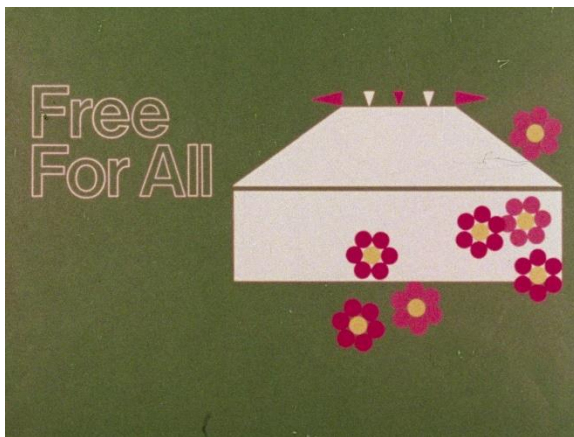


Special Collections Film Screening event 12th August 2019
Discussion sessions with former student filmmakers – Part 1

Participants:

- Richard Bradley (RB) - Sheffield Hallam University Library Special Collections Officer
- Martin John Harris (MJH) - former 1970s student filmmaker, co-director of *Free For All*; after graduating worked for BBC as Film Editor including on *Play for Today*, *All Creatures Great and Small*, and *Pebble Mill At One*; recently retired as Head of Documentary at the Northern Film School in Leeds
- Maggie Harris (MH) - Martin's wife, former 1970s Fine Art student, also worked on *Free For All*
- Jackie Jones (JJ) - former 1980s student filmmaker, director of *Life On Hyde Park Flats*, continued making films and taught Filmmaking herself after graduating
- Mark Knowles (MK) – former 1980s student filmmaker, a Psalter Lane contemporary of Jackie's, due to start a postgraduate Filmmaking course at Sheffield Hallam in September 2019
- Sheldon Hall (SH) - Reader in Film and Television at Sheffield Hallam University, has lectured in Film Studies at SHU since 1997



**Title card for *Free For All* (dir. Martin John Harris/
David Rea, 1976)**

RB: Is that the first time you've seen that film for a while, or have you got your own copy of it?

MJH: No, I've got a copy that Paul Haywood let me have a while ago.

RB: Yes, he put quite a few on YouTube as well. It's a lovely film, and really - as I was saying to you, I really love the '70s, so it's very redolent of that era...

MJH: ...though it's amazing looking at it again - it feels like half of it is in the '50s, the way the older people were dressing at the time, in the '70s, was very old...

RB: Clapping out of time to 'Y Viva España' - was that the Bolsterstone Male Voice Choir or someone like that?

MJH: Don't know.

RB: [...] It struck me as we were watching, I don't know if you'd be able to go around with a camera just filming children in playgrounds these days - there might be a few raised eyebrows there because culturally how things have changed - but it's good that you were able to do that...

MJH: We were given a piece of paper from the Marketing Department of the Council, we just had one letter, and we stuffed that in our back pocket for the whole summer, and we had to get it out every time there was a Parkie asking what we were doing.

RB: We were in touch around the time of the Doc/Fest screening [of *Free For All* and a small selection of other Special Collection 16mm titles in 2018], which you were unable to make as I think you were just about to retire [as Head of Documentary at the Northern Film School in Leeds] back

then, but I've got this quote from you [from email correspondence], which says, "It was my idea to make the film. I felt the people of Sheffield should know about all the free things they could do using the parks - being a socialist!" - so that was the ethos behind making it?

MJH: Yeah, yeah - that's right. And at the time, I remember thinking this, and it was something that I wanted to do. Because I was surprised how many parks there were in Sheffield. And I just wrote to the council saying, "Here's an idea, and do you fancy paying for it?" And they just wrote back and said, "Yes, come in and meet".

RB: There's an offer you can't refuse really, isn't it. [...] I was struck - again, I think this is something that I mentioned when we were emailing each other - I was struck by the amount of point-of-view shots that you used in the film - there was one on a roundabout, going down a slide; it looked like you'd somehow managed to get a 16mm camera on horseback as well, there was a horseback shot, and the zipwire as well at the end - how did you manage that without smashing up the cameras?

MJH: Well I don't think I did any of those shots.

RB: Right, OK - that was David, was it?

MJH: That was David, yes.

RB: OK, we'll ask him then, in September [at the re-run of the screening].

MJH: Well we worked together, I just was afraid of heights, for instance, but David was dead keen to do all those...

RB: ...action cameraman...

MJH: ...action shots, yeah. We worked with both a clockwork Bolex, and an electric one, and an Arri camera as well, which was quite heavy for those sort of things. If I remember, most of the point-of-view shots on things like the roundabout and the horse and that were done on the clockwork Bolex.

RB: OK. Talking about going out and filming people, I was wondering, the shot of the smooching couple, that went on for quite a while - did they know they were being filmed, or was that a set-up shot, do you remember?



A courting couple enjoying a Sheffield park (and each other) in *Free For All*

MJH: We didn't set any shots up, apart from the gardener [who was interviewed in the film].

RB: Yes, he was good - a philosophical gardener.

MJH: Yeah, very, yeah. But no, it's amazing what you have to do today - well, even in the last 20 years or so, actually - is to get permission from every single person in the film.

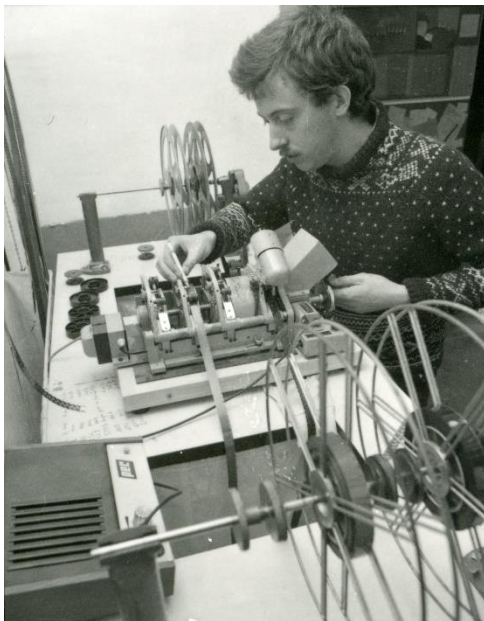
RB: Yeah, signed release.

MJH: Yeah, signed releases. And similarly, the music, the bandstand music.

RB: Yeah, that's something that I wanted to ask Jackie about as well when we come on to talking about her film, the use of music. So what was it that actually brought you to Sheffield to do the Filmmaking course in the first place?

MJH: I came to do the Painting course.

RB: OK, so you got sidetracked by Film?



MJH: And then after, I think after about the first term, I started working in the Film department. At the time Film was a subsidiary subject, sort of a secondary subject, and people weren't encouraged to go there at all. And I think it took Barry [Callaghan, Sheffield Polytechnic Filmmaking tutor] and Paul [Haywood, fellow Sheffield Polytechnic Filmmaking tutor] quite a while to really get it going as an official part of the Fine Art course. [*To his wife, Maggie*] Because you wanted to do Film, and they said, 'Absolutely not'.

MH: No, the Film didn't say absolutely not, Sculpture said, 'No one else is leaving'.

RB: You were a student as well then, Maggie?

MH: Yeah.

**Martin John Harris as a student editing
16mm film in 'B' Block at Psalter Lane, 1976**

RB: And I noticed you were on the credits [for *Free For All*] at the end, so you must have been married at the time?

MH: Yeah, yeah.

RB: So you weren't allowed to get your hands on all the film cameras then?

MH: I did some sound recording on other stuff they did, on other little films... I usually dragged along and [*laughs*] held things.

RB: Well I guess it's easy to forget you needed a bigger team really then, because now anyone could just go out with their mobile phone or tablet and film stuff and put it together, but then you needed the film stock, the sound crew that you'd have to synch - it was much more of a craft back then, and I guess a team effort. And as I understand it, on one film, you'd be doing the sound, and then [on the next] people would swap over, and you'd do the lighting - so everyone had that overview of learning how to do everything.

MJH: Yeah, we all used to help each other out - everything that we needed to. But I did notice that we had a complete disregard for synching sound and picture - there was a lot of stuff out of synch.

RB: Yeah - if you look at a lot of '70s and '80s cartoons, they'd do anything to get away from having to do lip synch, things like old *Dangermouses* - because it was harder to do - they'd kind of creatively get round having to do it. But you must have had quite a lot of location sound on that [*Free For All*] that you put into it, and fed in and out. And the folk song that you obviously had specially composed for it, because it had lyrics all about what we saw in the film - how did that come to be?

MJH: There was a couple of folk bands in the college at the time, and we just asked one of them if they were interested in working on it, and so they came up with all the lines. And we recorded it, one of the Painting tutors - I don't know if anybody here remembers [him]? - Martin Rose - was one of the Painting tutors, he had a little recording studio in his basement. And so he recorded that.

RB: Another thing that's ten-a-penny nowadays, I guess? - I guess people have got studios in their bedrooms, but back then you'd have had to have had all the gear.

MJH: Yes, and some of it was expensive, really - expensive stuff.

RB: Do you want to tell the story about the premiere of the film, where it was first shown and in what context?

MJH: I don't know how it came about, but it was the B-Movie to *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* [*audience laughter*]. I don't know if anybody remembers, but there was a little cinema called Cineplex in Sheffield - I can't remember exactly the address, where it was? But it was at the bottom of a very tall...

JJ/MK: Pond Street, was it? Flat Street?

MJH: ...I think, somebody must have had a connection with the guy there, it was an independent cinema, it had three little cinemas [screens], I think this would be about the biggest one, this sort of size [i.e. The Void Cinema at Sheffield Hallam University where today's screening event is held, capacity 93].

RB: There was The Anvil, that was Dave Godin, who was also a student at Psalter Lane, that he ran - I don't know if it's the same?

MJH: Don't know.

MK: Star Cinemas? Is it Star that you're talking about?

MJH: No, it was called Cineplex, that was the name of it.

JJ: Is it still there? It was the Odeon - I think it became the Odeon later? But they added the two big cinemas at the top, and then the little ones, a row of small cinemas below - so I think that used to be Cinecenta.

SH: Cine-Centa? OK.

MK: Wasn't it at the end of a really desolate walk on that walkway, and there was just the cinema at the end?

MJH: It was on a roundabout this, where we went [for the premiere of *Free For All*] - I'm sure it was underneath a hotel? [Martin was correct regarding its name; the cinema in question is the Cineplex Three Screen Cinema, opened in 1972, which occupied three shop units within the Grosvenor House Hotel complex on Charter Square. In 1983 the cinemas were taken over by Sheffield City Council as a municipal arts cinema, renamed The Anvil. Jackie and Mark are remembering the former Cincenta [*sic*], latterly the Cannon Cinema, situated under the old Roxy nightclub and overlooking Pond Street, now part of the current Odeon complex]

RB: And apart from the cheque for £600 and the note saying that you could go around sticking a camera in peoples' faces - did the council check up on you, or did they just leave you to go off and do it?

MJH: They didn't check up on us at all.

RB: Because they had their own Publicity Department as well at the time, didn't they - there's that film they made that's at the start of the film *The Full Monty* [*Sheffield - City On The Move*] - so did they take this film [*Free For All*] and go and show it to conference delegates to show them what an amazing place Sheffield was?

MJH: I think they used it for all sorts of things, but one of the main things that they were quite keen on was to use it for schools at the time - I don't know whether they still interact with schools in that way? But schools would have 16mm equipment and all that sort of thing. They were very good. And although £600 was a lot of money to us as students, it was probably half the budget of the films that they were making for publicity, like the one that you mentioned.

RB: Well I don't think you'd know it was a student film if you saw it - it was very well shot and put together.

MJH: Ah, hah... well thank you. But I don't know about that.

RB: I guess – unless there's anything else that you've got a burning desire to tell us, if we move onto Jackie now?

MJH: That's fine.

RB: OK, so Jackie made the *Life On Hyde Park Flats* film that we saw before Martin's film. So were you living on Hyde Park Flats at the time?

JJ: Yeah, we were – we were living on the top floor. Because it was eighteen stories, because the lower flats were double-storey, they were two-storeys. And they had the big long corridors, which were called 'streets in the sky' – but you actually never saw anybody on them [*laughs*].

RB: So you were inspired by your surroundings then?



JJ: Well I didn't really enjoy how bleak it was as a place to live – but the views were absolutely stunning. So the idea of the film was really just to create something that was visually exciting and different – and also just to try and explain the emptiness, and bleakness of it.

RB: Yeah – it was only the one guy in it who was the only person that we saw.

Left: Still from *Life On Hyde Park Flats* (dir. Jackie Jones, 1987 (filmed 1980/1))

JJ: Yeah – that's me brother, actually, and he helped me a lot, in setting up the shots, and being out at night. And there was one shot – I can't remember seeing it in the film just now, but we were shooting from Park Hill flats, and a bloke came out with a small axe! [*astonished audience laughter*] Trying to frighten us – but my brother was quite a big guy, and he was with his friend. And he hacked at the concrete... so we just kind of stood there frozen, and he eventually went off.

RB: Yikes.

JJ: I actually shot it in 1980, '81, that winter, because I wanted the city all lit up, so I had to wait until it got dark enough.

RB: That's called suffering for your art I think...

JJ: Oh, it was absolutely freezing.

RB: The use of the Brian Eno and David Byrne track [*Mea Culpa*, as the film's soundtrack] is quite interesting, because now we've got all this stuff digitised, a lot of people are saying to us now they know that it exists, "Oh, are you going to put it online so people can see it?" And people in the Library [have to consider the copyright implications] - so I think again, it's probably the sort of thing that was a lot... freer back in the day when you were a student – presumably you could just use any track without having to worry..?

JJ: Yes – because you had no way of screening it. Unless you had the 16mm copy – we did have copies made onto U-matic and VHS, but then you had to have a machine to play them in. I went into teaching video production later on, and I used to love telling students what it was like [*laughs*]. And I took a U-matic tape in, and you know it was like that big [*mimes*]... and we used to actually film on them, and they just couldn't believe it.

RB: We've got quite a lot of U-matics in the Special Collection as well, and we did some Heritage Open Day tours last year, so I had some of the film out on display, and also the U-matics, and used that as way of showing how quickly technology moves on – at some point, someone in the University thought, "That is the future of moving image storage" – and they just look so clunky and massive now. And we've got all this [the recently digitised 16mm films] on the latest technology – but five, ten years down the line, things might have moved on from there...

JJ: It's just so different now. I can remember as late as 1989 I was working for the Health and Safety Executive, we had a separate – what do you call it? – the tape went into a separate machine, and that was massive. And then you had a camera, which was heavy. And it was very difficult, really. And I just wanted to be a camerawoman, as it were – but the equipment was just... you know, terrible. And the sound recordist would carry the portapack, so they would have that job... with great big thick cables, and sometimes it would be a right hard job to find the right cable to fit the camera and the bloody portapack.

RB: So the current students don't know they're born, is what you're saying, when they go out with their tiny equipment?

JJ: I have said that, I used to say it in a kind of piss-taking kind of way, but meant it: [*adopts exaggerated Yorkshire accent*] "You don't know you're born!"

RB: There's another film we're going to watch shortly, which we didn't have much information about, but just [from conversation with Jackie] over lunch it turns out you're involved in as well.

JJ: Yeah, that was the *Deya* film – that was right at the end, I went back, because I spent two years with my ex in the Film Department, and that's when I shot the Hyde Park stuff. And then I just thought, "I need a break from this". And I went back in 1984 to do the degree, and right at the end of that we had this meeting about Virgin Atlantic wanted to give us a load of money and some filmstock, to go and make a film.



RB: An offer you can't refuse, really.

Still from *Deya*, promotional film made by Sheffield Polytechnic for Virgin Holidays (dir. Paul Haywood, 1987)

JJ: And it went round all the different art colleges. And all I can remember is that the Royal College of Art went to The Virgin Islands – is that part of the West Indies? They went there, and we thought we'd got the short straw because we'd got [*adopts Essex Girl accent*] *Majorca*. So we had to go to Mallorca, but it turned out to be a really old fantastic converted monastery. And it was beautiful, in the mountains near a cove. And Rupert Everett was staying there at the time, and I didn't know he was gay – sorry [*laughs*]. And everything was free – breakfast, lunch, all the booze we wanted...

RB: That must have been an amazing gig, as a young film student, to have been flown out there...

JJ: As a send-off, it was fantastic.

RB: Well, *Deya* is in the next section...

JJ: Can I just say, I've never seen the film.

RB: OK – well it will be a premiere.

JJ: Because me and the lads [also working on the film] just ran off afterwards and left Liza [Ryan-Carter] and Paul Haywood, so they were the two editors on it, as far as I'm aware. And I've only just found that out.

RB: Well it will be good for you to see it after all these years, hope it brings back some memories.

JJ: I'm sure it will.

RB: I don't know if you've got anything else you want to say while you've got the chance?

JJ: No, I'm just really pleased that you're doing this. And I think if we could get stuff out there and online – I mean, I'm on Facebook, and there's an awful lot of sort of, nostalgic kind of Sheffield pages for different areas and all sorts of stuff.

MK: So there's the actual film-making, [to Martin] I really enjoyed your film, and the cheekiness that was in it, and the cheeky shots. So there's the actual film-making, but it's what you've captured as well in all three films [shown in the Local Interest segment of the screening event]. Because obviously Hyde Park's an absolutely iconic bit of Sheffield history; in the parks, I don't know if you know or not, but you actually captured some local legends in there.

MJH: Oh right.



Flamboyant local Sheffield character Ernest Morley captured in action in *Free For All*

MK: So I think I saw a guy called Ernest Morley, who's a real legend in S9, which is Darnall and Tinsley. And the first film as well [*Canny Street*], which was the – I don't know what word to use which is P.C. really, but I'll say the 'rejuvenation' of an area of Sheffield. That's, the actual, just the content, is of interest to lots and lots of people, and certainly lots of groups on Facebook, so my question later would be, is it possible to share this stuff more widely, and do you have a responsibility to do that, to show more people, a much more wider non-film audience?

RB: It is the hope that we will, but as I was saying before we do have to make sure we have ticked all the boxes – I mean, when you were students, did you have to sign some sort of copyright waiver or anything like that? Because the issue that we have is that obviously when you were students in the '70s, '80s, '90s, there was no YouTube, hardly any internet, it's a different kind of way of... if you were signed up to being happy to having something shown at the end of your degree, it's a bit different to having it out there in the wider world – although, I imagine, anyone that made

the films would just be thrilled that they've survived and would want more people to see them really. [...] Is there anything else any of you want to talk about from your time at Psalter Lane?



Filmmaking tutor Barry Callaghan (in foreground, with students Bryan Causer and Russell Murray), 'B' Block film editing studio, Psalter Lane, 1976)

MJH: I think many of the ex-students who we've known over time, we've got one staying with us at the moment, and we're still friends with quite a few from our era, all say the same: that they're indebted to Barry and Paul for the teaching and the help, and the encouragement that they gave us, and you mention Barry and Paul all around different film places, and lots and lots of people know their names, so I think what they started in Sheffield was really a special thing. And if it's in their name that all this stuff carries on, then that would be brilliant, or they're associated with it, definitely.

RB: Yeah, unfortunately obviously they can't be here today because they're no longer with us, but it's their legacy I guess.

MJH: Yes.

SH: Did either of you have much to do with the Film Studies tutors – people like Tom Ryall and Gerry Coubro?

JJ: Gerry taught me, but I was very much one of those practical learners, I just wanted to know how to do stuff, so for me, the theory, I just didn't even... although my older brother, he did Film Studies A Level, it was the first year or just about that they brought that out, so he started teaching me about camera angles, and we used to watch Hitchcock films, and lots of things like that... but I wasn't taught Film Studies. And I think that's a bit of a gap, that it was more general Fine Art. And most of us that were doing Film or Photography were irritated by having to do the general thing, because as far as we were concerned we'd made this sophisticated decision to do Film or Photography – why are we having to look at this sort of, history that doesn't feel relevant? – that's how it was for me then. But yes, I do remember Gerry.

MJH: We had both Tom and Gerry, yes. They used to have weekly sessions and arguments.

MH: They were good.

SH: *[Laughs]* What kind of arguments??

MJH: They were very good. But I think as students we just didn't know what semiotics was. They drilled it into us.

MH: Yes, they drove the semiology. No, they were good. And then we ran the little student film thing for a while, the weekly viewings.

MJH: Yeah, we had the film club. We ran it for about a year I think? And a lots of people would say, “Oh, let’s see lots of art films that we can’t see anywhere else”, and we used to do that, but we’d get quite small audiences – so every so often, we’d get something like *The Wizard of Oz*...

RB: A crowdpleaser.

MJH: It would be packed out.

SH: Where were they screened?

MH: In Film Studies.

MJH: Yeah, at the [film] theatre in Psalter Lane.

RB: That’s something I was going to ask you actually Jackie: to what extent were you shown – I guess you were the second wave of student filmmakers after the early ones – were you shown stuff that had been made in the ‘60s and ‘70s at all?

JJ: No, like I say, even though we were doing Film, I think in Photography I remember tutorials about specific photographers that were working as fine artists, but I don’t really remember... it was more to do with people who were working in Fine Art, Video and Film, you got the visiting artists. But for me that was a bit of gap, we weren’t doing formal Film Studies, because we were there to sort of, not do Hollywood-style things; but in every year you got filmmakers – like my ex – who were into doing that formal kind of filmmaking.

RB: So you weren’t really shown previous generations of student filmmakers, films that had been made at the Poly?

JJ: No, no. I don’t remember it.

MK: I don’t think there was a system to collect them.

JJ: And the formats kept changing all the time.

RB: Well anyway, you’ve waited thirty, forty years to see this *Deya* film, so I guess we ought to move on...

JJ: Rupert’s not in it, unfortunately.

RB: He’s on the Cutting Room floor. Well thank you very much for sharing those memories.

Special Collections Film Screening event 16th September 2019
Discussion sessions with former student filmmakers – Part 2

Participants:

- Richard Bradley (RB) - Sheffield Hallam University Library Special Collections Officer
- David Rea (DR) – former student filmmaker 1975 - 76, co-director of *Free For All*; co-founder of SIF (Sheffield Independent Film) after graduating
- Alex Wilson (AW) – Sheffield Hallam University research student, author of MA thesis *SIF and the Emergence of Independent Film and Video in Sheffield*; currently working on AHRC Heritage Consortium-funded PhD on regional filmmaking in Yorkshire
- Lynne Barraclough (LB) – Sheffield Hallam University Photography Technical Specialist
- Colin Pons (CP) - Course Leader in MA Filmmaking at Sheffield Hallam University; former Managing Director of SIF
- Ivor Tymchak (IT) - former student filmmaker 1977 - 79, director of *Gentle Ihor Learns To Speak*; since graduating graphic designer, caricaturist, musician, author, public speaking coach
- Andrew Robinson (AR) - Senior Lecturer in Film and Photography at Sheffield Hallam University

RB: We're lucky that we've got one of the makers of the last film with us here, Mr. David Rea... So that film was made by you and Martin Harris as well, who came to the last screening that we had, unfortunately we couldn't get you in the same room at the same time, but this is an email I got from Martin about the genesis of the film, so I'll see if this tallies with your memory of events. So he said, "It was my idea to make the film. I felt the people of Sheffield should know about all the free things they could do using the parks - being a socialist! I wrote to the Parks Department of Sheffield Council asking if they would 'sponsor' the film, and to my surprise got a reply from the marketing department and they asked me to go meet them. That's when I asked David Rea if he'd like to be involved (he was a mature student and I thought that might help swing the PR people, that they weren't just giving their money to an inexperienced student – it worked, they said they would and gave us £600 which was a fortune in those days, but I guess probably cheaper than other films that they commissioned)" – is that broadly how you remember it happening?

DR: Yeah, I remember Martin asking me, he maybe told me that I was mature... what Barry Callaghan, who was running the film department at the time did, he set up this 'unofficial' one year Filmmaking course for people who were perhaps doing another type of career and wanted to retrain and make films, they could come along and we managed to blag some money from the government under a thing called the Training Opportunities Scheme, TOPS, it was called. And so that's how I got involved with Sheffield Poly.

RB: OK. So what had you been doing up until then?

DR: Chemical Engineering.

RB: OK, so a bit of a change in direction for you. And so Martin seemed to be saying that he thought you had more gravitas than him..

DR: Mmm, yeah, I don't know where he got that from...

RB: It's a lovely film, it's sublime really, one of my favourites of all the ones we've got... I grew up a bit obsessed with the '70s, I was born in 1980 so I missed them... you read about these semi-mythical '70s carefree summers, and you think, "Oh, it can't have been that good" – but looking at that [*Free For All*], it was, by the looks of things...

DR: Well that was one of the warm summers, I think it was '76. [Martin John Harris sent in the following clarification by email: "'Free For All' was shot over the summer of 75, then edited from Sept till around Christmas. I know this for certain because during the summer of 76 Maggie was pregnant with our first child, there's no way Maggie would have carried a Nagra sound kit around with the enormous bump in that 76 heat wave!"] They weren't all warm – they weren't all mythical and idyllic.



The hot summer of 1975 captured in *Free For All*

RB: OK, well it's good to puncture that ideal...

DR: Any more than the '80s or the '60s, or the '90s were.

RB: It does though show, it's really interesting to see all the really big gatherings of people together, which you don't get so much these days – I mean they still do have the Sheffield Show, which was shown there, in Hillsborough Park, it's now moved to Norfolk Park, that does still happen, but there just seemed lots of reasons where you'd get *lots* of people together – like the Whit sings, and the brass band concerts – it's just nice to see those big groupings of people together.

DR: It is, yes. I think the Publicity Department of Sheffield told us about all these things that were going on, and we just either turned up on the day, or we arranged to see somebody... I don't remember. But what strikes me about a lot of the films from the era, is the pedestrian nature of them – today, that would be a much faster-paced film, and actually I think for the better, really.

RB: Oh I'm not sure, I think it goes in its favour, though – because you go to the park to relax, don't you, and unwind, and you're seeing the lady with the pram walk right across the screen in real time, and I think it works for what you're trying to show...

DR: No, I'd had enough of her by the time she was half-way across the screen! *[audience laughter]*

RB: OK. Another aspect of it that struck me was that there were quite a few point of view action shots – there was a shot on horseback, I don't know how you managed to get a 16mm camera [on the back of a horse], there was a shot down a zip wire, on a roundabout, down a slide... Martin's answer to that was that he was scared of heights so he made you do all those action shots.



DR: Yeah – possibly?

RB: And it looked like you were on the roof of Weston Park Museum at one point doing a tracking shot of the Whit sing in Weston Park.

DR: Yeah – we must have been. I vaguely remember doing all these action shots.

RB: So you don't remember being on the back of the horse then?

DR: Mmmm... vaguely.

RB: OK. Another thing that struck me watching it, there were a lot of shots where you were going in to the park with a camera filming children which, rightly or wrongly these days would probably get you beaten up, or at least get alarm bells ringing – but it's all so innocent, really – you weren't doing anything dodgy. But it would probably be a lot harder to do these days, that sort of thing.



1970s children in *Free For All*

DR: I think it would. There would be more people coming up to you saying, "What are you doing? Why are you filming my children?" We never had any of that.

RB: ...although you would have been more visible, presumably, with a big 16mm camera and sound recording unit back then. There's the shot of the smooching couple as well, that went on for quite a while – I didn't know if they knew they were being filmed or not?

DR: No, they didn't know they were being filmed.

RB: Martin also said that it had an interesting premiere, he said it had its first public outing as a B-feature supporting *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* at an independent cinema which he thought was called the Cineplex, located on a roundabout in town – do you remember that?

DR: No, I don't – I must have been there, but I don't remember that. But the Cineplex was an independent cinema, and then it was taken over by the council, it became the Anvil cinema. And then the Anvil was the genesis for the Showroom.

RB: So that's Dave Godin was involved...

DR: Dave Godin was the Anvil, yeah.

RB: Was he at Psalter Lane at the same time as you, or did he come a bit later?

DR: I don't think Dave Godin was a student...

AW: He did a year of Film Studies, I think, as a mature student, yeah.

RB: We've got his scrapbook in the Special Collection.

DR: Have you really?

LB: Who's got his Northern Soul collection, I wonder?

RB: I don't know where that went, but the scrapbook's really nice – it's got loads of food labels and flyers and things that obviously took his interest...

AW: In later years, he was a hardcore vegan kind of militant...

RB: Yeah, he was [involved in] animal rights, wasn't he.

DR: He was a one-off.

AW: There's a Godin documentary-cum-book to be made by someone... some life.

RB: We talked about the involvement of the council, who it basically sounds like they just gave you some money and left you to get on with it really.

DG: Yeah – they were very happy with what they got, I think, because they got it for effectively peanuts. What's interesting as a result of doing the parks film, Martin and I made another film for the council, which you can see on the BFI website if you want a cringeworthy experience – it was a film that was designed to encourage businesses to relocate in Sheffield – it was called *Your Move*

Next, and it's a kind of drama-documentary, but when you watch your work from a long while ago, you kind of cringe. And even the BFI recognises that there's a cringe factor to it, but it's worth checking out.

RB: I have seen that.

DR: Oh you have?

RB: Yeah, it's on the BFI map of Britain, they've got a map where you can zoom in on Sheffield, and it's one of those films, so I know the one you're talking about.

DR: I think we got three thousand for that, instead of six hundred.

RB: OK, so bigger budget. [...] So you were also involved in the Rochdale Art College film as well that we saw before lunch [*Rochdale '75*]...

DR: So I see! [*Audience laughter*]



RB: So were you in the still of the camera crew [shown at the start of the film], were you confronted by a younger version of yourself there?

Left: The student crew of *Rochdale '75* (not including David Rea)

DR: No – I must have not been available for the photoshoot, I'm not in that. What's quite interesting about *Free For All*, there's a shot of Martin at the end – Martin Harris, who's the co-director – walking along the park. He doesn't get very close, so you can't really see him – but he did a Hitchcockian appearance.



Martin John Harris' 'Hitchcockian appearance' at the end of *Free For All*

RB: You weren't tempted to do one then?

DR: No, because I was behind the camera.

RB: So how did the Rochdale film come to be – was that another thing that was commissioned, presumably, by the college themselves?

DR: I guess – I've got no memory of doing anything on the Rochdale film, I'm sorry. [he is given a credit for 'assistant sound / lights' on the film]



SIF (Sheffield Independent Film) Catalogue 1984

RB: It's alright. I was going to ask if you could talk a bit about post-Polytechnic life, because you went on to found SIF [Sheffield Independent Film, founded in the mid-1970s after graduating by David Rea along with fellow ex-Psalter Lane students Russell S. Murray and Pete Care] didn't you, which we've also got some of the archive of in the Special Collection – the admin records of it, and we've got Hilary Bronski, former SIF employee, voluntarily cataloguing that for us at the moment. So that was you and Russell, and a few of you from Psalter Lane?

DR: Yeah. The reason for SIF starting was because there was all these students who were being churned out of – well 'churned' is the wrong word – they were leaving Psalter Lane, but they weren't leaving Sheffield. But they wanted to carry on making film. So we were using the Poly's facilities and

equipment for a while, but Barry eventually said that he couldn't really handle all these extra demands on the resources, so we decided to band together and see if we could get some money together to get some equipment. So that's how SIF started, it was basically so that we could carry on making films. But there was also this kind of grandiose idea that we would all get together and critique each other's productions of an evening, over a beer. Which kind of happened – but only in a kind of a way. So there was all these little groups then began to form, which then became production companies in the '80s, such as Steel Bank, Banner, which was myself and Richard Hines, and Sheffield Film Co Op... I think Jenny Woodley was one of the founding members of Sheffield Film Co Op, and she did this one year course at Sheffield Poly as well.

RB: It sounds like quite a creative place to be then, Sheffield, at the time?

DR: It would be an interesting, kind of, 'family tree' as to how it all happened in Sheffield.

RB: [To Alex Wilson] Well you've been doing a bit of work to put all that together, haven't you, Alex? [To David Rea] And do you think it still remains a creative place to be, compared to how it was?

DR: Hmmm. *[audience laughter]*

RB: Not so much, maybe?

DR: Well, I think there was a critical mass in the '80s. And Colin [Pons] was very heavily involved in creating that, and helping to encourage that critical mass. But then I think in the '90s it started to fall away a bit – what do you think, Colin?

CP: I think we had a lot of good things going, and then because of a change that was made centrally in London, that everywhere should have a Screen Agency, and London decided the Screen Agency for Yorkshire should be in Leeds, not in Sheffield, so a lot of the stuff that we'd developed just kind of disappeared. And then, I suppose the advent of the iPhone, things like that, Sheffield Independent Film became less relevant, because the whole thing was about access to a means of production, and the means of production you can [now] put in your pocket. And so that type of filmmaking became more active, and much more easily funded - but it didn't need the resource of a place like Sheffield Independent Film.

DR: I suspect there's still as much creativity in Sheffield now as there was then – perhaps it's not so high-profile.

CP: This weekend there was a Spirit of Independence festival out at Abbeydale Cinema, it was a whole day of independent filmmaking – I think it is starting to regather itself. But I think it's like politics, isn't it, it goes in surges, really... I think Sheffield for a long time was leading with all that kind of radical filmmaking stuff, and then – who knows why? Maybe it started raining one day, I don't know! *[audience laughter]* It just kind of changed, and I don't think it's come back... Alex, in terms of your research, do you think that's right?

AW: Yeah... I mean certainly there's a lot of factors involved... you always said Sheffield not having a broadcaster centrally, that was the way in for a lot of people.

LB: Wasn't the start of all that to do with people like Barry though, because it was the start of students making films, wasn't it?

AW: Yeah, what Barry and then later Paul set up was a first outside London of its type. And getting equipment, you know, it was quite crude in the early days – as we've seen [in the screening], the early stuff – but really important. It was a kind of perfect storm.

CP: Barry wrote that book as well, *Independent Filmmaking*, which I think came out in 1974 [*The Thames and Hudson Manual of Film-making*, pub. 1973] – I read that when I was a student in Montreal, so I knew about Sheffield from those days. But I think Barry was very much the genesis of a lot of it.

AW: You also had post-'68 students of a certain generation with all these ideals and politics, and riding that kind of wave – you're all of that same kind of generation, right?

CP: And then, fundamentally, Channel 4 in '82.

DR: Yeah, I think that's how the critical mass evolved in Sheffield. And not just in Sheffield – it was happening in Newcastle, it was happening in Glasgow, Nottingham... although we're concerned with Sheffield now, Channel 4's commitment to encouraging regional production in the early '80s was influential in creating the way that production companies are spread geographically now.

AW: But with that same token, the act of freelancer came about, and that changed things, through the '80s, right? It used to be a collective act, filmmaking, and everyone was competing for the same bit of coin and small increase in funding... there's a PHD there, isn't there? Someone's got to do that. [the joke being, that Alex currently is]

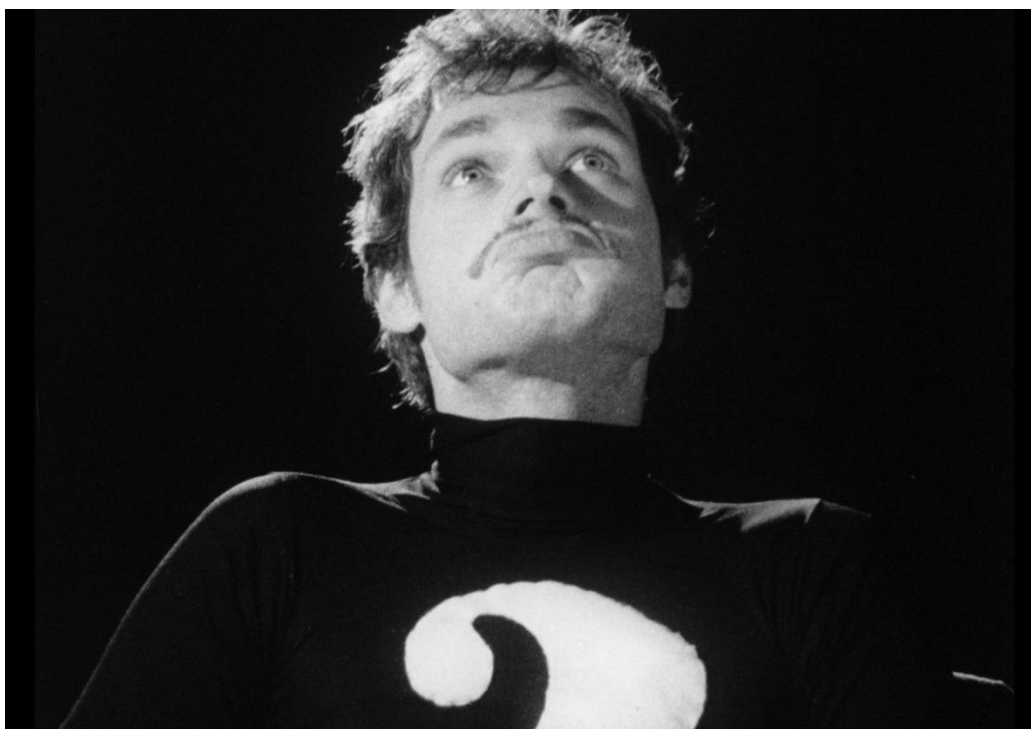
RB: Well thankyou for sharing those memories with us David.

[...]

RB: We're lucky to have another filmmaker with us now, the self-styled "clever twat" [quoting a line from his film *Gentle Ihor Learns To Speak*] Ivor Tymchack [*audience laughter*] So, I did a bit of looking you up on the internet to discover what happened after Psalter Lane, so you toured Europe with a band, set up a graphic design company, you're a caricaturist, you appeared as Gentle Ihor on a compilation album which was also the first ever recorded work of Pulp on a record, and are now a public speaking coach. So if we could start with how you got to Psalter Lane - and then if it is not too personal a question - your lineage, because you have this exotic-sounding Eastern European name and then these flat Yorkshire vowels come out on the film when you start talking. So what was your early life, and how did you end up at Psalter Lane?

IT: I caught the bus! But, I could draw, so I was encouraged to do art through school, I was from a working class background, my parents were Ukrainian. And that's probably where I got the chip on my shoulder. So that was kind of my escape route – because I could draw, as an artist, it was like, this is my ticket to get out of the working class manual labour, basically - would have been the textile mills in Huddersfield. So I got interested in film, because it did everything – it had sound, music, acting, writing – so that's where I went.

RB: And you did pretty much all of those things in that film [*Gentle Ihor Learns To Speak*], it's quite a personal film really, you're very much in it – twice, as well [he plays two parts in it, both versions of himself]. So I just wondered how it felt for your 2019 self to be sat watching your 1979 self?



Ivor Tymchak starring in his 1979 student film *Gentle Ihor Learns To Speak*

IT: It was bizarre, because when Paul Haywood digitised it - because of course, I couldn't see it, after I'd made it, it was in film, and I didn't have any access to the Steinbeck or anything - so he said, "I've digitised it, come and have a look at it", so I watched it after 25, 30 years, or whatever it was. And I was appalled how I hadn't changed really, from how I was then. And Paul said, "No, no, that's a good thing that you haven't changed, Ivor". Because with the advent of the internet, I've realised that it's a lot easier now to get an insight into how the whole media thing works. Whereas at the time, it was just an intuitive feeling that, "Hang on, there's something going on here that I haven't been apprised of, and I need to find out what it is".

RB: Well I scribbled down a bit [from the film] in particular where you said, "I've got nothing, and what there is isn't real, it's just an illusion created by the media to convince everyone they're happy". Now, that's really interesting in this age - obviously there was no Facebook, no Twitter, no social media then - so it's quite prescient, really.

IT: That's exactly the word I was thinking as I was watching it - I thought, very little's changed, in fact, it's got worse, if anything.

RB: You predicted the future, basically.

IT: Yeah - because everyone just keeps staring at their phone, and it's like they're not in the moment anymore - so it's even worse now: none of it's real. And then with fake news, it's getting compounded - it's like the double-cross, even when you do check your phone, it's fake on there as well!

RB: And you also said in the film, "There's no life here, life is on the radio, newspapers, magazines, adverts - people are paid to live it for you". So again, quite prescient really, in that you've got people paid to be 'influencers' and wear particular clothes, eat particular crisps, and things like that.

IT: Oh yes, that's true. Who are often found out to be fake in themselves, it's all set up or whatever, yes. I need to plug I'm an author now, as well by the way, I've got a book coming out, keep an eye out for it – *Sex and Death and Other Stories*... [David Rea raises his hand] I have a question! Can I take a question? David, yes? – no general knowledge questions, though, I'm crap at that.

DR: No, these are very personal, and I hope you won't take offence. Do you feel that in some way you are a kind of latter day prophet – or are you just a "clever twat"? [audience laughter]

IT: That's not for me to say, that's for you to decide, David. The book that's coming out is a collection of short stories, and actually, it's just an extension of exploring ideas, like in the film, because I'm obviously fascinated by the *idea* of things: the idea of film and what it can do, the power of it. And so the book's got stories about sex robots – what happens with them, when they get so realistic? And so it explores different avenues of technology, and death, basically. So I'm just fascinated by what's going on – it's for other people to decide whether it's...

DR: I think you should be back making programmes again, because I think you're almost in the zeitgeist – you were, thirty years ago, was that [*Gentle Ichor Learns To Speak*]?

IT: Thirty-odd, yeah.

RB: Forty – forty years this year.

IT: Forty – blimey.

DR: I feel your time has come [audience laughter]

IT: [Laughs] I'd love to make films, actually.

DR: Your Second Coming, if you'll forgive the expression.

IT: Thank you. But the film industry at the time, the media industry – I just couldn't get on with it, it's all the bullshit that you have to put up with, and it's who you know, and blah blah...

DR: Well that would be the same now.

IT: Well it's the same with anything: very little changes, we just get older, but it's the same story repeated, over and over again. But given the opportunity, to make a film, then great, OK then.

LB: Have you brought a box of books then, that you're going to sign?

IT: It's not actually out yet – October the 7th is the launch.

LB: Oh, that's badly-timed.

IT: Yes, I'm sorry about that, he should have put the date back, Richard.

LB: Where is the launch?

IT: It's in Leeds, actually.

LB: Will you be coming to Sheffield as part of...

IT: If I'm invited! If there's another one of these sessions, I'll bring a box of books.

LB: Isn't there the Off The Shelf thing?

Unknown audience member: Soon – yeah it's in October. Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

LB: Perhaps, couldn't you be part of that?

RB: I think that's all planned out now, the programmes are out for that – maybe next year?



IT: Yeah, next year. But thanks anyway for asking.

DR: Have you still got the question mark jumper [he was wearing in the film]?

RB: I was going to ask that as well! I was hoping you were going to be wearing it today actually.

IT: It wouldn't fit, trust me. But it got lost, I don't know where it got to.

AW: It's good stitching, it was a

good question mark.

IT: Well I was a graphic designer later – hence the title, where you had crossed-out stuff, that was deliberate irony, that was.

Unknown audience member: Where's the jacket, Ivor – "Ihor's back"?

IT: Erm, I think I've still got that, you know, somewhere, I'm pretty sure...

DR: Was that Letraset on the back?

IT: No, I actually had to take off the skin of the leather – so again, that was the graphic design skills: I had to sketch it out, then use a scalpel to take the first layer of skin off. A lot of trouble, just for one joke, really! [audience laughter]



RB: I was wondering, having been a Film Theory student myself, and I'd go to the Fine Art Degree Show at Psalter Lane, and it felt like people would just whack a quote from someone like Baudrillard on it that had no relevance, just to make it kind of seem more meaningful – I wondered to what extent you'd made it [*Gentle Ihor Learns To Speak*] as a sort of protest against part of the education that you were receiving.

IT: There was that, because I was at Portsmouth prior to coming to Sheffield, and that was so hardcore – you know, it was all *dialectical materialism*... And what was the name – [Jean-Luc] Godard, that was the filmmaker, wasn't he, who'd just kind of had shots of... nothing, for hours and hours. So yeah, there was kicking against that, in there. But I just like exploring the medium that I'm working in, whichever it is. So with film, I had to explore... film, and cameras. And if it was painting, I'd sometimes leave the canvas blank, because it's important that you see the meta part of the process. But exploring ideas, I just love the idea of... trickery.

RB: It's very playfully experimental, I mean we put you in [the] Experimental [section of the programme], but it's also obviously very funny compared to the other ones [in that section]. It made me think of B S Johnson, the author – I don't know if you know his stuff?

IT: No I don't, actually.

RB: He was an experimental author, but he used to do things like putting holes in the books so that you could see something that was going to happen a hundred pages in.

IT: [Laughs] Right.

RB: He was always falling out with his publishers because he'd do these kind of technically complex things – there's another book that he does that's a series of unbound chapters in a box, the idea being that novels don't really replicate how random life is, so this book everyone reads in a different order.

IT: I've got this alter-ego as 'This Is Not Art Boy' where I dress up as a sort of avant garde artist, so I've got this placard that says, 'This Is Not Art', and I visit art galleries with it, just to freak out the staff there. So I've got this idea of calling the book an artwork, it just happens to have words in it. So it's a similar kind of thing, you play with the idea, the pre-conceptions that people have. And a friend of mine, who I've known for 50 years now, he said, "You can only be serious for so long, Ivor, then you have to take the piss out of the thing". And it's true, it's like, yes, I'll get seriously into an idea intellectually, but then ultimately I'll see the absurdity of it, that's what it is, it's just the absurdity – and then you have to point out how absurd the whole thing is. I mean when you look at some of our social mores, and think "Why has it come about like that?" you realise there is no real explanation, it's just arbitrary, it's absurd. And yet people accept it as, "That's how we do things round here."

RB: I was also interested to what extent when you're making something like that, if you think back – what extent, how much dialogue do you have with your tutor as you're making it, as in, "this is the idea I'm going to do"? Or do you just kind of do it and then present the finished thing at the end of the course to be marked?

IT: Yeah, the latter, really, I just wrote it. I had one session with Paul Haywood's wife [Aileen], who was brought in as a kind of script consultant, and she said, "Oh, I really enjoy this" – and that was kind of the extent of the criticism – "Oh, OK". But I did get Graham Curtis-Wright to edit it, because when I'd shot it, I was kind of struggling with it, I didn't quite know how to put it together. And actually, that was probably the best move I made as a student, because he didn't have any

investment in it. So he cut it as he saw how it should be structured. I don't know if you've noticed, but the other films, they tend to be rather precious with their material, and you think, "That shot's held probably, perhaps 200% longer than it should have been". And it's like having an editor of a book, who just says, "No, we'll get rid of 30% of this [*makes ripping sound*]" And you need that kind of ruthlessness to keep the thing structured and moving. So that was the best thing I got out of the course.

RB: To what extent would you have exposure to previous generations of students' [work]? Were you ever shown any of these films that we've been watching today at the Polytechnic, that the people who came along four, five, six years before you have made?

IT: Funnily enough – no, because it was kind of fairly new then, '77, I think I was there. But subsequently I was told that one of my films was shown to students who came in for the induction – so I was one of the first to have the film shown to other students, saying, "This is what you can achieve, kids, if you think and be creative". So yes, I had that privilege of having my film shown there. But no, we weren't shown anything. At Portsmouth there was one film that had a great impression on me, kind of an experimental film – some of the imagery was just sensational. But it didn't happen at Sheffield.

RB: I was going to ask about your overall memories of Psalter Lane – being there in the late '70s, you were edging into the time when you had The Human League and Cabaret Voltaire and people like that playing in The Wham Bar, and all the music people starting to come in and get involved.

IT: That's right – Nick Park was at Sheffield as well at that time; Chris Malone, who's a director now at Granada. Human League were in there regularly because Adrian Wright, he was on the course, he was a keyboard player with them. So yes, the music scene was just exploding there with the whole punk thing.

RB: And were you influenced by punk at all?

IT: I always drop this at parties: I was at the last UK gig of the Sex Pistols, in Huddersfield, on Christmas Day – 1978, was it?

RB: Sounds about right.

IT: 1978, yeah. [*sic* - It was 1977, held as a benefit concert for the children of striking firefighters] With Sid Vicious – I mean, they reformed, and all that kind of nonsense. Yeah, so I was hugely influenced by the whole punk thing, because from a working background, it was like, suddenly, "wait a minute, you can do it, you can do it yourself, you don't need the approval of the hierarchy, you can just do it yourself". Which is one of the great things about the technology now, you've got smartphones, you can make your own films – you don't need the hundreds of thousands of pounds of equipment that you needed when I was doing it.

RB: Yeah, we did talk about that a bit before, how it was a lot more of a craft, you'd have to synch it all together.

IT: Yes.

RB: And it's easy to forget that really isn't it, as you say, you can just do it all on your phone now. It's easy to forget how dedicated you had to be really.

IT: Yeah, yeah.

RB: You made another film as well, which, when we were emailing each other, you said you actually preferred to that one, which was *Gentle Ichor's Odyssey In The City of Sheffield*...

IT: That was the one which was shown to the students, that was kind of a more experimental thing, it was poetry, and imagery of Hyde Park Flats – in fact one of the films, about Hyde Park Flats, I thought, “That looks influenced by mine, actually”, because I took time-lapse photography of the flats, and the lights changing...

RB: The Jackie Jones one that we saw after the lunch break.

IT: That's right, yeah.

RB: Well she came to the last screening, and I asked her the same question that I asked you about seeing former students' work, and she claimed not to be shown any.

IT: Oh right.

RB: But that is online, isn't it, on your YouTube channel.

IT: That's just the cutting copy that I managed to save, I've still got that, the 16 mm cutting copy, the mag stocks.

RB: We've don't have that in the Library – in fact, I've brought some, as props, and not done anything with them – yours is actually sat on the desk at the front. *[goes to fetch 16mm canisters]*

IT: I recognise the handwriting

RB: Yours has got the separate soundtrack...

IT: A print was never actually made of it, but a print was made of the other film.

RB: *[Shows him film reel]* There it is.

IT: Yes, it's still the same, I can verify that *[audience laughter]* – it's the original document.

RB: I feel like we're on *The Antiques Roadshow*, or something.

IT: I bloody well feel it, as well *[audience laughter]*

RB: Well, that's been fascinating – I don't know if anyone's else has got any other questions?

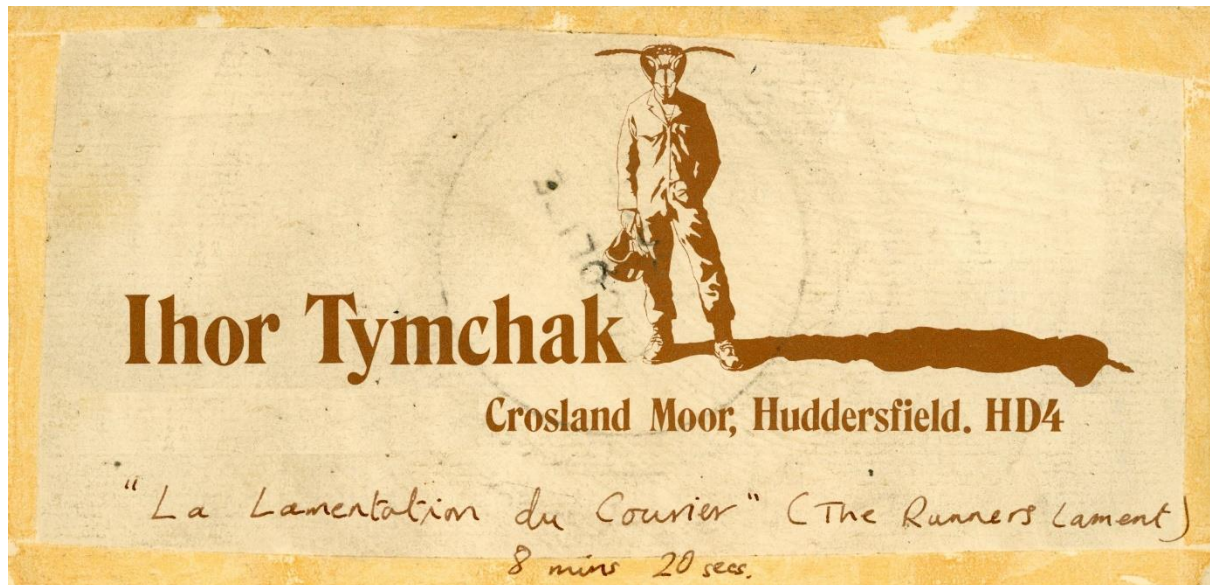
AR: I was just going to ask about how many times it was shown, and that long period of you not seeing it – was it shown at your Degree Show, or shown to the other students?

IT: It was shown at the Degree Show, because they had a 16 mm projector and a projector for mag stock, so they were able to show the cutting copy. It went down well, but as I say, that was the last I saw of it, and it was thirty odd years later that I saw it.

RB: Anything else you'd like to say while you've got the chance?

IT: Buy the book when it comes out!

RB: Yeah – October the 7th. Thank you.



After this screening event, technician Lynne Barraclough who was present donated a small cache of further 16mm reels of student work to the Library Special Collection which had been stored in the Photography Department since the move from Psalter Lane in 2008. One was a further film by Ivor Tymchak, *The Runner's Lament*. Inside the film canister was found this slip (above) of Ivor's self-designed headed notepaper. Ivor remembered: "Thanks for sending me this, I'd forgotten about my personalised note paper. My sister used to work as a designer at a printing firm and just before I started my college education she told me she was allowed/given/awarded a 'scotch job' and did I want some letterheaded paper? I said yes and set about designing it. Back in the day it was quite an impressive thing to have personalised writing paper. I remember I wrote to Sheffield using the paper asking if I could transfer from Portsmouth Poly film making course. When I arrived at Sheffield and made friends with some of the other film students, one of them told me how much of an impression the letter made in the department. Apparently, Barry [Callaghan] showed it round the department he was so impressed. The other students thought a real hot-shot was coming to join the course!"