

“Fuck! What the hell is going on in Europe... Isn’t that interesting.” So my curiosity was piqued a bit about Europe. I thought, “Yes, there is something happening there.” You begin to ask questions and see other films and things like that. Your perspective widens a bit.



The agency was divided up. The motion pictures division and the television division were very separate. I worked in the motion pictures division with Peter Shaw and Phil Kellogg. They covered MGM, 20th Century Fox. So and so covered Universal and Paramount. Somebody else covered Columbia. It was divided up within the agency. As a young agent I was sent out to cover Roger Corman and Robert Lippert. I was covering the bottom end of the independents. As a young agent I’m trying to sell my clients to Corman and Lippert and all of these people. I was told, “Try and get a job for Esther Williams.” “Esther Williams... OK.” So I got her a job in a Robert Lippert film, distributed partly in the United States by 20th Century Fox. I got various other people jobs in these lower-budget independent films, and I found some clients from it as well. Michael Landon, who went on to do *Bonanza* – I found him in Corman’s *I Was a Teenage Werewolf*. These were my clients, people that I represented. It was exciting. As a young agent I was not only getting the people who needed jobs with these lower-budget movies, but I was also finding the talent from the films themselves and signing them as clients.



When I became a junior agent, the first thing I was assigned to do was to represent the children of the famous who were clients of William Morris. I had Eddie G. Robinson, Jr., who I loved. An alcoholic who just could never break the habit. Christina Crawford, who was the daughter of Joan Crawford. I had Frank Sinatra Jr. These were my early clients. I worked hard to get them jobs, and in most cases I was able to do it. But in a way it was babysitting. Most of them were disturbed, one way or another, because of their childhood. When you’re Edward G. Robinson Jr., that’s a lot of weight that you’ve got to carry around.



I would say by nature I’m probably an outsider, somebody from the fringes of society, rather than the mainstream. I didn’t seem to fit into the group and felt attracted to people who I identified as outsiders as well. I felt comfortable with them, I liked them, I could identify with them. I read *On the Road* and like a lot of people of my generation I was captivated by the idea of Kerouac and freedom and being on the road and all that. I hitchhiked to San Francisco and saw Lenny Bruce in a nightclub.

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I remember seeing Cassavetes's *Shadows* the first time. I thought, "This is something different! Black people in a movie that are middle class and intelligent." There was something about Cassavetes. He represented a spirit and filmmaking that I loved. It was exciting, this independent movement, and it had a tremendous impact on me and it made me curious about Europe, because I could see there was inspiration coming from Europe to these people who were the so-called outsiders.



I had a client, a young actor called Paul Jasmin. I remember getting a call from him one weekend. "Why don't you come around. A friend of mind is having a drinks party at his house." I said, "Who is it?" He said, "Somebody called Dick Clayton." I said, "I know who he is. Dick Clayton's an agent. I've heard about him." So I met up with Paul and we went over together to Dick Clayton's apartment – and there was James Dean and Sal Mineo. It was mostly a gay crowd. There they were, this group of outsiders, the queer community in Hollywood that had to subvert their sexuality, that had to pretend to be straight. It was a bit of shock to me. I never realised that there was this community in Hollywood. It was so fascinating because they too appealed to my kind of outsider instinct. The fact that they had to disguise who they were – in some ways I felt I had to disguise my upbringing and background. I could identify with them. I felt comfortable with them. I didn't feel out of place or anything.

Henry Wilson was another agent who specialised in representing queer actors, and he gave them great names. Rock Hudson, Tab Hunter and various other clients of his had these wonderful names. All had to hide their sexuality. They could never come out. That would be the end of your career in Hollywood in those days.

I never felt comfortable in society as a kid. I always felt an outsider. First of all, it was an embarrassment that my parents had this accented English and spoke Yiddish and Russian at home. I could never identify or connect with my parents. They felt so alien to me in a way. All I wanted to do was be an American kid, so I tried my hardest to be an American. It made me, in some ways, completely disassociate myself from my parents. And the fact that we didn't have any money. It was a struggle. I started working when I was seven or eight years old – mowing lawns, washing cars, shining shoes. Whatever I could do to save some money and being able to spend it. I remember my sister Edie. She was three years older than me. She was so obsessed about getting a nose job, about reconstructing her nose, which she thought was too big. And so I, as a kid – twelve years old or something – I had to lend her the money. She couldn't get it from our parents. I actually had enough money saved up to pay for her operation. So that's the kind of childhood I had. I was always working, always ambitious, in terms of trying to get ahead.



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I would be on the road. I would be meeting people, I'd be shmoozing, I'd be talking, I'd be trying to get new clients. You're out there, going from one studio the other, one production company to the other. Within each studio there are twenty different producers on the lot, so I met a lot of really interesting people who impacted me.



The music department was a really important part of William Morris, and a lot of the people in the music business wanted to be actors as well. There was one young singer, I really loved him, a great guy – Johnny Nash. I got him his first movie, *Take a Giant Step*, Hecht-Hill-Lancaster. I was so proud I got this African-American singer a gig as a star of a movie. That was pretty unusual in those days.



One of the William Morris clients was Elvis Presley. Elvis was managed by Colonel Tom Parker. I loved the guy. There was something about him. He was a conman and a rogue, but very smart at the same time. He had something called the Snowmen's League. He invented it and had stationery printed. A "snowjob" is a bullshitter. Snowmen's League, the Bullshitter's League. I remember asking him, "Can I get into the Snowmen's League?" He said, "No, you don't have enough experience to get into the Snowmen's League yet. Keep trying." Anyway, I struck up a relationship with Colonel Parker. I loved his outrageous behaviour and the way he looked, but at the same time I thought, "What a shame. Poor Elvis, getting stuck in these really second-rate movies." But he did what he was told. It was fascinating to see the dynamic.

Colonel Parker enjoyed humiliating people in power. It was kind of a joke to him. I think it was my first Christmas at William Morris. He wanted to deliver roast hams – the big leg – to all the powerful bosses at the studios. What he did was wrap these hams in greaseproof paper, but they were so greasy that it started to come through. I was given, I think, Fox, MGM, Paramount, where Presley was working. I had to deliver the hams into the hands of these studio heads. I couldn't just leave them with the secretary. The instructions were that this had to be handed to the heads of the studios. Nobody wanted to go up against Colonel Parker. Nobody wanted to reject Elvis Presley. Everyone wanted to make a movie with him. So here I was, delivering these greasy hams, which they had to then receive in their expensive suits and clothes. I can see their faces – they would look at this thing in horror. I loved the fact that Parker was able to force them to accept it, to be humiliated in a way, to take this thing and thank me. "Please give my best to Colonel Parker!"



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I love films about Hollywood. One of my favourites was Robert Aldrich's *The Big Knife*. Such a great comment on Hollywood. It was about a tyrant, who was the head of a studio, played by Rod Stieger, who was just so over the top that it was brilliant. Jack Palance played the beleaguered actor, subjected to having to do these films for the studio, the studio system. The observations were brilliant.

Sweet Smell of Success was about Hollywood, about press agents and the entertainment business. I thought was the first one that actually had an honesty to it. Insightful. I contacted the actress Susan Harrison who was in it and got her as a client. I was determined I was going to get her another gig, because after *Sweet Smell* she wasn't working. So I took her to MGM to meet a producer called Pandro Berman, a big heavyweight producer at the time. Susan pulled out a pack of cigarettes. The package broke and the cigarettes went all over the floor, and what she got was Pandro Berman on his hands and knees picking up her cigarettes. I just sat there mesmerised, thinking, "How the fuck did she do that? My God!" And she got the part. That was the main thing. This psychological approach to the meeting, which I never even thought of, and she had planned the whole thing out.



I didn't see it as a career move. You're an agent and you become a producer or director or writer. When I was being an agent I was so focused on being an agent, which made me successful. I wasn't using an agent's job to aspire to become a director. No, I wanted to make it as an agent.

I had a client that I represented, a young Hollywood actress. Very smart, unusual. From L.A., but very different. Her name was Susan Oliver. I thought she had a shot in the movies, and they had decided to put her in a pilot. William Morris was very powerful in television. You did a pilot, a test film, and if it was successful you then made the series. She was in the pilot. I got her a job. I said to her, "Do you want to do television only?" – because in those days if you did television you didn't act in movies. She said, "Cinema is what my passion is." So I got her a film at MGM, and they offered her a contract as well. It was the end of that period.

I get a call. "Come down and see Sam Weisbord." He was the head of the television department. I walked into his office, and he said, "Who the fuck do you think you are?! You fucking idiot!" He screamed and yelled at me for twenty minutes. "Don't you realise you're jeopardising hundreds of thousands of dollars for William Morris if Susan is not in our television series and you get her in some crummy movie!" He just lost it and went completely berserk, and he made sure everybody else knew that I had transgressed, in the sense of taking the initiative in deciding what might be the career of a young actress. After that episode I thought, "Shit, he's going to block me at every turn." He was the very powerful head of the television department. So I said, "I think I'm going to get out of here."

As an agent, I loved the actors. I thought they were the bravest people of all – getting up there in front of the camera, getting on stage to create the character. There

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was something that I fell in love with about them, and that is why I felt my loyalty was to them, rather than to the corporation.

I saw it from the perspective of the actress. What's best for her career? What is her potential? – rather than, “Am I going to make hundred thousand or half a million more commission for William Morris?” I was looking at it from the perspective of the client, the actor. I think that's why people liked me and were attracted to me because I was interested in them and I had their interests at heart. That overrode in some way the responsibility that I had to make the most money for the agency. I don't like that attitude.

By coincidence I'd been approached as a young, hotshot L.A. agent by a couple of other agencies. “If you ever want to leave William Morris...” I ran into a guy that I'd known, an older man called Phil Gersh. He was running a very successful indie agency. It had been spun off of Famous Artists. It was called the Jaffe Agency then. It then became the Gersh Agency. He said, “Why don't you come to work for me?” I said, “I'll think about it, Phil.” A couple of weeks later I called him and went in and met with him. He offered me a good deal to come to work for him. I thought, “OK, I'm going to do it. I'm going to leave William Morris and go to work for Phil Gersh.”



Phil Gersh was an independent agent. He represented a lot of the Hollywood blacklisted writers, directors and actors. One of the things that inspired me was seeing his integrity, the fact that he believed in these people, he represented them, and he didn't believe they were a threat or a danger to society. He continued to represent them, whereas other people dropped them.

One of the Gersh clients who was blacklisted was Joseph Losey, who along with a whole group of other “named names” and blacklisted writers and director and actors moved to Europe in the late fifties and early sixties. We had clients like Lee. J. Cobb, Frederick March, Robert Wise, Karl Malden, Raoul Walsh, Budd Schulberg, who I got to know. *What Makes Sammy Run?* was sort of a bible for ambitious young men in Hollywood.

I saw that there was another way of being an agent that was more in tune with me because I think Phil had the same sensibility. Yes, you want to make money – it's his company – but at the same time his interest was in the client, in the artist. I really liked him. We got on well, and I noticed that most of his clients were working in Europe. 1960, I think it was. I kept on remembering *And God Created Woman*.

We worked in particular with one of the agencies in Italy called Kaufman-Lerner Associates, which was set up by two guys. They were gay. They remained on in Europe after World War II and they started a PR firm, and then they moved to Italy from Paris. Hank Kaufman and Gene Lerner. Then they became agents because there were very few agents in Europe. It was an unusual business to be in. They decided to represent European actors and actresses, as well as representing clients of independent agents in the United States. They would represent those actors for Europe.

I wrote to them and said, “We've been talking occasionally about clients and working in Europe, and I think I'd be interested in working in Europe if there's a

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position open in Kaufman-Lerner Associates.” I sent it off and didn’t hear anything for, I don’t know, five or six weeks, and then I get a phone call. They say, “Let’s meet and talk about possibly coming to work in Italy.” They gave me a ticket. I met them in New York, I flew to New York, and we met and we talked, and at the end of the meeting they said, “Fine, we’ll offer you a job, but you’ve got to clear it with Phil Gersh because we have a close relationship with him.” I said “Well, I would anyway.” I went back and I met with Phil and told him that I wanted to go to Italy and work for Kaufman-Lerner and that I could continue to represent the clients but I would be there. It would be even better for the Gersh Agency. He gave me his blessing and off I went. It was in 1961.



The Hollywood studios were built on a system. They owned the cinemas, they produced the films, and they distributed the films, which meant that every film that they produced they had a cinema to put it in. They didn’t have to convince a cinema owner to take their films. They were the cinema owners. Once the anti-trust ruling came down that they had to break up this system, they decided to give up the cinemas, to keep the production and distribution. It was a tremendous shift for these studios. They no longer controlled everything. They had to fight to get their films in the cinemas. They had to pay the cinema owners forty, fifty percent of the boxoffice, so their profits were being squeezed and diminished. This was a gigantic turning point. It was a transitional period, and it was the beginning of the independents.

I remember shortly before I left to go to Rome, they had started *Cleopatra*, and already the film was bogged down in problems with Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor. They changed directors. It was going millions of dollars over budget, and Fox was on the brink of collapsing as a company. I remember seeing all these top Hollywood agents – Lew Wasserman, Abe Lastfogel – they were all coming to meet with the man who ran 20th Century Fox, Spyros Skouras. He was based in New York, a financial wizard. They were coming to Fox to meet with him and the executives to save the company. It was on the verge of bankruptcy.



The first thing I had to do is to learn how to read, speak and write Italian. As an agent in Italy I was expected to draft the agreements, to read scripts, if necessary, in Italian. I was able to converse fluently in Italian.

I threw myself into Italy. I fell in love with the country. It was open, it was warm, it was welcoming. There was sex, there were drugs. What I discovered in Rome was a huge queer community in the cinema, making films, Whereas in the States everybody had to hide their sexuality, in Rome nobody hid their sexuality. It was out in front – whether you were gay or straight or bisexual, whatever it was. It was fascinating to see that. And it was the tail end of neorealism. Those directors were still working. A kind of awakening for me to see this kind of filmmaking, to come in contact with the filmmakers and to see how it was done in Europe. You get to meet the people. You don’t deal through lawyers and agents. You want Fellini? You call him and you go

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down to the studio. You meet him and you can talk to him. You're treated like royalty because as an agent, I have access to all of these celebrities and people and I know them.

"Yes, let's have a drink!" I was doing something that I loved and enjoyed and working with great creative talent. Beyond anything I'd ever dreamed of or imagined was possible.

De Sica, Robert Rossellini, Pietro Germi, Visconti. It was a different method of working. There was a form of collaboration between director and writer – and it was a collaboration. Certain directors wouldn't work with anybody if their writers or cinematographer or production designer weren't available. This was a collaborative thing, much more than Hollywood, where you employed the writer, you employed the cinematographer. Here, you didn't feel that they were employees. You felt that they were collaborating together on the making of a movie, and that was exciting to see.

I remember in Rome when they were doing *8½*. Anouk Aimée was one of our clients and I would always go down to the set. We represented Renato Salvatori, the lead in *Rocco and His Brothers*, Visconti's film. I was on the set half a dozen times. Not that I had to do anything except watch and see how these people worked, how they collaborated with the actors on the making of something. It was a different sensibility.

I loved going to Cinecittà. In those days in the early sixties it was not a luxurious studio. If you wanted to go to the toilet, you had to squat. There were no flushing toilets, and Americans coming to work at Cinecittà couldn't believe that this was what they had to do during their period of working at Cinecittà. I thought it was great. It was a leveller. Everybody had to squat.



Producer Franco Cristaldi called the agency and said, "I want to get in touch with Susan Strasberg. I don't know how to reach her." We said, "Why do you want to get in touch with Susan Strasberg?" He said, "I'm doing a film with Gillo Pontecorvo called *Kapo*. I'll pay for your transportation to go to New York." So Hank Kaufman got on the plane, paid for by Franco Cristaldi, went to New York, and met Lee Strasberg the first night he was there at a play. He said, "I have to get in touch with your daughter. There's wonderful Italian director who wants her in a film." So the next day he met up with Susan Strasberg and gave her the script. She said, "Yes!" and flew to Rome. *Kapo* was such a powerful film, one of the early films about the concentration camps and the Holocaust. In the early sixties that hadn't been dealt with before in cinema. Through *Kapo* I struck up a long relationship with Gillo Pontecorvo and we signed Susan Strasberg as a client.



What in some ways directed me slightly off the beaten path was coming to Europe and meeting directors like Godard and Alain Resnais. One of the things I learned very early on was that they thought in a different way. Their sensibilities were different. These were people who were steeped in cinema. I had to learn about cinema. I had to be able

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to have a conversation with a writer or a director or an actor. I had to have the references. I had to educate myself about cinema – and then I became obsessed with it.



Jack Palance was our client in Rome. Brigitte Bardot was our client. Godard was incredibly autocratic. You did it his way or you didn't do it. That was it. He knew what he wanted. He knew how to get what he wanted.



I had this great affinity for character actors, rather than the leading actors. I remember it began at the William Morris Agency, where I represented these harder-to-place character actors. I remember one in particular, an actor called Royal Dano, who played Abraham Lincoln. I loved to hear his stories.

Akim Tamiroff was an Orson Welles favourite. He was a brilliant character actor who had studied under Stanislavsky. He was a client. Orson Welles was an amazing character. It was fascinating watching him on the set, seeing how he operated. He created an atmosphere. People wanted to please him. People wanted to do their best working for him.

Akim Tamiroff was Welles' confidante and great buddy. They were making *Don Quixote*, and whenever Welles managed to get a few dollars together he would call me and say, "I need Akim Tamiroff! But I need him next week!" He never had enough money to pay him, but Akim loved Welles and would do anything for him, so he would turn up to shoot another few scenes.

A few years later, Welles was doing a film called *The Deep*. He was casting around for a leading man and trying to get the finances together. Laurence Harvey was a client of mine in London. I said, "What about Laurence Harvey?" And he said, "Yes! Laurence Harvey!" I couldn't get the money out of Welles. Laurence Harvey did the film. He wanted to do it, he wanted to work with Welles. He was a great character Laurence Harvey. I really liked him. So that was another link with Welles. Always trying to find some way to assist him.

Welles had done *F for Fake*. He couldn't complete the movie. He didn't have the money to complete post-production. I had met a documentary-maker in France called Albert Knobler. He owned and ran a state-of-the-art post-production facility in Paris. He did a documentary called *Happiness in Twenty Years* and it needed a narrator. I said, "What about Orson Welles?" He said, "Can you get him for me?" I said, "Let me see." I contacted Welles and said, "Will you do the narration?" He asked, "Who's the guy?" I said, "Albert Knobler. He owns a post-production facility..." "OK – I'll do the narration free if he does the post-production sound on *F for Fake*. I can finish the film. We can mix it." Knobler said, "Of course!" So that's how we got *F for Fake* finished and made.

I love doing things like that. I love working with people like that. I remember at the end of the final session of post-production for *F for Fake*, Orson Welles said, "You want to go to dinner?" I said, "Sure. Name the place." So he took me to this restaurant,

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one his favourites in Paris. You wouldn't believe what he ordered. It cost hundreds of dollars. The best wine! I didn't give a shit. I could charge it to something else. I remember him talking about his career and life. He was saying, "I'm sick and tired of people. All they want to talk about is *Citizen Kane*. Everytime I meet somebody it's about that. Nobody wants to talk about what I *want* to do, the films I *want* to make." He was expressing this frustration and anger. I just sat there with my mouth open, listening to him talk. He always came across as the most confident and in-charge kind of person. He was acknowledging that he was subjected to having to beg to get the money, and everybody wanted to recount the past. He said, "Nobody wants to know what I want to do in the future." A terribly moving experience for me, and once again it showed how the most gifted and talented people can be rejected for not fitting into the system.



I'd seen a film called *This Sporting Life* and thought, "Wow!" He reminded me of the vitality and acting ability of Marlon Brando. He just came onto the screen and took over. I contacted Richard Harris directly, and then his agent, Jimmy Frazer, who represented him London, and said, "I'd like to represent Richard in United States and sign him as a client." So he said, "When you're coming to Europe, come and stay with me," and so I stayed for about a week with him. He introduced me to this young Rank starlet and I had a few days with her. She had no central heating in her apartment. The milk bottle would be on the ledge outside the window. I was struck by the fact that there was another world out there that I wasn't aware of, that post-war Europe was not post-war United States. It was in the midst of trying to rebuild and recover. As an American you're not aware of that. We're so focused on what's happening in the United States. Europeans and Asians – they weren't part of your world. You weren't really aware of what was going on, what the social conditions were and how people lived, so it was an eye opener for me coming to London and seeing that.



I met Antonioni. He was preparing *Red Desert*. I said, "What about Richard Harris?" He said, "Good idea." So I made the deal for Richard Harris to come to Rome to do *Red Desert*. Harris was a really unruly actor, but Antonioni tamed him. Harris was smart enough to realise that he was working with a very special kind of filmmaker.

I got to know Antonioni. He had these ticks. He couldn't control his eyes blinking and he couldn't control his hand movement. Of course he loved beautiful women. Monica Vitti was his muse for many years. They had an apartment in the modern section of Rome, around Corso di Francia. He was on the top floor and she was in the apartment below, and they had built a staircase.

One of the things I got for Monica was the Joe Losey film *Modesty Blaise*. I suggested her for the role. Losey loved the idea and went for it. So she comes to London to start the film, and she comes with Antonioni. I didn't think anything of it. First day of shooting I go to the set. Monica's English wasn't that good, so I wanted to

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be there. I spoke fluent Italian. And there's Antonioni on the set as well. Losey was a bit uncomfortable with the fact that Antonioni was there on the set. After every take Monica would go over and confer with Antonioni about her performance. It drove Losey nuts having Antonioni sitting on his set, telling Monica Vitti whether that scene worked or didn't, or her performance, and giving her notes and things like that. It was absolutely riveting to watch it happen.

When Antonioni came to do *Blow-Up* he contacted me before he came to London. I helped introduce to all the different people around the scene that he wanted to make a film about. He was just digesting what London was.

The second job that I got Monica Vitti was for John Frankenheimer in *Grand Prix*. I made the deal. She agreed to do it and signed. We were very excited about it. The film is being prepped. All of a sudden I get a call from Monica. "I've got to talk to you. Come to Rome." So I go to Rome from London. Monica's there, in the apartment below Antonioni, and she's in bed. She says, "I'm sick." "What's the matter?" "I don't know. I'm sick. I don't want to do the film." Frankenheimer was in London. I called him. I said, "Listen, we've got trouble. Monica is now wavering about whether she's going to do the film." So Frankenheimer comes over the next day. She's still in bed. The meeting takes place in bed. She says, "No, I can't do it. I can't do it." Frankenheimer spent an hour trying to convince her to be in the movie. He couldn't. And he went berserk with me, claiming, "You fucked up my film! You're going to destroy the movie!" I said, "You were there. You saw her. You weren't able to convince her. What could I possibly do?" It was a pretty devastating experience, and Frankenheimer was such a volatile guy. Angry! I thought, "My God, he's going to beat me up!" Finally Monica Vitti was replaced by Eva Marie Saint and the problem was solved. I don't think Frankenheimer ever forgave me for convincing him to take Monica Vitti and then her deciding not to do the film.



I had been in Italy for over two years. It started with a client that I represented, Brett Halsey. I got Brett Halsey his first job in Italy. He called me one day and said, "I've got a friend of mine from L.A. who's coming through town. We're having a few drinks at my house and I'm introducing him around." He turned out to be Dr. Bob. I don't recall what his full name was. Dr. Bob was travelling through Europe. He had come from Israel to Italy via Switzerland, and he came with a shit load of LSD. At the party he asked if anybody would like to try some LSD. Nobody knew what it was. So I certainly volunteered. I was one of the early volunteers. Yes, it was certainly a mind-blowing experience, as LSD can be. It can also be a very dangerous drug.

A friend of ours, an American, Bruce Balaban, part of the Balaban cinema dynasty, had rented the apartment of a brilliant Italian photographer, Mirella Ricciardi. She was on the third floor with a beautiful balcony, overlooking the Fontana di Trevi. This became the centre for weekend LSD trips. All of a sudden at the end of the second year, the beginning of the third, I felt as if this would be a good time to get out of Italy. There was some self-preservation mechanism within me that said, "Too many drugs." Too many things that were distracting me from some kind of a normal life, a career

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trajectory, so I thought this would be a good time to leave the LSD and drug taking behind. I'd better get out of here.



And then I get a call from London because the Kaufman and Lerner agency had been bought by Leslie Grade, part of this empire in England called the Grade Organisation. There were three brothers: Leslie Grade, who was the agent, Lew Grade, who was the empresario and the founder of one of the biggest television companies in England, and Bernard Delfont, who was an empresario in the theatre and various other things. They owned major agencies, two or three of them, including the one in Rome, and they said, "Come to work for us in London." I said "I really want to get back to the States." I felt the pull to get back to the U.S. They said, "Well, come for six months," and so I came over for six months. It was in the winter I think of '63. It was cold and I didn't feel comfortable. It was very old fashioned. The first thing they did, I remember, they took me to the Palladium to see Ken Dodd. They said, "You know, we want to make movies with Ken, and we've also got Cliff Richard" – he had just done *Summer Holiday* – "and we represent him, and you look after him and this and that." I thought, "I don't like this. They're talented people but I don't want to represent them. It wasn't what I wanted to do."

There was a baseball game in London every Sunday. I liked baseball, played baseball. I wasn't great at it, but I played every Sunday. There was a whole group of us and I met this guy who had just come to London working for Creative Management Associates, better known as CMA. His name was Harvey Orkin. CMA sent Harvey to London because Judy Garland was a client of CMA and she was working in London. She was doing a film called *The Lonely Stage*. And they had just signed Peter Sellers as a client, so they had to open an office in London, specifically to represent Peter Sellers. That was the quid pro quo for his agreeing to being a client of CMA.

Harvey Orkin and I were chatting. I said, "I've just come from Rome. I've been working there for the past two years, and now I'm working for the Grade Organisation in London. I really think I'm going to go back to L.A." The Grade Organisation, good as it is, just didn't fit into what I wanted at the time. And so Harvey said, "Why don't you come to work for CMA?" CMA was new agency. It had been founded by David Begleman and Freddie Fields, after the demise of MCA, which was the biggest agency in the world. Freddie and David managed to bring with them a number of clients and also attracted other clients. So they recruited me and I went back to L.A. after six months in London.



CMA was a great experience for me. Fields and Begleman had a fresh approach to representation. They were very expedient and they were very devious, but they really understood and knew the business. We were sitting in Freddy's office. He said, "What do you read when you read weekly *Variety*?" I said, "Well, I read the movies and a bit of television, and occasionally the obituaries." He said, "You've got to read the whole

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thing. If you're going to be an agent you've got to understand the music business, you've got to understand film and television. You've got to understand the live concert business. You're an agent if you understand all that." I thought, "That's interesting, because you're channeled in such a way, generally, in the industry, in a narrow way rather than in a broad way. So it made me think in a more comprehensive way about crossover between music and film and television and all the rest of it. It was a real learning experience.



At CMA when I arrived in L.A. to work for them, they had a really interesting group of agents there, and amongst this group was Alan Ladd Jr. His father was the famous actor Alan Ladd. I befriended him and realised that he knew every single person in Hollywood, and he could get in to see anybody in Hollywood. He had total access. So I said, "Laddie, we're going to get in my car and we're going to go to the different studios together. You're going to come with me." And so whoever we wanted to see, whether it was Hal Wallis or Dick Zanuck or this one or that one, Joe Levine... I remember we got into Howard Hawks' office. I think it was his last film, *Red Line 7000*, and I managed to convince him to take one of our clients, Gail Hire, a young actress who got cast in that film. So the doors were open with Laddie and we became great friends and it helped him as well. It opened him up. I got him out into the field and feeling secure about being an agent.



It was a good period for me. I liked working back in Hollywood but not working for William Morris. It was more off the wall. Original thinking as an agent, if that's possible. I think at the time we had probably the most exciting roster of clients. If you're representing McQueen, Streisand, Fonda, Paul Newman, you're flooded with scripts, but they aren't necessarily the scripts that they want to do, so what you have to try and do is encourage people to develop and write material for the clients that you're representing, especially clients like that. So it's a combination of filtering what's coming in and feeding what you think is going to be of interest to those actors and actresses, and directors and writers as well, or you're trying to stimulate people into writing and creating vehicles for them. So it's a combination of those two things. While I didn't have the responsibility of representing Steve McQueen, nonetheless he was a client of the agency. I would be in contact with him. I would be out, soliciting and looking for material for him. I would meet him and talk to him.



Harvey Orkin remained in London. I was in Los Angeles. "Harvey needs help! You know Europe, you've worked there already. We'd like you to go back to London and set up the office properly with Harvey." I said, "Jesus, I've just come back. I'm happy

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here in L.A.” – and all the rest of it. They said, “Go for a year. We really need it.” I said, “OK, I’ll do it for one year.”

We represented most of the Americans that were coming over to work in Europe and we started representing British clients as well. I signed Oliver Reed. We represented Shelagh Delaney and Lindsay Anderson, and others as well.

The first thing that happened when I got to London was Harvey said, “OK fine, come down to Saville Row and you’re going to get a suit made and a new pair of shoes on Jermyn Street.” He was a fashionista. He loved the whole British suit and ties thing. It was the era of bowler hats and pin stripe suits in 1965. Hardly any cars. Wonderful, very pastoral London. It was a nice feeling. I met my future wife and we got married at the end of the year, and I thought, “Maybe I don’t have to go back.” Our first child came, then the second. I was very successful as an agent. Going back just wasn’t in the picture anymore. It was too nice living in London.



We decided to move to 99 Park Lane. Creative Management Associates would be set up there. Clients would be coming to see us. It was kind of a fantastic meeting place. We’d be going down the Les Ambassadeurs or The White Elephant for lunch. The world was our oyster. Mike Frankovich was running Columbia Pictures. There was United Artists, Ilya Lopart who was doing amazing stuff in Europe. Fox had an office. Paramount. Universal, in a big way.

Jay Kanter, who was one of the top MCA agents, was appointed to be head of production for Universal in Europe and was based in the U.K. I had known Jay. I’d first met him as a young agent. He was representing Marlon Brando on *Mutiny on the Bounty*, I was representing Richard Harris. They weren’t talking to each other. It was slowing down production. There was a crisis. We had to have a meeting to resolve their standoff. It was something stupid. That was where I first met Jay. I was in awe of him. “Who the fuck am I? How am I going to stand up against this guy and get Harris’s point across?” But he turned out to be the most wonderful, understanding, creative and intelligent person. So that’s where I first met him. Then when he became head of production at Universal, based in London, we would see each other a couple of times a week socially. He and his wife would have great parties. Stanley Kubrick and Christiana Kubrick were great friends of theirs. The only time I ever saw Stanley out socially would be at Jay’s house. Turned out he was an amazing, obsessive gossip. He would be calling people day and night to get the latest on Hollywood – who’s fucking who and who’s in power. He loved all that stuff, but he had to get it from third parties.



Representing Peter Sellers was a full-time job. He would now be classified as bipolar. Quite serious personality disorders, which made him totally unpredictable. If he walked in the room and he didn’t like your T-shirt, that was it – he would order you out of the room. It was irrational so much of the time and great fun the rest of the time, but only in character. He was never comfortable being Peter Sellers, he was only comfortable

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when he was being one of the Goon characters or inventing another character that he and Harvey would do together. And then at some point Harvey went back to New York, where he was from originally, for various personal reasons, and so I was left alone with Peter Sellers – and it was too much for me. If you're representing Oliver Reed and Peter Sellers and Richard Harris...



London at that time was a melting pot. Everybody came together, whether you were a philosophy or a poet or a fashion designer, a painter, sculptor. This mixing in London – I'd never seen anything like it.

I met Terry Southern early on. Just an amazing character. He did the screenplay for *The Magic Christian*. I remember spending time with him. So off the wall. One of those people that you loved being around. Ringo Starr had an office on St James's Street, and it would be the place to go to get high.

Michael Cooper was the photographer who did the *Sgt. Pepper* album cover. At his studio in Chelsea they built the set. At the end of the photo shoot, Michael said, "We've got to strike the set and get rid of all this stuff." I said, "I'd like one of the cut-outs." He said, "Which one do you want?" "I want the Bob Dylan one." I'm a Dylan fan, of course, And so I got it and had it framed. I was there on the set when the Beatles turned out to be photographed. I was one of the onlookers.



One of the interesting people I met was Oscar Lewenstein, a Glasgow communist. He was about five foot three or four. Short. He had long flowing grey hair. He was one of the directors of the Royal Court Theatre. I met him, originally, through Lindsay Anderson and Anthony Page, who were directors at the Royal Court. A fascinating character. Lindsay introduced me to him. We had a meeting together with Lindsay. There was a huge shortfall of money to keep the Royal Court afloat. They were at the epicentre of new writing, new actors, and new directors in the sixties – but they didn't have the money to continue. So I met with Oscar and Lindsay and Anthony Page, and I thought, "Well, I'll try to get some money for you." So I went to a very nice guy that I knew, John Van Eyssen. He was running Columbia Pictures at the time. I said, "John, how would you like to have the Columbia Pictures logo on Royal Court productions, and where possible you could get the right of first refusal on any of the plays. It's not going to cost you a lot of money. It'll cost you hundred thousand pounds a year for two years." He said, "A hundred thousand pounds!" That would be something like a million dollars or more now. Unheard of, putting that into the Royal Court. But he agreed to do it. I was astounded. And so were Oscar Lewenstein and Lindsay Anderson. So the money flowed into the Royal Court.



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Harry Saltzman was partners with Cubby Broccoli in the Bond films. Saltzman was doing the books of Len Deighton, a series of spy novels. One of them was *Billion Dollar Brain*. Ken Russell, who was directing, wanted Françoise Dorléac, who was a client of mine, for the leading female role. She was the younger sister of Catherine Deneuve. Françoise Dorléac had already begun her career in France. She was going to be a bigger star than her sister, I thought. So I said to Harry, “I want a hundred thousand pounds for her.” There was silence. He said, “A hundred thousand pounds? You fucking idiot! I’m not going to pay some French actress a hundred thousand pounds.” And the next thing I know he’s out from behind his desk. He was a short but powerfully built man. I could see he was coming right for me. I thought he might hit me. I ran out of his office. I didn’t want to get into a fistfight with him because I thought he would probably kick the shit out of me. That’s the kind of guy that Saltzman was. I eventually made the deal for Françoise, for a hundred thousand pounds. He ended up paying it because I wasn’t going to budge after that.



One of my clients in London was Leslie Caron. She called me and said, “Listen, I’ve been invited to the Moscow Film Festival.” They were going to be showing *The L-Shaped Room*. She said, “I don’t want to go there on my own. Would you come with me as my escort?” And I said, “Yes! Sure.” So we go to Moscow. They put us up in the biggest and most splendid hotel you can imagine, but of course every room was bugged. There were dozens of people in the corridor posing as maids. So you were aware of the fact that everything you said was being recorded. At the Writer’s Club in Moscow I met a Russian director called Mikhail Kalatozov. Yes! *The Cranes Are Flying*. I’d seen that film. I’d never seen a film like it. The use of the camera. I didn’t know how he did it. It was magic. We talked to him at the dinner. He said, “I want to show you a film that I’ve made. I can’t get it released. I’m going to arrange a screening for you at Mosfilm, at the studio.” So Leslie and I went, and he showed us *Soy Cuba, I am Cuba*. And I thought, “Wow! What a movie!” I’d never seen camera work like that. It was extraordinary. You didn’t know how he actually achieved the stuff. He had cameras on wires going between buildings. His technique was just astounding. I said, “I don’t know what I can do for you, but I’ll try.” I spoke to people when I get back to London, but nobody was really interested, so I couldn’t help him. But the film eventually got released, and it’s one of the seminal movies in movie history.



Marianne Faithful had just done her first song, “As Tears Go By.” I saw this layout in *Vogue* magazine with her and thought, “Wow! She might have potential in film and television.” Really interesting, beautiful, extraordinary looking young woman. Obviously she’s got talent. I went over and met her in Marylebone Road, in one of the mansion blocks. A big mansion flat with high ceilings, a nice roomy place. We were

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sitting in the living room chatting about films and her and this and that, and then I saw some figure in the kitchen, darting back and forth. I said, “Who is that?” She said, “That’s Mick. Hey Mick, come on out.” And he came out. The reason why she had arranged to meet me was because he wanted to meet me. I said, “I’d like to represent you as an actor, but also the Stones, maybe for film and television. It might be interesting for you guys.”

They had a manager, a terrible man, Allen Klein, one of the biggest crooks in the business, without a doubt. His word was not his bond, let’s put it that way. They didn’t tell him about it. They said, “OK fine. This is just us. Don’t worry about Allen.” So I never dealt with him, I always dealt directly with Mick. So that’s how I began representing The Rolling Stones. And then the first thing is this producer talking to me about possibly the Stones for this picture. He was trying to get together with Jean-Luc Godard. At that point it was called *One Plus One*. Ian Quarrier was the guy’s name. His partner was Michael Pearson, the heir to the Pearson fortune, the *Financial Times* and book publishing and banking. He had the money to make this film *One Plus One – Sympathy for the Devil* it was eventually called. So I made a deal for the Stones to appear in the film.

They didn’t pay that much attention to it, to be honest. Their participation in it was rather minor in some ways. It wasn’t the focus of the film. But they were glad to have done it. They loved the idea of making a film with Jean-Luc Godard. Who wouldn’t want to make a film with him? So they were very happy about that. It turned into this weird film about Black Power and various other things. It didn’t start that way, but from my perspective anything Godard wanted to do – fine.



That was the end of my CMA days. I told Freddie Fields and David Begleman I wanted to leave. “Fine, we’ll make the deal for *Performance*” – so they made a deal with Warner Bros.-Seven Arts, as it was called at that time. I never had to talk to anybody. They were good agents.

I represented Cammell, after he had made *Duffy*, a movie with James Coburn. It was Coburn who introduced me to Donald. I liked the script of *Duffy* a lot and offered to represent Donald. He didn’t have an agent. He told me that he told me he was working on an idea called *The Liars*. He wrote a brief treatment of *The Liars*. I read it and I thought it had potential, and I believed in Donald as a writer. I thought he was a really interesting character and an interesting writer, so I encouraged him to develop it, and he did. He said, “I’m developing this for Mick Jagger and I think maybe somebody like Marlon Brando.” Really! And I said, “Let’s see what it’s like, maybe I might want to produce it. I’d be interested in doing a film with Mick Jagger and Marlon Brando.” So Donald went away and he developed the treatment further. Then I got him some money to develop a first draft of *The Liars*, as it was called then. He came up with the first draft screenplay. I thought it had potential. It was interesting. He said, “Brando’s in town.” He was doing *A Countess from Hong Kong* or something like that. He said, “I’ve got a mutual friend Christian Marquand.” I said, “I know Christian as well. Let him set up a meeting for us with Marlon.” Brando had an apartment in Mayfair. Next thing I know

we're meeting with Brando. We go over to him. Brando is in bed, lounging around in the middle of the day. Christian Marquand is there, and Donald and myself. We talked to Marlon for I don't know three or four hours. We're schmoozing and talking and it all looks like it might happen. My God, it's extraordinary! I said, "I'm going to produce this film."

As it turned out it wasn't going to be Marlon Brando because he changed his mind. He was off doing something else. I don't think he believed that we were going to get the film made, so he went off and did something else. Donald and I talked about it, and we said, "Let's forget Brando because we're not going to get him. Let's be more realistic as to who we think might be possible to replace him." We talked about various people, amongst them James Fox. I really liked him from *The Servant*, but I wasn't sure whether he could transform himself into this character of Chaz. But he's a good actor, so let's see what he can do. At that point I'm about ready to leave CMA. I'm about to tell them I want to leave. We present the package to Warner Bros. and they go for it with James Fox.

Donald had suggested to me that we should meet with Nicolas Roeg. I knew him from around London. Here's Donald – he's written one script that was made, the first script he ever wrote was made. Here is Nic Roeg, who's a brilliant, brilliant cinematographer – intelligent, intellectual, a thoughtful but rooted person, very much part of the mainstream, although he too is an outsider within the mainstream. A suit and tie, a proper cinematographer. That's the way British cinematographers looked in those days. They came to the set in a suit and tie because they may have been below-the-line but they had achieved a certain social status within the film industry so that they identified with the director and the writer and the designer rather than with the below-the-line crew. It was about status, part of the British class system. I thought, "This is really interesting, the idea of combining this background that Nic Roeg had and his experience, what he could bring to the partnership with Donald." I believed in the potential of that, so that's how we presented it to Warner Bros. – "co-directed by." They were very nervous about that. Yes, there had been in the history of cinema co-directing situations where people co-directed in partnership, but not many. It wasn't part of the tradition, certainly not of mainstream Hollywood, and so they reluctantly accepted it. They were very suspicious of it. They didn't trust the idea of co-direction, particularly with Cammell and Roeg – lacking predictability. But that was the only way they could get the project and they wanted the project. They wanted to make this. They saw this as a crime thriller. The element of Mick Jagger was exciting to them. They thought, "He's the youth market."

If it wasn't for *Performance* I wouldn't have left being an agent to produce something. It was just something that I responded to. I thought Mick was an amazing performer – he still is. I saw him about a year ago in Hamburg and I thought, "My fucking God! How can he do it! He's only nine years younger than I am." He was an amazing performer. I love the Stones anyways – I was a Stones person rather than a Beatles person. So having him and believing in Donald and Nick, it was something exciting. We wanted to do something unusual, different. The influence of the whole

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French New Wave was very powerful with Cammell and Roeg. I subscribed to it. I thought that some miraculous stuff was coming out of it. Alain Resnais was another one who I thought was extraordinary. All of that made me feel, “Yes, I want to make the movie to be a producer” because it was *Performance*. It wasn’t, “Oh, I want to become a producer.” I wasn’t thinking that way.

In a way we were experimenting. I had never produced a film. I didn’t know what producing was. Yes, I knew you had to get the money together, then a production manager supervised the production. Donald had never directed and Nic hadn’t directed before, though he had worked with wonderful directors. So in a way we were experimenting, both professionally and personally. It was a journey for the three of us in a way. And for Mick as well. He was excited about it. He felt challenged by it. It was exciting for him. He was with a group of people he liked and respected. He was very close to Donald. A great journey. It was ambitious. We wanted to try and do something ambitious. You’ve got to remember it was 1968, it’s the sixties. Anybody can do anything! “Yes, I can produce a film!” “I can direct a movie!” “I can take a photograph!” Poets and writers came together in London. It was this mixing of the arts and culture. Everybody was feeding on it.

There was a lot of pressure coming from the studio even before we got halfway through the movie. In one of the sequences from the early part of the film, the thing that really threw Warner Bros. off was some pretty violent material and some very explicit sexual material. We used a small lab that Nic had worked with called Humphrey’s, which was based in Soho. I got a call one day. “Mr. Lieberman, come down to the lab as quickly as possible.” What the fuck is going on? I got down to the lab and they said, “We can’t process this stuff. We have to destroy what we’ve processed.” I said, “What are you talking about.” They said, “This is pornographic in our minds and we have consulted with our solicitor, and if we reproduce what could be considered to be pornographic material we could be prosecuted as a company, as the laboratory.” I said, “I don’t understand what you’re talking about. We’re not making a pornographic film. This isn’t pornographic.” He said, “Well, our solicitors have been consulted and they feel there is a chance that it could be considered so. Not only are we not going to process this scene, we are going to destroy what we have processed, and we want you to witness it.” I’d never seen anything like it. They got a hammer and a chisel and cut down the center of the film. They made sure the film print had been completely destroyed. I had to witness this. Then they said, “Now you can take your film. You should transfer it to another lab.” I got hold of Nic on the set and said, “Jesus, we’re in trouble. We haven’t got a lab anymore. They destroyed the print – not the negative but the print rushes. They don’t want to process the film anymore.” Nic says, “Don’t worry Sandy,” and he called a very nice guy at Technicolor, Les Austinelli, who was the head grader and had become the contact person for the industry. Les got all of the rushes, all the negative, everything moved over to Technicolor, and we finished the processing at Technicolor. But that shook Warner Bros. It had never happened to them before that a laboratory said, “We’re not going to process it.” Once again, we’re thinking, “What the

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hell are we into? What is this creepy movie that's being made in our name?" So those were some of the production problems on the making of the film.

Ultimately, I think we were four or five days over schedule and a very modest amount of money over budget. The whole film cost less than a million dollars. It wasn't as if it was a runaway production at all, but that didn't matter. Warner Bros. just didn't have any confidence in the film. I went to them and said, "Let's finish it. Let's complete it and then make a judgement as to whether or not you're doing to release the film. All this money invested. Finish the film at least." If they don't like it – fine, but at least they have a product. So they agreed to complete the movie, and when they completed it, they just sat on it.

The film had been locked in the vault by Warner Bros. They had no plans to release the movie. There was a change of management at Warner Bros. The company had been bought by Eliot Hyman. He sold it on to Steve Ross, and he brought in John Calley, who I knew. John Calley was a very high-profile, very eccentric producer, studio executive. He had started with Martin Ransohoff in the commercials business, then he moved into filmmaking. He was obsessive about the stock market. He would spend more time looking at the Dow Jones than he did at the scripts. Steve Ross had brought in Fred Weintraub, who had owned a nightclub in New York and had also, because of his involvement in the music business, had been one of the producers on *Woodstock*.

We got the call that Fred Weintraub was very enthusiastic about *Performance* and wanted it released, but he and Calley had ideas about what they wanted to do with the film, so I went out to Los Angeles with Donald Cammell. Nic Roeg was off making his film in Australia, *Walkabout*. John said, "We want you to cut the movie. We want to bring Mick Jagger earlier into the film." The beginning of the movie was an examination of what organised crime was like in England at that time, and there was a much longer section of that aspect of the film, looking at James Fox and the homosexuality of organised crime in London, through the Kray Brothers. He said, "You've got to cut that and bring Mick Jagger earlier into the film. And there's too much violence and sex in the beginning as well. You've got to cut that."

Our number one priority was getting the film released. So I said, "Donald, I've got to leave you in L.A. because I've got to get back. I'm doing *Mary Queen of Scots* for Universal with Sandy Mackendrick. I'm going to see that everything is set up for the cutting room – the material, all that. You'll get an editor to work with in L.A., and then I've got to go back." That's what I did. We were working in a cutting room side by side with *Woodstock*. They were in one cutting room, we were in another cutting room at Warner Bros. side by side. So Donald re-cut the movie with the editor. He called me and said, "Warners wants to preview the movie in L.A. They want you to come out for the preview." I said, "OK, fine."

The first thing I did when I got out to L.A. was to see how the film had been re-cut. I was more upset than Donald actually, at the truncation of the beginning of the movie. There was a good ten minutes cut out of the film, and they decided to re-voice one of the actors – John Binden, and somebody else as well, because they said you couldn't understand the accents. So they organised a preview in Santa Monica. In those days, what you did was preview your film alongside the film that had been playing in

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the cinema. It was the John Schlesinger film *Midnight Cowboy*, which had already been playing for three months. So this was in a second-run cinema in Santa Monica. The audience that was coming in to see *Midnight Cowboy* were older people. They had heard about it. This wasn't a young audience. And so we previewed it for that audience. There at the preview was Ted Ashley, the chairman of Warner Bros., John Calley, a wonderful guy in charge of publicity, and Dr. Aaron Stern. Dr. Stern was in charge of the rating board for the Motion Picture Association. They were the ones that gave ratings to films. There was an agreement between the MPAA, the rating board, and the major studios that the major studios would not distribute X-rated movies because they were considered to be pornographic. It wasn't about violence, it was about pornography. That shows you the US mentality. They were more concerned with sex than with violence.

So the film starts. Donald and I are sitting there. I'm sitting next to the Warner publicity guy. All of a sudden people are talking in the audience, and the next thing I know somebody jumps up. "This is a piece of shit! I want my money back." And then all of a sudden a hundred people say, "Hey! This is terrible!" We stop the movie, give the money back to those people who want it, and then re-start the film again, after about twenty minutes – not from the beginning but from the point where we stopped the film. We finish the screening and the lights come up. There were only about seventy-five or eighty people left in the cinema. I thought, "Oh God, this is it! It's over!" Nobody from Warner Bros. wanted to talk to us. Ted Ashley was off somewhere else and Calley was off somewhere else. The guy from Warner publicity said, "Just be calm. Don't say anything. Calm down. We'll have a meeting tomorrow morning in John Calley's office." So Donald and I come to the meeting in Calley's office, and they say, "I don't know if we're going to be able to release this. Stern is insisting that it get an X rating. What are we going to do about it?" We had already cut the film. We had already cut ten minutes out of it, in terms of the violence and some of the sex. Fred Weintraub said, "Hey, let's release it as it is. Maybe we can take the Warner Bros. name off the film. You know... the X rating." Then there was a discussion about doing that, but they were worried that word would get out that Warner Bros. was really distributing the film and had taken their name off it, so Weintraub convinced them. He got a great advertising guy in New York – Ken Duskin was his name, from one of the big agencies. They came up with a campaign that emphasised the disagreement between the filmmakers and Warner Bros. "Who's right? Warner Bros. or Mick Jagger? Mick Jagger believes that this is a great film. Why don't you come and see it." The audience can decide who is right and who is wrong. That's how the film got released, minus ten minutes, cut from the beginning of the movie. We could never find the cut material from Technicolor. Apparently they had junked it. They didn't even want to keep it. They junked it.

I tried to interest some of the other distributors. There was a distributor in New York that I knew quite well, Don Rugoff, and one or two independent distributors, and one or two others, and I talked to them about the film. I had a little bits and pieces to show them. They were interested in the movie, but Warner said, "We're not selling the film. This is it." It's just frozen for the time being.

Some of the material that Nic shot was shot in 16mm. He wanted to shoot it himself. He didn't want anybody else on the set from the crew because it was all the

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nude stuff between Mick Jagger and Anita Pallenberg and the young French actress Michèle Breton. So that was shot on 16mm, and there were some good shots of Mick's dick and various other bits and pieces of a sexual nature. I had that on 16mm. I never gave it to Warner Bros. Jim Haynes, who was a friend of mine, organised something called the Wet Dream Film Festival in Amsterdam. There were some wonderful pornographic movies there. Sex with animals and God knows what else. What I gave him to show were the out-takes of *Performance*, on 16mm. That was the only award that *Performance* ever won was from the Wet Dream Film Festival. I'm very proud of it.



At that point I thought what the hell is going to happen to me as a producer? My first film is shut down. My second film *Mary Queen of Scots*, Sandy Mackendrick directing, Mia Farrow and Oliver Reed starring. We're ready to start the movie. We're building sets. Then Lew Wasserman has a heart attack and is incapacitated. Temporarily a man called Berle Adams is put in charge of Universal Pictures. He closes everything down in Europe, cancels all the films that are being done by Jay, including *Mary Queen of Scots*. So that's the point that I find myself at in 1969.

I was feeling adrift. I began to lose confidence in myself as a producer. I'm thinking, "I made a terrible mistake." I was very successful as an agent. What is this producing crap? You've gone from being autonomous and powerful into being helpless and frustrated and stymied. I really wasn't sure what the hell I was going to do at that point.



They hadn't toured in a long time and there was a lot of friction within the group. I had just put together this deal for Barbra Streisand and to do special for Lew Grade at ITV. I'm sure I could do the same thing for the Stones. They said "Who would we do it with?" I said, "We'll do it with Lew Grade." "We don't want to work with him. We'll put up the money ourselves." I said, "Really? You want to do that. You're sure?" They said, "Yes, we'll do it ourselves, because we want to control it." Mick said, "I want to be one of producers." I said, "OK fine. I'll executive produce and it can be a Stones production." We got Michael Lindsay-Hogg who had done some music videos with them and put it together. It was amazing. Whoever we asked to participate jumped at the chance. The super group was Eric Clapton, John Lennon, Yoko Ono and Keith Richards.

It was great. We had a fantastic time, but at the end of it Brian Jones had died so they didn't want to release a movie with somebody who was no longer with the Stones, and they didn't like their performance in it. So that was locked away for twenty years or so.



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Si Litvinoff was an extremely successful New York lawyer, and decided he wanted to become a producer. One of the people that he decided he wanted to work with was Nic Roeg. Nic came up with the idea of *Walkabout*. Si said, "I'd like to produce that for you." I got to know Si quite well. Along the way he optioned the rights to Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* and came to me and said, "I want to do this." I read it and said, "Well, it could be problematic." I'm not sure how it came about, but there was a photographer that I was very good friends with – his name was Michael Cooper. He photographed and helped create the cover for *Sgt. Pepper*. He had read *A Clockwork Orange* as well and approached me and said, "There's this book I want to do." I said, "I've read it, but it's owned by Si Litvinoff." So I went to Si and said, "Michael Cooper is an extraordinarily talented photographer, and he wants this as his first film. I'm not really a hundred percent sure whether he can pull it off or not." Michael started to write the screenplay and gave the book to Mike Jagger, and Mick said, "I'd love to do it, yes." We started to put together a proposal. Michael had done a short film which was very good and he started to write the script and even started to look for locations, and we came up with a proposal. But, of course, by that point Kubrick decided that he wanted to do *A Clockwork Orange*.

There are going to be more things that you weren't able to do that you were able to do. That's the nature of this industry. You write, you develop, you hope it's going to be made – it doesn't get made. Sometimes twenty years later it gets made. You never know.



All of a sudden as a producer, I felt I had no power, no authority. I was pretty disillusioned about the film business at that point, and so when David Puttnam approached me about a partnership, saying that he wanted to get into the film industry, he wanted to become a producer, he's coming from advertising, I thought about it long and hard. I'd known him before as a photographers' agent. Here was somebody who had no connection with films whatsoever, but what he did have for me an enthusiasm and energy, and perhaps a vision that would compliment my feelings – depressed and helpless – as a producer. Maybe a new burst of energy would come through the relationship. And that was the beginning of the partnership. It took me a year or so into the company to find my feet and to regain my confidence and belief that I had something offer as a producer.

I liked David. He had an energy about him. Very unlike most of the Brits, he was very proactive, ambitious. Blind ambition. So when he approached me I thought, "Jesus Christ... I don't know what the fuck I'm doing. *Performance... Mary Queen of Scots...*" I had another project called *The Beard*, based on a play by Michael McClure. We were going to do it with Mick and Donald was going to direct it. It was the story of Billy the Kid and Jean Harlow. And all of these things began to all fall apart and fade away. David came along and I said, "Why not? What have I got to lose? Let's form a partnership." It was very good because he was coming into it fresh, all the ambition in the world, the energy, and I was feeling disillusioned. So it worked really well. It worked brilliantly for six or seven years.

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I was thinking in a lateral way about what was happening within the entertainment industry, and what was just bubbling up at that point – 1970 – was the home entertainment business. It was something that people were talking about. I said, “David, the movie business – I don’t know where it’s going. I think it’s going to be a rocky road ahead for me as a producer, so I like the idea of trying to do something in the home video market.” He said, “Fantastic! I agree with you.” We both had the same sort of perspective about it, so we formed a company called Visual Program Systems. David had a very good connection with Jocelyn Stevens. A really cool guy. British, upper class, super intelligent and super well connected. We approached Jocelyn Stevens and he said, “I like you guys and your idea. It sounds great.” He was also the editor or the publisher of *Queen* magazine. He was an entrepreneur. He said, “I’ll introduce you to Evelyn de Rothschild.” I said, “I can’t imagine de Rothschild wanting to get involved in this.” But he set up the meeting for David and myself. We met with Evelyn de Rothschild. He said, “I like the idea of the company, and I’m going to assign somebody from NM Rothschild & Sons to work with you and put together a business plan.” At the core of it was going to be VPS and Goodtimes, which was the production company, so that what we could do was use Goodtimes to produce movies and VPS to be our entry into the home video market.



Even though we had Rothschild as our backers, we knew we couldn’t buy a library from the major studios. You might be able to licence films from them for the home entertainment market. So what we began to do was look and see which libraries might be available to either buy or represent in this area.

I had a good friend, Jerry Epstein, who had worked for Charlie Chaplin as his assistant for twenty years. He did everything for Chaplin, including liaise between Chaplin’s children and Chaplin. Chalin had a very contentious relationship with some of his children, in particular Sidney Chaplin, his son. Sidney was from his first wife, and Chaplin apparently detested his first wife. Charlie had decided, through great pressure, that in order to get rid of Sidney and his continual need for money that he would allow him to make a little money and sell the rights for the Chaplin library. He and Jerry would be responsible for doing that. So Jerry came to me and said, “Look, we’ve got this situation with Charlie, Sidney and myself. You know about how to sell a film, and this and that. Would you be interested in representing us and helping us put together a package.” I said, “Yes, I would.”

I must have worked for six or seven months putting together a proposal of how the library could be exploited, what we would have to do to protect the copyright because some of the short films had gone out of copyright. You had to add music. I put it out there to several major corporations, including Time Life. Time Life had started a special film division. They were really anxious to get into film. They too saw the home video market. So I put the proposal to Time Life. They went for it. I put an offer on the table, which I thought was a good starting negotiating point. I said to Sidney and Jerry,

“OK, we’ve got to give this proposal to Chaplin now, because he has the say. He’s the one who’s going to have to sign the contract. He’s going to have to sign off on it. It’s no good you liking the deal – he has to go for it.”

We organised a meeting in Switzerland in Vevey, where Chaplin lived. It was Chaplin’s wife who was really pushing it and felt sorry for Sidney because he wasn’t going to get anything from Charlie. I lay out this proposal to everybody at the table, and Sidney starts to say something to Charlie. I don’t remember what it was, but he exploded. He said, “You’re always trying to get money out of me! That’s all you want from me – the money! You’re not really my son! I’m sick and tired of it! I don’t care how much money is or what the offer is. Get out of my house! Out! Get out!”

I’m sitting there. My mouth is hanging open. I’m thinking two things: poor Sidney, and I’ve done all this work. I’ve got this offer from Time Life. They’re waiting for the confirmation. This is the launch of VPS. Sidney grabs me. He says, “Come out into the hall for a minute. I haven’t got money to get a ticket back to Paris. Loan me a couple of hundred pounds, will you?” I gave him whatever I had. I had maybe a couple of hundred pounds on me. I gave it to him to try and get a ticket, then I went back in. Chaplin says, “What do you want? It’s all finished. I don’t care how much the deal is.”

One of the people who I had approached for the Latin American rights was a man who called Mo Rothman, who had been head of foreign sales at Columbia Pictures in Latin America. He was trying to buy the Latin American rights. I got a call from him when I got back to London. I said, “I’m sorry Mo, but the deal is off. Chaplin has changed his mind. He doesn’t want the money. He doesn’t want the deal. He doesn’t want anything to do with Sidney.” I said, “If you really are that interested in the deal, call Chaplin directly and see whether you can make a deal.” He eventually did. He eventually got the rights to sell the Chaplin Library, and made millions out of it.

Time Life were disappointed, but they liked what I had done, putting together a deal, the potential of it. They realised how valuable the libraries were, so they said, “We would like to hire you as a consultant.” So I had a consultancy from Time Life Film. I got a consultancy from CBS – they had their own VHS venture into home video. They hired us as consultants as well, in the UK. I made approaches to various other potential libraries and things like that. By then, the financing and partnership with Rothschild was in place. The three partners were NM Rothschild, Sotheby’s – Sotheby’s Parke-Bernet, but now it’s just Sotheby’s – and W.H. Smith, which was a big distributor of newspapers and various other business ventures. So they came in to VPS/Goodtimes as the partners. Having them, NM Rothschild, Sotheby’s and W.H. Smith, as partners gave us huge clout and money.

One of the projects that we thought would be interesting would be with Kenneth Clarke. Kenneth Clarke had just had a gigantic success with *Civilisation*, so we thought, “Let’s see if we can get another series with Kenneth Clarke.” He came up with an idea and we did a twelve-part series with him at *Reader’s Digest*.

We were doing interesting stuff. At the same time we were a distribution company. We distributed one of the Ken Russell films. I got Emile de Antonio’s *Rush to Judgement* and Bill Klein’s films and other strange movies. We were just distributing, we were producing, we were working in home video. We were doing everything.

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What I learned was that it's better to be a bit late than a bit early. That's what Rothschild said finally. "You guys are too early for the home video. The wave is just forming. You're not going to get enough critical mass."

There were going to be biographical films. We were going to do series about women photographers, women explorers. The ideas and concepts at that point were numerous. But it was all too early. It wasn't the right moment for it in a way. CBS was dipping its toe into the water. AFCO was dipping its toe into the water. Time Life too. But they hadn't taken the plunge. There wasn't the mass market of home video that had yet developed, that was yet to come a few years later. It was too early. We were diverted away from maintaining a powerful presence in that, trying to get some of these libraries, which were all available then. We approached BBC. We approached Rank and the libraries in Europe. We didn't even attempt to go to the major studios to get their rights. It wasn't the right moment for them. They wouldn't have given up any rights. We were diverted into cinema films to generate the cash flow.



Andrew Birkin was a young writer and had worked as an assistant to Stanley Kubrick. He came to David and myself with the *Playboy* interview with Albert Speer which had just been published and said, "This is amazing! You've got to read this." It was the first time anybody in this group of Third Reich leaders had actually spoken with any clarity about what had gone on and how it all began and happened. We read *Inside the Third Reich* written by Albert Speer, and we thought it was quite an extraordinary revelation about the Third Reich, the inner workings of Nazi Germany. We immediately contacted the German publisher and went to meet him in, I believe, Berlin. Of course many other people had approached him with the possibility of optioning the rights and turning it into a documentary. We wanted to turn it into a film, and he liked our proposal. He liked the fact that we were younger, of a different generation, and weren't coming with a lot of emotional baggage and intellectual baggage.

He introduced us to Speer. He organised the meeting. We went down with Andrew and had long conversations with him. We stayed at a nearby hotel overnight. We met the next day as well, and we came away with a relationship with Speer, and we came away with the publisher agreeing to negotiate an option for the film rights of *Inside the Third Reich*. It was pretty amazing for a small production company with very little money to be able to get something like this.

The next step was how we were going to develop it. Andrew would write a screenplay. I knew Stanley Kubrick and I knew his obsession and interest with Nazi Germany, so he was the first person that I approached about it. He was very flattered to have been asked but it wasn't for him at that particular time. He was involved with something else. The next person we spoke to about it was Nic Roeg, who loved the idea, the possibility of doing a film on the subject, but he went off to do something else, and nothing happened. We knew that what we wanted to do was to find a partner to develop the screenplay with, and we went to Paramount Pictures. They were excited about it, so we ended up making a deal to develop the screenplay and have them pay for the development of the screenplay. When we delivered the screenplay to Paramount, their

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primary objection – there was a question of guilt. He had to accept his participation in the extermination of Jews and various other minorities that they eliminated in Germany and throughout Eastern Europe. That wasn't in the book. He never admitted his guilt in terms of participating in the extermination and in the concentration camps. So this was a point of contention between Paramount and ourselves.

Ultimately, we decided we couldn't move ahead with Paramount. We lost the option on the book because we had spent eighteen months developing it and the publisher didn't want to renew the option with us because he didn't think we were going to get the film made.



There are two industries in Hollywood. There's a production industry that makes films and there's a development industry that develops films, most of which are never made. The development industry was as big or bigger than the production industry in a way. Thousands of scripts were developed that were never made. That created a bureaucracy within the studio system – the development department. You had a group of development executives, maybe a dozen from each studio. You had the story department. Any film, any idea, book, magazine article, pitch – whatever – that was submitted to the studio was immediately sent to the story department where a synopsis was done of the idea or the book or script, and an evaluation by a reader was made. Is this a good project? Is this a bad project? What are the things you have to do to make it better? The development of these projects became this motherload of people, and the compunction of having to input and make a contribution, whether it was needed or not. Sometimes it can be a very good thing because it focuses the filmmaker. It makes them go back and re-think and hone their ideas. But many times it can be a destructive thing, where it neutralises the idea the potential of challenging ideas and projects, and waters them down. *Inside the Third Reich* was one of those scripts that slipped into the development industry rather than the production industry. It wasn't a shock that Paramount decided not to make it – at least not for me.

I was so emotionally involved in getting this film made that I had to find another way to tell the story. We had done a film called *Brother, Can You Spare A Dime?* with Philippe Mora. We decided to tell the story of the lead up to the Great Depression through James Cagney's various characters in different feature films. We did an enormous research job in terms of locating films with Cagney, archive material which had never been seen before, and put it all together and called it *Brother, Can You Spare A Dime?*, with a great soundtrack. An amazing compilation film, found footage film, however you wanted to describe it – it has new terms now. We were very, very happy with the film and it was successful.

What I wanted to do was to make two films. By that point we had involved a researcher and young filmmaker by the name of Lutz Becker, who I met through a wonderful educator and documentary maker Thorold Dickinson at the Slade. I read about what he was doing at the Slade in terms of working with compilation films and archive material.

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I had seen a film called *Symphony of a City*, a German compilation film without any narration, soundtrack only. I thought that would be an amazing way to make the film. The images will tell the story. We developed it with Philippe and Lutz. We decided that we would make *Double Headed Eagle*, which was the early days of Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist movement, and then *Swastika*, which would lead us up to the beginning of World War II. They were complimentary to each other.

So we went about researching it, and we had an incredible stroke of good luck. Lutz Becker had heard about the existence of the Hitler/Eva Braun home movies, and he managed to find them at the National Archives. There was a U.S. Army raiding party of Obersalzberg and they took everything they found there to Washington, in terms of film material, photographs, archive stuff. He found the home movies wound into other films, seemingly trying to hide it in some way, or disguise it. So we used that as the core of *Swastika* and then surrounded it with all the other archive material we could find.

Nobody had seen Hitler in colour before. Nobody had seen him as a human being before, larking about on his balcony at Obersalzberg. Lutz Becker had done lip reading because there was no sound to go with the home movies, and then we had them dubbed.

They were making some documentaries. The BBC was doing a huge series about World War II. They were doing the conventional documentary film with a narration and interviews and things of that sort. Nothing like what we were doing had ever been done before about this subject.

We completed the film. It took us a year to do. I showed it to Alexander Walker, a British critic, the film critic for the *Evening Standard* and various other publications. A highly respected critic. He also worked for the Cannes Film Festival, scouting films, British films, that might be suitable for the festival. He saw the film at a screening that I invited him to, together with a man called Mo Rothman, who I mentioned earlier was involved with obtaining the Charlie Chaplin Library. He came with his wife, who was German, and they saw the film along with Walker at the Curzon cinema in Mayfair, and they thought it was extraordinary. Mo wanted to invest in the film. He wanted to get the sales rights to it and Walker wanted to show it to the Cannes Film Festival, which he did. They decided to invite it to the film festival – not in competition, but it would be screened at the main Palais at night, in effect making it official but not in competition. They hadn't shown many documentaries at Cannes, it was almost all fiction. It was unusual to get a documentary invited to screen in the evening at the Grand Palais. Mo immediately made a huge deal with a man called Preben Philipsen in Denmark, who was going to buy a huge chunk of the rights. We had a million dollar deal in place for the documentary. It was extraordinary. We thought, "My God, this is it!" We're at the Cannes Film Festival, we made a million dollar deal through Rothman for selling the rights. There was a German distributor who bought the German rights from Rothman. The money was rolling in and everybody was excited about it.

I showed it to one person here in London, Nat Cohen, who was a British distributor. I thought he would be a good distribute the film. And he said, "I think it's too dangerous. I couldn't show a film like this here." That was the first negative thing that emerged about the film. "Too dangerous." I thought he was just conservative and didn't see the potential in it.

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At that point we were very close to Cannes and we didn't want to show it to any other people. We had to get the film subtitled. It was a little complicated because there was both English and German, which then had to be subtitled in French. The subtitler was a very strange guy who had a film of his in the festival, and in some way he made it difficult to get the subtitled version of it. Strange little complications were beginning to arise. Prior to the screening we had created a poster for *Swastika*. We put the posters up around Cannes, which was normal, that's what all the distributors did. What we discovered at the end of the day was that they had all been ripped down.

The next evening was the screening. Absolutely full, which was unusual – why were people coming to see a documentary at the festival? But it was full. We started the film, and literally within fifteen or twenty minutes of the beginning of the film people got up and started to yell, “Stop this film!” There was such a disturbance that they had to stop the film. People left, people were shouting, people were arguing – “No, let it go on!”

What we discovered was that we didn't understand the power of the film. There was no narration. Nobody was saying that Hitler was a terrible man, Hitler was a criminal. Audiences really needed commentary to tell them how to feel about the film, about Hitler, to reinforce their hatred of Hitler, and that wasn't the film that we made. The film was conceived of to look at as if somebody had been dropped into Germany in 1932. We were seeing it through the perspective of how the Germans saw Adolf Hitler and the rise of the Third Reich. People misinterpreted it because there was no commentary saying all of this was terrible and bad. People thought it was endorsing the Third Reich and being complimentary to Hitler. This is how sensitive the issue was. In 1973 we thought by now people had somehow a different perspective, that they didn't need to be told Hitler was evil incarnate.

We limped through the rest of the film and managed to complete the screening, but at the end of it all the people who wanted to distribute the film, the people who had invested in the film, didn't want anything to do with it. It was completely shunned by everybody. It wasn't going to be distributed in Germany. Nobody would touch it. The Danish distributor said he didn't want the film, so everything began to fall apart. We thought, “What the hell is going on? This is extraordinary. We can't get this film shown.” We had already collected a big chunk of money from the Danish distributor. We couldn't get the money out of the German distributor, and so this million dollars in advances began to sort of fade away. In effect the film disappeared for years.



Nat Cohn ran ABPC – Associated British Picture Corporation – and he backed most of our films and distributed a lot of them. We made a science fiction film called *The Final Programme* written by Michael Moorcock. The film was released, and on the second day I get a call from Nat Cohen's office. “We're going to have change the title of the film.” I said, “The film's in release. How do you change the title of the film?” He said, “We're getting calls from the cinemas. The public thought the cinemas were closing down

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because on the marquee outside the cinema was “The Final Programme.” Funny how these things happen in the world of cinema. Anyway, Roger Corman, who was a good friend, bought the film for the United States and he changed the title as well to *The Last Man Left on Earth*.



Ken Russell was one of those filmmakers that I put into a special category of near genius. His work in television was extraordinary, ground breaking, original filmmaking and storytelling. He also brought an element of that to cinema films as well, and so I wanted to make some films with Ken Russell. It was as simple as that, and David shared my enthusiasm. We came to an agreement with Ken to make three films all based on musical personalities. The first one was *Mahler*. We even had some problems with a Jewish response to the film. Mahler converted to Christianity in order to further his career, so that was somewhat controversial. A wonderful film. It was original but traditional at the same time, in terms of being accessible to an audience.

Like a lot of directors, Ken Russell had a hatred of the film industry, a hatred of authority. They couldn't stand being told or even suggested what they might do with something. They reject authority completely. Ken was one of those people.

Mahler was a small, independent film. *Lisztomania* was a more expensive film. It was a Warner Bros. movie. Ken felt maybe his autonomy might be questioned or challenged, and he decided to go so far over the top in terms of how he would interpret Liszt, who was a pop star of his generation. He decided he was going to cast Roger Daltrey as Franz Liszt. Fine, OK. We'll take a chance on that.

It was somewhat grotesque in a way, so over the top and overblown. Elements of brilliance in it without any doubt, but nonetheless not a satisfying film and the distributor wasn't really interested in the film once it was completed. There was really a negative response to the movie, and at that point we thought, “What are you going to do with Gershwin?” – because that was to be the third film in the trilogy. “How are you going to treat him?” In discussing the treatment with Russell, we thought, “Oh my God, we are going to have a problem with Gershwin and Russell,” and so we decided two films with Ken was enough and we abandoned Gershwin. We decided not to do it.



1976. Russ Regan, who was in charge of 20th Century Fox music, came up with an idea of using a compilation of the best of the Beatles songs. I don't know where it came from, but he came up with the title *All This and World War II*. He got Tina Turner, Peter Gabriel – a dozen really top singers. They recorded Beatles songs, and he came up an idea of how to promote it, which was to create a film. The reason they made the film was to promote the album, so he came to me – he'd seen *Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?* “You know how to use archive film. I want to make an archive film: World War

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II footage to go with Beatles songs.” My first reaction was, “What does World War II have to do with the Beatles?” “Don’t worry about that. I just want to make the film. I want to make an archive film, like you did with *Brother, Can You Spare A Dime?*” So I said, “How much are you going to pay me?” I needed the money at the time. We agreed on a fee – I don’t remember what it was. \$75,000 or something like that. I went to Tony Palmer, who had made a series of films about classical composers, and also did a series about the Beatles for the BBC. I talked to him about it and he didn’t see the point of it, but he too wanted some money at the time. He had own post-production facilities, and I think it was draining him of money, so he said yes, he would do it. I got a very good editor, an American editor that I’d worked with before, Susan Winslow, to start the research and looking through the archives. I already knew a lot about the archives. Within six or eight weeks, Tony said, “I’ve got a go on one of my films for the BBC. I can’t do *All This and World War II.*” He pulled out, so I said to Susan, “OK, you direct it.” Anyway, we made the film. It was a bit of an embarrassment to me, because I thought it was a crazy idea. But Russ was very happy.



Bugsy Malone was a script that Alan Parker had written and developed with Peter Fetterman, who was an aspiring producer. He told me what the story was and I went to David and said, “I know you’re friends with Alan, you worked with him in advertising. Why don’t we get a shot at this film? It sounds really fun and interesting and different and original.” David contacted Alan and we got the project. He took it away from Peter Fetterman and gave it to us. But somewhere along the line, I’m not sure whether it was Alan or David, they came to me and said, “David and Alan Parker’s producing partner, Alan Marshall, are going to be the people responsible for the day-to-day producing of the film, and Alan feels uncomfortable that you’re going to be named as one of the producers of it.” I said, “Fine, don’t put my name on it as producer. It will be a Goodtimes production, that’s enough.” In effect I wasn’t named as the producer, but I certainly had a role in the production.

It was another film that we were doing. I was glad we were doing it. I don’t have that kind of ego in terms of the credit. I’m quite happy to work behind the scenes and do my work, my job as a producer or a studio executive. I’ve had a lot to do with a lot of the films that I’ve had no credit on. If you work for a studio, you don’t get a credit on a movie, not in those days certainly, and very rarely these days as well if you’re working for a studio. You don’t get the credit, but you have a lot of input in the film creatively. So it didn’t bother me. As I say, the company got a credit and it meant that we had another movie under our belt.

It did extremely well and is never off television. They developed a theatrical version of it. It has a continuing life. It’s one of those films that is continually before the public in one way or another.



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Hollywood now, when you look at the credits on films, it's not unusual to see ten or twelve producers, seven or eight or ten executive producers, co-producers, associate producers, production executives. Very hard to understand who really was responsible for the producing of a film. Some many people take credit for stuff that they really had very little involvement or practically no involvement in. People think they need that credit in order to be successful.

In the last four or five years, the producers have joined the Producers Guild of America, which they never belonged to before, because now, if you want a producing credit and you want the possibility of getting up – and everybody believes they might get up – and get an Oscar, you've got to have that credit and you've got to be in the Producers Guild of America. That's only recent. That's only in the past five or six years. Up until then there was an argument as to who was going to collect the Oscar. Who really is the producer? And even now it's more obscure because when you look at the credits of these films, everybody wants a credit. It always amazes me that wealthy people are very happy to invest their money and get a credit with practically no chance of ever recouping or making a profit. They like the association with the film industry. They like the idea that they'll be at the preview. They like the idea that their friends will see their name on the credit of the film, and they can dine out on that and talk about the movie and have a conversation about it. This still works – this attraction of wanting to be associated with the film industry, the business, the making of films. People still throw money at movies to get them made and have some association with them. It's fascinating.



David and I had very different sensibilities. We were interested in different things, different kinds of films, and filmmakers and storytelling. And that really, I think, helped the partnership flourish. David was much more interested in more conventional, mainstream storytelling than I was, but I recognised the commercial potential for some of the ideas that he was interested in and therefore could help facilitate them, to get the financing.

What we did in our partnership is find unusual ways of getting films made. When we made *That'll be the Day*, we got a lot of the money from a record company that sold directly to the public. They were called "rack jobbers." You would go into Sainsbury's or Tesco and there would be racks of VHS films and records for sale. We went to this record company and pitched the idea to them, and they partially financed *That'll be the Day*. That's how we got it made, and that's how we got the soundtrack put together. So we found different ways of financing and making movies at a time when the British film industry was on its ass, so to speak. The American companies had departed. They no longer saw Britain as a source of commercial filmmaking. Yes, they could appreciate the directors and writers and actors, but they didn't see it as a place to contribute to their mainstream ambitions, so they had left England. Financing dried up and we came in at that time and formed our partnership. In a way it was healthy for us because we had to

be more resourceful in terms of getting money to make the films and find different ways of financing our films.

The first head of the BFI Production Board was a man called John Terry. I had a good, strong relationship with him, and he backed a number of our films. The films of VPS/Goodtimes were successful. They returned the investment to the BFI and a profit, so they were very happy with VPS/Goodtimes. On the whole the films were successful inasmuch as they made money, they were received critically. The first film we made together was *S.W.A.L.K.* – “sealed with a loving kiss,” with Mark Lester. It became one of the top grossing films of the year in Japan. Mark became a teen idol in Japan.

We made *That'll Be The Day*, looking at the beginning of a budding career of a pop singer in England in the sixties. The second in the series was *Stardust*, directed by Michael Apted and starring David Essex, Ringo Starr, Keith Moon and various other people. It was the downward trajectory of a pop star. Columbia bought *Stardust* for distribution in the US and paid a lot of money for it.

The crossover was just beginning to happen, where documentaries got cinema releases. There was a synergy there, between theatrical-length documentaries and cinema. We did real *James Dean: The First American Teenager*, once again another compilation film. We made a documentary about the first BBC pop station, Radio One. We made a film with a pop group called Slade.

Pied Piper was David Puttnam's idea. We discussed potential directors and hit on the idea of Jacques Demy, who at that point had done *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* and *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*. We loved his work, and we thought that he would bring a really interesting sensibility to the film. We got Donovan to play the Pied Piper and do some of the music. Unfortunately it didn't quite work. We had very little money – it was a low-budget film. We had five hundred rats on a string and we would pull the string. Very primitive.

The last film we were working on together was based on a book by Ray Connolly. It was about a lesbian relationship. It was pretty early to do that, to think you were going to do that as a mainstream film. Michael Apted, a very successful and highly respected young filmmaker, was the director. He wanted to cast an unknown in the role opposite Bianca Jagger. We had a partnership on that film with *Playboy* magazine, which was venturing into films at the time. The other partner was EMI. The film was going to be shot almost entirely in Rome, which is where it was set.

As we got into the movie, Bianca Jagger, who was already married to Mick Jagger, decided she didn't want to do the nude scenes in the film. We were having real problems with her. We got around it by using a double for her in the nude scenes. At some point, about halfway through the film, it just became impossible to work with her. She refused to shoot certain scenes and was late coming to the set. A real nightmare, a pain in the ass. Michael Apted said, “I don't know if I can continue making the film.” We said, “Well, let's just shut down for a week.” At that point David said, “I don't want to make the film.” I said, “Well, I don't want to make the film either under these circumstances, but I'm not going to sit by and watch Bianca Jagger, who has a contract and is legally required to make the film – she had approved the screenplay – why should she walk away from the film and get away with it? We're going to sue her and we can collect money. We can get back the investment.” *Playboy* was quite happy to do it but

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EMI didn't want to do it and Rothschild, who was still our partner, said, "We don't want any part of this. This could be rebound against us as a bank. Let's just forget it. Write it off." David and I had a real disagreement over this. I wanted to pursue it. I spoke to legal advice and counsel. They said, "You have a really strong case." In the end, because of Rothschild and David not having his name tarnished with a lawsuit, we just dropped it and had to write off a huge chunk of money. The film was never finished.

At that point we looked very carefully at VPS/Goodtimes. We hadn't made any money out of the company. Everything that had come into the company had gone back to Rothschild and Sotheby's and W.H. Smith, and both of us were in debt. David had borrowed money from his father-in-law, who was a bank manager. At that point we decided to call it quits with VPS/Goodtimes. We were already disillusioned in terms the partnership. I was objecting to not pursuing Bianca Jagger in a lawsuit, I thought it was a terrible mistake. We weren't making the money that we thought we were going to make out of the company, so we decided to both go our own ways.



I love Terry Gilliam. He has an energy and an enthusiasm, and his mind is so open to images and input. He can absorb ideas. I knew that I wanted to work with him. We met and I said, "I know you involved in the Pythons and have co-directed with Terry Jones." He said, "I've got an idea that maybe we can do together."

It was made for less than a million dollars. \$750,000. One of the greatest compliments I had about the film – Stanley Kubrick read about the movie so I arranged to get him a print. He called and asked, "How much did you make the movie for?" I said, "\$750,000." He said, "You're lying. You couldn't have made it for that." I said, "Stanley, I'm going to send you the budget." I sent him the budget and we had a laugh about it. He had to admit that you could make that kind of film for that amount of money.

I got the film financed through several sources. Columbia Pictures took the U.K. rights. I got Michael White, a British theatrical impresario, but who had access to a lot of money, and he came with a partner, John Goldstone, a very nice man, so John became co-producer with me on the film. Michael "presented" the movie. I got all the money – no strings attached, no worry about people telling you about how to make it and what the script should be. We put together the most brilliant cast, I think the best British comedic and character actors.

I was totally open and honest with Terry. "This is how much we've got to make the film with. This is the budget. This is the number of weeks we're going to shoot." I went through the script with him. "Can you do these scenes in this number of days? We've got three days to do this sequence" – and this and that. In a way it eliminated any contention. He was brought into the production so that he understood how the money was going to be used, how much money we had, and the fact that we were agreed to make it for this budget at this price, and that was that. He was the most understanding and cooperative of directors, but at the same time the most original. I had a great time on the film. I had just come from this partnership and all of a sudden felt like I was a

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producer again. I helped with the special effects, I did the smoke. I was a part of the team as a producer. A really enjoyable film to make.



I'm a fairly alternative person in my tastes. I've been lucky to be able to work for mainstream companies. It isn't necessarily my instinct, the mainstream. I like the fringe and the underground. That's just my taste.

Jabberwocky was very successful. All the things you hope for as producer. Back on my feet again, doing what I what I want to do. And then I got a call, out of the blue.

I got a call from Alan Ladd. He said, "You know we're just finishing *Star Wars*, a science fiction film. There have been problems with the studio and the film. We're thinking maybe we might do some other films in England and Europe. Would you be interested in coming to work with me at Fox?" I didn't really know much about *Star Wars*. Nobody knew anything about *Star Wars*. They were just were nearing completion of shooting and it had gone over budget. The studio was pressuring Ladd. I said, "I've never worked for a studio before." I thought about it and thought, "Well, maybe this could be interesting. Maybe I can do something at Fox and contribute something. I could get them to do some interesting movies." I called Ladd back and said, "Yes, I think maybe – but I want to do more than just produce the films, because what I've seen is that you've got to be involved in the distribution, and I like what you are doing because you're the president of production and distribution. Although you're not the president of distribution, you have somebody who answers to you, so you have strong input into how the films are the distributed and marketed, and if I'm going to work for Fox in Europe, I would like some input in the marketing and distribution of the films." He said, "OK fine."

Ladd was a very special person. He had an instinct. If he believed in somebody, he would back them, and that was the reason he backed Lucas, after Lucas had been turned down – this is all well documented – everywhere. Ladd said, "Fine. I'll take a shot. I'll make it with you." There was a very sketchy script. You couldn't really imagine what *Star Wars* was going to be, so it was down to a personal belief by Ladd in a filmmaker. Understanding the sensibility of the filmmaker. That's the way he operated at Fox. It was an extraordinary experience working there.

At Fox at that time, on the first floor was mainly Alan Ladd and all the development people, the marketing and distribution people. On the second and I think the third floors, or maybe just the second floor, were all of the independent producers who were working for Fox: Mel Brooks, Paul Mazursky, David Giler, Walter Hill, Gordon Carroll, all of these people. I went to every single production company and said, "Hey, I'm the new guy in London. I'm looking for material. Have you got anything that can be done for Europe?" At the end of the week I went back to London. I got on a plane with a load of scripts – I must have had a dozen scripts – and I said, "OK, I'm going to start reading them on the way back." I think the second script I read was this thing called *Alien* I got from Giler, Hill and Carroll. I said, "Yes! Special effects. London. We can do it inexpensively. We've got the whole infrastructure because of our experience with *Star Wars*." I had seen the John Carpenter film *Dark Star* and

really liked it. One of the writers of *Alien*, Dan O'Bannon, had also written *Dark Star*. I said, "Yes! This is great! This is horror in space!"

I got on the phone as soon as I got back, and said to Laddie, "Hey, I've got the perfect project for us: *Alien*. You guys have been sitting on it for two or three years. You haven't made it. I got it from Walter, David and Gordon. Let's do this in London." Laddie said, "OK." He was that kind of guy. So I'm on the phone to Walter, Gordon and David. They're all excited. We talk about budgets and casting, maybe some script alterations that Walter wanted to do with the screenplay. Everything was moving ahead. We were going to do the film, Walter was going to direct. We started talking about casting ideas. Then all of a sudden I get a call from Gordon Carroll, the producer. He says, "Sorry to tell you this but Walter is off the project." "What do you mean? He's the director!" "No, he's got a film that he wrote – *Southern Comfort*. Walter has written it. He's going to direct it. He's going to do that film next. He's not going to do *Alien*." I said, "Well shit! The studio's on board. We're ready to launch this. What the hell are we going to do? I've got to come up with another director."

Ridley Scott had designed the furniture for my apartment when I got married. He designed the flat and the paint job – all modern. Then when I moved to Mount Street he did the same thing there. So I was good friends with Ridley, and he had done *The Duellists*. David Puttnam was one of the producers of that. I'd known his work as a commercials director, and then I saw *The Duellists* and I said, "He can make a movie." The movie was completely unsuccessful. It got bad reviews and did no business, but you could see there was a filmmaker there. I said to Laddie, "What about Ridley." He said, "Who?" I said, "Ridley Scott." I got him to see *The Duellists*, I sent out Ridley's reels, and meantime I'd sent Ridley the script of *Alien*. He said, "Yes, I'll got for it. I'd love to do it." I got Ridley to meet with Laddie and guys from the studio. "Fine. Go ahead. Do it with Ridley Scott." That was that. We didn't look back from there.

Fox had interests in Australia. They owned a distribution company there and New Zealand. Worldwide distribution – that's what the majors were all about. Worldwide distribution. They distributed in almost every country in the world, and if they didn't in some small territories, they controlled the independents who distributed the films. We had to inspect every cinema it was going to be released in. George Lucas and Gary Kurtz, the producer, were obsessed with finding the best cinemas with the best projection and the best sound. Dolby sound was still in a fairly early stage of its development, so what we had to do was to inspect all of the first-run cinemas in all of the territories to make sure that the project was good, to make sure that the screen was good, and to make sure that the sound, where possible, was going to be in Dolby stereo. Lucas was meticulous in wanting the best screens, the best sound system, the best for *Star Wars*.

All that was going on and *Alien* was shooting. Ridley was operating the camera a lot of the time. The design and concept and everything it was his because he came from being a production designer. We were going over budget. "I've got to get another shot." I said, "Ridley, you've got five days. We're wrapping at the end of the fifth day. That's it. You're out at the end of that." I got the guy who worked for me at Fox, Peter Beale, I said, "I want you to go the studio and at the end of the day on Friday at 6 o'clock you pull the power. That's it. That is the last day of shooting." And that's exactly what he

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did. The power was cut. Ridley gets on the phone. “What are you doing!” I said, “Ridley, I told you – that’s it.” We finished the movie slightly over budget. We had a brilliant editor, Terry Rawlings. Fantastic. He put the film together quickly. The first preview was in Dallas, Texas. It was at a big cinema – there must have been a thousand people. It was chaos. We had a couple of people faint at the chest busting sequence. We carried a woman out. The audience loved the film, despite all of that. We knew we had something really, really good and exciting, and the rest is history. A big, big success, on every level – critically and financially.



Fox provided me the opportunity to work with a lot of really interesting filmmakers that as a producer I couldn’t have done because I couldn’t have raise the money. You need somebody at this studios, the distribution companies, who shares your enthusiasm and your vision, and they are hard to find, because everybody is terrified in losing their job in Hollywood. Nobody wants to take a chance. They all need sure things, and when you do films with these kind of filmmakers you don’t know what they’re going to come up with. “Who do I want to work with at Fox?” That’s the way it happened for me. It wasn’t that I own a script and now I’m going to get a director. I always said, “Well, who do I want to work with, and let’s see what they’ve got and what they want to make.”



1900 was over four hours long and had already been released I think in Italy in two parts. We couldn’t figure out whether to do it as one film. We experimented. I think in the U.K. we did the whole film at one go and then we experimented elsewhere with part one/part two. Either way we couldn’t get an audience for the movie, no matter how much money we spent on marketing, distribution, publicity. We did our best.

Bertolucci was extremely appreciative of the amount of money we put into the marketing of *1900*, so I said to Laddie, “Why don’t we try to do a deal with Bertolucci for more films from him.” So we made a three-picture deal with him.

I said to Bernardo, “You’ve got to pitch the story to Laddie. He has to understand what you want to do.” Laddie came over and we sat down. It was the one of the best pitches I’d ever heard in my life. Bertolucci started talking about his family, about his upbringing, about alienation. It was all about him and his own emotion and feeling and how this was going to be shown through the characters. We were just sitting there, fascinated. He could have said anything, pitched any idea, but the way he did it – he made it so personal that we said, “Yes, OK fine. Let’s do it.”

La Luna was not successful, neither critically nor commercially. I loved it. I thought it was a really interesting film, and powerful as well. But not commercial. Bernardo decided that his second film was going to be an Italian language film, and that was called *Tragedy of a Ridiculous Man*. Once again I really liked the film but it wasn’t commercial. The third film was a Bertolucci film, but it was made by his brother and it wasn’t successful either.

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Malcolm McLaren was a friend of mine. Malcolm was the inventor and manager of the Sex Pistols. He called me and said, “We’re developing a script with Russ Meyer and Roger Ebert.” Roger Ebert of course was a great admirer of Russ Meyer, and the number one critic in the United States at that time. They were working on the screenplay, which was called *Who Killed Bambi?* I met with Malcolm. He gave me the script to read. It was a bit long, but I could see the potential of it. Then I got together with Johnny Rotten and a few other members of the group and we watched movies, trying to figure out how the film would be made and developed. Ladd went along with it. He said, “OK fine, you believe in it. We’ll do it.” So we signed the contract with McLaren and the Sex Pistols. Meyer and Ebert came to London. Everything started to go into preparation for the film. All of a sudden I get a call from Ladd saying, “I’ve been contacted by Grace Kelly, who’s on the board of directors of 20th Century Fox.” She was a member of the board. “She’s heard about this Sex Pistols film.” She hadn’t read the script or anything, but she said, “This is not the right association for 20th Century Fox.” Ladd said, “She’s going to rally the other board members around to her point of view, and we’re going to have a real problem at Fox if we do this film.” I said, “Well, we’ve signed a contract already.” He said, “Pay them off.” So we had already paid something to Russ Meyer and Roger Ebert, and to Malcolm for the development, and we were committed to making the film, so we had to make a settlement with them and get out of the deal. It was a very tense and embarrassing time. The interesting thing is that when I took over as president of Fox, the first board meeting that I went to was in Monaco with Princess Grace, and I reminded her of the incident of the Sex Pistols, and she had a good laugh about it at that point.



It’s so difficult – at least from my perspective – for European filmmakers to crack it in Hollywood. I thought one of the things that might work would be set to up a programme at Fox to bring a small group of filmmakers to California, to meet all the Fox executives, and to spend six months developing, finding a project, that they wanted to make. When I proposed the idea to Alan Ladd Jr. he said, “Fine, let’s do it.” He was that kind of guy. If he trusted your judgement and respected you, then he would go with you.

Alan Clarke was, I think, the first one to come out. I put him into a hotel. It wasn’t one of the top hotels, but it was a Beverly Hills hotel. Very nice. A nice location. “Come on over to Fox.” Alan didn’t show up the next day, so I called the hotel. “Mr Clarke has check out.” “Did he leave a forwarding address?” “No, we have no idea. He just checked out.” Three or four days go by and I can’t find him in L.A. What the hell has happened to Alan Clarke? All of a sudden I get a call from him. “Oh Sandy, I changed hotel.” I said, “I know you’ve changed hotels! What hotel have you gone to?” He said, “I’m not sure of the name of it. It’s on Hollywood Boulevard, somewhere near Highland.” I said, “Find out the name of the hotel you’re staying in and let me know what it is.” He called me back with the name of the hotel. It turned to be some fleabag

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hotel filled with prostitutes and drug addicts and God know what else – which is what Alan loved, the kind of underside of society, which is what fascinated him really. He spent the next few months travelling. I lost track because he said, “I’m going to travel. I’m going to find an idea.” Getting close to the end of the six month period he came back to L.A. and we met at Fox. The project that he proposed was *Requiem for a Dream*. I knew that was a Hubert Selby novel. I’d read *Last Exit to Brooklyn*. Incredibly powerful. So I read *Requiem for a Dream* and said, “It’s a longshot that Fox is ever going to make a film like this.” But we contacted Selby and the rights were available. He met Selby. Alan said, “This is what I really want to do.” I said, “Let it rest for a while. Go back to London and I’ll see what happens.” I got the book covered. I had a reader read it at Fox and circulated the coverage to the rest of the group at Fox. Everybody said, “We don’t think we can make this at Fox.”



What input could I have as a producer? What input could I have as a studio executive? What I had to gauge was: is there room for a contribution from the producer? Was my contribution valid? Did it have something to really enhance and in some way give extra dimension to those filmmakers, or is it best to stand back and watch it happen? Maybe there’s a moment when you might contribute something. I learned it with Bertolucci very early on with *La Luna*, reading the script. I said, “Bernardo, let’s just sit down and talk about the script. Maybe if you did this and that...” And he looked at me and said, “This is my script.” I said, “I know, but...” He said, “No. This is my script.” And from that point on I had no input whatsoever. I just backed right up because I knew that I wasn’t going to make a contribution to Bertolucci’s films. There are filmmakers like that, and you make a decision. Either you work with them making their film or you feel as if you’ve got to contribute.

David Puttnam did see himself as a creative producer, and he did make a creative contribution on a lot of the films. And that’s a good thing, a positive thing. It helped, because some of those filmmakers that he worked with and made a creative contribution to actually needed it. There was room for him to work with Hugh Hudson and to work with Roland Joffé and to make those contributions. I don’t think he had a lot of contributions to make with somebody like Bill Forsyth, who was much more rigid, but nonetheless maybe he made a contribution in terms of some casting ideas. So give him full credit for being a creative producer.



What I discovered is that producing a film was a complex network of relationships, and it was in those relationships that the film was either going to succeed or fail.

As a producer, the first thing that I had to learn and understand was how I was going to be able to communicate with the writer and director in the development process, in the casting process. What I learned very quickly was that rather than telling somebody, “This is how I would do it” or “This is what you should do,” I discovered a sort of Socratic approach to it. It became a questioning relationship. “Do you think this

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scene works?” or “Is the relationship developed enough?” So I’m not telling them the relationship isn’t developed enough or that the scene doesn’t work or that it’s too long. I’m letting them, in a way, consider: is the scene too long? – and to come up with an answer. Then the discussion begins. So often I saw at the studio: “You should do this” and “You should do that” and “You’ve got to change this.” That immediately sets up this resistance with the creatives. A lot of directors and writers hate being told what to do and how to do it.



Herzog was one of the filmmakers that I sort of zeroed with him on while at 20th Century Fox that I wanted to work with. He wanted remake *Nosferatu*. Fine. Sounds like it could be a genre movie, a horror movie. I called my colleagues in L.A. “I want to do a film with Werner Herzog. *Nosferatu*.” “Who?” I had to explain who he was. They trusted me and said, “Fine, let’s do *Nosferatu* with Werner Herzog.” So we made a partnership deal I think with Pathé or one of the French companies, I think it was Pathé, and so our exposure wasn’t a hundred percent. They had French rights, we had the rest of the world.

They had to meet Werner Herzog, so Jay Kanter and Alan Ladd and Mike Gruskoff, who the executive producer on the film, we all met in Munich. I came from London, they came from L.A. Werner picked us up at the airport in his Volkswagen Camper and he said, “I am going to take you to a wonderful dinner!” We drove for an hour and half into the Bavarian Alps, in this freezing weather. There was no heater in the Volkswagen Camper. We had a delicious fish dinner on the top of the mountain, and of course Werner mesmerised Ladd and Jay Kanter with stories.

It was made, I think, in two or three versions. There’s a French version because of the French co-production. There’s an English version. We’re going to have the first preview of *Nosferatu*, I think it was somewhere in the San Fernando Valley in L.A. We recruited a pretty good audience. It’s the English version, and halfway through the film the audience started laughing. They thought it was a comedy, and at the end of the movie the audience reaction cards were terrible. We had a meeting the next day. Ashley Boone, in charge of distribution and marketing, is there. He said “I don’t think we can release this film, at least not in this version.” He was the one who said to me, “But I know you’ve got other versions.” I said, “Yes, we’ve got German and French.” He said, “Let’s preview the German version.” And that previewed really well. People saw it as foreign language film, so they could appreciate the strangeness, the way the film was made, the story and how the characters looked and all of that. That was the version we ended up releasing in United States.

But before we could get to that point, we had to shorten the film. I called Gruskoff and said, “You better get over here because we’ve got to sit down Werner. We need a shorter version for the United States.” It was quite long, over two hours I think. Werner was in Paris. We go to the cutting room in Paris. Gruskoff and me, Werner and I think the French editor. We said, “Werner, we’ve got to shorten the film.” “What do you mean shorten the film?” “If you want the film released in the United States you’re going to have to shorten the film, anywhere up to ten minutes.” A long discussion

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ensued, and finally we sat down with Werner and the editor and we went through the film from beginning and to end. He was re-cutting the movie, shortening it. I could see the French editor couldn't believe that these American executives were telling Werner Herzog how to edit his movie! But Werner ultimately was very cooperative, and what we discovered was that he used part of the budget of *Nosferatu* to make another German language film – *Woyzeck*. When I found out about that I didn't tell anybody. Just forget it. I didn't tell anybody at Fox that part of the budget had gone to make the other film as well.



When I came to L.A. in 1979 to take over as president of production for 20th Century Fox, one of the films just finished shooting, and was in the final stages of editing, was Bob Altman's *Health*. We had done several films with Bob Altman at Fox. I'd known Bob Altman from my days at Creative Management, when he was a client of ours. He was a television director. A real character. So anti-establishment it was unbelievable. He hated authority. He couldn't bear it. He couldn't bear being told what to do by people he thought didn't know what they were talking about. The one person he actually respected and admired was Alan Ladd, and Ladd gave him the opportunity to do *Three Women*, *A Wedding*, *Quintet*. When I came out there one of the first things I did was take a look at *Health*. Bob said that he had finished editing it. I thought, "This just hasn't quite come together." So I had a meeting with Bob. I knew that I couldn't tell him that. I said, "Why don't you take another few weeks in the editing room. Play around with it. Maybe you had to rush through it to finish it. Have another look at the movie." Which he did. He made some changes to it, but it was the only way I could deal with Bob Altman. That was one of my strengths, I think – understanding the nature of the filmmaker. If I had gone in saying, "Bob, listen. You've got to re-cut it and look at the ending and see if you can come up with something better," I know what he would have done. He would have said, "Fuck you. That's it. I'm done." So at least he played around with it. He made some changes. He did improve it. It never reached its potential, but nonetheless I think turned out to be a better movie for having encouraged him to do more work. But you had to encourage him in a way that it was his decision.



I had been involved with David Puttnam on *Chariots of Fire*. I read the script and said, "Hey, I really like this." I knew Hugh Hudson. I said, "I'm going to pitch this at Fox and see if I can get you part of the money" – which I did. Ladd went along with it. We got the foreign rights on it, everything outside of the US, and had an option to acquire the US rights. It opened in Europe and was an enormous success. Fox had the option to acquire it, and while I was in the process of leaving Fox, they decided not to exercise their option to distribute the film in the US. They didn't think it had any potential there, and so I said, "Laddie, you're at The Ladd Company now. I'm about to leave Fox. You ought to acquire the option." It was going to expire at Fox. And so the option

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expired and Ladd grabbed it for The Ladd Company, and of course it was an enormous success. It beat Warren Beatty's film *Reds*. I'll never forget that.



Well... the lunacy of Hollywood is staggering. And within this lunacy, you also have an industry and people who spend their life acting as if they know what they're doing. I greenlit two films simultaneously. One was *Chariots of Fire*, which I thought could be problematic in terms of its market. The second film I greenlit, the same day, was *Oh! Heavenly Dog*, starring Chevy Chase. Chevy Chase had just been in some big hit movies. *Oh! Heavenly Dog* fit into that genre and category of what Chevy Chase did best. And of course *Oh! Heavenly Dog* was a complete flop and *Chariots of Fire* was the success.



Julia was already in production when I joined 20th Century Fox, so I didn't have any input on that film, but I developed a relationship with Zinnemann. He was probably one of the most autocratic people I dealt with. I remember I was fifteen minutes late to a meeting and when I got there he refused to see me because I was fifteen minutes late. That's the kind of person Fred Zinnemann was. But at the same time he was open. You could suggest a writer to him. "OK fine – I'd like to meet that writer and talk to him." It was an interesting collaboration working with him.

The film he came up with following *Julia* was a disaster. It was called *Five Days One Summer*. Fred Zinnemann, every year, climbs mountains. In the summer he goes to Switzerland. Physically even into his eighties he was amazing and fit and strong and mountain climbing, and so he wanted to do *Five Days One Summer*, which was about the mountains in Switzerland. OK, we'll make it with him. He had seen a play in the West End and fell for this actress, Betsy Brantley. He wanted her for female lead and he could not be dissuaded, despite the fact she hadn't done anything. Fine, we'll go with it. Sean Connery – not a bad leading actor.

The film goes into pre-production. The film goes on location shooting in Switzerland, and I get a call. "There are problems. You better get up here." The mountain climbing adviser/expert, who is a consultant on the film, and he had small part in the movie, a handsome guy, a rugged older man, a mature man maybe in his fifties – he began an affair with Betsy Brantley. Fred Zinneman finds out about it and he went beserk. He shut the film down. I get up there. No shooting. He says, "I am not going to continue this film with Betsy Brantley having an affair with this mountain climbing guy." I said, "Fred, we're in the middle of a movie. You can't abandon it. This is impossible." He said, "I have to talk to them both and I have to get this straight, and I'm not going to continue with this film if she continue her affair with him." In the meantime I get a call from Sean Connery. He says, "Hey, if there's a problem with Fred I'm happy to step in and take over if you want me to." I said, "Well, hopefully we won't need that Sean, but I'll let you know how things develop."

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We had to shut the film down for four or five days. Finally she agreed and the mountain climbing adviser agreed: no affair, no contact during the remainder of the film. We made the movie, wrapped it. It was not a very good film, to say at least. It didn't work at all. She wasn't really good enough in it and it was rather an unfortunate experience. But an interesting experience nonetheless as a studio executive as to how these things happen.



Alan Ladd call me and said, "Look, I'm having problems at Fox. Dennis Stanfill is the chairman of the board. Anything up to ten million dollars I've got a green light. I can approve any project. But anything over ten million and he's arguing about the bonus I going to get on *Star Wars* and it's really making my life unpleasant. I've got to get out of here and I've had an approach from Steve Ross at Warner Bros., who wants me to set up my own company at Warners. No controls up to a certain amount. They give me twenty million, whatever, a hundred million dollars, 250 million dollars – I forgot that exact amount – of production money each year for three years, and I want to take the deal. I want to get out of Fox." I said, "OK fine. Let's do it together." He said, "No, I've got to get a replacement because they won't let me out of my contract until there is replacement, and I've suggested you as a replacement." I said, "I don't even know Dennis Stanfill. It's not my bag. I don't want to go out to L.A." He said, "Just come out here and meet Stanfill and let's see if we can get this resolved." So I go out to L.A. and Ladd really puts the pressure on me saying, "See whether he's going to offer the job to you, and if he does you've got to take it." So I go out there and with meet Stanfill, and he does offer the job. I go out to L.A. and I take over as president of 20th Century Fox. There wasn't a lot in the pipeline and so there was a bit of a scramble to get some things going.

One of the projects that Fox had in development was *9 to 5*. That had been developed by Paula Weinstein, who was an executive at Fox, together with Jane Fonda and her company. *9 to 5* turned out to be an enormous hit.

Quest for Fire did well all over the world. It wasn't obvious that it was going to do well. A rather unusual story and type of film. The director was Jean-Jacques Annaud, who had made some really interesting films. Mike Gruskoff was the producer, and I trusted him. I met Anthony Burgess through his agent, Deborah Rogers, who was a good friend of mine. He was an extraordinary character, on every level – personal and professional. He always needed money, and so when *Quest for Fire* came up, we had no language to use in the film. We had to create a language, and I thought, "Well, the guy who can create a language is Anthony Burgess." So I went to his agent. She said, "Yes, I'm sure he'll be interested." I met with Burgess and got him together with Jean-Jacques Annaud and Gruskoff. And so Burgess developed and entirely new language for the film.

Dario Argento made *Susperia*, and Fox picked that up, and it was very successful, so of course I went to him when I joined Fox and said, "What else have you got." And

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he came up with *Inferno*. That was successful as well. Not as good as *Susperia*, but nonetheless it still worked within the genre.

Kagemusha was brought to Fox by George Lucas and Francis Coppola. Kurosawa was having difficulty getting financing for his films – they were becoming more expensive, so Japan was hesitant to back him. Lucas and Coppola wanted to make a film with him, so they became the executive producers. They “presented” it. They brought it to Ladd at Fox. We said, “Yes. Of course. We’ll do it.” And then, of course, Ladd and the group left Fox and I remained for the next nine months, and the film was delivered while I was working there. *Kagemusha* was successful enough that Fox didn’t lose money on it. But that wasn’t the reason we made it. We made it because it was Coppola and Lucas who brought it to us, and it was Kurosawa the filmmaker, who all of us revered. So it was a drop in the bucket in terms of production costs for Fox.

I got to know Mel Brooks at 20th Century Fox. He had an office on the third floor, around the corner from Paul Mazursky. They were great friends, and very competitive with each other as well. Laddie left Fox to set up his company at Warner Bros. Mel and Paul came to me and said, “What about our deals?” I said, “Don’t worry, I’m going to renew your deals.” Mel said, “Listen, I want to change my deal. I want to contribute to the budget of my films because of the foreign sales. I want to acquire the foreign rights to my films, and I’ll put up forty percent of the budget and let Fox take the US.” I said, “Mel, it’s a bit of sweetheart deal for you, but I want your next movie, so I’m going to make the deal.” And I did make the deal, and Mel made millions of dollars, because the foreign rights to his films were incredibly valuable. From that point on he couldn’t thank me enough. It did well for both Fox and for Mel.



Blade Runner was brought to us at The Ladd Company by Ridley. It had been optioned and developed by Hampton Fancher, somebody that I met in the sixties in Rome. He was an actor, he was a flamenco dancer. He was from East L.A. – we grew up few miles apart, similar ages. I think I’m a year or so older than him. We didn’t know each other but we had all these mutual experiences, and I think we said hello in Rome in the sixties. He had the script, he developed it, he put his own money into it or got somebody to loan him some money. He had the option – it had been out to a dozen different directors. Half a dozen different people were going to make the film. It never came to fruition. There was a producer involved at that point called Michael Deeley who I had known, a British producer. We had nothing to do with Deeley at that point, it was all to do with Ridley. Ridley brought us the script and said, “I’ve been given this script. I really like it. I’d love to do it as my next film.” We read it and said, “Yes, we believe in the potential of it. We want to work with you. We want to make it.” It’s going to be an expensive film. We’ve only got the OK up to ten million dollars with Warner Bros., or twelve – whatever the cap was – so we were going to have to bring some partners. We brought the Shaw Brothers, Harold Shaw, who was based in Singapore. We brought in Jerry Perenchio and Bud Yorkin, who had their company together. They were coming in as producers and they were the completion guarantors as well.

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The film is coming together. Harrison Ford is just coming off *Indiana Jones* and *Star Wars*. This is looking good! We're looking at the rushes. They look amazing. Fantastic! This is going to be brilliant. Ridley is shooting and shooting. Remember: *Alien*, no CGI. It wasn't invented. *Blade Runner*, no CGI. It wasn't invented. Everything had to be done either with miniatures, with painted backdrops. It was the old fashioned Hollywood technique. So shooting went on. It's over budget, it's over schedule. Yorkin and Perenchio are on the hook for completion, not us. I get a call from Laddie. "You better get out here." I go from London to L.A.

We have a screening, about an hour's worth of material. Behind me are Bud Yorkin and Jerry Perenchio. Bud Yorkin, who I'd known for ages, is sitting behind me. "Fucking Ridley! How many takes did he get? The coverage on this!" He's thinking like a TV director. All of a sudden I go flying out of my seat. "That fucking Ridley Scott!" And he kicks my seat and I get catapulted out of my seat. "God! What the fuck is going on!" We stop looking at the material. Screaming matches going on about Ridley and how much and the rest of it. It was a very, very difficult film in terms of all these different elements. The Shaw brothers were quiet – they were leaving it to us. Michael Deeley was not very much in evidence on the film.

We bring the film back to London for post-production. We had to reshoot some scenes, add some scenes. The music was going to be recorded here, the edit was going to be done in London, the post-production. Yorkin and Perenchio were screaming and yelling about everything. During the mix we wanted to use a song from The Ink Spots and they refused to pay for the license fee, so Vangelis went away and wrote a pastiche, which was just as good as the original, to be used in the film. We put it together. We go out to L.A. at the end of it. The film is, I think, two hours and fifteen minutes, something like that. It was brilliant, absolutely brilliant. Warners didn't like it. "It's too long, it's boring. It's not what we thought it was going to be." Ridley goes away and recuts it. We add some of the Kubrick film from *The Shining* for the ending. The narration is recorded. Harrison Ford by that point hated Ridley. "I was never was directed by him. He wasn't interested in even talking to me. Why am I doing this goddamn narration now!" He had something wrong with his back. He was lying down flat and doing the narration. He was really pissed off about the whole thing.

Warners comes up with the ad campaign. I don't know why we agreed to it, but it was a shit campaign. They tried to sell it as an action adventure movie. Cheap-looking posters of some action adventure film. It's still a good movie, even having being cut by fifteen minutes. It's still a great film. Not as good as that two hour and fifteen minutes cut, but still a great movie. I don't know. The audience didn't turn up. The audience that did turn up felt as if they had been cheated. They thought they were coming to see Harrison Ford in an action adventure film because of the advertising and marketing. The critics almost universally were bad. They panned the film. Unbelievable! Within two weeks it was out of the cinemas – disappeared, gone.

Years later – I think it was two or three years – all of a sudden, midnight screenings. The internet, just at the beginning of the internet, all of a sudden people are posting things about *Blade Runner*. Universities and colleges are clambering to play it. Warners re-releases it, and all of a sudden it's a classic.

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There are cult films that are recognised after the fact. It's amazing the way it happens. All of a sudden they become great movies, whereas a few years earlier they'd been rejected by both critics and audiences. So... figure it out.

Ridley was very happy with the two-hour cut. He was pragmatic about this things. "You need a two-hour version? I'll give you a two-hour version. Two hours fifteen? Two hours fifteen." He's that kind of filmmaker.



There was something about Sergio Leone. Extraordinary filmmaker and a fascinating, interesting guy. He had done the Spaghetti Westerns. I had met him in Rome during that period. He talked about doing *Once Upon a Time in America*. I said, "Let me represent you and try and see if I can get it set up." I hadn't been able to. He was an interesting character. He said, "I'm not going to direct another film until I direct *Once Upon a Time in America*." He produced a couple of movies in Italy. He had a white Rolls-Royce and he would come every May to the Cannes Film Festival. I saw him eight or ten years running. He would come with his white Rolls-Royce and pull up to the Carlton Hotel where he had a suite, and he had a box full of scripts of *Once Upon a Time in America*. He tried every Cannes Film Festival, and probably the rest of the year, to get this film made, and he couldn't get it set up. In a way like Sandy Mackendrick, my heart went out. Here's Sergio Leone. I'm at the altar of cinema. Spaghetti Westerns. He's one of the Gods for me. This poor fucking guy, this genius filmmaker, getting in his car every year, going to the Cannes Film Festival, hustling, trying to get his film made. So at The Ladd Company I said, "Maybe we can do something with Sergio Leone."

We started with the production of *Once Upon a Time in America*. Sergio was shooting and shooting and shooting. All of a sudden I said, "Laddie, what is going on? We've got tonnes and tonnes of material. Something is wrong here." Leone kept on adding to the script. It was out of control. The next thing we know at the end of the filming we've got a four-hour cut of the movie – and it just doesn't work at four hours. It's not a four-hour film. We're not going to get in a situation where it's part one and two again. We've already been through that with *1900*.

Ultimately, we reached an agreement with Leone where he's going to shorten the film. We're going to come out with a shorter version of the movie, and then, when it come into home video, there will be his director's cut.

Reviews were mixed on the film. Business was not what we thought it would be. But I'm glad we made the movie. We were all happy we made the movie, but it didn't quite live up to our expectations. I liked it. You can like a movie and then you can evaluate its commercial potential, and sometimes you can like or love a film but you're still unsure about what the public response is going to be to the film. We felt that way about *Once Upon a Time in America*. I loved working with Leone. It was like a dream come true being able to realise the film that he spent fifteen years trying to get made, schelpping with all his scripts to Cannes. Great performances, amazing stuff within the film, but ultimately it didn't satisfy an audience for one reason or the other, and it didn't get the kind of critical support that we thought a Leone film would get. But we were glad we made it.



I was working at The Ladd Company. I could see that we were winding down, running out of money. I went to Ladd and said, “Listen, I’ve just been approached by David Puttnam and Richard Attenborough. They want to replace Jake Eberts at Goldcrest and they’ve approached me. I have mixed feelings about it, but I know that The Ladd Company is winding down and there’s nothing more for me to do in Europe, nothing I can do, so I think I’m going to go for the Goldcrest gig.” And he said, “Fine, no problem. Do what’s best for you.”

Goldcrest was a very successful company at that time. They had invested in *Gandhi*. They had invested in *Chariots of Fire*. Jake Eberts, the man who had set up Goldcrest, brought in Puttnam and Attenborough as part of the company – they turned against him, and I never got to the bottom of why. But they approached me and said, “We want to make a change, and Jake Eberts is going to go. Would you be interested in taking over?” I had known Jake Eberts. He had approached me when he was at Goldcrest, trying to set up a partnership with Alan Parker, Alan Marshall, Hugh Hudson and myself to see whether he could bring those filmmakers and producers into Goldcrest. Parker and Hudson could never agree on the deal and who was going to be more important, so it never worked out. But I had known Eberts and I admired the guy. I thought he has done an amazing thing setting up Goldcrest. I said, “Why you want to get rid of Eberts? He’s created this brilliant organisation.” They said, “We’ve having trouble with him and James Lee, part of the Pearson organisation.” They had invested money. There was a whole group – the coal board had put money into Goldcrest, a whole group of venture capitalists had put money in. That was Jake Eberts’ expertise. They said, “Jake is too difficult to work with. He’s not really listening to us.” And I said, “What makes you think am going to listen you?” “No, we get along with you. We know you. You’re a producer. Jake isn’t really a producer” – and this and that. They painted a rosy picture and I said, “OK fine. Let’s have a go.”

I sat down and had a deal with Goldcrest. Jake departed – very upset by the whole thing, because it was his creation. Of course everybody at Goldcrest thought I was the person who had gotten rid of Eberts, because Puttnam and Attenborough never really talked about it. There was this tremendous hostility when I came in. I’d never worked with a British company before, and there was a certain kind of small pettiness about it. Everybody thought that I was the villain in the scene and so it was a horrible atmosphere. I knew within a few months that I’d made a terrible mistake in going to Goldcrest. It was a really unpleasant place to work, and James Lee, who became the chairman – I was the head of production – he was involved too much in what my job should have been.

We did a few good films. We did *The Mission*, *Dance with a Stranger*, *A Room with a View* and things like that. But it ended up to be a disaster. *Absolute Beginners* didn’t work. It went over budget, considerably over budget, and that was a big flop. Julien Temple wasn’t ready to make that film as a director. It was too much for him. There were wonderful things in it but it didn’t add up to a film. It added up to some good moments, and the casting was a big mistake, so it didn’t work.



Revolution was a nightmare. *Revolution* didn't start as a huge Goldcrest production. It started as a really intimate, slightly claustrophobic film about the American Revolution. It was presented to me by Hugh Hudson and Irwin Winkler, the American producer. Robert Dillon wrote a very interesting script. In reading it, I didn't see it as an epic battle sequence-dominated movie. It was intimate, and so in the discussions with Hugh Hudson, the director, I mentioned two films to him which I thought reflected the sensibility of the screenplay. One was *Chimes at Midnight*, Orson Welles' brilliant film. The battle sequences in that were done so economically. It was all done in tight close-ups, yet you have the feeling of something monumental and big. The second film was *Culloden*. The director was Peter Watkins. And that too had this sensibility of a country at war, but once again done intimately, tight, exciting and powerful. So the discussions with Hudson were about that kind of film – and he didn't disagree at all. He liked that idea. What those two films represented was the ability to make something look big and important, but yet was also so economical. But I think one of the things that threw this out of balance was really when Al Pacino was cast as the lead of *Revolution*. All of a sudden, Hugh, and the producer Irwin Winkler, without really ever talking about it, had the desire to make something much bigger, rather than this intimate, powerful kind of film.

I remember the first day of shooting in Devon. I turned up at eight o'clock in the morning, something like that. The guy who worked for me, Garth Thomas, who was in charge of production at Goldcrest, I said to him, "Nothing's happening. Garth, what's going on." "We're all waiting for Hugh Hudson." I said, "Where is he?" "He's in his trailer. He says he's getting ready." I said, "God! We've got five hundred extras and all the rest of it." So I go to Hudson's trailer and knock on the door. I open the door, and Hugh Hudson is sitting looking at a television screen – and it's *War and Peace*, the Bondarchuk version. "Hugh! We've got a crew and actors waiting." He says, "I just got to see this." "What the fuck does this have to do with *Revolution*?" "I'm getting some ideas about..." I said, "Ideas about the shot! That took a year of shooting and there were a hundred and fifty thousand extras, and God knows how much it cost! What does that have to do with *Revolution*?" "Well, I'm getting some ideas from it." I said, "This is bullshit. Come on out and let's get the first shot. We'll talk about this later." The problem was we were making two different films. Somebody had a concept and an understanding of what it's going to be, and the makers of the film have another concept and understanding – never expressed, never talked about. And so all of a sudden you discover, once principal photography starts, that we're on two different planes in a way, two different kinds of movie. It's endemic in the film industry. This happens countless times, this misunderstanding of what the film is going to be. Hugh Hudson was making *Revolution* like *War and Peace*, and I'm thinking that we're making *Revolution* like *Chimes at Midnight*.

It went way over budget. James Lee, the chairman of Goldcrest, had decided he saw completion as a profit centre, a way for Goldcrest to make money, because what we could be is completion guarantors. We charge a completion fee, a percentage of the budget, and we get to keep all of that money. That's a good thing. But Garth and I said,

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“Wait a minute James. Don’t you know that many, many films go substantively over budget. That’s a very dangerous thing you’re doing.” “Oh no, don’t worry. We’ll control it and make money out of it, you wait and see.” So Goldcrest was on the hook for all of the over budget and over schedule. That’s what really knocked Goldcrest for a loop.



The Mission was interesting. It was brought to me not by David Puttnam, it was brought to me by the Italian producer Fernando Ghia. I said, “What you could use is a good British producer as well,” and I introduced him to David Puttnam, and so they produced it together. But Fernando – I think he was elbowed by David in terms of his contribution. He had developed it with Robert Bolt. It was his baby really.

The film was being shot. I was at the end of my tenure at Goldcrest. David called me and said, “My daughter’s getting married and I’ve got to get out of here. I’ve been too long in Colombia. I can’t stand it anymore. Would you come down? We’ve got problems with the budget.” So he came back to London and I stayed in Colombia for six weeks, just to get away from Goldcrest.

When I went out to Colombia, to be a presence there, representing Goldcrest, it was fascinating to see what was happening. It must be 98 degrees, a hundred degrees, a hundred percent humidity. On the first day in the jungle, at lunchtime: roast beef, Yorkshire pudding. I thought, “This is bizarre! Here’s the British crew in the middle of Colombia, in the hottest temperature, a hundred percent humidity, and they insisted on their traditional British lunch of roast beef and Yorkshire pudding at least once a week.” The sight of them eating it in the middle of the jungle always cracked me up.

De Niro and Scorsese had evolved a way of working where they would do take after take after take, sometimes twenty or thirty takes. Jeremy Irons came from a different background and sensibility. He hits it, most of the time, right on the first take. Sometimes it’s the best take. What he was drawn into was the situation where he would have to participate in twenty or thirty takes, and it just drove him nuts. Roland Joffé, the director of *The Mission*, really bought into Robert De Niro’s style of acting. Take after take, because De Niro loved it. De Niro would encourage him. More takes, more takes. Jeremy Irons and De Niro weren’t really talking at that point.

But it turned out to be a good movie. It’s very interesting about the music on that film because Roland and David, particularly Roland, had the idea of using classical music as a way of composing the soundtrack. It didn’t work at all. It was a disaster. Fernando said, “We’ll get Ennio Morricone.” I said, “Go for it.” He went and spoke to Morricone, they showed him the film, and we hired Morricone to come in and do the music. If there was one thing that really strengthened the emotional side of *The Mission*, it was Morricone’s music, without a doubt.

Roland Joffé had previously directed *The Killing Fields*. It had definitely gone to his head. At the end of *The Mission* he was invited to form a company with Jake Eberts. They went to Hollywood, and Roland did a succession of films, generally based in Hollywood, that just weren’t good enough. He bought into the system. You get fed, so pumped up by the agents and the executives and all rest of it, and he stumbled. His

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career, instead of an upward trajectory, took a downward trajectory. For me he's an example how you can be destroyed by the system or your career is impaired by the system. I think, essentially, a lot of it still prevails, even with the advent of the streaming platforms. They invite you to participate in Hollywood – a generic term – but ultimately they are less interested in your ideas and they really want you to execute their ideas. Oftentimes the fit doesn't work, and in Hollywood you don't often get a second chance. If the first one doesn't work, no matter how talented you are, you're pushed onto the second rung. You're no longer the first guy to go to, and you get trapped in this system. And that's happened to so many of the European directors. They are invited to Hollywood, and so many of them are overwhelmed by Hollywood. Some manage to survive, to adapt, to find a way of working within the system in Hollywood, but so many of them are destroyed by it. It's the perfect cautionary tale. A gifted, talented man who comes from the theatre world, the Royal Shakespeare Company, successful, makes a film that's very successful. Academy Awards. Next film – there was something in Roland's character – he had to be seen to be an important director, a big director. A big expensive film. "I've got Robert De Niro, the greatest American actor! Jake Eberts is making a deal for me in Hollywood. I'm going out to make films with Jake Eberts in Hollywood." And then disappeared.



I can't tell you how many times British filmmakers and writers and actors say to me, "Why do you want to work in England? Don't you want to go back to Hollywood." Their ambition was to go to Hollywood. It wasn't to make another movie, it was to go to Hollywood, to be part of the system, because it's a validation for them, that they're international filmmakers, they are "approved" filmmakers. And it doesn't work for a lot of them. They don't have the temperament. Hollywood is very intolerant of mistakes. You make a mistake, your first film isn't successful, you don't often get a second chance in Hollywood. It's ruthless that way. It's a city that runs on fear – fear of failure. That is overriding sentiment in Hollywood – the fear of failure, the fear of being replaced, the fear of your parking spot being taken away from you. In twenty-four hours, Alan Ladd's parking spot was painted over. That's how you know who's in power – seeing the parking spots that are gone and the new ones that appear. It's a company town, and you either work within the system... I saw what it did to Donald Campbell. It destroyed him. He committed suicide – and he's not the only one. Careers have just disappeared. Europeans. But some make it. Some find a way of incorporating their individuality and their personality within the system. They are strong enough to do that and powerful enough to do that. And others not.



Stars and Bars was a project that David Puttnam had developed. He had worked with Pat O'Connor, so he offered the film to Pat. It was a wonderful novel by William Boyd, a best-selling British novelist. Then David got the gig working for Columbia Pictures, and he came to me and said, "Listen, I can't produce *Stars and Bars*. Would you step in?"

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In effect, supervise the production of the film.” So I read the script. I liked it. Pat wanted Daniel Day-Lewis for the leading role. We showed the rushes to the entire crew every night. The laughter was unbelievable. People loved it. When it was put together, something went out of it. It’s one of those strange moments in filmmaking where you think you’ve got something absolutely wonderful, but put together it just deflates slowly.



1986. I had finished at Goldcrest. I wanted to go back into independent production. I had been approached by Oscar Lewenstein, who I really admired for his Woodfall days with Tony Richardson and his involvement with the Royal Court, sponsoring this whole new generation of Angry Young Men writers. He had brought me *Rita, Sue and Bob Too*, which had been done at the Royal Court Theatre. I read it and I thought, “There is only one way I’ll do this film,” I said to Oscar, “and that’s if I can get Alan Clarke to direct it.” I said, “Alan, I know you’re going to do this if you want to do it with me.” He read it and said, “OK, let’s do it.”

It was two plays – *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* and *The Arbor*. Andrea Dunbar combined the two plays into *Rita, Sue and Bob Too*. It was about a sixty or seventy page script. I gave it to Alan. He loved it. He sat down with Andrea Dunbar. They went through the script. I went to Channel 4. David Rose and Karen Bamborough were in charge of production for Channel 4. I walked in the door and the first thing David Rose said to me: “How much do you want?” Never in my life as a producer has somebody say to me “How much do you want?” I broke up and started laughing. I said, “Not a lot, David. Just a little money to make this. We’re going to do it for £500,000,” or whatever it was. And so I partnered with Channel 4 and British Screen. It was one of those things as a producer working with Alan. He was open and collaborative, but with a vision about what he wanted and how to get it. He was economical about it. We had a great time making the film, and it turned out brilliantly.

I wanted to use *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* as a statement for me as a producer, to say, “Hey, all this stuff about over budget and this and that – I’m going to make something cheap, £500,000 pounds, and good and powerful and strong.” And that was *Rita, Sue and Bob Too*.



Alan Ladd called me and said, “I’m moving over to MGM. I’d like you to come and join me.” 1989 to 1993. President of International Production, MGM. We did *The Russia House* by John le Carré, that Fred Schepisi directed. We did *Company Business*. We were shooting in Berlin when the Wall came down. That was a very difficult film because Gene Hackman did not like Nick Meyer. There was a scene in bed. He refused to take off his undershirt because he didn’t want to expose his chest. We lost a whole day of shooting in the arguments between Nick and Hackman. Hackman was a very difficult character. Extremely difficult. A brilliant actor, but not an easy person to work with.

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We did *Liebestraum*, Mike Figgis' film. It didn't really work in terms of its first cut, so we previewed the film in the United States. I think it was in New York. I said, "We've got to get a really good audience." Those were days when we started to recruit the audience for previews rather than just show them to an audience. One of the criteria was that they had to have seen one of Mike Figgis' previous film. *Leaving Las Vegas*, of course, was a fucking brilliant movie. They had to be fans of Mike Figgis, in theory. So we get the audience, we get the preview. Mike's there. The producer, Eric Fellner, is there as well. And there's this one scene... At the end of the preview, the lights come up and half the audience had left. The film was, I don't know, two and a half hours, whatever it was. I said, "Mike, we got your audience. Half of them left during the movie. It's time to re-cut it." He said, "Re-cut! No! I'm not going to re-cut the film." I said, "If you want to get it released, you're going to have to re-edit the film." And he did. He went back with Eric Fellner. They cut maybe fifteen minutes of it, including part of the pissing scene. My argument about the pissing scene is that a guy doesn't have that much urine to piss.

Not Without My Daughter, the story of a woman who marries an Iranian, and they have a child, and the woman is desperate to escape from Iran. We couldn't shoot in Iran, of course, so we used Israel. When the film was released the first thing that happened was bomb threats. I thought it was truthful. It's really what life is like in Iran for a woman.

Son of the Pink Panther, Blake Edwards' final Pink Panther film, with Roberto Benigni. One morning I get a call. Benigni hasn't turned up for shooting. "What do you mean? Have you tried his hotel? Where is he?" "We can't find him." This went on for two days. Finally we discovered that he was at a casino on Edgware Road. For forty-eight hours he was at there at the tables gambling. We finally got him back and completed the movie. Working with Blake Edwards, who was directing the film, and his brother-in-law, who was the producer, was a nightmare. I'd known Blake from the early days of the Pink Panther with Peter Sellers, in Rome when they were shooting there. Blake was one of those people who detested authority. He couldn't stand being told what to do. He had in his mind that he wanted to go to Jordan to shoot a sequence there for *Son of the Pink Panther*. We said, "This is going to be so expensive. It's complicated. It's a volatile country." "I'm not going to complete the film unless I can go to Jordan." So he goes to Jordan. I didn't go out to the location, but I get a call from the production manager. "Blake is not actually going to be on location when they're shooting the scenes." "What are you talking about? He's the director of the film." He said, "Well, we've got a video hook-up. He doesn't want to leave the hotel. It's too hot for him. So he's going to be in the hotel with a video hook-up on the set, and he's going to direct from the hotel." I said, "OK, let him direct from hotel, as long as he can finish the film on schedule." At that point I had already thrown up my hands with Blake Edwards. He was notorious for creating these lavish sets and at the end of the film these sets wouldn't be struck. All the furniture from the sets would be shipped to Blake Edwards' home. He liked to refurbish his house periodically, and would refurbish from the sets of the film that he was directing. A talented man, but extremely complicated and difficult to work with.

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Thelma and Louise, we did that at MGM. I got called to come out to L.A. because the film was going over budget and we had to have a meeting with Ridley. I'd gone through the script and identified, I don't know, three or four scenes that if we eliminated, it wouldn't have impacted on the narrative of the film and it wouldn't necessarily have impacted on the excellence of the film – at least in my estimation. So we get into the meeting, and everyone is intimidated by Ridley. He's a very strong personality. Very strong. I said, "Ridley, we're in this situation. Over budget, over schedule. We don't have the money at MGM to continue this way. There are three sequences..." I could see the development people – their mouths had dropped open. "You don't talk to Ridley Scott that way." I could see that's what they were thinking. I just ignored them and just went right into it with Ridley. "If we get rid of the gas station scene, cut that and this, a few other scenes..." Ridley said, "I don't really want to cut anything." I said, "Well, if you don't cut anything, what are we going to do to get back on track budget-wise?" He said, "Let me go away and see what I can come up with." And he cut the schedule. He didn't cut anything in the script. What he did was manage to compact what he had to achieve, in terms of what he wanted to get from the script, but in a shorter period of time. And it didn't impact on the quality of the film at all.

Pragmatic. Ridley is absolutely pragmatic. He can be as efficient as he wants to be. It's how loose the reins are. So yes – I had a way of talking to Ridley. I'd had a relationship with him going back to making furniture for me, so I could talk to him, and I think he trusted me. He knew I wasn't trying to bullshit him or exercise some kind of authority over him that wasn't necessary.

We preview it, and it's a mixed reception. Ridley did about three different endings for the film. It's the girls going over the edge of the cliff – that's the end of the movie. How can you do that after you've built up this love for the two characters? How can you end the movie with them committing suicide? So there were at least three or four different endings shot for the film. They were variations on a theme. You have the girls sail off into space somewhere, you have them crashing at the bottom of the cliff. Ultimately we stayed with the original ending, and it worked. I really like the film. I think it's one of Ridley's best and most interesting films.



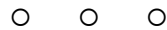
I got a call from Film Finances, the completion bond company. My cousin was working there, Kevin Hyman. He said, "Hey listen. We've got a project. We've already started shooting. We're in the first week and we're already a week over budget and over schedule." It starred Rob Lowe and Bill Paxton as Frank and Jesse James. He said, "Elliott Kastner and Cassian Elwes, they're producing it." I said, "Jesus, Kevin – Elliott Kastner is an old and dear friend. I don't know if I can come and take over the film. Let me call him and ask him." I called Elliott and he said, "I don't care. Come on out."

Film Finances has the option of taking over the film if it exceeds a certain percentage of the budget, and it was projected that by the end of the first week they were going to be way over budget, so they say to Kastner and Elwes, "Hey, we have the

option of either taking the film over or putting somebody in, working for us, to supervise the completion of it, and it's going to be Sandy Lieberman." And they said, "Fine." That's how I got involved with it.

I had to reorganise the whole film. Certain crew members had to be replaced. We got a new first assistant director, a new cinematographer. We had to re-schedule and re-budget. We managed to re-coup the week. It was a balancing act, having to get the director to accept the fact that, "Hey, you can't do what you're doing for the rest of the movie," and taking it from there.

Particularly in the case of Robe Lowe, I also had to get him on board. What I discovered, a couple of weeks into the film, was that Rob would be calling the financiers in Los Angeles and say, "Hey, we need an extra few days to do this and that." I had to say, "Hey listen – no more phone calls." The very people financing the movie were dishing out more because they liked the phone calls from Rob Lowe. It's all part of the process of moviemaking. Different power structures. You have to know how to manoeuvre and manipulate and work in these structures. It's complicated.



Colin Young founded the National Film and Television School. I would go out occasionally to meet the prospective applicants who wanted to get into the school. I always told Colin, "There's no producers course at the National Film and Television School." His reply always was, "This is a director's school. This isn't a producer's school. Filmmaking is about the directors." Even the writing course was secondary to the directors. The directors were encouraged to write their own scripts, whether they had the ability to do it or not. So I was always agitating for a producers course. And then, strangely enough, I was approached, at that particular time, after *Frank and Jesse* – would I be interested in coming out to the National Film and Television School to establish the producers course?

I went out with the sensibilities of a practitioner, not a pedagogical approach to film producing. It had to be practical rather than be theoretical because my style is not theory. My style is practice, and that is what has made me acceptable to filmmakers. I'm not coming at them with philosophy, I'm coming to them with ideas about how they can realise their films in the most practical, efficient and yet flexible way, and that's what I wanted the course to represent, that sort of philosophy. And so I brought in some help to help me structure, because I had to fit in to the curriculum of the writing department, the directing department – and it was a director's film school. The cinematography and the production design and all of the other department, I had to fit in with them.

Stephen Frears was a good friend of mine and he had been out of the film school sporadically. I said, "Come on, why don't you get more involved in the directing department. We can do it together. It will be fun." So he signed on. He wasn't doing anything at that moment, and he spent the first six or seven months that I was out there working more or less steadily.

I structured something, a three-year course, because it had to be three years at that point, that looked at how I could introduce the producers course into a director-orientated film school, where, even though they have a writing department, most of the

directors insisted on writing their own script as well, even though weren't capable of writing of it. Nonetheless they were allowed to.

So I was immediately at odds with a number of the other departments because what I had to do was to exercise control over what was being filmed, particularly the graduation films. The producers had to fit into that, and that means it's the producer's responsibility in terms of the cost the budget of these graduation films. Also I was philosophically at odds with them because everything was still being done on film. They hadn't introduced the digital approach to filmmaking. This is the late Nineties and the digital revolution was beginning to happen. The school was still doing things only on film, and the philosophy was, "They have to learn about filmmaking." I was at odds with them and it caused a lot of problems because filmmaking is filmmaking. It's storytelling. It's realising the story on whatever medium you're making it on, whether you making for television and it's going on video tape, or you're making for film, or it's on a digital hard drive or whatever. It's only the way you're recording it. Yes, there will be differences in the visual aspect of it because, especially in those early days of digital filmmaking, it hadn't become as sophisticated in terms of the equipment for shooting and the lenses and everything that are available now. Not only that, philosophically I said, "Why don't we shoot exercises on digital, then look at it, critique it, and go back and do it again, and see whether we can make it better or different."

I was bringing a philosophy into the school, and to the producing department, that put me at odds with a lot of the people in the other departments. Not everybody but a lot of them, including Stephen, who objected to that as well. He didn't like that at that particular time anyway. Later he was much more flexible about it.

It was creating something. There hadn't been a producing course. There had been a production management course, which was to facilitate the making of the graduation films and some of the exercises. So this was the first producers' course in Europe, in the U.K. Yes, there had been producing courses I think at USC and UCLA. I'm not even sure how specialised those were, to be honest.

It was exciting. What I found was a challenge, just as I did as a producer. How the hell can I make a good film? How can I make a good course? How can I make something that really works for all the departments, particularly for the producing department. I thought we came up with something really exciting and interesting. To this day, twenty years later, they're still using the course I set up as the basis for it. There have been changes, alterations and additions, and we've lost a few things and added a few things, but essentially it's the same approach.

It was a very insular time. You didn't find people going to the festivals and the producers hustling and trying to make a deal in France and Italy and Germany, and going to the U.S. and hustling the major studios and the independents. If they didn't get the money from Channel 4 or BBC or the BFI, they didn't make the film. This is not producing. It's one type of producing. So my idea was to send the people out, send the producers out. Get them to the Cannes Film Festival, to the Berlin Film Festival, to the Edinburgh Film Festival. Learn was producing is – and that's interacting with people. Talking about film. Being able to talk about your picture and learning how to pitch it so that it isn't just telling the story. What the film's atmosphere? What the texture going to be like in the film? In a way you've got to supplant the filmmaker and be good at talking

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about it in that way. Also educating them to do the pitch with the director and the writer. The course is great. It works fine and it's something am really proud of. I found it challenging, and as exciting as producing its own way.



What I discovered over the years before I got to the NFTS was that there was not just one kind of producer. There were the producers who came from the studio system, and they worked in a very specific way. Some of them were incredibly gifted and contributed. Some of them made sure the films came in on budget and schedule. It varied. But they were a studio product. And then, of course, you have independent producers. They had a different perspective and a different kind of approach. Some independent producers were very good at developing stories and working with the writer. Some were very good at getting the money. Some understood publicity and advertising. So you had different sets of skills in different people.

My concept was to try and bring these skills together so that the course would allow the producer to develop skills of working with a writer, identifying material, trying to understand what could work and what couldn't work, how to work with the writer and director in terms of developing ideas, interacting with them. How do you get films financed? What's the distribution process? How do sales agents work? All of these practical aspects of producing. And what you discover is that in most cases, these young aspiring producers have a natural skill in some areas but not in others, and so what I would suggest is: "Maybe you want to team up." Maybe like Puttman and myself – we were a good role model to use with them. "Maybe what you want to do is partnerships." Some of them are wonderful at being able to identify good stories, communication with writers. Some are very good at raising money and finance. Others are good at marketing and selling a film, convincing people to put money into ideas. I tried to open their eyes to different ways of producing, different approaches, the different sets of skills that you need as a producer.

The producing course was the first course that introduced students to the industry. There was very little interaction at the school between industry and students, and so what I did with the producing course was each producer in their first year got a mentor from the industry. They could choose them. "Who would you like as your mentor?" Then I would approach those people. So each producer had a mentor. Each producer had an introduction to the industry. And it worked brilliantly.



At the right film school you can learn a hell of a lot. But with the right film school and the wrong teacher, you're better off learning it yourself. There is this debate: are film schools good or are they bad? Useful or not useful? I think you have to look at the industry. The industry began on an apprentice basis. You had to start as an apprentice and work through your chosen field of endeavour, and then finally you might get to be a director or writer or producer. Then you have the evolution of film schools. I don't

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know if people can get into the industry without going to film school now. It's the stamp of approval. You made your graduation film.

If you have the kind of personality, and you have the kind of resilience so you can do things on your own, and try and get a film made instead of spending three years in a film school, and learn that way, then maybe that's the best way for you to do it. Some people need the nurturing of a film school. Others flourish and do better outside the film school. I don't think it's an either/or. Both approaches can work.



I get a call from the Film Council. "We've been approached by the Berlin Film Festival to participate with them a new initiative that the head of the Berlin Film Festival, Dieter Kosslick, wants to institute, which is the Berlin Talent Campus. So we are going to contribute to the financing of the Berlin Talent Campus, but we also want to have an input as to what the Talent Campus is going to be." So I go to Berlin and meet with Dieter. He's a wonderful, extravagant, outgoing, flamboyant character. They didn't have a clue as to how they were going to organise the Talent Campus. They had an idea. So I said, "OK, let's work together over the next year, structure how it's going to work, and we can implement it the following year." That's exactly what happened. I remember in the first year we decided we were going to invite five hundred students. They had to fill out an application online and submit a sixty-second film, together with their application. In that first year I had to look at five hundred sixty-second films and read the applications. After that first year I managed to put together a team that could do that work. I worked with Dieter very closely, and one of his associates, Thomas Struck, who was a documentary filmmaker, and we started the Talent Campus. All of a sudden it took off, and had a status almost as important as the festival itself. I'll never forget that first year, I thought we would do a speed dating thing. The five hundred students had three minutes. The buzz at that speed dating – five hundred young filmmakers in a room, meeting each other for the first time, I was elevated off the ground. The energy, the enthusiasm, the excitement. The Talent Campus just grew from there. And of course all of the filmmakers who had their films in Berlin, and some who didn't have their films in Berlin, came and participated and did workshops and seminars. We did case studies. It's now established in half a dozen different countries. It's become a real phenomenon. It's exciting to be there at the birth of it and be able to contribute as to what it would be.



BFI had set up regional filmmaking centres. There was one in Manchester, one in the south of England as well. There were six – but never London. They hadn't actually done London in terms of making it a centre for development and production for the BFI. And so they asked me if I would set up Film London.

We started the Microwave Film Fund – £50,000 to make a feature film. No development. I didn't want to get into the development business. You come with a script and we either make it or we don't. I thought that would help generate independent thinking in filmmaking because up until that point, London was a place

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where you either got your film commissioned or you didn't make it. If you didn't get money from the BFI, if you didn't get money from Channel 4 or BBC, then you didn't make your film. This was the idea of trying to make self-sufficient filmmakers to think independently, to think, "Yes, I can write something for a £50,000 budget, rather than taking something that's a £500,000 budget and try to squeeze it down into three weeks."

We made a partnership with the Arts Council for films by artists, which to this day is running successfully. We created something called the Derek Jarman Award, where they get a big cash prize for the best film by an artist in any one year. We set up the Film Market Screening programme. We got distributors to show their unreleased films. International distributors and production companies were invited. We had a programme helping to support independent cinemas.

London is composed of, I think, thirty-three boroughs. That means thirty-three independent government organisations that decide the rules and regulations for their boroughs. It meant that each borough had its own regulations for filmmaking. In most of the boroughs you couldn't close streets, you couldn't give priority to filmmaking. London had become one of the most difficult cities in the world to film in because if you wanted to film across London, in different locations, that meant you had to negotiate separately with each borough. Part of our *raison d'être* was to have some kind of uniform agreement, and that means we had to get something passed in Parliament to create a law that allowed filmmaking precedence in terms of location shooting, which we were able to do. It took three or four years, but we managed to do it. And we managed to get all the boroughs to agree that the rules in one borough would apply to all boroughs.



We are schooled to believe that if you have the talent, you'll make it. That isn't necessarily always the case. What I discovered in the years working in film and television was that the most gifted and talented people weren't the ones that always succeeded. It was the most ambitious that seemed to push to get ahead, to make it. So many gifted people I've seen just go by the wayside because they didn't have that drive and determination and ambition. What they had was a gift and a talent, but not the ability to get it exploited. There's a very romantic image connected to the creative industries, whether you're a writer or director or producer or actor. That romanticism is important, and it's part of the process and sensibility that drives the business. But it's also one of the big stumbling blocks, because this is a dog eat dog profession. You have to have the stamina to keep pushing ahead, because it's ninety percent rejection and – if you're lucky – ten percent acceptance.