



### **Momma don't allow**

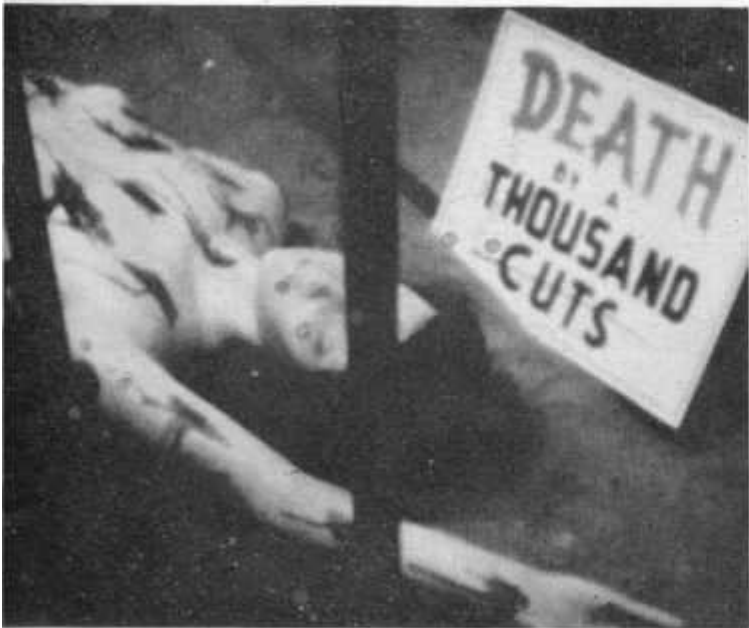
*A view of young people in Britain different from either that of the British Council or the popular press. The Wood Green Jazz Club meets in the spare room at the "Fishmonger's Arms" Teddy boys and their girls come there after work) typists and their boy friends. . . . The only ones whose enjoyment is synthetic, who do not Jit in, is a party of Mayfairites out on a slumming spree. Between the two worlds there is no contact. The Mayfairites depart: the others remain, to dance their joy of living to Chris Barber's Jazz Band, without self-consciousness or inhibition. (Direction Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson. Camera Walter Lassally.)*



### **Together**

*Two deaf mutes in the docklands of London's East End. Filmed with documentary realism, but really a poem, about human isolation, and incapacity to communicate. Directed by Lorenza Mazzetti and Denis Home. Leading roles played by two artists'. Michael Andrews and Eduardo Paolozzi. Other parts taken by people of the East End, in whose streets, pubs, markets and lodging houses the film was entirely shot and recorded.*





### **O Dreamland**

*An unsparing 10-minute picture of a South Coast Fun Fair (direction, Lindsay Anderson; camera, John Fletcher). Londoners down for a day at the sea are entertained by "Torture Through the Ages" (admission sixpence), featuring Death by a Thousand Cuts, and the electrocution of the "Atom Spy Rosenberg." Juke boxes give out thick helpings of commercialised religion—"I believe, I believe . . ." Animals in cages; slot machines and Bingo; queuing for baked beans and cups of tea in the cafeteria. The children drag round with their parents: is this the culture we are content they should inherit?*

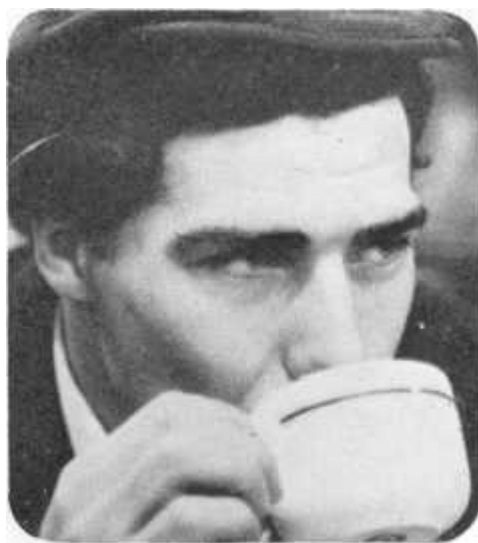


### **free cinema—two**

### **Nice Time**

*A picture of the Piccadilly area in 1957, made by Claude Goretta and Alain Tanner (camera, John Fletcher). Another critical, essentially humanist view of our contemporary industrialised culture. Crowded pavements on Saturday night: hot dogs and nude magazines: dumb queues outside cinemas ("seats at 12/6") whose posters advertise the glories of war and the sensational escape of Science Fiction. Lonely faces, searching glances, the parade of amateur and professional "talent." Ironic symbol: it is the God of Love who dominates this circus.*





**free cinema—three**

**Every Day Except Christmas**

*Covent Garden from midnight to midday. Empty night streets and echoes: work through the small hours in flower market and vegetable market: backchat and cups of tea: buying and selling and fetching and carrying. But above all—people. Essentially this is a lyric film—a poem about work—and a humanist declaration. (Direction Lindsay Anderson. Camera Walter Lassally.)*



# Free Cinema

*Lindsay Anderson*

WHEN people ask you what you do, and you tell them you work in films, their reaction is predictable. "Oh! That must be very interesting. . ." They mean it, too. But then go on, and tell them you make documentaries, and you get a different response. The light of interest fades from their eyes and conversation flags. Sometimes they say: "Wouldn't you like to make real films?"

This sort of standard response is the measure of the failure of British Documentary—a failure for which the responsibility must be shared by many of us. Not by the film makers alone, but by distributors and exhibitors too. By the politicians who connived at the destruction of the Crown Film Unit; and by the public and the critics who continue to accept a situation in which the production of quality documentaries about Britain is a financial impossibility—and remain content to sit through appalling travelogues and third-rate imported shorts without raising a murmur.

Documentary should not be—it certainly *need* not be—synonymous with dullness. It should be one of the most exciting and stimulating of contemporary forms. After all, the cinema started with it. Lumiere's first films are all admirable documentaries: trains pulling up at stations, workers leaving their factories: still interesting to look at today. But the cinema was soon captured by drama, and with relatively few notable exceptions artists have preferred fiction to the exploration and interpretation of the "actual", living material. Yet think how rich, fantastic, unexpected and significant "actual" life can be. Our own documentary movement began to say something in the thirties: and films like *Song of Ceylon*, *Housing Problems*, *Night Mail* still carry their message today. During the war Humphrey Jennings emerged as the British cinema's most eloquent and individual poet: *Listen to Britain*, *Diary For Timothy* and *Fires Were Started* should be compulsory viewing for every British schoolchild. (How many readers of this review have seen them, I wonder?) But in recent years—conformism, publicity more-or-less disguised, the deadness and the dishonesty of the "official" vision.

The problem is twofold: creative and economic. British film makers are not blameless. Energetic and radical in their youth, the surviving members of Grierson's band of pioneers (many of them now established in positions of influence) have abandoned the treatment of contemporary life in their films. This retreat they are apt to rationalize: there are no problems today—or the problems are different—things are more complex—we must think dialectically, internationally, intellectually . . . Yet people still exist, and housing problems, and night mails—as well as Teddy Boys, new schools, automation, strikes and sex crimes. All these are subjects for documentary, and of the right kind: the human kind.

Admittedly the economic problems are formidable. The Conservative Government dissolved the Crown Film Unit in 1952, and since then the official policy is that the

country does not sponsor documentaries for home consumption, except in special cases, for specific propagandist or informational purposes. But the present system of distribution and exhibition in the commercial cinemas makes the speculative production of documentaries quite impossible: either they are not booked at all, or you get twopence for them. Some kind of sponsorship *has* to be found.

It is in this connexion that the movement which we have called *FREE CINEMA* is significant. Three programmes of these films have so far been shown, all at the National Film Theatre: two of them have been made up of films made in and about Britain, one of films from abroad. They are all relatively modest pictures, in means if not in ambition: most of them have been shot on 16 millimetre. (This is the "substandard" gauge of film, as used on portable projectors as opposed to the standard 35 m.m. film used in normal commercial production.) They have not been made according to any plan or programme: instinct came first, and we discovered our common sympathies after. But all of us want to make films of today, whether the method be realist or poetic, narrative or montage. And we all believe that "objectivity" is no part of the documentary method, that on the contrary the documentarist must formulate his attitude, express his values as firmly and forcefully as any artist. The result has been a group of films on diverse themes: a poetic fable about two deaf mutes in the East End of London: studies of Amusement Park and Jazz Club: Piccadilly on a Saturday Night and Covent Garden all round the clock. These are not intended as picturesque films (although of course they are written about as though they are, very often); nor as simple slices of life. Slices, if you like, but cut with a bias. All of them say something about our society, today.

This programme is presented not as an achievement, but as an aim. We ask you to view it not as critics, nor as a diversion, but in direct relation to a British cinema still obstinately class-bound; still rejecting the stimulus of contemporary life, as well as the responsibility to criticise; still reflecting a metropolitan, Southern English culture which excludes the rich diversity of tradition and personality which is the whole of Britain.

With a 16 millimetre camera, and minimal resources, and no payment for your technicians, you cannot achieve very much—in commercial terms. You cannot make a feature film, and your possibilities of experiment are severely restricted. But you can use your eyes and ears. You can give indications. You can make poetry.

The poetry of this programme is made out of our feelings about Britain, the nation of which we are all a part. Of course these feelings are mixed. There are things to make us sad, and angry; things we must change. But feelings of pride and love are fundamental, and only change inspired by such feelings will be effective.

"We have the Welfare State and the domestic upheavals

## Lindsay Anderson

of the Huggetts . . . Bleak, isn't it? . . ." So someone wrote in a letter to the *Observer*, "explaining" why vital art is no longer possible in this country. This kind of snobbish, self-derisive, pseudo-liberalism is the most pernicious and sapping enemy of faith. We stand against it.

Our aim is first to look at Britain, with honesty and with affection. To relish its eccentricities; attack its abuses; love its people. To use the cinema to express our allegiances, our rejections and our aspirations. This is our commitment.

When you are making a film like *Every Day Except Christmas*—or rather while you are editing it, waiting for a reel to be joined, or reprints to come in from the lab.—it is easy to talk about what you are trying to do. But when you have finished, it is difficult. The film speaks for itself, you feel; and if it does not, you have failed, and statements of intention are merely pretentious.

But perhaps I should say what I was *not* trying to do. I was not trying to make an information film, or an instructional film. And I was *not* trying to make a picturesque film. When John Grierson first defined the word "documentary", he called it "the creative interpretation of actuality". In other words the only vital difference between making a documentary and making a fiction film is that in documentary you are using "actual" material, not invented situations and actors playing parts. But this actual material still has to be interpreted, worked on creatively, or we are left with nothing but publicity. And if we are to interpret, we must have an attitude, we must have beliefs and values. It is in the light of my belief in human values that I have endeavoured to make this film about Covent Garden market. I hope it makes my commitment plain.

I have been reproached on the one hand for not giving more "information" about the people in the film; and on

the other for not making a more explicit social comment. I have nothing against information films, and no doubt there are some very interesting ones to be made about Covent Garden (statistics, dates, weights, wages, etc.). But this is not the kind of information I wanted to give about these people—and about people in general.

Similarly with social comment. I feel that at the moment in this country it is more important for a progressive artist to make a positive affirmation than an aggressive criticism. (The criticism will be implicit in the affirmation anyway, if it is a genuine one.) In aggressive criticism there is too often a sense of inferiority. The Left in Britain suffers too much from such complexes of opposition. I want to make people—ordinary people, not just Top People—feel their dignity and their importance, so that they can act from these principles. Only on such principles can confident and healthy action be based.

## Luck and sponsorship

Who pays for these films? One of them was privately financed (*O Dreamland*); *Together, Momma Don't Allow* and *Nice Time* were paid for by the British Film Institute's Experimental Fund; and *Every Day Except Christmas* was commissioned by the Ford Motor Company. There is food for thought here. The Institute's Fund is a remarkable thing, but of course its scope is limited. None of the film makers who avail themselves of it can be paid anything for his work, and budgets are only adequate for relatively modest productions, generally on 16mm. This is why Ford's sponsorship of *Every Day Except Christmas* is so important. Directors have grown accustomed to think of their sponsors as automatically unreasonable, narrowly utilitarian, and essentially unimaginative: undertaking a subject commissioned by an industrial concern, they are defeated before they start. Yet here is a film made for an industrial sponsor which—whatever its artistic value—has been made completely without interference or pressure, with its director allowed, even encouraged, to express himself as he feel 5. (It is unthinkable that a film should today be made for a Government department, or for the Central Office of Information, under conditions so liberal and so enlightened.) I am quite conscious of my extraordinary luck in having been able to work like this, and of my debt to Leon Clore of Graphic Films, who undertook the further responsibility of extending the picture from its original twenty-minute conception to its final forty-minute length. But—I cannot help wondering—should the existence of films of this kind in Britain have to depend on luck, or on the courage, principle and imagination of an individual producer or industrial sponsor? If so, there will not be many of them.

A number of questions, in fact, present themselves, not merely to film makers and enthusiasts, but to anyone seriously concerned with present-day realities in our country. And I presume this means all readers of the *Universities and Left Review*. For instance: Why do we not use the cinema; and what are the implications of this neglect? Is it not strange that at a time when so much emphasis is being put on ideals of community, this medium (above all potent in the service of such ideals) should be abandoned to irresponsible commerce? Why does the Left not take a more active and creative interest in an art so popular? And is it not time that artists whose convictions are progressively started to consider a little more seriously their relationship with their audience, the kind of use that can best be made of these mass-media, so that their art be neither exclusive and snobbish, nor stereotyped and propagandist—but vital, illuminating, personal and refreshing?

## provincial readers

# LOOK AT BRITAIN!

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is sponsoring a tour of our main cities by Lindsay Anderson and Karel Reisz, presenting the film programme that has so excited London audiences, **LOOK AT BRITAIN**. This will be your chance to see these films—outside London for the first time—and to discuss them and the future of humanist documentary with their makers. If you live in or near Birmingham, Belfast, Cardiff, Coventry, Dublin, Ebbw Vale, Edinburgh, Falkirk, Glasgow, Hull, Liverpool, Leeds, Manchester, Merthyr Tydfil, Nottingham, Sheffield, Swansea, you can help us to make the show a success in your town. Your local film society, Labour Party, Trades Council, or other Labour Movement organisation might be interested. Ask them if they would like to sponsor a one-night stand for the programme together with us.

*If you would like to help us organise the show in your town, please write to*  
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