

# Lindsay Anderson,

## unfashionable humanist, in conversation with Gerald Pratley

**Gerald Pratley:** *Seeing O Dreamland with you here brings back to mind the tremendous excitement so many of us felt during the '50s when we heard about the Free Cinema movement which you were involved in. We had been reading Sequence in which you started your writing career – and there was a new vitality about the cinema at that time, an enthusiasm and an awareness that movies could be more than just mass entertainment. You and your colleagues were writing fascinating studies; then you started making films; the film societies began to show the Free Cinema films, and I remember how interesting it was to see these films – so different from what we had seen before.*

**Lindsay Anderson:** It's interesting now to see *O Dreamland* because it could almost be regarded as a piece of Sunday painting. The technique of it is, I suppose, rough; could be described as primitive. It's interesting to remember, of course, that in those days the facilities for tape recording, sync tape recording, which are commonplace today, didn't exist. Perhaps a very good thing, I sometimes think, because I have never been a believer in what's known as "direct cinema," and I think that the necessity of using sound contrapuntally as opposed to naturalistic recording of whatever sound happened to be taking place when the shots were taken, imposed on one the need, in some way, to be creative. *O Dreamland* was a little film that I made with my friend John Fletcher, who was concerned with the Free Cinema. Actually, it was made at the time when I was also working on *Thursday's Children*, a film about deaf children in Margate, which was on 35mm and considerably more polished. Walking around Margate and the funfair called Dreamland, I saw this sideshow called "Torture Through the Ages," and I thought 'That is so classic it ought to be recorded.' And that's actually what started the film off. I wrote to the managing director of Dreamland, I remember, and asked for permission to shoot there and said that perhaps he would be interested to use the finished film for publicity purposes! We got into a great deal of trouble because the voice, as it turns out, that says: "This is Torture Through the Ages" happened to be his – he had recorded it for fun – and when bits of it were shown on BBC Television, he found that he was laughed at at his golf club! He got very annoyed. And, in a way, the film shouldn't be shown because the copyright on all the music would, of course, have been astronomical – if we'd ever paid it!

I made *O Dreamland* and it sat on the shelf for a couple of years because I felt there wasn't anything I could do with it until in about 1955, I suppose, I happened to be working on a picture with an

Gerald Pratley is director of the Ontario Film Institute.



Italian girl in London, Lorenza Mazzatti, called *Together*, and my friends, Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson, happened to be shooting a 16mm picture about a jazz club. We wanted to find some way of bringing our films to the attention of people, even of critics, and the only way we could think of was to make a movement. We put the films together and called it Free Cinema. We wrote some principles, which were not principles that we didn't believe in, exactly, but it was part of a conscious and concerted effort to get our work shown.

And, of course, it was a time when British cinema was still quite formal, when the documentary movement too, I think, had lost any kind of bite or vitality that it had before and during the war and had become completely conformist with people like Edgar Anstey at British Transport making films about spring-time and what goes on at the bottom of ponds.

The kind of claims we made for our films were more about what we'd like to do if we could get the opportunity to make more films. They were all those

things which seem commonplace today and perhaps even naive, I don't know – about making pictures that reflected not just contemporary reality, but also were truly personal. Because I've always thought that documentary at its best, or what I think is its best, is a very subjective medium. I don't think that documentary need be journalistic, or need be reportage, and certainly *O Dreamland* isn't objective. Plainly it is a film that expresses a particular mood, a particular view of the culture of the time and I think, perhaps looking at it now, I can see that there is also in it this kind of, shall I say, generalising itch, if you know what I mean. In other words, a film that starts with the particular, and ends with more, much more general, poetic implication. And I think that at the end, when those people are walking past those statues and the woman lifts up her hand and giggles, it's a bit like 1984 really. It has that kind of personal and subjective vision, I think. The whole thing is pretty sort of horrific, really, isn't it? That, as I say, is a personal and poetic expression and I think even as early as that, that's probably what I was after.

**Gerald Pratley:** *By the time it ended, I also thought that it was very, very sad. But this fits in with your manifesto, if that is what it was at the time, in which you said what Free Cinema was, and spoke about the use of visuals, the image, the use of sound, not depending on commentary and, above all, the importance of human character, the nature of the people who were in the films.*

**Lindsay Anderson:** I think that's certainly true. The tone of Free Cinema and probably of all my work has been, to use a very unfashionable word, humanist. Humanist does not mean sentimental, but it perhaps implies that the centre of our world is, for good or ill, the human race, and that can be regarded as depressing or challenging, but not in any way, sentimental. That, probably, is something reflected 30 years later in *Britannia Hospital*. The viewpoint is probably the same.

**Gerald Pratley:** *What I find most interesting about this is that you have said that when you started you didn't know anything about making films, and there was nowhere to go to learn in those days. There were no courses in universities or colleges, there were no books, there was nothing, and so you learned by experience. But what is so remarkable about O Dreamland is that it was made by just the two of you. Even the simplest student film today needs about six colleagues to go around to help with bits and pieces, yet here you did all the camerawork and the sound and with fairly primitive equipment by today's standards. How did you manage to get the close-ups of the people? Did they know you were there and they paid no attention?*

**Lindsay Anderson:** I think by dashing in and out.

**Gerald Pratley:** *They seem completely*

unaware that there's any camera there at all.

**Lindsay Anderson:** Well, yes, but remember in a film you have to cut out the bits that didn't come off. Depending on whether you think there is any creative charge in a film like *O Dreamland*, and if you do, I think that what is interesting is the extreme economy of it, and the assertion of the fact that anybody can make a film and you can make it out of anything, and that certain refinements of technique really don't matter. For instance, I think that generally films today are too well-photographed. I am sick of what critics always call 'stunning photography', and I think that in the end all these techniques are valueless unless they minister to, or support, or express, a central or essential creative idea. And, yes, it's true that myself and John did do the whole film—and there you are.

**Gerald Pratley:** And you went up on the Big Wheel to get your closing magnificent aerial shot?

**Lindsay Anderson:** That's a good last shot that, but the Big Wheel unfortunately went round the wrong way, because actually sitting on it with the camera it was going down like that... going away. So, as far as I remember, we held the camera upside down and joined the shot in back-to-front. And that's how you do that kind of shot. Anyway, that's *O Dreamland*.

Funnily enough, I don't think I could do that kind of film now: not only that kind of film but another sort of film I made during the Free Cinema period, a film about Covent Garden called *Every Day Except Christmas*. In *O Dreamland*, I was accused by left-wing critics of sneering at the working classes, and in *Every Day Except Christmas*, I was accused of patronising the working classes or being sentimental about them. But I'd find it difficult today to make these films. Documentary can be a very satisfying medium, but it is to some degree restricted, and I think there does come a time when, to express more complex kind of truths about human nature and predicaments, you have to admit drama, and that I suppose takes us on to the next film.

**Gerald Pratley:** Your comments on documentary are of extreme importance and interest to us, because Canada's main claim to fame as a film-producing nation is for its documentary films made by the National Film Board, which was founded by a fellow Scotsman, John Grierson. What did he think of your form of documentary, the Free Cinema?

**Lindsay Anderson:** Well, Grierson was no friend at all. I have relatively unorthodox feelings about John Grierson. I certainly would not attempt to take away from him anything that he did in the '30s in founding and nourishing the documentary filmmakers of Britain. I don't know much about his work in Canada to be honest. I know about the creation of the National Film Board and I'm sure it was a good thing—well, whatever's become of it, I'm sure it was a good thing at the beginning. But I do think that Grierson was a philistine. He was extremely patronising to people like Flaherty. He was extremely unpleasant to someone like Humphrey Jennings. He had a social propagandist view of cinema and what documentary ought to be, which was curiously unpolitical in many ways. I don't think Grierson had a



● Malcolm McDowell runs for his life in *O Lucky Man!*, top; Richard Harris and Rachel Roberts in *This Sporting Life*, center, and director Anderson explains a shot to Alan Bates in *In Celebration*  
photos: Ontario Film Institute

very strong political position, but he was a propagandist. I have absolutely no objection to that, except that I do object to people who try to impose that as the only valid function of documentary cinema. It is interesting that, after the war, Grierson was extremely denigratory, hostile if you like, dismissive of Free Cinema. I can't remember the actual term he used, but it was something nasty. Indeed, the old relics of the documentary movement were never friendly, and that's rather sad. There was no line of development and the only artist in documentary whom we really respected and, I am sure, to some degree, were influenced by, was Humphrey Jennings. We like Basil Wright, who's a nice fellow. The others were not particularly nice and weren't friendly. I think that some day, I know it would be painful, but the truth should be said about John Grierson and his attitude toward Free Cinema.

**Gerald Pratley:** How did you make the transition from documentary to the dramatic film, *This Sporting Life*?

**Lindsay Anderson:** Well, Free Cinema did not last very long and we packed it up when we realised we weren't able to get sponsorship for the kinds of films we wanted to make. We didn't have a Grierson to do that for us, and I doubt whether a Grierson would have been able to anyway because we didn't want to make propaganda or advertising films. At the Ford Motor Company, which did come forward and give money for myself to make *Every Day Except Christmas* and Karel Reisz to make *We Are The Lambeth Boys*, there was a shuffle, and the chap who was in the position to help us was pushed into something else and it all fell through. We brought Free Cinema to an official end after not so very many shows, and not very many films. By luck I was then given the opportunity of going into the theatre. Tony Richardson, who had worked with Karel on *Momma Don't Allow*, was much more of the theatre in those days and he was, together with George Devine, running the Royal Court which assumed a huge importance in the late '50s, starting in 1956 with the production of John Osborne's *Look Back In Anger*, which was one of the great symptoms of change and renewal of that period. With the success of that and of *The Entertainer*, Tony and John Osborne formed a film company called Woodfall Films, and they made a film of *Look Back* and of the *Entertainer*, and most significant, actually, Tony then produced through Woodfall Karel Reisz's first film, *Saturday Night And Sunday Morning*, and that was a big success. There was a whole new wave, tide, whatever you like, that swept through literature, stage and then the screen at that time, and it became possible for new directors to make feature films, which was unheard of before in British cinema of the '50s. I was invited by Tony to go and work at the Royal Court. The first full-length play I did there was called *The Long and the Short and the Tall*, and it was symptomatic of the time that I could direct a play that was very successful (Peter O'Toole played the leading role), but when Ealing Studios bought the rights, they wouldn't let me direct it and they wouldn't let Peter O'Toole play in it. It was made by Leslie Norman with Laurence Harvey, and it was a pretty awful film. That was very typical of the British cinema of that time.

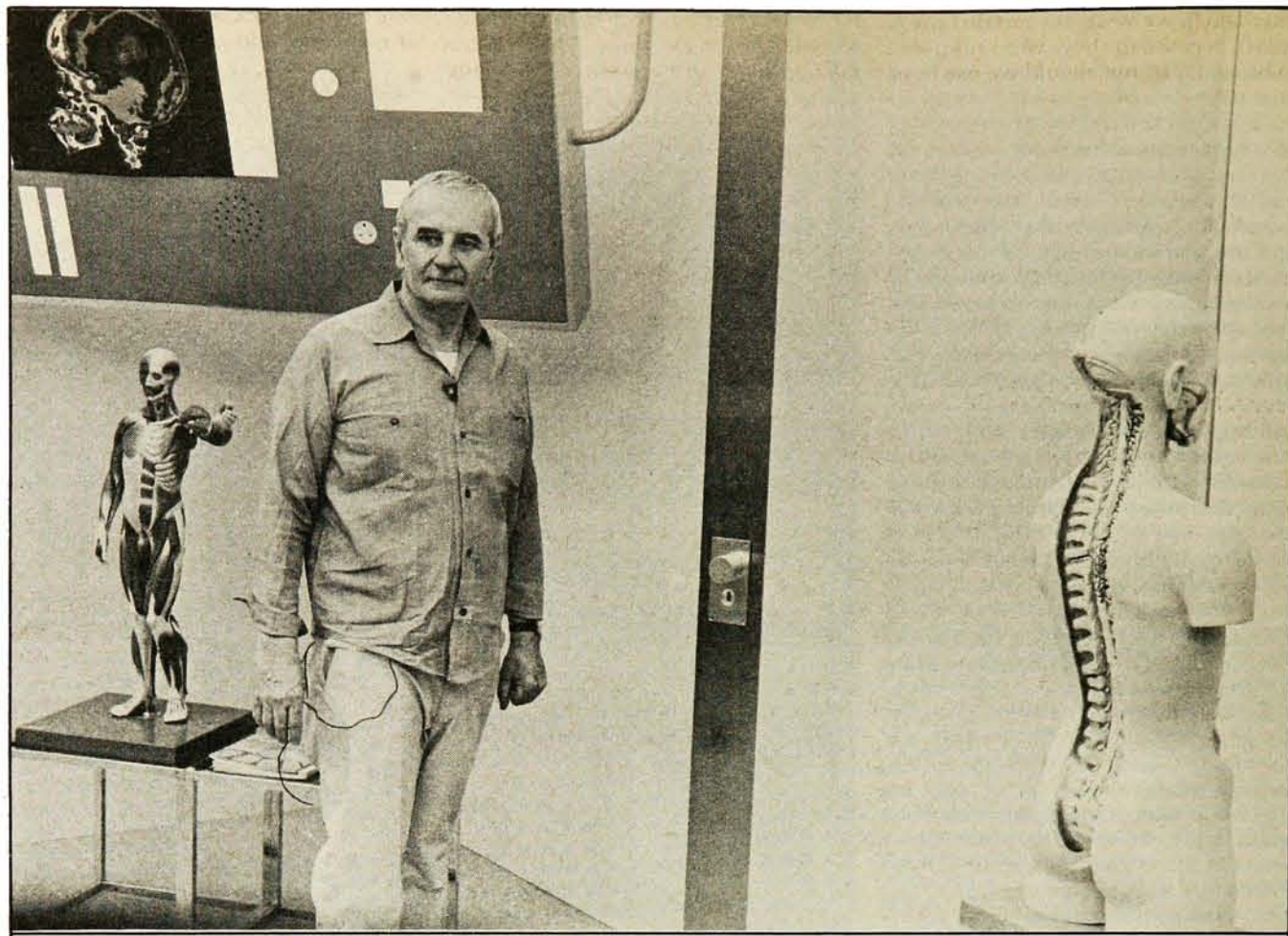
But after *Saturday Night And Sunday*

Morning things loosened up considerably, and Tony had always said to me: "Why don't you do a film for Woodfall?" I had read a book in the early '60s called *This Sporting Life* and I did suggest this to Woodfall but – there's a long story about that which I won't go into – in the end Tony Richardson didn't make it, and it was bought by the Rank Organization who asked Karel Reisz to direct the film because of *Saturday Night And Sunday Morning*. But Karel wanted to have experience of producing and he came to me and said, "Can I put you up as director of the picture and I'll produce it?" And that's what those days were like. For a brief period they were a time of renewal, of new ideas, and of close association, which is always, if it can happen between artists, immensely valuable.

In the end that's how I came to make *This Sporting Life* after having worked in the theatre for whatever it was – three-four years. Essentially, *This Sporting Life* is not what's known as a characteristic 'kitchen sink' film, the way the English described anything that wasn't set in an upper-class locale. It was a very passionate, deeply-felt and tragic film – from a novel by David Storey who I think is a brilliant writer – about two very proud and totally ill-assorted characters. A young man who is tremendously ambitious to realise himself and realise his energies by being a professional footballer, and a widow he lodges with, who is a deeply self-denying or self-destructive character and feels guilty over the death of her husband. Against her judgement, she has allowed herself to be seduced by the young man, but never feels it's right, never feels he's going to commit himself to her. He lives with her quite happily, thinks it's all right if he buys her a lot of stuff but never talks about marriage or anything that would imply a permanence to their relationship. And she is determined to destroy the relationship. He doesn't understand this – he's too immature, too egotistical. I think both Richard Harris and Rachel Roberts were totally remarkable in the film and remarkable in their relationship to the roles they were playing and with each other. In relation to anything I had done before, of course, *This Sporting Life* was closer to theatre than to documentary films I had made. The film is certainly its author's, not *auteur*, author, i.e. David Storey – it belongs to him as much as it does to me. I am not a subscriber to the whole *auteur* business and I think there are undeniably films where the writer is, if not *the*, at least as important an author of the picture as the director. But one doesn't want to make those distinctions readily, because what matters is the work. There is a social side to *This Sporting Life* and that was probably what initially attracted me to the film because I was concerned then with social issues – individuals in relation to society – which probably has marked the kind of films I made after *This Sporting Life*, though not with David Storey. I did one other film of David's, from a play of his called *In Celebration*, but the other three principal features that I've made have a rather different emphasis.

**Gerald Pratley:** *Those were written written in collaboration with David Sherwin.*

**Lindsay Anderson:** Yes. There is a film I like very much which is very rarely seen called *The White Bus*. It's



● "To amuse people who don't want to think": Anderson directing *Britannia Hospital*

not a full-length film, it's about 50 minutes, made from a story by Shelagh Delaney which was probably the first of the films to have a certain sort of social-epic quality – epic-poetic. But after I made *The White Bus*, in about 1967, I was sent a script by a friend of mine, Seth Holt, who was himself a director. He had been working with a young writer who had shown him a script that he and a friend had written about their schooldays, and they had called this script *The Crusaders*. Seth read it and was obviously interested and intrigued by it but he thought he couldn't have tackled such a subject because he had not been educated at what, in Britain, we call "a public school." I was at a public school so he sent it to me and asked if I'd be interested in doing a picture with him as producer. Of course I said I'd be delighted because the one thing I imagine that every director looks for is a good producer – very hard to find. There are far fewer good producers than good directors. Anyway, I got the script, and when I read it I thought, well, I couldn't do this, because although it was a very authentic and personal piece of work, it was inexperienced and amateurish. I said that the only people who could make this would be the writers. Seth then said, "Well, will you meet the two writers?" and I met David Sherwin and John Howlett and I got on well with them. I started making suggestions, criticisms, and all that sort of thing, and before I knew where I was, I was working on the script with one of them, David Sherwin.

And after a long period of re-working and re-casting we finished a script which was in fact called *If*. I can't remember now. I think when we were shooting the film it either didn't have a title, or was called *The Crusaders*. *If* is a personal film in that it does draw on the experiences of both David Sherwin and myself of schooldays, but I think, as I was saying with *O Dreamland*, it does expand from an initial naturalistic

presentation of school to, I hope, a kind of poetic charge and significance in that, by the end of the film, it is not just a film about a system of education, or about school, or about youth, necessarily, but much more, a film about the relationship of the individual to the pressures of society, tradition, fossilised tradition oppressing natural impulses, that kind of thing.

**Gerald Pratley:** *But personal also in the sense that you went back to your old school to film it?*

**Lindsay Anderson:** Yes, I did. We hadn't originally meant to shoot *If* at Cheltenham, where I was educated; in fact I was a bit apprehensive of it. But we couldn't find anywhere that seemed better, and we did go back and I did show them a slightly doctored script, which probably wasn't necessary because people in England don't take films or art seriously anyway. We did get their permission and it was invaluable, and we shot most of the exteriors at Cheltenham.

**Gerald Pratley:** *When If came out, you were embroiled in a great deal of controversy and accused of attacking the Establishment, and heaven knows what. Also, any number of critics came up with startling theories as to why you had done some scenes in black-and-white and some in colour, and there were all manners of subjective, philosophical reasons for this.*

**Lindsay Anderson:** We didn't originally think of shooting certain sequences in monochrome. When I shot *The White Bus*, which I mentioned, with Miroslav Ondricek (who photographed *If*) we did so in black-and-white. But we had put in certain shots, short sequences, in colour, and that idea had come to Shelagh Delaney and myself when we were scripting it. When we were preparing *If*, we were looking at the location at Cheltenham and Mirak was very worried about the chapel because

the very large windows there meant that the light varied continually, and we didn't have enough time to cope with it. He was extremely scrupulous, but we didn't have enough time on the schedule to see that the light would be consistent or enough money to hire enough lamps to compensate. We had various thoughts about how we could shoot: should we try and shoot on 16mm and blow it up, or do something like that? It wouldn't have worked. Finally I said "Let's shoot the sequences in black-and-white so that we don't have to do all that compensating for colour." Obviously an idea like that takes on some kind of creative significance if one's going to do it. It wasn't just for finance or schedule's sake. The first thing was that, if we did that in the chapel, we would have to make it consistent throughout the film. We'd have to have shots in monochrome. But I did like the idea because the thing about *If* was that it was not a naturalistic picture and, by the end of it, it was going to be anything but naturalistic. And I wanted to do this without recourse to any odd effects of style of photography, and using monochrome would break the kind of naturalistic pattern or surface of the film. It also, possibly related to the idea of – I don't like to use the word 'alienation' because it's so boring – but the separation between the audience and the film they are looking at, leading them into judging it, thinking about it, rather than just being absorbed into a naturalistic story. And I even think that becoming conscious of the surface of the film, enhances the colour. So there you are.

**Gerald Pratley:** *The protagonist in If, O Lucky Man and Britannia Hospital is played by Malcolm McDowell. His character's name is also the same. Could you tell us how he came into your life?*

**Lindsay Anderson:** Malcolm came into my life in a purely professional way in that we were casting *If*. When we set

out to do *If*, we were not certain how to cast it, because the boys were supposed to be 16, 17, 18, but should we use boys, or should we use actors? In the end we came to the conclusion that, provided the character was correct, the literal age didn't matter. And I saw about 30 boys for that part. My casting director had seen Malcolm in a little television series, a small part, and brought him in. He did an audition, I thought he was interesting, and he came back again. We did a second audition, and he was very, very good and I cast him. I think usually the kind of stories you hear about, you know, Roman Polanski sitting down in an aeroplane next to Jon Finch, who played Macbeth – it's all nonsense. Actually it very rarely happens and if it does, it's probably not very good. I am a believer in professional actors. *O Lucky Man* came out of *If*. It came out of the personal, creative relationships in *If*. Malcolm actually started writing the script when he was out of work, about his experiences as a coffee salesman before he became an actor. Then they gave it to me and I started making my usual comments, thinking about it and developing the idea. It developed from being a coffee man into *Lucky Man*, into *O Lucky Man*, and it grew. Malcolm went off to make *Clockwork Orange* and David Sherwin and I effectively wrote this as a script.

All sorts of things came together in *O Lucky Man*. For instance, Alan Price, who had written some music for plays I had directed. I had the idea of doing a short film, about Alan Price, and that, for one reason or another, fell through, and he sort of wrote himself into *O Lucky Man*. I mean he was just present, and the way that he is used in *O Lucky Man* was originally specified as being in a rehearsal room – that idea was integrated, and it was integrated from the very beginning. The first script had Alan's sequences and songs specified in them.

*O Lucky Man* is a continuation, or an elaboration if you like, of the film as moral fable, I would say. Or film as a moral quest, with a considerable amount of irony and also, I hope, of poetry. The last sequence puzzled most people. There is a sort of reminiscence of the Zen story in it, of the Zen teacher who is perpetually asked 'Why?' by a troublesome student, asking the wrong questions, and who in the end, I think, hits the student with his chin rest and, at the moment of being hit, the student acquires enlightenment. That is where that sequence came from. A lot of people didn't understand. A lot of people resented all that stuff at the end in a totally mysterious way. I didn't appear in that scene as a character through egotism. I just couldn't imagine it being done by an actor, because that wasn't quite what the film was about. Malcolm, having gone through his quest, first in pursuit of success and then in pursuit of goodness, ends with a final attempt to redeem the world through sentimentality, which fails. The speech he makes is lifted from Gorky, from *The Lower Depths* – nobody's ever spotted that, I think. So it is not sentimental, but is an attempt at a suggested approach to the problem of how to live in the world – a modest ambition!

ly, not referred to anything political, or to politics. Yet the three films we are talking about are spoken of in many places as being political in content and in various other aspects.

**Lindsay Anderson:** I think that they are political films in a very broad sense. They obviously aren't films that can be identified with any specific political philosophy. They aren't propagandist in that sense, but they have to do with the relationship of us in society to each other and the individual to society in the widest use of the word. I very much do believe in audiences making their own decisions and their own analyses. I think there is a kind of ambiguity probably in all these films – not that there are many of them – but they do end up leaving the audience to make their own decisions. From that point of view I don't think the films are of any identifiable political persuasion. But there does come a time when artists should stop talking about their own work. They can talk about how it was made, perhaps what they tried to put into it, but in the end it's for other people to react to them and may be to tell the artist what he's done.

**Gerald Pratley:** Do you prefer to work in the theatre?

**Lindsay Anderson:** It's terribly difficult to answer a question like that. Let's give the obvious answer first: there isn't a great rush to, shall I say, finance the kind of pictures I manage to squeeze out of myself. And perfectly understandably, I'm not a money-making director. I don't think I've lost companies an enormous amount of money, but I'm not a profitable director. I don't think it's easy to formulate and work out ideas such as are contained in my films. They take a long time to germinate and then to execute, so I'm more inclined to be surprised at the number of films I've been able to make. I really am. It would be nice if we lived in a different world, but I wish that I had more creative dynamic. I haven't the kind of energy that is necessary to promote a career. I don't claim this a virtue, but I haven't actually got it. I'm absolutely no good at it. I think it's amazing we made *O Lucky Man*, and I am very gratified to find people who enjoy the film and remember it. It's awfully interesting that there are considerably more people outside Britain than in it who do, and that's an interesting question as to why that should be the case, but perhaps in Britain people tend to relate films too much to Britain. Although these films start from specific situations, they don't end up like that. But that's about all I can say on that, quite honestly.

**Gerald Pratley:** But, of course, you do enjoy working in the theatre?

**Lindsay Anderson:** Well, I suppose it's true that if I had been unable to work in the theatre, perhaps I would have concentrated more on films and maybe managed to squeeze out one more. I do enjoy working in the theatre and I don't think that's at all wasted time, and I count myself as being very fortunate. During the '70s, from about 1969 when I directed my first play by David Storey, *In Celebration*, I think I was incredibly lucky that David was in a very fertile period of dramatic writing, so between the films I was able to go back and do plays by him at the Royal Court of the calibre of *In Celebration*, *The Contractor*, and *Home and The Changing Room* and *The Farm Life Class*. That

was colossal luck, and I think that a lot of my energy did go into that.

**Gerald Pratley:** And it should not be forgotten, of course, that you did the film *In Celebration*.

**Lindsay Anderson:** I liked that film, actually.

**Gerald Pratley:** I know it's expensive to make films, but is there any reason why you haven't worked for television?

**Lindsay Anderson:** There is one problem about television, certainly in Britain, in that it does tend to be, not exactly a closed shop, but people work in television and they like to graduate, as they may think, to cinema, but there isn't a great rush to get people from cinema or theatre to work in television. The other thing is that I think that television is a very conformist medium. I have only done, really effectively, one piece for television which was from a script by Alan Bennett, a writer whom I like. I was asked by Stephen Frears (who is now a director in his own right and was an assistant at the Royal Court and on *If*) who was producing, if I would do a play by Alan Bennett, and I worked with Alan on the script much as one would on a film script, which is very much not the kind of may people work in television. The function of directors in television is to realise a script and not to be creative. Anyway, I did that with Alan and had a very good collaboration and the result was a little film that I thought was remarkable, and was an absolute catastrophe. It was rather the beginning of the period of a very violent rejection of my work – which I don't say in a self-pitying way but a factual way. But it did make me realise that if you try to be really original in television, and certainly if you are going to be anarchic, or critical of established ways, you're going to get slaughtered, particularly in Britain. So that hasn't tempted me to try television again and certainly hasn't tempted anyone to ask me. Nor do I think that the films are inspired by writers that I can think of, I don't think so. There is a very obvious influence on *If* which has frequently been remarked of *Zéro de conduite*, and that's all right.

**Gerald Pratley:** It has also been said that last sequence in *O Lucky Man* bears some resemblance to *Bunuel and Viridiana*.

**Lindsay Anderson:** Oh, I've never heard that! I thought it was supposed to be Felliniesque.

**Gerald Pratley:** If, *O Lucky Man* and *Britannia Hospital* have been called a trilogy, did you intend them to be?

**Lindsay Anderson:** I'd have to say that I think that the use of the word "trilogy" in relation to these films is rather loose. They are not, strictly speaking, a trilogy. The phrase I have sometimes used is that they are philosophical sequels. The character of, for instance, *Britannia Hospital* was not conceived at all as being a third section in the adventures of Mick Travis. *Britannia Hospital* came out of, originally, just an item in the newspaper about a strike at a hospital being led by a very ferocious lady shop-steward, determined to eject the private patients from the hospital. As the story developed, that character, played by Malcolm, sort of came into it, but he wasn't originally even Mick Travis, and then as I was working on it with David we thought, well, that's a good part for Malcolm, and

we'll make him Mick Travis again. It all sort of fitted, it all sort of worked organically. No, the only time he recognises people is at the end of *O Lucky Man*, when he begins to have this odd apprehension that he's seen these people around before. But I don't think it would be proper to have that in *Britannia Hospital*, which really is a different kind of film.

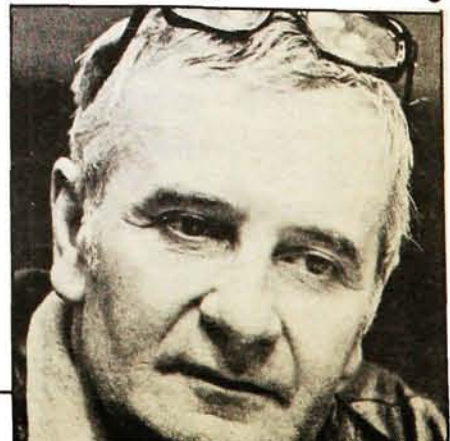
**Gerald Pratley:** You were recently asked to do a music video. Can you tell us about that?

**Lindsay Anderson:** Well, I was asked to do what is called a video promo for a group – well, it's hardly a group: a girl singer called Carmel, who has a bass player and a chap on drums. And she sings in a sort of jazz-derived way, not rock, and the company suggested I should do it. I talked to them, and I thought the number was rather nice, and I did a little film, a 3 1/2 minute film which came out rather like musical reprise of *A Taste Of Honey* – something like that! But it was totally unlike the conventional rock video. (*Anderson has just completed a video on Wham's recent China tour – ed.*)

**Gerald Pratley:** What observations would you like to make about the response to *Britannia Hospital*?

**Lindsay Anderson:** Mostly, in Britain, the picture was totally rejected, not understood, I think, in many ways. That opens up a big question about Britain at the moment, and it's capacity to accept satire or reality, which is not very great. I don't know whether the attempt to make people think through films can ever be very successful. Satire, of course, invites thought, and *Britannia Hospital* is a satirical film. Poetic, and all that too, I hope. It is a film that has to be thought through to the end. I didn't use any alienating or thought-provoking devices in it. I hoped to make a film that would be absurd and entertaining enough to amuse people who didn't want to think. *Britannia Hospital* is the development of the idea of a film as a moral fable. It certainly ends with a very large question mark, not a solution, and this is also something that a lot of people don't like. They want to be given solutions and they do want to be let off the hook at the end of the picture. And I think the thing about *Britannia Hospital* is that it does impale the audience on a rather large hook. So, it poses certain questions.

The final thing I will say about it is that it is a humanist film in the sense that I used the word earlier in that it does, rightly or wrongly, suggest that this world, our world, is one centered on human beings, the human species. And if we are going to find solutions, we are going to have to find them ourselves and not with any help from God, who doesn't enter into it. And probably not from any pre-sold political nostrum. I suppose the great question of *Britannia Hospital* is: are we good and intelligent enough to survive?



**Gerald Pratley:** Many directors today, particularly in Europe, aided and abetted by solemn critics, are forever going on about the political implications of their work. You have, very refreshing-